



5 TO FIVE TEAM PRODUCTION PRESENTS  
A film by Eileen Hofer



OFFICIAL SELECTION  
INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL  
ROTTERDAM  
2012

# HE WAS A GIANT WITH BROWN EYES

Sabina Narmina Namik Vagif  
Aghamaliyeva Aghamaliyeva Aghamaliyev Aghamaliyev

5 TO FIVE TEAM PRODUCTION PRESENTS A FILM WRITTEN, DIRECTED AND PRODUCED BY EILEEN HOFER. STARRING SABINA AGHAMALIYEVA, NARMINA AGHAMALIYEVA, NAMIK AGHAMALIYEV, VAGIF AGHAMALIYEV AND KERIM ZERBERLI. CINEMATOGRAPHY JAVIER GESTO. SOUND AND ADDITIONAL CAMERA IVAN CASTIÑEIRAS. EDITING ANDRES ENIS AND VALENTIN ROTELLI. ASSISTANT EDITOR FELIX SANDRI. MUSIC COMPOSED AND PRODUCED BY LADISLAV AGABEKOV AND JULIEN PAINTOT. MIXED BY YVAN BING AT KITCHEN STUDIO. VOICES AND LYRICS KATE WAX AND "CARMENSITA" BY DEVENDRA BANHART AND "MEAN MONDAY" BY YELLO. SOUND EDITOR BENJAMIN BENOIT. ASSISTANT SOUND EDITOR DANIEL ALVAREZ FLORES. SOUND MIXED BY GABRIEL HAFNER AND FRANÇOIS MUSY AT NOSSONMIX. COLOR EDITING RAPHAËL FRAUENFELDER AT C-SIDE. ASSISTANT PRODUCER FLAVIA ZANON. GRAPHIC DESIGN GREGORY ANTILLE. TRAILER JEAN-DANIEL SCHNEIDER. WITH THE SUPPORT OF VILLE DE GENÈVE, FONDATION ROMANDE POUR LE CINÉMA ET LE SOUTIEN DE LA LOTERIE ROMANDE, FONDATION NOVRUZ, SWISS FILMS FONDATION SUISA POUR LA MUSIQUE AND BUTA ARTS CENTRE





## The film in a few figures

- 0 professional actors
- 4 self-taught technicians (director, camera operator, editor, musician)
- 80% of the film's scenes were shot in single takes
- 25'000 Euros of shooting budget
- 8 non-professional volunteers for translations
- 18 days of shooting in Azerbaijan
- 9 months from the initial idea to Rotterdam

## Technical Infos & Crew

**Screening Format:** DCP, 16/9, 5.1.

**Language:** Russian, Azerbaijani

**Subtitles:** English

**Length:** 80'

**Country:** Switzerland/Azerbaijan

**Written, directed and produced by:** Eileen HOFER

**Cinematography:** Javier GESTO - **Editing:** Andres ENIS & Valentin ROTELLI

**Sound:** Ivan CASTINEIRAS - **Sound editing:** Benjamin BENOÎT

**Sound mix:** François MUSY & Gabriel HAFNER - **Music Mix:** Yvan BING

**Music:** Ladislav AGABEKOV & Julien PAINOT - **Singing/Songwriting:** Kate WAX



## The Film

After her parents' divorce, Sabina followed her mother to Switzerland while her sister, Narmina, stayed with their father in Baku. Five years later, the 17 and 19 year old sisters are reunited when Sabina comes to spend her summer vacation in Azerbaijan. Yet Sabina's vacation has a secret motive: she wants to move back home to live with the father she loves so deeply. He, too, has a project of his own: he wishes to marry for the third time and has to break the news to his daughters.

Sabina, torn between two cultures, ends up following her father's advice and leaves for the countryside with her uncle. She sets out on a journey of discovery, while her sister, Narmina, is left to lament her boyfriend's departure for the army.

This film paints the portrait of the coming of age of two Azerbaijani teenagers and their quest for answers.



## Director's Statement of Intent

The idea behind "He Was a Giant with Brown Eyes" was born at the end of April 2011, following a conversation I had with Sabina Aghamaliyeva, the 17-year-old protagonist of the film. She was planning on returning to Baku for the summer; a great opportunity to spend some time with her father and 19-year-old sister that she hadn't seen since her departure to Switzerland. I have always been interested by split families and human movement, and such themes already appear throughout my entire filmography.

No producer would have accepted to embark on this adventure on such short notice. I thus decided to produce the film through my own association, 5 to Five Team Prod, created for the production of my previous three short films.

We began the project with no limits, no safety nets whatsoever. We wanted to truly build a story around the characters, so we met them for the very first time on set and then proceeded directly to the shooting, which lasted 18 days. It was a challenge to convince all of the family members to participate in the project as well as to find a way to direct them subtly. In order to be both precise and faithful to reality, the script was written on a daily basis.

The boundary in between fiction and documentary can sometimes be blurry and it is on this very ambiguity that we wanted to play. The acting is spot on... yet there were no actors, no written script, only a subtle staging of reality where characters became actors in their own existence. By integrating this family's true day-to-day life it was possible to observe all its members' personalities and to spotlight their different weaknesses, doubts and fears.

With this project, I wanted to get back to the cinematic language of "Roots" - my first short film - a style that is clean, almost spare; while underlining the beauty that lies in the simplest of human interactions. If I have explored the theme of human movement in previous films, never before have I filmed it in such an upfront manner. I owe this to the fantastic amount of trust and complicity that I shared with Sabina and her entire family.

I'll finish by adding that I have myself suffered a great deal because of my mixed heritage. But today, I am proud to feel at home not only in Switzerland but also in Turkey and in Lebanon where my mother is from.

# Biographies



## EILEEN HOFER - DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

Eileen Hofer was born in 1976 in Zurich. She worked as a press officer for a film festival and then began her career as a journalist for a Swiss daily newspaper in 2005. She spent two years as chief editor of a Swiss magazine before starting off her career as a self-taught filmmaker.

Her first short film, "Roots" (2008) was screened in 70 festivals (Locarno, Clermont-Ferrand, Palm Springs) and received over 10 awards. Her second short, "The Mourning of the Marry Stork" (40 festivals such as Rotterdam) won the Suissimage/SSA New Generation Prize for Best Short Film. "Soap Opera in Wonderland" was awarded a special mention from the jury in Amiens. "He was a Giant with Brown Eyes" is her first self-produced, creative documentary. Its world premiere was held in Rotterdam in 2012.



## JAVI GESTO - CINEMATOGRAPHY

Javi Gesto is a respected filmmaker in Spain with a career that spans over 20 years. In 2000, he founded his own production company in Madrid, Struendo Films, a collective of artists, filmmakers, designers, musicians and writers.

During the last 10 years, he has mainly focused on producing and directing music videos for artists in Spain, as well as TV commercials, TV promos and motion graphics.

He has worked for EMI music, Sony music, Universal music, Warner music, Canal +, Disney Channel, Discovery Channel, TVE, Arte, Maccan Erickson, Publicis, Walter Tompson, Hispasat and others. Struendo has been awarded various Spanish Music Academy Awards, as well as two Promax Awards.



## VALENTIN ROTELLI - EDITOR (In collaboration with ANDRES ENIS)

Born in 1983 and raised in Geneva, Valentin Rotelli grew up in a family active in the Swiss TV and film industry for two generations.

He naturally found his role in the industry by working as a director and film editor since 2004. Two years later he started a company, covering post-production for major fiction and documentary projects. As an editor, he worked with local talents such as Elena Hazanoy, Bruno Deville and Eileen Hofer, whose film "Roots" earned him an editing prize at Larissa Film Festival in 2009.

His short films have won numerous awards and have been screened internationally in festivals. With his fellow co-director Pierre-Adrian Irlé, he received a Quartz Swiss Academy Award nomination for Best Short Film in 2009 with BIG SUR and directed "All That Remains", his first feature film.



## FRANÇOIS MUSY - SOUND MIX

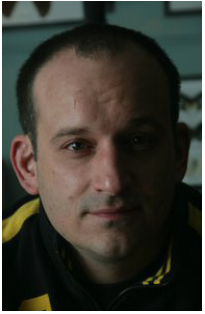
In 2007, François Musy was awarded the César for Best Sound for his work on Xavier Giannoli's film "Quand j'étais chanteur" featuring Gérard Depardieu.

His numerous collaborations, with internationally renowned directors such as Jean-Luc Godard, Walter Salles or Noémie Lvovsky make him one of the most important person in Swiss cinema today. Together with his collaborator Gabriel Hafner, he made the sound mix for two of Eileen Hofer's previous short films, "Roots" and "The Mourning of the Marry Stock".



## GABRIEL HAFNER - SOUND MIX

Gabriel Hafner is François Musy's collaborator at Nos Sons Mix. Together they worked on Jean-Luc Godard and Xavier Giannoli's films, on Fernand Melgar's "Vol Spécial", on Philippe Garrel's "Un été brûlant" and, among others, on Xavier Durringer's "La conquête".



#### LADISLAV AGABEKOV - COMPOSER

After having travelled Europe, playing over 500 gigs with different bands (Nostramo, Filth and Dirt, Les Tontons Flingueurs, la Chose), Ladislav Agabekov turned himself towards electronic music production and film scoring. In 2005, he composed the soundtrack of Laurent Nègre's first feature film "Fragile". This experience led him to further study the relation in between image and sound as well as synthetic soundscapes.

Since then, he has worked on several commercial music productions for different institutions (Banque Pictet, Baume et Mercier, Banque KBS, ROLEX etc.). He also created his own studio, AGAsound where he has been collaborating with the likes of Dandy Jack, Quenum, Detroit Grand Pubahs, Dave The Hustler, etc.

In 2008, together with Julien Painot, he composed the original soundtrack for Pablo Martin, Olivier Pictet and Marco Recuenco's feature film "Lo mejor de la vida es que no haber muerto". He resumed his collaboration with Julien Painot on the score of Eileen Hofer's first documentary, "He Was a Giant With Brown Eyes".



#### JULIEN PAINOT - COMPOSER

After attending the Geneva High Conservatory of Music, where he gained in-depth and extensive knowledge in composition, orchestration, piano and guitar, he moved to the Berklee College of Music in Boston to hone his skills even further. He earned a BA in Film Scoring and graduated Magna Cum Laude. He was also awarded the prestigious Film Scoring Achievement Award in recognition of outstanding musicianship.

He then moved to Los Angeles where he composed for numerous projects, among them, "Scar", suspenseful thriller distributed by Blockbuster in 2005. He also worked for Alex Wurman on big budget films such as "Anchorman" (Dreamworks) and "A Lot Like Love". After five years in the States he came back to Switzerland in order to establish himself on the European market.

He quickly started to write for Swiss television (TSR) and European television (TV5), working on documentaries and sitcoms. At the same time, he practiced the classical repertoire and obtained a Master degree in Classical Piano at the Lausanne Conservatory in 2010. Julien's composing career continues to soar as he scored his first European feature film: "Lo mas importante de la vida es no haber muerto", a Spanish-Swiss production starring Emilio Gutteriez Caba, double Goya's winner.



#### KATE WAX - VOICES/LYRICS

Born on the shores of Lake Geneva, Kate Wax traveled extensively to exotic locations early in life. Escaping to other worlds provided her with the inspiration to create imaginary ones for us today – and training as a soprano chorist fine-tuned her captivating crystal-clear voice.

The music of Kate Wax will be filed under electro-pop, because it's electronic and retains the verse-chorus-verse format. But it's a highly personal hybrid, the result of do-it-yourself digital tinkering with influences ranging from early new-wave legends to 21st century neo-pop divas.

Kate Wax new album "Reflections of the Dark Heat" features a rich blend of styles: up and downtempo minimal techno, electro-punk grime, ambient-industrial blues and more, all driven by her unique, warm and seductive vocal delivery. From old-school rapping to whispered lament, Kate Wax reveals a wide spectrum of emotions and builds her own universe with the mind of a techie and the grace of a Eurasian princess.