

DRYADES FILMS PRESENTS

SIRENS OF DIEPPE

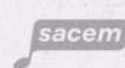
A DOCUMENTARY-MUSICAL BY NICOLAS ENGEL & NICOLAS BIRKENSTOCK



A DRYADES FILMS PRODUCTION WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF FRANCE TÉLÉVISIONS AND PICTANOVO WITH THE SUPPORT OF HAUTS-DE-FRANCE REGION IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CNC
WITH THE SUPPORT OF NORMANDY REGION IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CNC AND IN ASSOCIATION WITH NORMANDIE IMAGES, WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF CNC, THE CREATION OF THIS FILM'S ORIGINAL MUSIC WAS SUPPORTED BY SACEM
A FILM BY NICOLAS ENGEL & NICOLAS BIRKENSTOCK « SIRENS OF DIEPPE » WITH DIVA BELUGA, LILY, ALONSO BYNE, SWEETY BONBON, PLEXY GLAM, TORNADO, EDGAR FALZAR & XTINE
DIRECTORS OF PHOTOGRAPHY NICOLAS ENGEL, NICOLAS BIRKENSTOCK, ARTHUR DELAMOTTE, CHRISTOPHE BAZILLE SOUND NICOLAS BIRKENSTOCK, NICOLAS ENGEL, JEAN-LUC GESCO
ORIGINAL MUSIC: RAPHAËL BANCOU EDITING NICOLAS BIRKENSTOCK, NICOLAS ENGEL, MONA-LISE LANFANT GRAPHIC DESIGN ZACHARIE CHAPUIS, PATRICK CAVROIS COLOR GRADING JULIEN DESCAMPS
CREDITS STÉPHANE COENS SOUND EDITING CHRISTIAN CARTIER RE-RECORDING MIXER YANN REILAND, CLÉMENT MAURIN PRODUCED BY CLAIRE BABANY & ÉLÉONORE BOISSINOT



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Presents



SIRENS OF DIEPPE

A documentary by Nicolas Engel & Nicolas Birkenstock

52 minutes

PRESS KIT

June 2024

A **Dryades Films** production with the participation of **France Télévisions (France 3 Normandie)** and **Pictanovo** with the support of the **Région Hauts-de-France** and in partnership with the **CNC**, with the support of the **Région Normandie** in partnership with the **CNC** and in association with **Normandie Images**, with the participation of the **CNC**

The creation of the original music for this film was supported by **Sacem**



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Région Hauts-de-France

RÉGION NORMANDIE



CNC





SUMMARY

In Dieppe, a small port town on the Normandy coast, stands a cabaret where Diva Beluga and her queens put on drag shows. The place survives thanks to the energy, the perseverance and the unshakeable faith of its team. Behind the parties and the glitter, struggles and resistance rumble. Welcome to “The Bearded Siren”.

FILM CLIPS

Clip 1: L'argent ne fait pas le bonheur, Diva Beluga Song (Money can't buy happiness) (3mn)
<https://vimeo.com/963156698> | Mdp : LSDD1

Clip 2: The energy of the show (1mn30)
<https://vimeo.com/963160201> | Mdp : LSDD2

Clip 3: Parade during Dieppe herring and scallop fair (1mn30)
<https://vimeo.com/981212781> | Mdp : LSDD3

Clip 4: Sweety Bonbon performs in Dieppe Pollet district (1mn30)
<https://vimeo.com/981215929> | Mdp : LSDD4

FILM PRESENTATION

Frenetic movement in the dressing room of « The Bearded Siren », « La Sirène à Barbe ». Sounds of hairspray and zippers. The show is about to begin. The drag-queens make final touch-ups to their costumes and adjust their wigs. Someone helps Nicolas Bellenchombre, aka DIVA BELUGA to get her fake silicone breasts into the cleavage of her rhinestone dress. As soon as she is dressed, she rushes on stage and shouts to a packed house: « Welcome to la Sirène à Barbe ! »

Nicolas created his cabaret in the heart of Dieppe, a fishing town of 30,000 inhabitants. After a homophobic aggression in 2018, he sank into a deep depression that caused him to gain more than 60 pounds in a year. This led to the birth of Diva Beluga, named after the small white whale of the Gaspé Peninsula.

We discover him torn between choreographies' rehearsals, booking calls and mounting administrative problems. The place isn't doing well at the moment and tonight the spectators are too few. Nicolas takes the opportunity to invite people, as money doesn't really interest him. "I'd rather make people happy than make euros", he sings.

Some of the performers, such as Lily, have learned on the job. Others, like Alonso Gyne or Sweetie Bonbon are professionals coming from Paris who fell in love with Nicolas's cabaret.

The financial situation is critical. To keep going, Nicolas Bellenchombre can count on the members of the troupe, but also on Xtine, his fairy godmother, his parents and some friends who regularly come to give him a hand. Driven by the will to make it, he motivates his troops to save the Siren. Streets parades, new design of the entrance hall, creation of an after-show to keep the bar running... It's not easy being a « Drag in Dieppe ».

From manoeuvres to boost attendance to relentless struggles to overcome prejudices - which, alas, are still very present - Sirens of Dieppe is an ode to determination, solidarity and tolerance.

At the heart of the documentary, the queens of the Siren tell their lives in song, in the style of a musical. Set to a score by composer Raphaël Bancou, these lyrical escapes remind us that whatever happens, the show must go on.

The filmmakers Nicolas Engel and Nicolas Birkenstock have followed « The Bearded Siren » for a year, during which the cabaret was threatened with closure. Witnessing this pivotal moment, they filmed the team's determination in the face of adversity.

Today, the Bearded Siren's financial worries belong to the past. The cabaret is doing well, enjoying a real popularity in town and attracting audiences from all over France.



TECHNICAL SHEET

Title : Sirens of Dieppe

Documentary | 52 minutes | France | HD | 2024

With Diva Beluga, Lily, Sweety Bonbon, Alonso Gyne, Plexy Glam et Xtine

Authors & Directors: Nicolas Engel & Nicolas Birkenstock

Producers: Claire Babany & Eléonore Boissinot (Dryades Films)

International Sales : Anne Littardi (Beliane)

Directors of Photography: Nicolas Engel, Nicolas Birkenstock, Arthur Delamotte, Christophe Bazille

Sound: Nicolas Birkenstock, Jean-Luc Cesco, Nicolas Engel

Picture Editing: Nicolas Birkenstock, Nicolas Engel, Mona-Lise Lanfant

Original Music: Raphaël Bancou

Graphic Designers: Zacharie Chapuis, Patrick Cavois

Sound Editing: Christian Cartier

Color Grading: Julien Descamps

Titling: Stéphane Coens

Re-Recording Mixers: Yann Reiland, Clément Maurin

© Dryades Films – France Télévisions – Pictanovo – 2024

A Dryades Films Production with the participation of France Télévisions and Pictanovo with the support of Hauts-de-France Region in partnership with CNC, with the support of Normandy Region in partnership with CNC and in association with Normandie Images with the participation of CNC. The creation of this film's original music was supported by Sacem. International Sales: (Beliane)

SOME SIRENS OF THE FILM

Following a homophobic attack in 2018, Nicolas Bellenchombre decides to set up the Bearded Siren, a drag-queen cabaret in the heart of Dieppe, his hometown in Normandy. He imagined the place as a bulwark against intolerance. But just as the cabaret was about to open, starring four Parisian drag queens, Covid destroyed his lofty ambitions and put him into debt. When the theaters reopened, unable to pay the artists he had booked every week end, he decided to go on stage himself and invented a character. The weight gain that followed his attack inspired him the name **DIVA BELUGA**, in reference to the white wale of the Gaspé Peninsula.

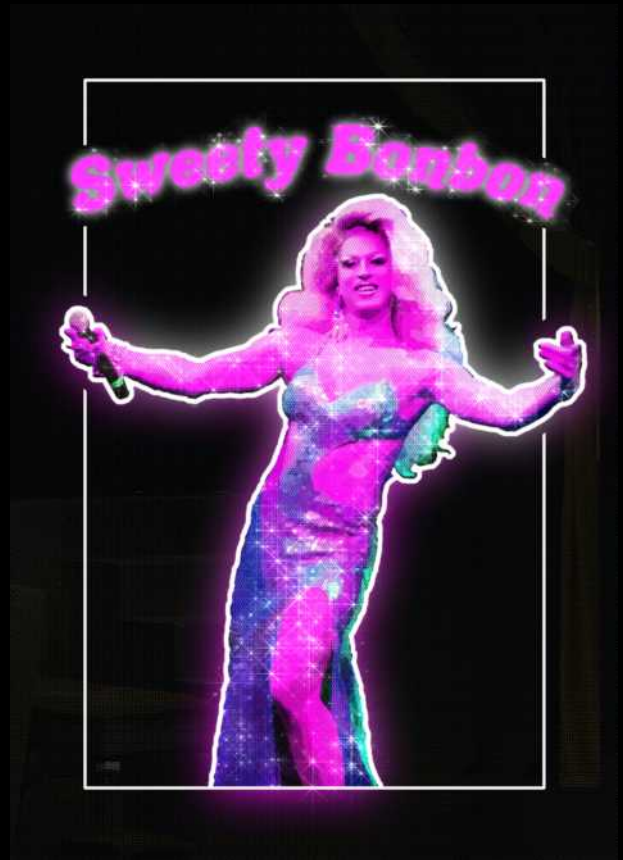


Lacking the means to hire an entire team of professional artists, Nicolas Bellenchombre invited his friend **LILY** to perform on stage with him. A totally new world for this forty-something Dieppoise, whose job is normally to load ferries on the port of Dieppe... The gamble has paid, and the stage now allows her to express herself fully, to accept her body and to heal her heartaches. This late vocation turned her life upside down and Lily tied strong friendships with the other queens in the dressing rooms.



In his search for unusual profiles, Nicolas discovers **ALONSO GYNE** on Instagram, a Mexican-born artist who mixes acrobatics with the art of drag-queen. Alonso, who previously danced in New York, London and Paris, falls under Dieppe's spell. A man of few words, he quickly becomes an indispensable member of the team.

SWEETY BONBON is a Parisian drag queen with a predilection for singing and playing the piano. Her devastating sense of humor and generous temperament immediately win over audiences. A true "drag mother", she teaches Nicolas the fundamentals of the art of drag. Charmed by the venue and the energy of its creator, Sweetie left Paris for Normandy.



The troupe is now making a name for itself. **PLEXY GLAM**, a young man from Rouen who initially came as a spectator, decided to change his life to join the Siren's team. Full of ideas, he is especially the inventor of the famous "bubble-breasts" that have become his signature, and which are much noticed by the locals when the troupe parades through the streets of Dieppe.

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTORS

How did the idea for this documentary come up?

Nicolas Birkenstock: We got to know Nicolas Bellenchombre long before the creation of The Bearded Siren, when he was a film festival coordinator. We witnessed the genesis of his cabaret project and saw him confront the difficulties of the Covid pandemic. During the confinement, we also saw him create the character of Diva Beluga, and draw his entourage into the adventure.

Nicolas Engel: When we followed the troupe for the first time at the Dieppe Herring Fair in November 2022, we realized it could be a great topic for a documentary. The drag-queens of The Siren were parading among the fishermen and the tourists. The sight of these creatures in high heels amidst the grilled herring was the promise of a colorful film. This led us to accompany them for a whole year, right up to the next Herring Fair.

What was it like working with them this past year?

N. E.: Shortly after we started shooting, The Siren found itself in a complicated financial situation, and the venue was even threatened with closure. As witnesses to this pivotal moment, we found ourselves filming the team's determination in the face of adversity. Ultimately, the film tells the story of a provincial cabaret struggling to survive.

N. B : Today (Summer 2024), these worries are behind them. The cabaret is doing very well, enjoying real popularity in town and attracting spectators from all over France.



Original songs were created specifically for the film. Was it your intention from the beginning to create these sing-along numbers, reminiscent of a musical?

N. E.: We both come from fiction filmmaking. What appealed to us about this troupe was the very romantic nature of their daily lives, which seem almost scripted, with all their twists and turns. We wanted to push the film in that direction. It also seemed natural to come into contact with the musical comedy genre, which I happen to know well. In Bob Fosse's musicals, for example, the action is often accompanied by a musical number. With the cast, we imagined songs that would bounce off the documentary footage we'd shot.

N. B.: These songs create carefree bubbles. You get the feeling that, with music, nothing really bad can happen! In the Drag à Dieppe song, for instance, a discrepancy is created between the seriousness of the situation (saving the Siren from bankruptcy) and the fun, pop tone of the song. It's an irony that the members of the troupe have at all times. Even during hard times, they find ways to laugh about it. Whatever happens, the show must go on.

How did the the singing numbers' creation go?

N. E.: We called on the services of composer Raphaël Bancou, with whom I had just collaborated on a children's opera at the Opéra de Vichy. Raphaël had worked on many musicals, and he knew how to give each number its own color. He was with us every step of the way and was always ready to make suggestions. He has a great sense of derision, a key asset for such a project.

N. B.: We'd always start from a situation we'd captured during filming. For example, Nicolas Bellenchombre's administrative difficulties inspired the song Money Can't Buy Happiness. Other songs appeared in the editing process, depending on how the film turned out. Xtine - Nicolas' fairy godmother - who wasn't supposed to be so present at the outset, took up so much space in the editing that we decided to create her own song. In addition, the sequence set in Dieppe's Pollet district, which we chose to close the film, inspired the film's title song: Les Sirènes de Dieppe.



How would you define the relationship between the Dieppois and the cabaret ?

N. B. : When Nicolas Bellenchombre set up his cabaret in Dieppe, a fishing town of 30,000 inhabitants in which he had been the victim of a homophobic attack, he knew he was opening a highly atypical venue and had no assurance of its viability. But the cabaret soon had its regulars. It's a place where anyone can be listened to, without being judged.

N. E.: The cabaret is located in the town's central square, Place Nationale, between the fishmonger's and the kebab shop. Nicolas wants it to be a place of diversity. He tries to shake people's prejudices without being aggressive, and to convey a political message behind the glitter.

Was the proximity of the UK a factor in the decision to open a drag cabaret in Dieppe?

N. E.: Dieppe is linked by ferry to Brighton, the LGBTQ+ capital of England. Nicolas Bellenchombre drew much of his inspiration from the Brighton's drag-queen cabarets and the great figures of queer culture celebrated there, from Divine, the star of John Waters' films, to The Wizard of Oz, or The Rocky Horror Picture Show...

N. B.: Today, he often invites Brighton drag queens to the Siren, including Kara Van-Park, who appears in the film, and says she has found a real family at the Siren.



The Bearded Siren is also a family affair...

N. E. : Indeed, Nicolas Bellenchombre started by asking his own parents for help, and then built up another family around the site. With the artists, of course, but also with a good number of people who give a hand on a daily basis.

N. B.: Many people have found meaning in their commitment to the cabaret, and take refuge there as in a cocoon. At times - as the film shows - the violence of the world resurfaces, but the family holds together. The Siren's artists always stick together.

N. E.: We wanted to capture and convey this special bond. A bond expressed through their faith, their joy, their zest, their energy, perseverance, irreverence... Their humanity, quite simply.



THE FILMMAKERS



Nicolas Engel directed musical short films for ARTE, Canal+ and France Télévisions. Among them, Copy of Coralie, which was awarded at the International Critic's Week (Cannes Film Festival). Also working for stage shows, he wrote the French adaptations of the musicals The Phantom of the Opera, Grease and Chicago (Théâtre Mogador, Paris), and received a "Trophée de la Comédie Musicale" for his work on Mel Brooks' The Producers.



Nicolas Birkenstock directed his first feature film in 2014, Picking up the pieces, starring Philippe Torreton, released theatrically. He directed several short films broadcasted on France Televisions and ARTE, and presented in Competition at the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival, among which Black seeds and Little Bear (awarded in Palm Springs). He's currently working on his second feature film.

BROADCAST, SCREENING DATES, FESTIVALS

- Broadcast Date: April 2025 on TV5 Monde
- Broadcast Date: November 7th, 2024 on France 3 Normandie and on [france.tv](https://www.france.tv) until December 7th, 2024
- Broadcast Date: September 2024 on France 3 Hauts-de-France and on France.tv
- Broadcast Date: May 2024 on France 3 Normandie as part of the Fini la Bamboche? 's national collection

- Screening on Saturday, June 22, 2024 at 10 a.m. at Max Linder Panorama in Paris
- Screening on Tuesday, May 14, 2024 at 8pm at Le Fresnoy, Studio national des arts, Tourcoing
- Screening Tuesday, April 16, 2024 at 6:30pm at Dieppe Scène Nationale

- Selected at the « Des Images aux Mots » Festival, Toulouse, France (2025)
- Selected at the « Les Premiers Jours d'été » Festival, Port-Bail-sur-Mer, France (2024)





Dryades Films is a French production company founded in 2016 by Claire Babany, Éléonore Boissinot & Arié Chamouni, based in Paris and Marseille. Our primary goal is to produce creative documentaries for the cinema, web & television, focused on society, culture & human interest. We are keen on working with International partners and our previous experiences in coproduction with various countries comforted us in our ambition to produce documentaries across the borders.

Our latest productions include **OUT**, a feature-length documentary by Denis Parrot theatrically released in 2019 (selected at Sheffield Doc/Fest, Busan, CPH:DOX; Warsaw, Fipadoc and Etoile de la Scam 2020 awards, broadcast on Canal+, Ciné+, MDR/ARTE, LCP, RTS, RTBF, BETV, Prime Video...), **RADIO CONGO** by Philippe Ayme, broadcast in 2019 on French national TV Public Sénat and TV5 Monde in 2023 (selected at Namur International French-language Film Festival, Saint-Louis du Sénégal International Documentary Festival, awarded at Traces de vie), the webseries **PALESTINIAN WOMEN, A GUIDE TO CULTURAL RESISTANCE** (FIGRA 2021, Ciné-Palestine, Documed) released in 2020 on the French media Courrier International, broadcasted on LCP channel in 2021 and France 3 Corse Via Stella in 2024 and sold to ORF, DW, BBC Arabic ; **ÉLÉONORE'S WAY** by Géraldine Millo (Biografilm Festival, International Celebration of Lives Bologna 2021, sales: Beliane).

In 2023, Sérine Lortat-Jacob's **FISHERMEN OF SAINT-TROPEZ** aired on France Télévisions (France 3 Côte d'Azur), the feature-length documentary debut **NIGHTWATCHERS** by Juliette de Marillac opened Visions du Réel International Film Festival and screened at IDFA Best of Fests (sales: Mediawan Rights), while **THE PATHAN SISTERS**, Éléonore Boissinot's directing debut, was awarded at Locarno Critic's Week and aired on France Télévisions (France 2 "25 shades of docs"), RTS and Deutsche Welle (sales: Blooming Docs/Cinephil). The film receives an "Etoile de la Scam" author society Award in 2024.

More on: www.dryadesfilms.com



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