

H264 A PRODUCTION
PRESENTS ART ET ESSAI

HUMANIST VAMPIRE SEEKING CONSENTING SUICIDAL PERSON

A FILM BY
ARIANE LOUIS-SEIZE

WRITTEN BY
ARIANE LOUIS-SEIZE AND CHRISTINE DOYON



SARA
MONTPETIT

FÉLIX-ANTOINE
BÉNARD

STEVE
LAPLANTE

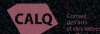
SOPHIE
CADIEUX

NOÉMIE
O'FARRELL

MARIE
BRASSARD

PATRICK
HIVON AND

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BEAUPRÉ



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Written

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A film by

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With

SARA MONTPETIT
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MADELEINE PÉLOQUIN
MARC BEAUPRÉ
PATRICK HIVON
MICHELINE BERNARD
ARIANE CASTELLANOS

Length

92 minutes

Production

Art et Essai
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Summary

Sasha is a young vampire with a serious problem: she's too sensitive to kill! When her exasperated parents cut off her blood supply, Sasha's life is in jeopardy. Luckily, she meets Paul, a lonely teenager with suicidal tendencies who is willing to give his life to save hers. But their friendly agreement soon becomes a nocturnal quest to fulfill Paul's last wishes before day breaks.



Ariane, *Humanist Vampire Seeking Consenting Suicidal Person* is your first feature film, after many years of directing short films that went on to garner much praise, domestic and abroad. How did you come up with this project?

Ariane Louis-Seize — I already had the desire to make a feature film in me at the time of my first short (*Wild Skin*, 2016). I was working on an idea that I ended up putting aside, but that first writing experience allowed me to know myself better as a creator. Eager to put my ideas on the screen, I made one short film after another. The creative urges were strong. Then, five shorts later, the desire to move on to a longer form became very important to me. Spontaneously, this idea of a vampire film came to my mind, sitting at the crossroads of multiple inspirations, between indie coming-of-age stories and genre auteur cinema, both of which I relate to deeply. I'm thinking of movies such as *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*, *Only Lovers Left Alive* and *Under the Skin*.

Writing can sometimes be an arduous and solitary task, but for this project I felt that I needed to keep it fun, go somewhere crazy, lavish and free with it. Hence the desire to cowrite the screenplay with Christine Doyon, a friend of mine who shares my sense of humour. The way I saw it, having a cowriter would force me to change my way of writing, which is usually more instinctive.

So it was a first for you, this collaboration with another screenwriter? Beyond the friendship that unites you, what attracted you to Christine's way of writing?

I wrote my shorts by myself, so yes, it was a first for me. It's important to find collaborators who, instead of restricting your imagination, will feed it and help it grow. I had an intuition about Christine, and I was right to follow it, because we had so much fun working together! She is an excellent dialogist and her humour resonates with me. Usually, my films are inhabited by observant characters. I work on atmospheres and a certain strangeness. I wanted such a strangeness, a poetic signature, for this film, but I also wanted to keep exploring comedy, making sure to put the dialogues and colourful characters front and center.

As you mentioned, *Humanist Vampire...* mixes vampire movie, comedy and coming-of-age story. How would you define your film first and foremost?

The starting point would be the coming-of-age part. What touches me above all is the characters' search for identity. Our teenage years leave a rich footprint on our lives. That's when we test our limits and those of others, when we question everything. Then, I like clashing genres. My short films don't fit neatly into any box. I let the world of the film guide me, I follow my instinct and if along the way I encounter a funny or destabilizing element, I follow this vein of creation without limiting myself.

Sasha is very close to dark and romantic representations of vampires in literature and film. Yet the members of her family, although colourful, lead a very concrete life, banal even.

That parallel was interesting to me. To imagine that vampires also have daily problems, that women have to manage a significant mental load, that children sometimes refuse to leave the family nest and cling to their comfort. These dynamics needed to exist in the lives of vampire too. I had such fun creating a melancholic atmosphere that's typical of the genre, but I still needed the audience to identify with these characters.

Sara Montpetit is perfect as Sasha. It's as if the role was written with her in mind. How did you cast her?

I didn't have anyone specific in mind when writing the film. When the time came to cast for Sasha, Sara had just won the Iris for Revelation of the Year at the Québec Cinéma Gala, for her role in Sébastien Pilote's *Maria Chapdelaine*. Beyond the promising career that awaits her, I felt above all that there was something... vampiric about her, in the sense that she can play a young 68-year-old girl! She has a very touching depth and when I saw her interact with Félix-Antoine Bénéard, who goes on to play Paul, I instantly knew I had found my two main roles. They each possess a strangeness in their own way. They were fascinated by each other, which fit with this encounter between two marginalized beings who do not understand each other, but share the same inner struggles.

You also went for actors with whom you had worked before on your short films...

I love this stage of the casting process. Even the supporting characters had to have something extra, a madness. It's important for me to maintain long-term relationships with actors. They were easy to convince. They wanted to explore this universe populated by vampires and I wanted characters who would feel whole.

Also, when writing and directing a film, I think about the characters first. They're my anchor. The challenge is to build characters who are as realistic and profound as possible. When I reread my screenplay, I do it through the eyes of each character. Their reaction is never left to chance. That's why in my final version of the script, I know exactly how to direct the actors in every scene. This preparation makes it possible to go further in our exploration. It allows me to be open to ideas that come from the actors. I communicate my vision to all the creators and artistic collaborators on the project, and then I trust them because I love their tastes and admire their talent. Then there is this desire to stay focused on my vision, but without being rigid, so that the work grows with them.

You've been working with cinematographer Shawn Pavlin since your first short film. How did you approach the visual aspect of this film? Several scenes had to be shot at night and, to some extent, you had to play with the aesthetics of the horror movie.

Shawn and I developed our styles simultaneously. He listens to my vision and understands that I like to create captivating worlds, which attract and enthrall the viewer, and wish to avoid something hermetic. We did a lot of visual research, and watched a lot of vampire movies, not to pastiche them so much as to wink at them. We embraced the darkness, typical of the genre, but never sidelined the light and colours, which play their own narrative role. We had a lot of fun working with contrasts.

I couldn't help but think of German expressionism while watching the film. The cinematography, the lighting that sometimes echoes Sasha's moods, the confusion that lives in her...

Yes, the flashing lights surrounding her is a good example of that. These are the moments when the vampire in her awakens. Sasha's inner struggle is there, as her great humanism clashes with her vampire identity. From the moment her sharp teeth come out for the first time, instincts and impulses start warping her thoughts. We used lighting to express this inner turmoil.

German expressionism and vampire movies certainly inspired us, but also teen movies from the late nineties and early aughts. We wanted to explore the texture and lighting typical of these films. These two influences have created our visual universe, and I think that these references breed nostalgia, which adds to the melancholy permeating the film.

This balance between different styles is largely built in editing. Your editor was filmmaker Stéphane Lafleur, who is rightly known for works where laughter never strays far from melancholy. Did his creative sensibilities help you in finding the right tone?

I love Stéphane's cinematic universe, where dry humor rubs shoulders with melancholy. We both play in the same areas and that's why I wanted to work with him. The film was edited as it was written, in a very natural way. At no time did our ways of conceiving the tone of the film diverge. He understood the project from the very moment he read it. Editing began before the film was finished, so Stéphane's invaluable feedback was coming in as the shoot progressed. Two weeks after wrapping the film, we already had a first assembly.

In recent years, genre cinema in Quebec has freed itself from the margins, and it's now reaching an ever-growing audience. Viewers are now fond of original, hybrid proposals, ideas that go off the beaten track. How do you envision this film's release? When making your film, do you think about audience reception?

Is *Humanist Vampire...* more of a theatre film or a festival film? I don't know. My ambition is for it to be screened at international festivals; to connect with people from all over the world; to travel, while also connecting with the Quebecois. I hope to give to viewers a work that I would enjoy discovering myself. I'm convinced that the film has the potential to reach both the youth and the cinephiles, but only time will tell!





Director's note

Humanist Vampire Seeking Consenting Suicidal Person was born out of the need to tame my own anxieties about death. Coupled with my ambition to make a vampire movie for several years, the idea of addressing this universally terrifying theme through the vampire figure quickly took hold. As creatures who are doomed to kill to survive, vampires carry death within them. But what happens if they start thinking too much about the value of the lives they take compared to their own? It is by asking this ethical, philosophical and potentially tragicomic question that the character of Sasha, a young humanist vampire ready to let herself die to spare others, was born. Death is also anchored in the character of Paul, a teenager with chronic depressive behaviors who does not find his place in a world he can't decipher and that is hostile to him. The inner dramas of Sasha and Paul are certainly tragic, but I wanted light and hope to emerge from their encounter. So if the first part of the story addresses their relationship to death, the film is also an ode to life in which a roster of characters, each more colourful than the last, create a whirlwind of adventures for them.

When I begin my creative process, I always give myself the freedom to instinctively draw on several cinematographic genres that live in me or inspire me. I like to have fun with the various codes and languages, I use them as valuable narrative tools to thwart expectations—mine and that of the viewers. This approach also allows me to shape my own universe, which I want to be bold and bountiful, and avoid it getting confined to a single category. Created in this desire for freedom of form and creation, the universe of *Humanist Vampire Seeking Consenting Suicidal Person* navigates between genre film, coming-of-age story and dark comedy.

I also approached the directing of this film in a spirit of artistic continuity, as I sought to create an intoxicating cinematic experience that's always centered around the characters. My visual universe is lush, textured, precise, and my staging and blocking are intimate. The atmosphere is sulphurous, the frame stays poised and the camerawork shows an economy of movements. That way, momentum most often comes from my protagonists. My intention is that the form be put at their service, that it accompany them, sometimes as a way to exacerbate their feeling of suffocation and their disconnect with the world around them, sometimes to offer viewers a window into their past. It's also in this character-focused mindset that I sprinkled my film with small moments of magic which allowed for a private access into their interiority. Both at the writing and mise-en-scène stages, I paid as much attention to the silences filled with unspoken things, as to moments of tension, colourful dialogues and dynamic sequences where the twists and turns happen. The amalgamation of all these elements was essential to give my film its DNA.



Ariane Louis-Seize's bio



Ariane Louis-Seize is a Montreal-based filmmaker. She made her directorial debut with her short film *WILD SKIN*, a fantasy drama that travelled in more than fifty festivals across the world and won several awards and nominations, including Best Fiction Short Film at the Québec Cinéma Gala and Canadian Screen Awards. She then shot *LES PETITES VAGUES*, which was selected at the Berlinale and as part of TIFF's Canada Top Ten. In 2018, Ariane writes and directs *THE DEPTHS*, followed by *COMME UNE COMÈTE* in 2019. Both got a world premiere at TIFF and a Quebec premiere at Festival du Nouveau Cinéma. With *COMME UNE COMÈTE*, Ariane won a dozen awards around the world, in addition to being nominated again for the Iris for Best Fiction Short Film at the Québec Cinéma Gala. *HUMANIST VAMPIRE SEEKING CONSENTING SUICIDAL PERSON* is her first feature film. Theatre release for this dark humour vampire dramedy is scheduled for fall 2023.

Filmography

- 2022** Rencontres nocturnes silencieuses | 4 minutes
- 2020** Comme une comète | 23 minutes
- 2019** Les profondeurs | 21 minutes
- 2019** Rituels | 7 minutes
- 2018** Les petites vagues | 12 minutes
- 2016** La peau sauvage | 19 minutes
- 2016** D'encre et de sang | 1h22 minutes
- 2013** À l'horizon | 16 minutes

Christine Doyon's bio (cowriter)



A writer and a designer, Christine has been writing for film, TV and digital media since 2013. She notably wrote the web series *MICHAËLLE EN SACRAMENT* and *GERMAIN S'ÉTEINT* seasons 1 and 2, and the short film *CHALOUPE*, which earned her her first international writing awards (Best Series and Best Texts at the *Marseille Webfest*, *Melbourn Webfest* and *Buenos Aires Series*) as well as her first nominations for the Gémeaux and the Jutra Awards. In 2020, she cowrote her first feature film, *HUMANIST VAMPIRE SEEKING CONSENTING SUICIDAL PERSON* which won the Best Pitch Grant awarded by Netflix as part of the *Pitch: FNC First Works*. Programmer at the St-Séverin Film Festival from 2017 to 2020, she is currently developing her first TV series at Urbania. Christine also acts as a screenwriting consultant, a project analyst and a trainer at L'inis in various screenwriting programs.



Cast info

With	SARA MONTPETIT FÉLIX-ANTOINE BÉNARD STEVE LAPLANTE SOPHIE CADIEUX NOÉMIE O'FARRELL MARIE BRASSARD MADELEINE PÉLOQUIN MARC BEAUPRÉ PATRICK HIVON MICHELINE BERNARD ARIANE CASTELLANOS
A film by	ARIANE LOUIS-SEIZE
Written by	ARIANE LOUIS-SEIZE CHRISTINE DOYON
Producers	JEANNE-MARIE POULAIN LINE SANDER EGEDE
Associate producers	IRÈNE BESSONE ANAËLLE BEGLET
Director of Photography	SHAWN PAVLIN
Artistic Director	LUDOVIC DUFRESNE
Editing	STÉPHANE LAFLEUR
Sound	THIERRY BOURGAULT D'AMICO
Sound Design	MARIE-PIERRE GRENIER SIMON GERVAIS
Mixing	LUC BOUDRIAS
Music	PIERRE-PHILIPPE CÔTÉ

Technical info

Original Title	VAMPIRE HUMANISTE CHERCHE SUICIDAIRE CONSENTANT
International Title	HUMANIST VAMPIRE SEEKING CONSENTING SUICIDAL PERSON
Shooting Format	4K
Screening Copy	DCP (colour)
Sound	5.1
Length	92 minutes
Original Version	French
Subtitles	English
Aspect Ratio	2.39 / Scope
Production Country	Canada
Year	2023

Produced with the financial support of

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