



BORDERLINES FILM FESTIVAL

PROXIMA (12A)

Director: Alice Winocour

Starring: Eva Green, Zélie Boulant, Matt Dillon

France/Germany, 2019, 1 hour 47 minutes SUBTITLES

The director, Alice Winocour, born in 1976 in Paris, has written and directed for the cinema since studying screenwriting at Le Femis and making her own short films. She co-wrote *Mustang*, a film we screened at Borderlines in 2015, wrote and directed *Augustine* (2012), and *Disorder* (2015, with Mattias Schoenaerts), and *Proxima* is her third feature film as writer/director.

Winocour said she had wanted to make a film about a mother and daughter for a long time and then the idea to set it in the context of a woman working in the man's world of space exploration clicked for her. She was fascinated by space when she was a child, and then she started to research for the film, meet astronauts, see the process they went through to train and the extraordinary efforts made to leave the earth and she realized they spent most of their lives preparing to leave and not always leaving. She realized that none of this intense and difficult preparation appeared in the famous Hollywood space films, and she wanted to show it.

As her idea progressed, she realized that the figure of the astronaut served as the perfect metaphor for the intimate and complicated relationship between a mother and a daughter. And this would be heightened to extremes in a situation where the woman astronaut is preparing to leave her eight-year-old daughter for a whole year.

"I thought it would designate this idea of separation because astronauts have to separate from Mother Earth," explains Winocour. "There are lots of little separations before the big separation. It's like the stages of a rocket leaving the atmosphere. You have to get rid of different stages of the rocket for lift-off." Also, what's very important is that separation is necessary for growth, for independence – separation can be liberating and joyful too and as well as painful. The film explores the mother's struggle to cope with the rigorous and exhausting training, the sexism at work and the notion of leaving her daughter behind, as well as her own ambition and need to succeed in her chosen career.

The sound design of *Proxima*, by legendary Japanese composer Ryuichi Sakamoto (*Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence*, *The Last Emperor*) is crucial to grounding the film in the mother and daughter's relationship and in the Earth that she is leaving behind. "The music you associate with space is opera, like *2001: A Space Odyssey*," explains Winocour, "but that sound was too big for the movie, especially as this isn't a space movie, but a dream of a space movie.....I think Sakamoto could connect with that idea of leaving Earth. He had been sick and almost died a few years ago so I think he could connect to this idea of leaving."

Preview courtesy of Picturehouse Entertainment

Notes compiled by Jane Jackson