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# MAGNETIC BEATS

A FILM BY  
VINCENT MAËL CARDONA

# SCREENINGS

ARCADES 2 (MARKET)

**WED 7, 04:30 PM**

OLYMPIA 4 (MARKET)

**FRI 9, 02:15 PM**

**THEATRE CROISSETTE**

(WORLD PREMIERE)

**FRI 9, 06:15 PM**

CINEMA STUDIO 13 (OFFICIAL)

**SAT 10, 03:00 PM**

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# MAGNETIC BEATS

A FILM BY  
VINCENT MAËL CARDONA

WITH  
THIMOTÉE ROBERT MARIE COLOMB  
JOSEPH OLIVENNES

Length: 98 min

**INTERNATIONAL SALES**  
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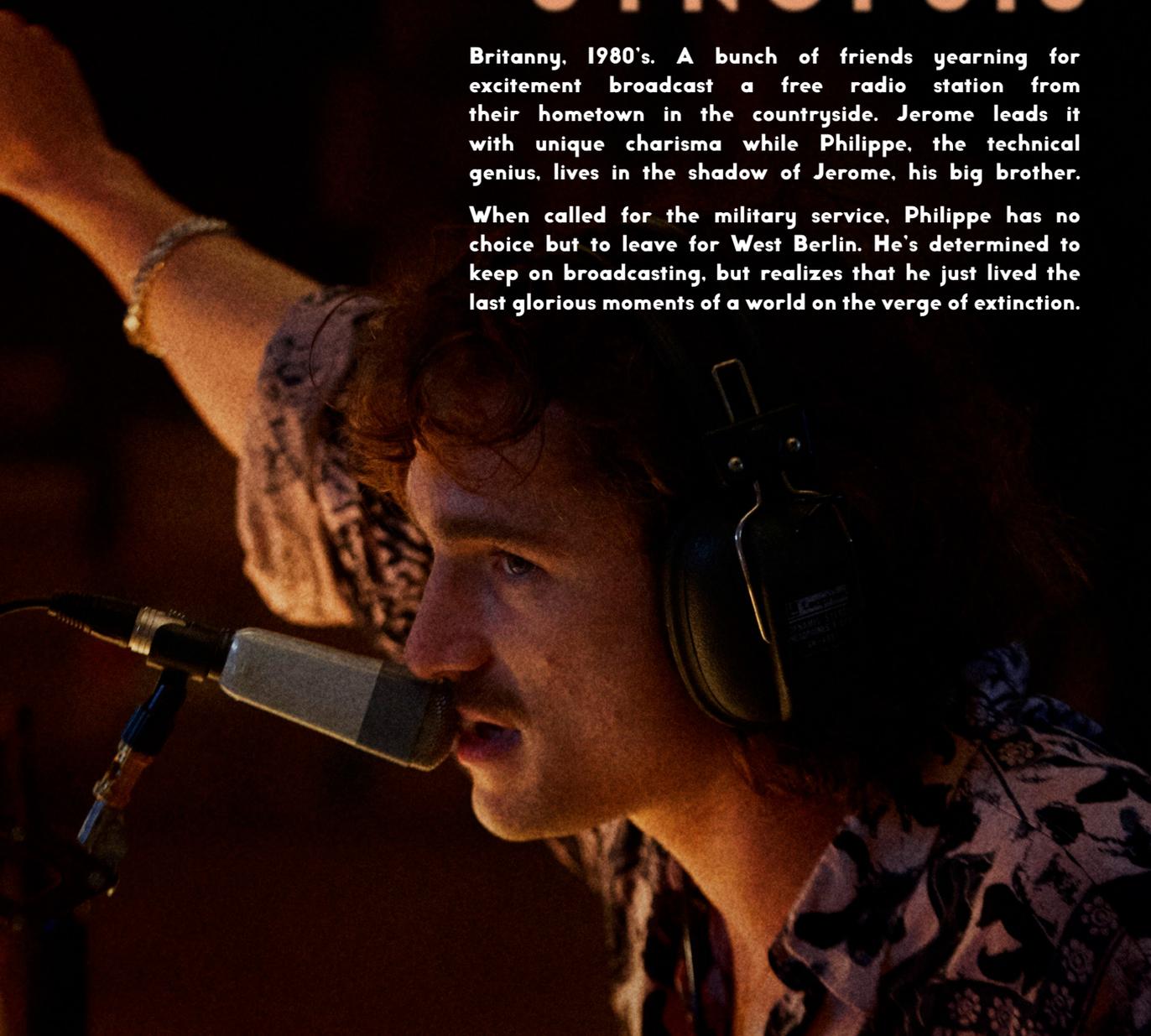
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# SYNOPSIS

Britanny, 1980's. A bunch of friends yearning for excitement broadcast a free radio station from their hometown in the countryside. Jerome leads it with unique charisma while Philippe, the technical genius, lives in the shadow of Jerome, his big brother.

When called for the military service, Philippe has no choice but to leave for West Berlin. He's determined to keep on broadcasting, but realizes that he just lived the last glorious moments of a world on the verge of extinction.



# INTERVIEW WITH VINCENT MAËL CARDONA

## **Where does Magnetic Beats come from?**

From a desire for collective writing. First of all, bringing together screenwriters of my generation whom I admire. They are all born at the beginning of the 1980s: Romain Compingt, Chloé Larouchi, Maël Le Garrec, Catherine Paillé and Rose Philippon. And also a desire to measure how much the digital revolution has transformed the world we were born into, into a kind of dream, a separate world. A way of thinking about how much we ourselves, all of us, have been transformed by the course of things

**Magnetic Beats mixes the election of Mitterrand with rock, new wave and pirate radio. For you, rock and the left come to power, is it the same energy, that of 1981?**

Something very strange happened between 1978 and 1983. There was a real explosion of artistic expressions, particularly musical expressions. In Rennes, Lyon, Montpellier, Bordeaux and also Paris of course, rock groups, fanzines, and radio stations appeared everywhere. A whole youth that no longer recognizes itself in the promises of 1968, seizes the punk wave to express its disenchantment and, paradoxically, its desire to party. And after 1983 it is finished. Most of these groups disappeared and those who remained were absorbed by the music industry. Like the free radio DJs that demand the freedom to broadcast at the top of their voices and as soon as they get it, they disappear and get swallowed up by the commercial stations. It is true that one cannot help but see an echo with the arrival of the left in power in 1981 and the turning point in 1983. But it is as if music was ahead of politics. As if it had understood that what was at stake was the passage from one world to another, and that in this other world to come, the notion of the future was nothing to worry about: it was here and now that counted. This «no future» sensibility appears to me today as a kind of prophetic vision.

**The film presents the contrast between the energy of the rock that embodies the present, the youth, and the patina of the settings, especially the house where the two brothers and their father live, which represents the past, the frozen side of the province at the time.**

The film takes place where seemingly «nothing happens». This is the meaning of the imaginary province depicted in the film: The province not as a physically located territory, but as a mental one. It gives this feeling of being far from everything. This setting in the film is the timeless province of yesterday and today, the one of bistros, of puddles, of small secondary roads. It also exists in relation to a fantasized center, the Berlin of that time, the center of all possibilities, where the crazy energy of that time converged. This tension

between the center where «things happen» and the periphery where «nothing happens» is very precious because it refers to the great disease of our time: the feeling of never being quite in the right place. Art, especially music, bypasses this distance: One is far away and in the heart. And the greater the distance, the greater the intensity. Like my characters, I come from a small town where music and film have always been my way to feel connected to the world, but I can only imagine what it must have been like in a village in the early 1980s, to get your hands on a Joy Division bootleg, to be there in your room overlooking the fields in the silence of the night, listening to a concert given at the Factory a few weeks earlier.

**Magnetic Beats also has a love triangle, the fact that the two boys are brothers makes it more intense. There are several dimensions here: biblical, Freudian, as if the Greek tragedy were nestled in a remote province of France.**

That's it. This type of contrast seems to me to be very fertile in cinema, it allows a rather powerful deployment of the imagination. This dimension is present from the start in the reaction of the cursed brother who shouts the Old Testament. He refers to the sons of Noah and their conflict with their father. I wanted to bring these two levels together: An archetypal mythological scheme, and a banal house with three men. From the first shots of this house, the tragedy is clear. There is this corridor, the two holes that are the brothers' rooms, and the father who always appears in the corridor, this straight line that seems to go into a wall. It is a mythological scheme but also a very prosaic story, very common and widely lived, which reflects our lives in their most ordinary way.

**The world changes all the time, but are biblical patterns like invariants that repeat themselves in every era?**

Of course. All stories can be reduced to a few very simple patterns that can be found everywhere. We interpret and retell them. The first stories are only the transcriptions of those shared by word of mouth. If in this film these patterns are particularly legible, it is

because Philippe tells us how he got the wrong story. He lived his story with his brother from the angle of this love triangle and unfortunately only too late realized that he had made a mistake, it was the story of the prodigal son. It was a question of managing to live, of accepting to live, which neither of them could do: for his brother, it's because he wanted it too much; for him, it's because he didn't want it enough.

**The other triangle is the one formed by the father and his two sons, Jérôme the elder and Philippe the younger, who are themselves different, among other things, in their relationship to music. Did you want to show three types of masculinity?**

Yes, they are three men of three eras. The good son, the bad son and the patriarch. As in Luke's story, the bad son is also the favorite. But what is important here is their relationship to the end of the ancient world. Jerome, the elder, is still attached to the world of yesterday, to its promises, and he will leave with it. Philippe, the younger, is already on the side of the modern young people. As in Pialat's 1978 film Graduate First, a pure source of information about this transitional period, we can clearly distinguish between young people still trapped in the imaginary world of the 1970s and others who are already ready for what comes next - that is, the 1980s and a form of nihilism.

**The character of Marianne is very moving. We don't know her past, but we can guess a little since she has a young daughter.**

She comes from elsewhere, from the big city, but above all from the world of adults into which she plunged at a very early age and from which she brought back a child, leaving her own adolescence behind. In the France of the time and its gender assignments, this says a lot about her strength of character and her independence. For Philippe, she is instantly everything that calls him to extricate himself from his hole, from his mutism, from the shadow of his older brother. But it is with Jérôme that Marianne finds the carefree spirit that she had to put away too soon. Between the one who doesn't want to grow up and the one who can't, Marianne's two hearts beat alternately between them two.

**Jérôme seems to be an eternal teenager, even though he is no longer of that age, while Philippe leaves to do his military service in Germany: an initiatory stage that really is part of a vanished world! Did you want to show the service as a hindrance but also as a liberation for Philippe, an opening to the world?**

Clearly the military service in France, as a great rite of passage gathering all the little guys from all the French provinces, is a central motif of the world before. Like the other motifs, it is treated from the angle of fantasy: One enters as a boy, one leaves as a man. Except that the great lesson for Philippe is not military but existential. In losing his brother, he discovers solitude and that is what will make him «a man», like the others.

**There is an important and masterful scene where Philippe creates a real sound performance on the army radio station to indirectly profess his love to Marianne.**

Magnetic Beats is a film about speaking out, that of Philippe, a shy and mute boy. With his sound creation, he is halfway through this journey towards speech. First, he tried to send a tape in response to Marianne but he didn't manage to record himself, and at the end of the film, finally, he takes the microphone, and with it, the reins of his existence. In this scene, he is in the middle of the crossing, he has no choice, he must speak but he is still unable to do so. How do you show someone inventing a language on screen? That was the whole point of this scene. Through technology, through machines, Philippe will imagine a way of saying that which for him is unspeakable.

## **How did you imagine and make this sequence?**

This is one of the moments in the film where the sound preceded the image. Normally the sound editor and the mixer arrive on a film only after the shooting. In this case, Pierre Bariaud and Samuel Aïchoun were the first on board. We set up a real radio station of that time in the production office basement and got familiar with the machines. Everything Philippe was going to do had to be realistic, without tricks or cheating. We tested the infinite loops, the cassette scratches, the cup on the turntable, the pendulum inspired by Steve Reich... Once we had finalized the performance, we had Timothée Robart rehearse it in the basement for most of the summer. Then I cut the sequence during shooting from the pre-existing soundtrack.

## **This sequence sums up what rock is for millions of teenagers: a way to express what words can't or don't dare to say.**

The punk epiphany is marked by DIY, «do it yourself». What punk says, in essence, is that you don't have to learn music to rock. You just go out there, grab some guitars, yell what you have to say and make music right there and then. This is more or less what Philippe does with his radio performance: An instinctive, wild relation to electrified sounds. Punk has been summed up a bit pejoratively as «no future». But «no future» is powerful, it's the whole history of nihilism, and today it resonates strongly. No future in 2021 is the youth mobilizing for the preservation of our species! This is what I meant by the «prophetic vision» of the 1978-1983 moment. The «no future» of that time contained the seeds of today's.



**Jérôme dies young. Here again, the tragic destiny of an anonymous man joins myths like Achilles, James Dean or Joy Division's Ian Curtis**

In fact, the film evokes the figure of Ian Curtis with the crepuscular, sepulchral music played at the beginning by Jérôme and his pirate radio band. Jérôme's death (Spoiler) is symbolized at the end by a bouquet at the side of the road. This bouquet is at the same time our own lives, the ordinary tragedy, the little crosses on the side of country roads. But it is also a kind of monument - perhaps the monument of a world that has passed away. There is a great proximity between the rage to live and the incapacity to live.

**With its theme of provincial boredom, Magnetic Beats evokes songs such as *We've Got to Get Out of This Place* by the Animals, *Born to Run* by Bruce Springsteen, or novels such as *The Last Picture Show* by Larry McMurtry, which was adapted for the cinema by Peter Bogdanovich, or *Their Children After Them* by Nicolas Mathieu.**

1980 for me it is a youth which arrives on the job market at the same time as the mass unemployment. It is a major phenomenon that will irrigate a whole range of artistic production and that refers more generally than provincial boredom to existential doubt: What am I going to do with my life? And in the end: Is there anything left to do? The present time is only an intensification of what was played out in the period 78-83: mass unemployment has become the norm, the liberal parenthesis has never closed and ecological concerns have only intensified. Perhaps the specificity of Magnetic Beats is its symbolic dimension. As if this global disenchantment was played out on an individual scale; provincial in the sense that the center has disappeared forever. The idea is not to celebrate the world of before

as a lost paradise but to hear how, at the moment of toppling over, the old world was able to tell us that we should expect nothing from it, nor from what was being prepared. That another world used to be, was and will be. This is what I hear in the soundtrack of the time and that I wanted to restore in the film. It's whether in the way they spoke or the music that this generation produced - Camera Silens, Joy Division, Marquis de Sade, Die Krups or D.A.F. - it's always for me the same spirit of the time, the same contradiction between a form of nostalgia, of anguish linked to the future and an intact rage to live in the present. To me this contradiction says a lot about our current situation. of nostalgia, of anguish linked to the future and an intact rage to live in the present. This contradiction speaks to me a lot about our current situation.

**Timothée Robart plays the shy and introverted Philippe excellently. You saw him in *Burning Ghost* by Stéphane Batut?**

Yes. At the beginning, he is not an actor but a boom operator and Stéphane had the intuition to give him his first role. These were already two very strong indications. But the difficulty for the character of Philippe was to find a young actor capable of being both reserved, in the background, and immediately magnetic. He had to be able to disappear in the eyes of the group and make us want to watch him. Timothée has that magic.

**Marie Colomb is magnificent. We saw her in the mini-series *Laetitia* but we hardly recognize her in *Magnetic Beats*, as if several years had passed between the two shootings.**

When I met Marie it was as if she came with the whole history of cinema. She was both the bus shelter girl and the great classical actress. And then she has an instinct for acting, a mixture of great fragility and crazy bravery. And speaking of Laetitia, I learned afterwards that Timothée was a boom operator on the set. Already a story of sound!

### **How did you find Joseph Olivennes, who plays Jérôme with a lot of charisma?**

Thanks to Pierre-François Créancier, the casting director, I met Joseph at the time of casting tests around hosting a radio show. Joseph's show was simply fascinating. He was constantly inventive, provocative and intelligent, and above all, he quoted groups of the time and precise titles, rare and extremely relevant to the character of Jérôme. Through these musical choices, it was obvious that Joseph had understood everything about Jérôme, and by extension, the film.

### **The father is played by Philippe Frécon, an actor not very well known in the cinema, also very good.**

Philippe is a member of Joël Pommerat's group. I discovered him at the theater in *The Reunification of the Two Koreas*. Alongside the young actors who were just starting out, I wanted more experienced actors who had come from the theater and had experience of working on the stage. Many scenes were only sketched in the script, I knew we would have to find them on the set. Philippe, like Saadia Bentaieb who plays the bar owner, or Maxence Tual and Fabrice Adde who are part of the group of friends, were all very comfortable with this way of doing things.

### **Antoine Pelletier plays Philippe's classy Berlin friend with a lot of ease.**

The musicality of the speech of the time was for me a capital thing and there is something extraordinary with Antoine, which is that he speaks naturally with this phrasing of the 80s. He was like a tuning fork, whenever we had a doubt, we came back to him. Beyond this charming particularity, I especially had the feeling of discovering a young actor of a particularly rare intelligence and appetite for acting.

### **The image has a grain of the period. How did you work with your director of photography, Brice Pancot?**

Our collaboration with Brice goes back to the time of la Fémis and if Magnetic Beats is my first experience of feature film, it is not the case for him. We were able to talk about this project at a very early stage and we patiently built our cinematographic device. We wanted the film in its form to evoke the silver world without abstracting itself from its current production context. Of course, we asked ourselves the question of using physical film, but it seemed more appropriate to opt for a digital camera body with vintage anamorphic lenses. The idea was to look at the analog world from today's point of view, to consider it as forever unattainable, but to make a digital image that testifies to our fascination and our attachment to the images of this bygone world. This is done through the format, the optical and chromatic aberrations, but above all through the work on the light, the sets and the costumes around the notion of fantasized memories. All of us in the technical team were born in the early 1980's, so our intimate and real relationship with that time is precisely that of a fantasized memory, a childhood experience reconstructed afterwards. In my eyes this was not a problem, on the contrary, it is this sensitivity of an era lived without having lived it completely that I tried to restore. A world as close as it is foreign.

**Magnetic Beats is rock, punk and post-punk to the end since it is dedicated to Philippe Pascal and Gilles Bertin, two deceased musicians.**

Gilles Bertin was the founder and singer of the Bordeaux group Caméra Silens, founded in the early 1980s and whose activity was abruptly interrupted with the robbery of the Brinks depot and the passage into hiding of Gilles who was involved in the case. He reappeared 30 years later in 2016 to, as he said himself, «stop lying». I had contacted him to discuss the film and ask him to be in it because Camera Silens represented for me the sound of the time around which Magnetic Beats revolves: The raw, frank, and visceral cry of a provincial youth who had somehow seen everything. Unfortunately, Gilles died two weeks after the beginning of shooting. The same goes for Philippe Pascal, who died a few weeks before. Philippe was the singer of Marquis de Sade, a band from Rennes. He was a mythical figure in the French rock scene, especially for a young Breton like me. He was a character with an unforgettable charisma, an Egon Schiele-like beauty, an immense artist. Philippe Pascal and Gilles Bertin embody better than anyone else this strange time when in every region of France rock bands of an exceptional dimension appeared with no other career plan than to perform around their home. They burned down like a straw fire but the light they generated can still enlighten us.

# BIOGRAPHY OF VINCENT MAËL CARDONA



Vincent Maël Cardona was born in Brittany in 1980.  
He entered the directing department of the Fémis and won the 2nd prize  
of Cinéfondation with *Coucou-les-Nuages*, his graduation film.  
*Magnetic Beats* is his first feature

**2021 *Magnetic Beats*** (feature film)

**2010 *Coucou-les-Nuages*** (short)

# CAST

Philippe  
Marianne  
Jérôme

Francis  
Nathalie  
Kader  
Jean-Jacques

Patricia  
Le père  
Edouard

Annie  
Dany  
Yvette

Sergeant CSO  
The cleaning lady  
Rita

Thimotée ROBERT  
Marie COLOMB  
Joseph OLIVENNES

Fabrice ADDE  
Louise ANSELME  
Younès BOUCIF  
Maxence TUAL

Judith ZINS  
Philippe FRÉCON  
Antoine PELLETIER  
Saadia BENTAÏEB

Brian POWELL  
Valia BOULAY  
Benjamin GEORJON  
Mathilde BISSON

Olga CRÉANCIER-WERCKMEISTER

# CREW

**Director**

**Vincent Maël CARDONA**

**Script**

**Vincent Maël CARDONA, Chloë LAROUCHI**

**Maël LE GARREC, Rose PHILIPPON**

**Catherine PAILLÉ, Romain COMPINGT**

**Dialogue adaptation**

**Romain COMPINGT**

**Image**

**Brice PANCOT**

**Sound**

**Mathieu DESCAMPS, Pierre BARIAUD**

**Samuel AÏCHOUN**

**Set design**

**Marion BURGER**

**Editing**

**Flora VOLPELIÈRE**

**Music**

**David SZTANKE**

**Production**

**EASY TIGER**

Marc-Benoît CRÉANCIER

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Toufik AYADI et Christophe BARRAL

**ELEMAG PICTURES**

Tanja GEORGIEVA-WALDHAEUR

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Jan KRUEGER

**FRANCE 2 CINÉMA**

**International Sales**

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**Domestic release**

**PANAME DISTRIBUTION**



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