



Flight Movie presents

# THE WOMEN OF MOUNT ARARAT

a feature-length documentary directed by Erwann Briand



Duration : 85' – With : Zylan, Sorxwin, Elif, Hevidar, Ciçek, Sewra

SELECTED BY THE ACID - 59<sup>ème</sup> Festival de Cannes

**Screening during the Cannes film festival - friday 19 may 2006**

**11h00 at Studio 13 – 20h00 at Arcades**

The director and the producers will introduce and present the film



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## SYNOPSIS

In Kurdistan, as in the majority of battle zones, which have been ongoing for many years, women are making their presence increasingly felt. It is almost as if, in order to stop the murderous madness of man, they must today be in the front line, transforming themselves into human bombs or soldiers.

In 1996, the women joining up with the PKK guerrillas decide to form their own army, completely independent of the men's army.

"The Women of Mount Ararat" retraces the life of a women's "manga", a base unit of the guerrilla army, made up of six women soldiers.

Constantly on the move, with no particular aim other than climbing the next mountain, they are on the lookout for the invisible enemy. Amidst military manoeuvres and everyday tasks, the intimate moments of these women's lives are gradually revealed alongside their individual destinies. Here, where life is a question of survival, their human qualities transcend those of the soldier's, liberating them from their state of male oppression in their society.

## SHOOTING DIARY

by Erwann BRIAND

Irak. Summer 2003.

Nobody, except our driver, knows where we are heading to. After 800 kms of desert and crossing illegally the Kurdish frontline, we reach our destination, a mountain range at the border of Irak, Iran and Turkey. This is a strategic point controlled by the Kurdish rebels of the PKK. Among them are 3000 women. They have founded their own army and live separated from the men.

We are the first Western crew to have filmed their lives.

In these war zones, which last several decades, women are more and more present. As a way to stop the madness of men, they step into the light, and transform themselves into human bombs or soldiers, very often in territories where their basic rights are ignored.

Strangely enough, very few people speak about these women. It is true that the image of martyr women wrapped in burkas or torn apart by the deaths of their kids is more convenient to us than those of women giving death.

When you start talking about Kurds, you quickly realise that you are alone. This is the case when you mention Turkey's Kurds, as their war has been completely silenced by the media.

When there is a conflict, the bulk of images we see are those, mute, from CNN or other live news feeds. As if a man behind a camera should not take an engagement or have a position. As if the fact to film horrors was enough to redeem ourselves, as if this was an engagement. As if we were too scared to get caught in a propaganda machinery.

What's the point of filming tanks, despaired faces, cities in ruins if you don't know what's inside the heart of men and women ready to defend their ideals? What's the point of filming this if you do not share their lot for the time of a report, if you do not get engaged yourself?

I have decided to give these women a voice by seeking the humanity behind their kakis and kalashnikovs. I have filmed in emergency and depth, by living among those who are fighting..

## THE DIRECTOR : ERWANN BRIAND

Erwann Briand was born in France in 1971. Having travelled to Eastern Europe on several occasions, he then went to live in Poland where he studied at the Lodz School of Cinema (PWSFTviT) specializing in Film Directing. Via his encounters with such film directors as Wojciech Has and Krzysztof Kieslowski, he discovers an approach which is very close to his own sensitivity. Upon his return to France in 1996, he works in film directing and script writing.

### *Filmography*

2004 - Les femmes du mont Ararat

2000 - Des Polaks en Pologne

1996 - Aniela

1994 - Les bergers des Tatras

1992 - Le prêtre

## CASTING : 3 WOMEN AT WAR

« The women of Mount Ararat » are personified in this movie by three fighters : Zylan, Sorxwin and Elif. This army of women gathers several generations who share different experiences in a unique fight to defend ideas, to defend their gender and obtain equality. Women's participation in a war wears down gender barriers as much as it underlines them. These women fight for peace and an ideal of living that combines emancipation and autonomy. They took the arms to gain their peace.

These women have a contemporary resonance. They are making History. Who are they ?

**Zylan**, 20 years old, is from Germany. Her war name comes from a woman who blew her explosive belt among Turkish soldiers. Zylan is a strange fanatic, naive, a young girl who is not already a woman, who spends her spare time writing poetry, whose favourite words are « happiness » and « love ». She is the only one in this group not to have blood on her hands. This is probably why her own words ring true, despite the weapon she carries permanently.

**Sorxwin**, 23 years old, is from Belfort in France. She dropped from school at 16 and landed in the guerilla right during a fratricidal fight with Irak's Kurds. Her story is one of an immigrant's daughter living in the French suburbs, who one day vanished. She is still marked by France, her school comrades, her teachers, but also by war, by the men she killed and by the shrapnel marks she bears on her skin.

**Elif**, 36 years old, is the eldest. She spent 10 years in a Turkish jail. She joined the guerilla aged 14, and she is a living memory for these women who rarely live after 30, as most of them have been killed in the 90s. Elif heads the squad. Always serious, always listening, she is a mother whose sole children are these women soldiers. She is a woman who has only known weapons. But she is, paradoxically, the most womanly of all of them.

## FESTIVALS

### 2006

Festival de Cannes 2006 – Selected by the ACID  
MoMA, Documentary Fortnight Expanded  
New-York (USA)

3<sup>rd</sup> Kurdish Film Festival - Franckfurt (Germany)

### 2005

HOTDOCS - Toronto (Canada)

Internationale competition

Cinéma du Réel - Paris (France)

Mention of the Jury of Library Award

Golden Apricot - Erevan (Armenia)

Internationale competition

Cracow Film Festival (version 52') (Poland)

Leipzig Film Festival (Germany)

Rencontres Internationales du Documentaire  
Montréal (Canada)

Festival international du Film d'Environnement  
Paris (France) - Internationale competition

Escales Documentaires - La Rochelle (France)  
Opening Film

Tempo Documentary Festival - Stockholm  
(Sweden)

Bergen International Film Festival - Bergen  
(Norway)

Exile Film Festival - Gothenbourg (Sweden)

Human Rights International Film Festival  
(Argentina) - Special Mention of the Jury

Festival de Cine Independiente - Barcelone  
(Spain)

### 2004

IDFA - Amsterdam (Pays-bas)

Nominee for the First Appearance Award

## DETAILED CREDIT

Direction Erwann Briand

Image Jacques Mora

Sound Erwann Briand

Editing Guillaume Germaine

Sound Editing Francis Wargnier

Mixing Daniel Sobrino

Music Ramponneau Paradise

Dialogue's languages turque, kurde, sorani,  
français, anglais

Comment's language no commentaries

Formats et versions disponibles

VERSION 85'

Digital Beta PAL format 16/9

V.O. french subtitles

V.O. english subtitles

V.O. spanish subtitles

VERSION 52'

Digital Beta PAL format 16/9

V.O. french subtitles

V.O. english subtitles

Executive Production Flight Movie

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## THE PRODUCTION

Flight Movie is a documentary film production company founded in 2000 by Etienne Chambolle and Christophe Folcher. Via the diversity of the films it offers, the aim of the company is to bring to its audience an enlightened outlook on society.

Flight Movie has made the commitment to support its writers and directors throughout the production of their work, giving particular priority to documentary films which they consider to have a unique approach and sensitivity, whether it be for cinema or television.

- **Image et Science : Emergences** directed by Jean-Pierre Mirouze. 52' coproduit avec France 5 et le CNRS - 2006

- **Titans et Mosquée** directed by Christophe FOLCHER- written by Denise Bregand 47' - 2006 - with ACG et CNRS Images

- **Les Femmes du Mont Ararat** directed by Erwann Briand - 85' - 2004  
IDFA – Amsterdam - nommé pour le prix First Appearance - 2004  
Cinéma du Réel 2005 – mention du Jury du prix des bibliothèques  
HotDocs 2005 – Toronto - En compétition  
Festival International de Cracovie, Leipzig, Bergen, Erevan...

- **Enfance à vendre** directed by Clara Ott - 52' - with France 5 - 2004  
Festival International du Film des Droits de l'Homme – Paris – Prix du meilleur film pour les droits de l'enfant

- **Orphelin d'aventure** directed by Christophe Folcher - 52 - coproduced with ACG - 2004  
2<sup>nd</sup> Prix du Jury au festival documentaire d'Ambigat 2005

- **Image et Science : Mutations et Métamorphoses** directed by Jean- Pierre Mirouze - Serie of 5x26' - coproduced with France 5 and CNRS - 2004

- **Cinéastes à tout prix** directed by Frédéric Sojcher - coproduced with Saga Films, the RTBF and Ciné Cinémas - 2004.  
Sélection Officielle hors compétition - Festival de Cannes 2004

- **Image et Science 2003** directed by Jean-Pierre Mirouze - Série de 5x26' - coproduced with France 5 and CNRS. 2003.  
Grand Prix du film médical des Entretiens de Bichat - 2004.

- **Nous les Apprentis** directed by Cyril Mennegun, coproduced with France 5 - 2003

- **India Song** directed by Stefano Barberi, coproduit avec KTO - 2003

- **Quel Travail** directed by Cyril Mennegun - 52' - coproduced with France 5 et Images Plus - 2002

- **Les Ballons pirates de Rio** directed by Etienne Chambolle - 52' - coproduced with France 5 and ACG - distribution Télé Images International - 2002  
Prix du public et Prix du meilleur 1<sup>er</sup> film – Festival International du Film de Vol Libre - St-Hilaire – 2002  
Prix du public – Festival Imagin'Air – Payerne (Suisse) – 2004

- **Brigitte Fontaine : Kékés at work** directed by Thomas Brésard - 52' - coproduced with Artefilm - 2001

- **Krik! Krak! Carnaval** directed by Natacha Sautereau - 52' - coproduced with ACG - 2002

- **Café Française** directed by Christophe Folcher - 52' - coproduced with Artefilm - 2000  
Sélectionné au Festival Entrevue – Belfort - 2001

## **DETAILED FILM INFO**

To better understand the geopolitical situation in Kurdistan, please visit the following website (french and english) :

### ***LE MONDE DIPLOMATIQUE***

<http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/dossiers/kurdes/>

### ***LE SITE DE L'UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL (QUÉBEC)***

[http://www.tfq.ulaval.ca/AXL/asie/turquie\\_3kurdes.htm](http://www.tfq.ulaval.ca/AXL/asie/turquie_3kurdes.htm)

### ***DIPLOWEB***

<http://www.diploweb.com/forum/dorinkurdes.htm>

### ***RFI***

[http://www.rfi.fr/actufr/articles/070/article\\_39041.asp](http://www.rfi.fr/actufr/articles/070/article_39041.asp)

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