

LOLA – LOLA VERS LA MER

Original version: French/ English subtitles



Director: *Laurent Micheli*

Release date (Québec): *September 11, 2020*

Genre: *Drama*

Countries of origin: *Belgium, France,*

Length: *90 minutes*

CLASSIFICATION VIEWS

Lola vers la mer



Motifs de classement

Ce drame en provenance de la Belgique montre le cheminement d'une personne transgenre en attente de son opération pour changer de sexe. Suivant la forme du *road movie*, l'intrigue dévoile le parcours émouvant d'une jeune femme vers l'acceptation de ses proches. Les dialogues évoquent une enfance et une adolescence difficiles; il est notamment brièvement question d'automutilation. Quelques retours en arrière illustrent sur un ton mélodramatique des moments marquants d'intimidation. Le traitement de ces sujets fait preuve d'une grande réserve. Il permet d'apporter un éclairage à la fois vibrant et pédagogique sur les problèmes rencontrés par les personnes appelées à vivre un changement de sexe.

Date de classement : 30 juillet 2020

For 16 years of age and older

SYNOPSIS

Rejected by her father, 18-year-old Lola is forced to live in a youth shelter. Lola is a trans girl and her father does not accept it. Her mother silently supports her, promising to help her pay for her surgery. But after her mother's death, Lola is forced to spend a few days with her father to go and spread her mom's ashes in the sea as she wanted. Their journey highlights the conflicts between the teen and her father, the wounds caused by exclusion, the lack of paternal affection and the slow evolution towards acceptance.

FILM REVIEWS

Combining a gritty realism with a **delicate coming-of-age story**, filmmaker Laurent Micheli's sophomore feature—boasting a pitch-perfect soundtrack featuring Boy George, 4 Non Blondes, and Anohni—is a **deeply moving portrait** of two people who must find common ground in order to live with each other authentically.

<https://www.frameline.org/festival-archive/festival2021/film-guide/lola>

Lola and her father travel to the coast to scatter the ashes of Lola's mother. But Lola used to be Lionel, and her father has not accepted that she's no longer a boy. **Tender road**

movie by Laurent Micheli (*Even Lovers Get the Blues*) about discovering **what lies behind appearances**.

<https://moviesthatmatter.nl/en/film/lola-vers-la-mer/>

One of the film's strengths lies in the way it shows **Lola's interrogations**, her anger and her wild energy, of course, but also the **wounds of the father**, as he is faced with the failure of his family life and with his inability to be a good dad. This **tension**, brimming in **scenes of confrontation** that are naturally encouraged by confinement in the car, at the hotel, at the childhood home, adds depth and nuance to the singular journey of the young woman, all the while situating her in **the universal conflict that is the difficult relationship with one's father**.

<https://cineuropa.org/en/newsdetail/376845/>

DETAILS

LANGUAGE

The film is based on the conflict between Lola and her father. These characters can't talk to each other without using insulting each other in a vulgar language... They call each other asshole, fucking jerk, shit, loser, dickhead... Their exchanges are brutal and angry, punctuated by slang and familiar phrases such as

Are you shitting me? / *Tu te fous de ma gueule?*... Your f...ing face/...you're in deep shit...get the f...k off me...You're nuts / *tu es taré*... You're f...ing crazy / *tu es malade*...Shut the f..k up / *Ferme ta gueule*... stop busting my balls. / *Tu arrêtes de me faire chier*...you're an asshole / *Quel con*...in your shitty life, in your shitty house / *dans ta vie de merde, dans ton pavillon de merde*, etc.

Besides the characters verbal confrontation, the dialogues mention the hormonal treatment that Lola must get as well as plastic reconstructive and esthetic surgery (PRES).

Transphobic prejudices are expressed by a pharmacist who claims not to sell such hormones and by Lola's father who is appalled that "his son" is changing his body in this way. The Belgian police mock Lola for her trans identity: "what the hell is this mess," they ask.

Philippe, Lola's father, accurately describes the distress he and his wife experienced during the hell their son put them through hysterical fits, skin mutilation [he scratched his skin, cut his arm with a pair of scissors...], running away from home, wearing girl's clothes [The father talks about transvestite]. That's just his point of view.

He doesn't understand Lola's orientation: are you lesbian, homosexual, straight?

Lola, too, paints her father as a hyper violent man, a disgraceful father who was ashamed of her. She pays tribute to her mother, Catherine, who understood everything. In her

moments of revolt against her father, Lola expresses her feeling in a language devoid of familiarity.

Apart from French, some characters speak Flemish.

VIOLENCE

Like their aggressive verbal exchanges, Lola and Philippe, her father, tend to push each other around. At the beginning of the film, when Lola, having been deprived of her mother's funeral by her father, enters her parents' house, Philippe asks her to "get out" and pushes her out.

Lola breaks into the family home to steal the urn filled with her mother's ashes and then smashes the window of her parents' hardware store.

When Philippe comes to take back the urn containing the ashes of Catherine, his wife and Lola's mother, he threatens to attack Lola: "act of deliberate assault" Antoine says. Antoine oversees the youth hostel and threatens to report it to the police.

Philippe tries to get Lola to leave his car, which he hits with anger. Not having been able to get rid of Lola, Philippe drives at full speed, making Lola and the urn in the back of his car "bounce" to the point of risking a serious accident.

On this stormy night, she throws a bucket full of red paint at Philippe's car, which startles him.

Lola punches her father in the face: a quick gesture, we don't see the fist landing on Philippe's nose at all. NON-GRAPHIC violence

Philippe slaps Lola's cheek: here again, the scene is very brief with no visible physical effects (redness, marks...).

These gestures of violence are not gratuitous: they result from the tension between father and teenager.

Lola remembers when she was a little boy in the house by the sea with her cousins. At the beginning we see him running: he is a small blond boy who seems to be watching who follows him. Other children chase him and beat him. Another non-graphic scene where we guess the beatings more than we see them.

Blood in the form of red flower petals comes out of the little boy's mouth, then some blood. The children (his cousins) do not help him at all. Later, Lola sees herself as the little boy curled up in the bathroom of the house. He has a red mark on the corner of his mouth, a mark that he had been assaulted.

Philippe's car is on fire, the result of a failure in the electrical circuit as suggested in an earlier scene.

The police arrive to investigate. The officers grab Lola, but her father defends her. They show verbal abuse towards Lola's trans identity which does not match her ID card.

NUDITY

To be examined by the doctor, Lola takes off her top. All we see is her shoulders and neck. No sexual overtone.

She takes a shower and once again we see her naked upper back.

Non-sexual nudity with no close-ups.

SEXUAL ACTIVITY

During one of their many arguments, Lola enters a cabaret, a kind of local night club, where a young woman is very briefly doing the pole dance.

The atmosphere of the place feels unhealthy, and Lola is "hit upon" by a man who wants to buy her a drink with implied sexual intentions.

Lola has a tender friendship with Samir whom she embraces.

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT/MESSAGES

By opposing father and daughter in a conflicting duo, the director explains the points of view of each of the characters.

On the one hand, a stubborn father who refuses to recognize the identity of his teenager.

On the other hand, a teenager who knows what she wants and will go through with it no matter what.

The school kids will learn in small steps the obstacles Lola has to overcome: hormone treatment, plastic reconstructive esthetic surgery, the choice of toilets, the suffering Lionel/Lola goes through to affirm her desire to be a girl.

The father represents a selfish generation. When he tells the bar owner, a kind of good fairy, how Lionel made them suffer with his hysterical attacks, his self-mutilations, his runaways, his girl's clothing, etc., he thinks only of himself.

She reminds him: "You know, I don't think there's a single child who would go through all that just to piss off his parents."

You have to learn how to balance things out.

Philip makes a point that may speak to young teens. He tells Lola to wait until later for the surgery because when you're a teenager you tend to feel bad about your body.

One of the powerful messages of the film is found in the letter that Lola wrote to her mother:

"When you look at the sky, you can only see stars. But you can also see magical shapes: centaurs, eagles, dragons, unicorns. Today, I know that there are other things that are hidden behind appearances."

Not only that we should not rely on appearances but go beyond to better understand the beings around us.

Cigarettes: Lola smokes a cigarette at the window of the hotel run by a lady who also smokes a cigarette and offers it to Philippe.

FILM PHOTOS

Lola is a determined 18-year-old teenager with a sturdy character



Lola enjoys a relaxing moment listening to the songs her mother loved





Samir is Lola's confidant at the youth home where Lola is forced to live after her father kicked her out of the house

Lola and her father Philippe are in conflict. Philippe continues to call his child Lionel because he doesn't accept Lola's choice.



Lola is desperate for her father's acceptance and affection

