Music Box Films presents **S I B Y L** Dir. JUSTINE TRIET

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PRESS NOTES

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<u>SYNOPSIS</u>

Sibyl, a jaded psychotherapist, returns to her first passion: writing. But her newest patient Margot, a troubled up-and-coming actress, proves to be a source of inspiration that is far too tempting. Fascinated almost to the point of obsession, Sibyl becomes more and more involved in Margot's tumultuous life, reviving volatile memories that bring her face to face with her past.

INTERVIEW WITH JUSTINE TRIET

Like AGE OF PANIC and IN BED WITH VICTORIA, SIBYL is the portrait of a woman struggling to balance her professional and personal life, grappling with her emotions and anxieties. Are your films always a form of veiled self-portraiture?

I take inspiration from certain things happening within my inner circle, from research, from films, and no

doubt a little bit from myself, but honestly, I'm not Sibyl. My cowriter Arthur Harari and I really had fun going deep into fiction, deliberately damaging our characters. I get the impression that in the end, they no longer resemble me at all.

Woody Allen's film ANOTHER WOMAN haunted me from the moment I started writing. Oddly I don't love that film, but its main narrative fascinates me: a woman seeking calm and inspiration is confronted with another woman, who plunges her into a dizzying abyss that makes her life break apart. That film was my initial reference.

Did you do any research on psychoanalysis?

No. I did meet a number of shrinks and asked them if they'd ever had an unsettling experience with a patient. One of them confessed that she'd gone through her father's grave illness at the same time as one of her patients was going through it. Her own father died sooner than the patient's did, and she had to end the analysis because she felt extremely brutalized by the patient. That nourished the script, as did the television series IN TREATMENT.

The film explores a number of motifs: motherhood, filiation, creativity, couples, passionate love, the mid-life crisis, duality, how neuroses are passed down... What is the dominant, central theme?

It's how we handle the question of our origins. How we find ways to forget them, and how they suddenly reappear. It's a film about identity, roots. Where do I come from, who am I, what have I done, can I reinvent myself? Sibyl is haunted by the origins of her child, her book, and Margot. It was important to me that Margot come from a modest background. She hates her origins and is fighting against them. She appears out of nowhere with a dilemma that sends Sibyl careening into her own past. In a certain sense, she is Sibyl in a reverse mirror. Sibyl is also attempting to work against her origins - her mother, alcohol - as she builds her life. Writing is her way of escaping them as she reinvents herself. As she begins writing again after meeting Margot, Sibyl opens a Pandora's box that leads her into both fictional folly and a vertiginous identity crisis.

This leads us to the question of immorality. Sibyl transgresses the code of ethics when she records her patient for use in her future book. The film also features a filmmaker who models her actors like clay. Does the creative act always require some form of vampirism or predation?

To an extent, yes. But beyond that, in the film, everyone is manipulating everyone. In Sibyl's case, her need to write prompts her to break all the rules. She leaves reality and enters fiction in order to experience certain things. At the same time, it's playful. Creation is like a game with no rules. Of course Sibyl goes too far, because her life had gotten bland. She gets carried away. The writing and the book turn her into a locomotive that runs off the rails no sooner than it starts chugging. She feeds not only on Margot but on everything and everyone around her... including herself!

The film within the film reflects the game you refer to, playfully combining comedy and cruelty.

By this point in the film we need that blend, because this is when things really start going off the rails. When Sibyl goes to the island, she's entering a world of fantasy, no longer entirely real or normal. It's far away, it's beautiful, it's fake. The shoot was perfect for that. I needed it to bring the comedy and the insanity, two elements that shouldn't necessarily mix.

Sandra Hüller really helped me combine those elements. She achieves a perfect blend of comedy and drama as she embodies her explosive character, turning her pain into a nutty energy. We don't know whether to laugh or to suffer right along with her.

At one point on the shoot, Margot says the movie business is crazy and she's afraid she'll lose her mind. Do you sometimes worry about that yourself?

The movie business is a microcosmic society where life speeds up and intensifies. Everything takes on

monumental proportions. The tiniest problem becomes a tragedy. The hierarchy is brutal and completely grotesque. It's a ridiculous, comical milieu, but when you're living in it, experiences are heightened. I enjoyed making fun of it, and it served the story. It almost begs to be satirized. Altman's THE PLAYER was a reference in that regard. Even in a serious film, like Minnelli's TWO WEEKS IN ANOTHER TOWN, everything that has to do with the film biz has a comical, satirical side.

There's a duality between Sibyl and Margot, Sibyl and her sister, Gabriel and the little girl born of his love with Sibyl... Can you talk about this motif, that runs through so many films?

There is also a duality between Sibyl and Mika, Gabriel and Igor... Between Sibyl and Margot, it's more of a reverse mirror. Sibyl kept her child; Margot wants to abort. As for Mika, she wanted a child, like Sibyl, but didn't have one and is mourning that. I tried to multiply the duality motif, as though Sibyl were penetrating all the film's characters. Towards the end Margot escapes that and we realize she may be less fragile than Sibyl. The stronger one may not be who we think. Margot has blossomed and matured. She's no longer a victim and seems happy and proud at having inspired Sibyl.

In terms of mirror images, the presence of the children is striking. What role do they play in the story?

The children are very important, but they are sort of hidden characters in the film. The child in psychanalysis, Daniel, is a strange presence, not necessary to the story, but always there when Sibyl remembers her past love. Daniel is like a ghost of the child she made with Gabriel. In the beginning, when Daniel and Sibyl are playing Monopoly, he tells her "you're going to lose." This is a foreshadowing of what is to come. When I wrote the script, I was told there were too many characters, that I wasn't making a series, that Daniel wasn't necessary. I felt, on the contrary, that he reflected a key element of the main story. To me, he is covertly

a very important character. As for Sibyl's daughters, initially they're in the background, but gradually Selma comes into focus and we understand that she is the secret core of Sibyl's life.

She inherits it all, without knowing it. She is both a trace and a prolongation. The film needed to end on her. She speaks her own mind and truly sees her mother for the first time, hence beginning to exist just when Sibyl has decided to pretend her life is fiction and that the people around her are characters. The child unknowingly comes along and contradicts her mother.

After a very urban first part (as in your first two films), SIBYL heads for the light and the wide open spaces of Stromboli. Why this place, so loaded with symbolism and cinema?

The island's history has been transformed by cinema. Shooting there was somewhat of a mystical experience, and beyond the reference, the volcano evokes all the emotional and sexual metaphors. Though SIBYL is in no way a rereading of Rossellini's legendary film, we had fun filming a German director imagining herself shooting a love story on Stromboli. The idea was to use the location to make the film erupt. It was the first time I'd ever shot in a natural landscape and I loved it! (I have one thing in common with Sibyl, I spend more time in fiction than in reality, and filming elements like the sea, the wind and the sun was a new challenge.) Stromboli provides such a contrast to the Parisian apartments that it seems almost unreal. Sibyl calls her sister from the island and tells her she feels she's no longer in any reality, which is ironic, because this is where she is the most proactive, where she really dives into life.

The film is bursting with characters, stories inside stories... How do you kick off such complexity? Did you and Arthur Harari set challenges for yourselves when writing the script? Or were you seeking to expand upon the vein of VICTORIA? VICTORIA was fairly complex in terms of interconnecting stories, but it was quite down-to-earth, whereas here there's a more cerebral dimension: we're in Sibyl's head.

Challenges have nothing to do with it. We explore a lead, and for this film, that immediately implied complexity and overlap, because there are multiple levels of reality: the present, Margot's story, Sibyl's past, the writing of the novel. It was complicated to organize because I don't do much theorizing. I need a

kind of chaotic accumulation that I then make sense of, taking things out, clarifying. That continued in the editing, where we had to once again ask questions, break it all down and reorganize it. At that point, the editor Laurent Senechal and I had to decide how all these elements might add up to a particular tone: straight-up comedy, drama, or a mix. I realized that we shouldn't systematically aim for comic efficiency, that it wouldn't work with this film. It's a drama, or maybe a dramedy. A film like James L. Brooks' TERMS OF ENDEARMENT is a great example of that. Genre goes out the window, it's a hybrid.

How did you approach the love scenes, which are relatively explicit?

It was new for me and I tried to film them like action scenes. I asked myself, should I approach it with a fear of lowering the camera, or should I see it as a mechanical thing? We directed these scenes with mechanical precision, especially since Virginie had no desire to improvise. She asked me to tell her exactly what I wanted her to do. It was pretty comical. I spoke to them as if teaching them to ride a bike or rebuild an engine. It was concrete.

This is your second film with Virginie Efira. VICTORIA was a career milestone for her, and it seems like you two are starting to form a cinematic bond.

With this film, I felt I was discovering new faces of Virginie. She understands everything I'm looking for, we worked quickly. The ice was broken, I could ask her anything and she trusted me. She abandoned herself completely. And she doesn't limit herself to the primary logic of the script. She's prepared to explore all facets of her character down to the illogical contradictions. I took an almost physical pleasure in filming her, molding her like clay. I wanted to rough her up, but in a good way: see her cry, fall apart, stumble and get up.

Did you choose Adele Exarchopoulos based on her work in BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOR?

Not at all! Though I loved her in that film, I wasn't thinking of her when I wrote the script, I had an older actress in mind. She came to the project later on. She auditioned and was amazing. Adele has an incredible power, a rare grace. You look at her. The role is tricky because it could be played just technically (fall apart, cry, panic, etc.). But Adele never relies on technique, she actually puts herself in the emotional state the scene requires, and that's how she becomes the character.

Did you get the idea to cast Sandra Hüller after seeing TONI ERDMANN?

Of course! But I actually met her 10 years ago at a festival, and she really struck me before I'd even seen her work. She has a rare intelligence, and she's also a theater actress in Germany. To say she works a lot is an understatement! You feel she can do absolutely anything, and every time it's incredibly fleshed out and original. She brings a lot of burlesque, but always mixed with seriousness. She really impresses me.

The ending is beautiful, highly ambiguous and very open, at once happy and unhappy... As Sibyl gazes at her daughter, we think of Truffaut's words in another context, "Looking at you brings both joy and pain." Joy at seeing her daughter, pain because she is reminded of Gabriel.

Yes, that's right. The end of the film is impure. We can read in liberation or appeasement, but the wound has not healed. Sibyl doesn't show her daughter her tears, and we feel the child is a bit lost, wondering not only where she comes from but also who her mother really is. We don't know who she is either. Her life is brimming with lies. But they are not malevolent, they are arrangements with reality, loving lies. To keep love in her life, she lies.

JUSTINE TRIET, DIRECTOR

Justine Triet is a graduate of the Ecole Nationale Superieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Her first films question the place of the individual within the group. SUR PLACE (2007) was shot during the student demonstrations and SOLFÉRINO (2008) during the presidential elections. In 2009, she directed DES OMBRES DANS LA MAISON in a township of Sao Paulo. Her first fiction short, VILAINE FILLE, MAUVAIS GARÇON (TWO SHIPS), won a number of prizes at French and international festivals (European Film Award, Berlinale 2012; Grand Prix, Angers First Look; Grand Prix, Belfort; preselection for best short, 2013 Césars). Her debut feature LA BATAILLE DE SOLFÉRINO (AGE OF PANIC) was selected for ACID in Cannes 2013 and nominated for a 2014 César in the Best First Film category. VICTORIA, her second feature, opened the Critics' Week in Cannes in 2016. Starring Virginie Efira, the film was nominated for five Césars, including Best Film and Best Actress.

JUSTINE TRIET FILMOGRAPHY

2019 SIBYL

2016 IN BED WITH VICTORIA (VICTORIA)
2013 AGE OF PANIC (LA BATAILLE DE SOLFÉRINO)
2011 TWO SHIPS (VILAINE FILLE, MAUVAIS GARCON) (medium-length film)
2010 DES OMBRES DANS LA MAISON (documentary)
2009 SOLFÉRINO (documentary)
2007 SUR PLACE (short film)

VIRGINIE EFIRA

2019 **SIBYL** by Justine Triet, **POLICE** by Anne Fontaine, **KEEP GOING (CONTINUER)** by Joachim Lafosse, **BENEDETTA** by Paul Verhoeven

2018 AN IMPOSSIBLE LOVE (UN AMOUR IMPOSSIBLE) by Catherine Corsini, SINK OR SWIM (LE GRAND BAIN) by Gilles Lellouche

2017 NOT ON MY WATCH (PRIS DE COURT) by Emmanuelle Cuau

2016 ET TA SŒUR by Marion Vernoux, IN BED WITH VICTORIA (VICTORIA) by Justine Triet, UP FOR LOVE (UN HOMME À LA HAUTEUR) by Laurent Tirard, ELLE by Paul Verhoeven

2015 CAPRICE by Emmanuel Mouret, THE SENSE OF WONDER (LE GOUT DES MERVEILLES) by Eric Besnard, UNE FAMILLE A LOUER by Jean-Pierre Améris

2013 DEAD MAN TALKING by Patrick Ridremont, IT BOY (20 ANS D'ÉCART) by David Moreau, LES INVINCIBLES by Frederic Berthe, COOKIE by Lea Fazer, TURNING TIDE (EN SOLITAIRE) by Christophe Offenstein

2011 SECOND CHANCE (LA CHANCE DE MA VIE) by Nicolas Cuche, MY WORST NIGHTMARE (MON PIRE CAUCHEMAR) by Anne Fontaine

2010 KILL ME PLEASE by Olias Barco, THE PERFECT DATE (L'AMOUR C'EST MIEUX À DEUX) by Dominique Farrugia & Arnaud Lemort, THE WHISTLER (LE SIFFLEUR) by Philippe Lefebvre

ADELE EXARCHOPOULOS

2019 **SIBYL** by Justine Triet, **THE WHITE CROW** by Ralph Fiennes 2018 **REVENIR** by Jessica Palud

2017 THE FAITHFUL (LE FIDÈLE) by Michael R. Roskam

2016 ORPHAN (ORPHELINE) by Arnaud des Pallières, THE LAST FACE by Sean Penn, DOWN BY LOVE (ÉPERDUMENT) by Pierre Godeau

2015 THE ANARCHISTS (LES ANARCHISTES) by Élie Wajeman

2014 INSECURE (QUI VIVE) by Marianne Tardieu, THREE DAYS by Mikhail Kosyrev-Neterov

2013 I USED TO BE DARKER by Matthew Porterfield, BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOR (LA VIE D'ADÈLE - CHAPITRE 1 & 2) by Abdellatif Kechiche

2012 PIECES OF ME (DES MORCEAUX DE MOI) by Nolwenn Lemesle

2011 GINO STORY (CHEZ GINO) by Samuel Benchetrit, CARRÉ BLANC by Jean- Baptiste Leonetti

2010 TURK'S HEAD (TETE DE TURC) by Pascal Elbe

2009 THE ROUND UP (LA RAFLE) by Rose Bosch

2008 TROUBLE AT TIMPETILL (LES ENFANTS DE TIMPLEBACH) by Nicolas Bary

2007 **BOXES** by Jane Birkin

GASPARD ULLIEL

2019 SIBYL by Justine Triet

2017 ONE NATION, ONE KING (UN PEUPLE ET SON ROI) by Pierre Schoeller, 9 FINGERS (9 DOIGTS) by F.J Ossang, TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD (LES CONFINS DU MONDE) by Guillaume Nicloux, EVA by Benoît Jacquot

2016 IT'S ONLY THE END OF THE WORLD (JUSTE LA FIN DU MONDE) by Xavier Dolan, THE DANCER (LA DANSEUSE) by Stéphanie Di Giusto

2014 SAINT LAURENT by Bertrand Bonello

2012 A GREEK TYPE OF PROBLEM (TU HONORERAS TA MÈRE ET TA MÈRE) by Brigitte Rouan 2011 THE ART OF LOVE (L'ART D'AIMER) by Emmanuel Mouret

2010 THE PRINCESS OF MONTPENSIER (LA PRINCESSE DE MONTPENSIER) by Bertrand Tavernier 2009 INSIDE RING (LE PREMIER CERCLE) by Laurent Tuel, A HEAVENLY VINTAGE (VINTNERS'S LUCK) by Niki Caro, ULTIMATUM by Alain Tasma

2008 THE SEA WALL (BARRAGE CONTRE LE PACIFIQUE) by Rithy Panh, THE THIRD PART OF THE WORLD (LA TROSIEME PARTIE DU MONDE) by Éric Forestier

2007 HANNIBAL RISING by Peter Webber, JACQUOU LE CROQUANT by Laurent Boutonnat 2006 PARIS, I LOVE YOU ("Le Marais") (PARIS JE T'AIME) by Gus Van Sant

2005 NINA'S HOUSE (LA MAISON DE NINA) by Richard Dembo

2004 THE LAST DAY (LE DERNIER JOUR) by Rodolphe Marconi, A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT (UN LONG DIMANCHE DE FIANÇAILLES) by Jean-Pierre Jeunet, STRAYED (LES ÉGARÉS) by André Techiné 2002 SUMMER THINGS (EMBRASSEZ QUI VOUS VOUDREZ) by Michel Blanc 2001 L'OISEAU RARE by Didier Albert

<u>SANDRA HÜLLER</u>

2019 SIBYL by Justine Triet
2018 IN THE AISLES (IN DEN GANGEN) by Thomas Stuber
2017 FACK JU GOHTE 3 by Bora Dagtekin
2016 TONI ERDMANN by Maren Ade
2014 AMOUR FOU by Jessica Hausner, LOSE MYSELF (VERGISS MEIN ICH) by Jan Schomburg
2013 FINSTERWORLD by Frauke Finsterwalder
2011 ABOVE US ONLY SKY (UBER UNS DAS ALL) by Jan Schomburg
2010 BROWNIAN MOVEMENT by Nanouk Leopold
2009 HENRI IV by Jo Baier
2008 ANONYMA (EINE FRAU IN BERLIN) by Max Färberböck
2007 MADONNEN by Maria Speth

2006 **REQUIEM** by Hans-Christian Schmid

LAURE CALAMY

2019 SIBYL by Justine Triet, SEULES LES BÊTES by Dominik Moll, LOULOUTE by Hubert Viel, QUEENS OF THE FIELD (LES FOOTEUSES) by Mohamed Hamidi, LE DINDON by Jalil Lespert

2018 CLAIRE DARLING (LA DERNIÈRE FOLIE DE CLAIRE CARLING) by Julie Bertuccelli, LADY J (MADEMOISELLE DE JONCQUIÈRES) by Emmanuel Mouret, OUR STRUGGLES (NOS BATAILLES) by Guillaume Senez, ROULEZ JEUNESSE by Julien Guetta, TEMPS DE CHIEN ! by Edouard Deluc 2017 AVA by Lea Mysius, KISS ME! (EMBRASSE MOI) by Ocean and Cyprien Vial, I GOT LIFE! (POUR

LE RÉCONFORT) by Vincent Macaigne

2016 AURORE by Blandine Lenoir, HAPPINESS ACADEMY (BONHEUR ACADÉMIE) by Alain Della Negra and Kaori Kinoshita, CLITOPRAXIS by Emmanuel Laborie, ELEMENTARY (PRIMAIRE) by Helène Angel, STAYING VERTICAL (RESTER VERTICAL) by Alain Guiraudie, IN BED WITH VICTORIA (VICTORIA) by Justine Triet

2015 THIS SUMMER FEELING (CE SENTIMENT DE L'ÉTÉ) by Mikhaël Hers, IN HARMONY (EN ÉQUILIBRE) by Denis Dercourt, LES COWBOYS by Thomas Bidegain, ALL ABOUT THEM (À TROIS ON Y VA) by Jérôme Bonnell

2014 FIDELIO, ALICE'S JOURNEY (FIDELIO, L'ODYSSÉE D'ALICE) by Lucie Borleteau, FRENCH WOMEN (SOUS LES JUPES DES FILLES) by Audrey Dana, WEEK-ENDS by Anne Villacèque, ZOUZOU by Blandine Lenoir

2013 **BICYCLING WITH MOLIERE** by Philippe Le Guay, **9 MONTH STRETCH (9 MOIS FERME)** by Albert Dupontel

2012 A PERFECT PLAN (UN PLAN PARFAIT) by Pascal Chaumeil, FAMILY MATTERS (LA FLEUR DE L'AGE) by Nick Quinn, WHAT WE'LL LEAVE BEHIND (CE QU'IL RESTERA DE NOUS) by Vincent Macaigne, A WORLD WITHOUT WOMEN (UN MONDE SANS FEMMES) by Guillaume Brac 2009 PARK BENCHES (BANCS PUBLICS (VERSAILLES RIVE DROITE)) by Bruno Podalydes

TV SHOW

2015 - 2019 CALL MY AGENT

NIELS SCHNEIDER

2019 SIBYL by Justine Triet, REVENIR by Jessica Palud, SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL (SYMPATHIE POUR LE DIABLE) by Guillaume de Fontenay, CURIOSA by Lou Jeunet

2018 AN IMPOSSIBLE LOVE (UNE AMOUR IMPOSSIBLE) by Catherine Corsini, THE BLACK BOOK (LE CAHIER NOIR) by Valeria Sarmiento, ONE NATION, ONE KING (UN PEUPLE ET SON ROI) by Pierre Schoeller

2017 DALIDA by Lisa Azuelos

2016 POLINA (POLINA, DANSER SA VIE) by Valérie Müller & Angelin Preljocaj, SLEEPING BEAUTY (BELLE DORMANT) by Adolfo Arrietta, DARK DIAMOND (DIAMANT NOIR) by Arthur Harari, KOKORO (LE COEUR RÉGULIER) by Vanja d'Alcantara

2014 **GEMMA BOVERY** by Anne Fontaine

2013 YOU AND THE NIGHT (LES AMANTS D'APRÈS MINUIT) by Yann Gonzalez

2011 ATOMIC AGE (L'AGE ATOMIQUE) by Helena Klotz

2010 HEARTBEATS (LES AMOURS IMAGINAIRES) by Xavier Dolan

2009 I KILLED MY MOTHER (J'AI TUÉ MA MÈRE) by Xavier Dolan

PAUL HAMY

2019 SIBYL by Justine Triet, JESSICA FOREVER by Caroline Poggi and Jonathan Vinel, FURIE by Olivier Abbou, TERRITORY OF LOVE (L'AUTRE CONTINENT) by Romain Cogitore
2017 BACK TO BURGUNDY (CE QUI NOUS LIE) by Cédric Klapisch
2017 9 FINGERS (9 DOIGTS) by F-G. Ossang, OCCIDENTAL by Neĭl Beloufa, STALIN'S COUCH (LE DIVAN DE STALINE) by Fanny Ardant, THE ORNITHOLOGIST (O ORNITOLOGO) by João Pedro Rodrigues, SEX DOLL by Sylvie Verheyde
2016 PARISIENNE (PEUR DE RIEN) by Danielle Arbid, DESPITE THE NIGHT (MALGRÉ LA NUIT) by Philippe Grandrieux
2015 FRENCH BLOOD (UN FRANÇAIS) by Diastème, MARYLAND by Alice Winocour
2013 ON MY WAY (ELLE S'EN VA) by Emmanuelle Bercot, SUZANNE by Katell Quillévéré

CAST

Viginie Efira...Sibyl Adèle Exarchopoulos...Margot Gaspard Ulliel...Igor Sandra Hüller...Mika Laure Calamy...Edith Niels Schneider...Gabriel Paul Hamy...Etienne Arthur Harari...Dr. Katz

CREW

Directed by...Justine Triet Written by...Justine Triet, Arthur Harari Director of Photography...Simon Beaufils Sound...Julien Sicart Actor Direction Collaborator...Cynthia Arra Production Designer...Toma Baqueni Costume Designer...Virginie Montel Editor...Laurent Senechal Sound Editor...Ingrid Simon Sound Mixing...Simon Apostolou Director of Production...Nicolas Leclere Direction of Post-production...Juliette Mallon Produced by...David Thion and Philippe Martin **Produced by...**Les Films Pelleas In coproduction with...France 2 Cinema, Les Films de Pierre, Page 114, Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes Cinema, **Scope Pictures** With the participation of...Le Pacte In association with...mk2 Films With the participation of ... Canal+, Cine+, France Televisions, La Région Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes avec le CNC With the support of ... La Region Ile-de-France en partenariat avec le CNC In association with...Cinemage 13, Cofinova 15, Cineventure 4 Directed with the support of...Tax Shelter du gouvernement Federal Belge via Scope Invest International Sales...mk2 Films French Distribution...Le Pacte

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