

young mothers

A FILM BY
JEAN-PIERRE AND LUC DARDENNE



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
SÉLECTION OFFICIELLE 2025
COMPÉTITION

MUSIC
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FILMS

young mothers



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105 minutes | Drama | Belgium, France | French | 2025

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LOGLINE

A group of young women face the challenges and joys of motherhood while attempting to break free of the past in a delicate and hopeful study of women on the brink of new life from master directors Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne.



SUMMARY

In a shelter in Liège, Belgium, a group of young women face the challenges and exhilaration of motherhood. Looking ahead to an uncertain future, the new mothers aspire to break free of the past and not repeat the cycles of neglect, abuse, and abandonment that have defined their young lives. Jessica grew up in a foster family, and must understand why her biological mother could not keep her. Perla wrestles with the unreliability of her boyfriend, and confronts the possibility that she may need to raise her child alone. Julie has a more stable partner, but cannot imagine parenthood until she overcomes her drug habit once and for all. And Ariane must protect her baby at all costs, with the daunting recognition that her home may not be safe for her daughter. Winner of the Best Screenplay prize at Cannes, the latest film from master directors Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne (*Rosetta*; *Two Days, One Night*), *Young Mothers* is a delicate and hopeful study of women on the brink of new life.



April 5th 2024

With our small video camera we looked for shots in the sets we anticipated. By constructing a long sequence shot in Nathalie's (Ariane's mother) apartment, we once again observed that the sequence shot is our alexandrine, the constraint to find our film, its rhythm.

April 12th 2024

We are in the casting process, looking for the young women who will be Jessica, Perla, Julie, Ariane and Naïma. Among 300 candidates, we selected one hundred and fifty.

July 8th 2024

What separates these young mothers from their own mothers? What separates them in the materiality of the shot? Of the frame? At some point? The whole sequence? In the rhythm of the sequence? What can also link them? To be found in the sets and also, probably, in the variations of the rhythm.

July 23rd 2024

In long dialogue scenes, try long silences. Silences to approach the interior of the characters.

July 28th 2024

We have the intuition that the sequences in the maternal home have to be shot inside the maternal home that inspired us. Let's not go anywhere else or build a set. Shoot in this house and add no other elements of décor and lighting.

—Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne

August 6th 2024

The rehearsals allow us to find shots and above all be surprised by the spontaneity of the acting of the five young women chosen during casting. It's up to us, at the time of filming, to allow this spontaneity to exist. Let's not freeze anything with our indications.

August 17th 2024

How to film Jessica's first meeting with her mother? Both of them together all the time? The two then Jessica by herself, then slight movement towards the mother then again the two?

August 26th 2024

Shooting has begun. To be free and simple. Let the wind through. Easy to say, hard to do. Film the young women in a way that they are people who resist being shot. The babies should also appear as little people, not baby pictures.

October 9th 2024

We have just finished shooting. There was beautiful energy on set. No doubt that the fact that we rehearsed a lot allowed us to film so quickly. Also because we shot without cinema light.

January 8th 2025

We are finishing the editing. We are happy to have made the film the way we did. It seems to us that these five young mothers led us to the most fundamental emotions.

BIOGRAPHY

JEAN-PIERRE AND LUC DARDENNE

Jean-Pierre Dardenne was born in Engis (Belgium) in April 1951 and Luc Dardenne was born in Awirs (Belgium) in March 1954. They have directed many documentaries. In 1975, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne created Dérives, the production company that has produced up to this day over eighty documentaries, of which theirs. In 1994, they created Les Films du Fleuve production company.

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

1987 - Falsch
with Bruno Cremer

1992 - I'm Thinking of You
with Fabienne Babe, Robin Renucci

1996 - The Promise
with Jérémie Renier, Olivier Gourmet,
Assita Ouédraogo

1999 - Rosetta
with Émilie Dequenne, Fabrizio Rongione,
Anne Yernaux, Olivier Gourmet
Cannes Film Festival 1999

2002 - The Son
with Oliver Gourmet, Morgan Marianne,
Isabella Soupart
Best Actor Award to Oliver Gourmet - Cannes Festival 2002

2005 - The Child
with Jérémie Renier, Déborah François,
Jérémie Segard
Palme d'Or - Cannes Film Festival 2005

2008 - Lorna's Silence
with Artta Dobroshi, Jérémie Renier, Fabrizio
Rongion
Best Screenplay Award - Cannes Film Festival 2008
Lux Prize - European Parliament 2008

2011 - The Kid with a Bike
with Cécile de France, Thomas Doret,
Jérémie Renie
Grand Prix - Cannes Film Festival 2011

2014 - Two Days, One Night
with Marion Cotillard, Fabrizio Rongione
European Film Award for Best Actress
to Marion Cotillard 2015
Oscar Nomination Best Actress
to Marion Cotillard 2015

2016 - The Unknown Girl
with Adèle Haenel, Olivier Bonnaud

2019 - Young Ahmed
with Idir Ben Addi, Olivier Bonnaud,
Myriem Akheddiou
Best Directors Award - Cannes Film Festival 2019

2022 - Tori and Lokita
with Pablo Schils, Joely Mbundu, Alban
Ukaj, Tijmen Govaerts
75th Anniversary Prize - Cannes Film Festival 2022

2025 - Young Mothers
Official Competition - Cannes Film Festival 2025





PERLA

Lucie LARUELLE

Born in 2007 in Agaro (Ethiopia).
Has already appeared in several films as extra.
Young Mothers is her first proper role in a film.



JESSICA

Babette VERBEEK

Born in 2006 in Brussels (Belgium).
She has acted in several plays, including at the Théâtre Royal du Parc in Brussels between 2014 and 2016, Festen (2018) directed by Alain Leempoel and Hofstade by Ilyas Mettiouti from 2023 to 2025
Young Mothers is her first experience in film.



ARIANE

Janaina HALLOY FOKAN

Born in 2008 in Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium).
She is a dancer, a singer, and plays the piano.
She started her film career in Inexorable (2020) by Fabrice du Welz, followed by Christmas Carole (2023) by Jeanne Gottesdiener.
She also starred in the Belgian series Attraction by India Siera (2022)



JULIE
Elsa HOUBEN

Born in 2003 in Liège (Belgium).
She has acted in several clips and short films, has worked for television in several TV movies and series, including Clem seasons 9 to 12, OVNI(s), Les Invisibles....

She has starred in several feature films, among others Gaspard at the Wedding by Anthony Cordier, Love at Second Sight by Hugo Gélin, Dark Heart of the Forest by Serge Mirzabekiantz.

NAÏMA
Samia HILMI

Born in 2005 in Brussels (Belgium).
She has been working in theatre since the age of eight, is also a dancer, plays the piano, and the drums.

She is currently working on several theatre projects.
Young Mothers is her first experience in film.



CAST

Jessica	Babette Verbeek
Julie	Elsa Houben
Ariane	Janiana Halloy Fokan
Perla	Lucie Laruelle
Naïma	Samia Hilmi

Dylan	Jef Jacobs
Robin	Gunter Duret

Nathalie Ariane's Mother	Christelle Cornil
Morgane Jessica's Mother	India Hair
Angèle Perla's sister	Joely Mbundu

Isabelle Psychologist	Claire Bodson
Asun Nurse	Eva Zingaro
Yasmine Caseworker	Adrienne D'Anna
Lucie Caseworker	Mathilde Legrand
Silvia Caseworker	Hélène Cattelain
Betty Director	Selma Alaoui

CREW

Screenwriters and directors	Jean-Pierre et Luc Dardenne
First assistant director	Caroline Tambour
Cinematographer	Benoit Dervaux (SBC)
First assistant camera	Amaury Duque
Chief editor	Marie-Hélène Dozo
Sound engineer	Jean-Pierre Duret
Sound Editor	Valène Leroy
Production sound mixer	Thomas Gauder
Production designer	Igor Gabriel
Costume designer	Dorothée Guiraud
Make-up	Natali Tabareau-Vieuille
Gaffer	Tanguy Delhez
Grip	Basile Duquenne
General Manager	Samuel Palm
Color grader	Christophe Bousquet
Foley artist	Éric Grattepain
Production manager	Philippe Toussaint
Production manager and Post-production France	Cédric Ettouati
Set photographer	Christine Plenus
Producers	Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne Delphine Tomson Denis Freyd
Coproducers	Michiel Dhont and Lukas Dhont
Associate producers	Valérie Berlemont Philippe Logie Tanguy Dekeyser

ABOUT MUSIC BOX FILMS

Music Box Films is the prestigious North American distributor of acclaimed international, independent, and documentary feature films. Recent releases include Cannes Directors' Fortnight baseball comedy *Eephus* by Carson Lund; Film Independent's "Someone to Watch Award" winner Sarah Friedland's coming-of-old-age, *Familiar Touch*, starring Kathleen Chalfant; Angus MacLachlan's poignant family portrait, *A Little Prayer*, starring David Strathairn; and Charlie McDowell's *The Summer Book*, starring Glenn Close. Upcoming releases include Charlie Shackleton's Sundance award-winning true-crime autocritique, *Zodiac Killer Project*, and the Dardennes' Belgian Oscar Entry, *Young Mothers*. Music Box Films is independently owned and operated by the Southport Music Box Corporation, which also owns and operates the Music Box Theatre, Chicago's premier venue for independent and foreign films. For more information, visit www.musicboxfilms.com.

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