

**Glass speaks with French actor CAMILLE COTTIN about playing a single-mum in her latest film *Stillwater*, one of her many roles championing the female experience**

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# A WOMAN'S VOICE

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Popping up on the screen via Zoom, Camille Cottin is the epitome of a cool, French woman. Peering through oversized geek-chic glasses, flicking her tumbling perfectly undone hair, while she gets lost in a passionate discourse on the arts, Cottin exudes effortless *je ne sais quoi* that only the French can do.

Currently staying in London while filming *Killing Eve*'s fourth and final season, Cottin is clearly well adjusted to British weather – we may be speaking during the height of summer, yet she is wrapped up in a woolly jumper like a true Brit.

Her affiliation with the UK runs far deeper than playing *Hélène* opposite Jodie Comer's Villanelle in the spy thriller. As a teenager, Cottin grew up in London alongside her stepfather, younger sister and mother, who forever welcomed people in to stay. From an Australian couple, to an "Italian lyrical singer", to a Spanish best friend, and to her mother's Hungarian friend Anika, such an upbringing enormously widened Cottin's outlook on life. This melting pot of culture and revolving friendships within her childhood home mirrors Cottin's latest role as *Virginie* in Tom McCarthy's film *Stillwater*.

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*Serpenti Viper* necklace in 18K white gold, set with full pavé diamonds, *B.zero1 XXth Anniversary* five-band ring in 18K white gold, High Jewellery earrings in platinum with onyx inserts, two marquise diamonds, ten step cut diamonds and pavé-set diamonds, all BULGARI, All clothing DIOR

Single mum Virginie welcomes red-neck Bill Baker, played by Matt Damon, into her Marseille home while he tries to save his daughter Allison – played by Abigail Breslin of *Little Miss Sunshine* fame – from a murder trial. Among its several qualities, Cottin calls *Stillwater* a “tribute to single mothers”, who endlessly give, just as her own mother did: “You can help me and I can help you. Let’s put some life and joy in the house because it’s not fun being the only grown up. I think this is something that I’ve been through and that I deeply could understand in the way it was written.”

Indeed, *Stillwater* is sensitively written, full of surprises and nuance, beautifully portraying the push and pull of life against the backdrop of a gritty port city. Virginie is creative and fluid, with an open mind to match, while Bill, a builder, is the direct opposite, and yet together they make a complementary union.

The pairing of characters reflects a much-needed metaphor for the existing tensions and cultural gaps between American and European

thinking, and one that felt extremely nostalgic for Cottin, “Sharing a home with somebody who is not your culture and being two fishes out of the water ... and [having] a house which is always alive, and being somewhere where energies come and go and experiences are set, it’s something I’m so familiar with.”

Whilst she was fully prepared to be blown away by Matt Damon, she was not expecting to be so impressed by nine-year-old Lilou Siauvaud, who plays her daughter, Maya, in the film. “She was amazing and I just really benefited from her ... it’s not only her acting skills, it’s also her personality that I loved. It was a lesson of acting, even more a lesson of listening. The way she listened, the way the things touched her before she gave anything back was very impressive.”

*Stillwater* is clearly a moment in Cottin’s career that has touched her greatly. She describes completing filming “like ending a book that you have loved ... I was deeply moved by the imagination, and how we believed in what we did”.

Believing in her craft is fuel for Cottin and has kept her determinedly on track, “I love what I do. Sometimes you fail but you’re like, ‘Oh, yeah, but I’m still in love’. So you keep going.” Cottin advises up-and-coming actors to “work with the people you like and don’t underestimate what comes to you or what you go and get”. Just like her character Virginie, Cottin feeds off of other people’s passions and ideas: “I think this is an energy that keeps you enthusiastic and curious.”

The past year of lockdowns, she says, has forced us to swallow the idea of “losing your bearings and changing your context”. Suddenly we all have had the collective time to question our purpose and greater good. For Cottin, this meant coming to terms with that fact that we “need to change our way of life regarding ecology, the climate, the production and the economy. The world has never been so united, even though, of course, there are some privileges over this crisis and not everybody has the means to react in the same way. But anyway, I would say that the world is really sharing this moment, no matter where you are.” Cottin hopes that we can use and translate this “feeling of unity” into a way we can “save our planet”, and more imminently, “I’m hoping that the vaccine will help us see the end of the pandemic”.

Ironically, while being trapped at home last year, Cottin’s career continued its upwards trajectory. Fanny Herrero’s French TV series *Call My Agent!* was a lockdown must-watch in which Cottin plays the gutsy talent agent Andréa Martel. Cottin remains nonplussed and



*Serpenti Viper* pendant necklace in 18K white gold, set with pavé diamonds, *Serpenti Viper* two-coil 18K white gold ring, set with pavé diamonds, *Serpenti Viper* two-coil 18K white gold bracelet set with pavé diamonds, all BULGARI, All clothing MICHAEL KORS COLLECTION



*Serpenti Viper* 18K rose gold necklace set with demi-pavé diamonds, *Right hand* – *Serpenti Viper* two-coil ring in 18K white gold, set with full pavé diamonds, *Left hand* – *B.zero1 XXth Anniversary* five-band ring in 18K rose gold, *Divas' Dream* earrings in 18K rose gold set with mother-of-pearl and diamonds, all BULGARI, All clothing DIOR



*Serpenti Viper* 18K rose gold necklace set with demi-pavé diamonds, *B.zero1 Rock* pendant necklace in 18K yellow gold with studs set with pavé diamonds, *Serpenti Viper* 18K rose gold earrings, all BULGARI, Trousers VICTORIA BECKHAM, Top A.W.A.K.E MODE



humble about its triumph, “It’s amusing because the show started some five years ago.” In November, Cottin stars in Ridley Scott’s *House of Gucci* opposite Hollywood A-listers Lady Gaga, Al Pacino, Jared Leto and Adam Driver. Strictly under wraps, all she can share is that “there’s a certain mysticism and distance that I’m really eager to see”. Of course, we are too.

With an acting career that spans two decades, Cottin is ready for Hollywood while quietly but confidently challenging it off screen. Two years ago she set up her own production company, Malmö, with Swedish friend Shirley Kohn, which seeks to support “women talking about their experiences and what they’ve been through, and what it means and what it results in and where it comes from”. When discussing gender equality in the industry, Cottin admits, “Each time you feel like you’re moving forward, there are always people to remind you that what you’re aiming for is not something that people are ready to give up so easily. Nevertheless, I really feel that ... things are being done in a very

concrete way to make things more just”. By way of example, Cottin cites *Killing Eve* with its female writers and directors.

In conversation with Cottin, a pattern begins to emerge – her roles are a dogged attempt to reflect the rage and range of the female voice. Even her viewing habits lean this way, with programmes like *Unorthodox* and *I May Destroy You* on her lockdown watch-list.

Before we lose her to America, what will Cottin hold on to from London? “What I love about London is that it’s very diverse and multicultural.” She also prefers London’s parks to those in Paris, where “they have a very different approach to the gardens. They are decorated, so you have beautiful statues but you’re not allowed to go on the grass. You have some trees, but they are all aligned and you walk on some little stones. It’s not like Holland Park when suddenly the garden becomes almost the forest.” Similarly, Cottin is in many ways a wild talent, acting outside the lines, ready to be unleashed into Hollywood.

*Serpenti Viper* pendant necklace in 18K white gold set with pavé diamonds, *B.zero1* necklace with 18K rose gold chain and with 18K rose gold and white ceramic pendant, *B.zero1 XXth Anniversary* five-band ring in 18K white gold, High Jewellery earrings in platinum with onyx inserts, two marquise diamonds, ten step cut diamonds and pavé-set diamonds, all BULGARI, Dress LONGCHAMP, Shoes NEOUS

*Serpenti* High Jewellery bracelet in 18K rose gold with diamonds, *Divas’ Dream* 18K rose gold necklace set with mother of pearl elements, a round brilliant-cut diamond and pavé diamonds, *B.zero1* 18K rose gold large hoop earrings set with black ceramic on the spiral, all BULGARI, Top JOSEPH, Skirt BOSS, Shoes MAXINE SHOES

Make up LIZ PUGH at PREMIER HAIR AND MAKEUP using DIOR Forever Foundation and Capture Totale Super Potent Serum, Hair KEN O’ROUKE at PREMIER HAIR AND MAKE-UP using CHARLES WORTHINGTON, Manicurist CHERRIE SNOW using the DIOR, Manicure Collection and Miss DIOR Hand Cream, Digi assistant ANDREW MAYFIELD, Styling assistant FEDERICA BATTISTINO