

# DREAMING IN NEON/RÊVER EN NÉON

*Original version: French / English subtitles*



**Director:** *Marie-Claire Marcotte*  
**Release Date planned in theatres:** *April 2025*  
**Genre:** *Drama*  
**Country of origin:** *Canada*  
**Run Time:** *83 min.*

## AGE APPROPRIATENESS

According to Cinémental, the unique Francophone Film Festival in Manitoba, the classification is G for General which implies:

*Suitable for viewing by persons of all ages. Occasional violence, swearing and coarse language, and the most innocent of sexually suggestive scenes and nudity, are permitted in this category.*

ManitobaImage – Country Fest Community Cinema

## SYNOPSIS

8-year-old Billie leans on her vivid imagination, and her loyal best friend Sherry, to unravel the web of secrets shrouding her mother's identity. Believing that her mother is a ballerina icon, Billie stops at nothing to try to find her. As Billie delves deeper into the mysteries of her family's past, she begins to question the true intentions of the ones closest to her — her grandma and dad. Billie must decide whether to embrace her imperfect family or continue living in the comfort of their secrets.

## REVIEWS

The film is inspired by the play "Flush" by director Marie-Claire Marcotte, whose characters have inhabited her for years. Billie, who was a secondary character in the play *La Petite*, inherited her own story.

The magical realism in the play lent itself well to the seventh art.

*Translated from an excerpt from Ex-FRIC now RACCORD comments*

Working with children. Marie-Claire loves working with children. Having already experienced on set with them, she knows that their presence will bring her formative experiences and inspiration.

The film straddles reality and magical realism.

*Translated from remarks from Ex-FRIC now RACCORD*

## DETAILS

### LANGUAGE

The characters express themselves in regional French with words in English. This is why Billie uses "Let's go!" or "Come on" a lot.

Billie and Sherry, her best friend, call each other "bestie". In her quest for her mother's identity, Sherry notices; "Your mom is like famous." *Ta maman est comme famous*

When they are having fun, one calls the other "weird". Billie to her grandmother. "Stop looking at me weirdly" *Arrête de me regarder weird*

Sherry affirms her unconditional friendship with this line:

I'd only freeze my butt off for my bestie. *Je me gèle les fesses pour personne sauf my best* (taken from the film subtitles)

Affectionate words abound. The grandmother often refers to Billie as "ma puce" "my sugar-plum". Dad Fred calls his daughter "my sweet bubble gum" *Ma p'tite boule sucrée* or "Little turd" *Ma p'tite boule de gras* and Billie returns her affection with "Big Turd" or "shooting star"

Several scenes express the love that has surrounded Billie since she was a baby with her mother: the video of the kissing attack.

The letter that Geneviève wrote to her began with: "My sweet Billie " *Ma Billie d'amour*  
The grandmother's beautiful love tirade when she asks Geneviève if she is sober: she wonders if Geneviève is able "to tuck her in, wash her, take care of her, help her with her homework, make her laugh, comfort her and tell her: 'you eat too much sugar'"  
Billie wonders about the ability of others to love her: "Is it easy to love me?" She is a little taken aback at the idea of seeing her mother: at least twice she wonders what she will call her mother "mom", "maman" ...  
She asks her grandmother who she loves most, her or her son Fred. Her grandmother speaks of different but equal loves.

The unease is present because Billie is determined to find her mother against all odds. Before running away, she keeps calling her grandmother a liar and even her father later when she accuses him of loving her "badly"  
"I hate you" *Je te déteste* / "You suck" *T'es nul* says Billie to her father, whom she considers to be a coward.  
The words "lies", "lying", "mega huge lies" [*Mensonges, mentir, méga mensonges*] come up very often in the dialogues. Billie blames her grandmother for causing her classmates to make fun of her: ... "People laugh at me at school" *on rit de moi à l'école*  
Under these conditions, Billie's tone is scathing and very direct. It borders on rudeness. She will even repeat "f\*\*k it" after her father. The word does not appear in the subtitles. She puts herself in danger when she runs away and refuses to listen to her father: "blah blah blah"

Despite Billie's sharp tone, she begins an instinctive introspection and repeats what Geneviève tells her: "I did things that were not right [of which I am not proud]" *J'ai fait des choses pas correctes dont je ne suis pas fière*  
And in front of the class: "we have the right to hide in our bubble to dream of something better"  
In her search for her mother's identity, Billie often speaks of a "real family" that she will bring together. It's a dream that she carries throughout the film.

## **VIOLENCE**

Billie hits her father when she is frustrated, such as when they are supposed to visit Genevieve at the time when the latter is at the grandmother's home.  
The death of the fish offered by the mother is found dead on the carpet. Billie accuses herself of having killed him.

## **NUDITY**

Nothing to report

## **SEXUAL ACTIVITY**

Nothing to report

## PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT/ MESSAGES

### • **Billie's quest and the role of the mother**

Billie is a determined, spontaneous, direct, sincere and a warmhearted little girl with a great sense of humor.

The search for her mother's identity is also linked to her own. It's both the source of inspiration (being a recognized ballerina) and imitation: Billie repeats what Geneviève says about the wrong things she did.

The grandmother is also an example of attentive maternal love (see the tirade of a mother's duties) towards Fred (they have a gestural code that brings them together) and towards Billie. It was her loving care for Billie that led Marthe to lie to her.

### • **The role of the family: the "real family"**

The film goes beyond the maternal role to encompass that of the very affectionate father and even, in a sense, that of very close friendship.

The ritual of meals around the table is important: it indicates both the discord when Billie does not sit at the table and the harmony when at the end Geneviève, Amadou, Marthe, Fred and Billie are having fun with the spoons and the camera around dinner.

### • **The friendship between Billie and Sherry**

Little girls share warm moments together. They also help each other wholeheartedly.

A few squabbles such as the scene of the theft of lipstick in the supermarket brings them closer..

Sam and Geneviève had themselves shared this kind of friendship, which gives it a timeless aspect of continuity and mutual support. After all it is Sam who facilitates Geneviève's return.

### • **The magic of the imagination**

Objects such as the photos and the bracelet stimulate Billie's imagination who, with the flashes of neon, imagine her mother, a ballerina. The sequences are visually beautiful, rhythmic and underline the innocence of childhood as if being a ballerina is reduced to wearing a white costume (like a tutu)

### • **Some false notes**

-The little girls who make fun of Billie

-The little fish that dies

-The fish water jar poured by Billie on her grandmother's face

-Billie's theft of the lipstick (and maybe a suitcase)

-the anxiety of Billie's dad when she tried to join her mom

-Billie's sometimes untimely character in relation to the adults in her family.

-The annoying background noise of the phone picked up

FILM PHOTOS



Billie



Her grandmother Marthe



Her father Fred



Geneviève, the mother Billie reunites with



The very tight friendship between Billie and Sherry resembles Geneviève et Sam's

