

UN CERTAIN  
REGARD

Leb-Fr. 2008. 75mins

**Directors**

Joana Hadjithomas  
Khalil Joreige

**Production  
companies**

Mille et Une Productions  
About Productions

**International sales**

Films Boutique (Berlin)  
(49) 30 8411 0859

**US distribution**

None

**Producers**

Edouard Mauriat  
Anne-Cécile Berthomeau  
Fares Ladjimi  
Georges Schoucair  
Tony Arnoux

**Screenplay**

Joana Hadjithomas  
Khalil Joreige  
Zeina Saab de Melero

**Cinematography**

Juïen Hirsch

**Editor**

Enrica Gatolini

**Main cast**

Catherine Deneuve  
Rabih Mroué

# Je Veux Voir (I Want To See)

Reviewed by Howard Feinstein

The idea here is surreal: make something akin to a documentary with French icon Catherine Deneuve and well-known Lebanese artist/actor Rabih Mroué on a day trip by car from Beirut to the ruins in South Lebanon left over from the Israeli incursion in 2006. But film-making couple Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, who proved their imaginative skills with the 2005 Lebanon-set fiction *A Perfect Day*, have succeeded in making it happen.

These politically engaged Lebanese co-directors have broken new ground here in the documentary/fiction fusion debate, and have done so with a dream cast. Once word gets out that *Je Veux Voir* is such an original work, it will find audiences with Deneuve's participation, of course, giving it a boost.

In the film, Deneuve is in Beirut for a glamorous gala, but insists "I want to see" — *je veux voir* — the carnage wrought against civilians in Israel's pursuit of members of Hezbollah in the summer of 2006. "I feel it's impossible to stay on the fringe," she adds — and she means it. This is not the classic Hollywood scenario of

an up-and-coming star meeting with a facilitator to find the right charity for his or her marketing image. It rings with sincerity and genuine curiosity.

So Hadjithomas and Joreige, who know first-hand the sites Deneuve and Mroué will visit, arrange for a meeting (which is filmed) and the two embark on a surprisingly gorgeous two-hour drive to southern Lebanon in time to return for her appointed engagement.

To their credit, the directors are not didactic. The two passengers talk about life and seat belts and *Belle De Jour*; it almost seems normal. They establish a comfortable intimacy without overdoing it.

Occasionally something they encounter will ruffle their feathers: buildings destroyed during the civil war, low-flying Israeli aeroplanes. At their destination, however, there are no exhausted images of homes without roofs or even gutted roads — because it is all gone.

We see the film crew only occasionally, and that is as it should be. Deneuve does not play the star, although Lebanese men do line up to stare at her. The only false note follows an ellipsis to the gala, where Deneuve awaits Mroué's presence



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eagerly. Something here smacks of movie fiction, as if a romance might develop out of their shared compassion. Whether it does or not, the actress looks beautiful, but not so beautiful that she overshadows such an important film. This one is for the history books.