

# VQFF 2016: Lesbian drama *Summertime* captures the fleeting beauty of *La belle saison*

by [Craig Takeuchi](#) on August 13th, 2016 at 6:45 PM

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- *Summertime (La belle saison)*

Aesop's fable of the country mouse and the city mouse is refracted through a Gallic, Sapphic lens in the French-Belgian drama *Summertime (La belle saison)*.

As the earthy Delphine (Izïa Higelin) helps her aging parents run the family farm in the French countryside in the early 1970s, she maintains a secret romance with a girl who breaks her heart by announcing she will marry a guy.

When Delphine inexplicably relocates to the big city, she's literally swept up in the life of the airy Carole (Cécile De France), who ignites the streets of Paris with her fiery fellow feminists with their shit-disturbing antics, protests, and noisy debates.

As Carole introduces Delphine to the nascent world of gender politics, their friendship becomes more intimate than Carole bargained for, turning her domestic life with her boyfriend upside down.

When Delphine's father suffers from an attack that renders him physically inert, Delphine returns home to fight for the farm's survival.

Carole, confused but intoxicated by her sensual experiences with Delphine, follows suit. While helping out with the farm, the two carry on their relationship in secret, trying to evade the quietly observant gaze of Delphine's mother.

What follows is a witty inversion of their life in the city, where Carole is introduced to a new kind of politics, where feminism simply takes place as matter of fact and where Carole and Delphine switch places in their boldness or closeted approach to their sexual orientation.

As the two struggle to reconcile the various social forces keeping them at odds, the chasm between their very different worlds become increasingly pronounced.

While well-crafted overall, the quiet underlying strength of the film is how director Catherine Corsini (*Three Worlds, Leaving*) maintains a brisk pace yet allows all the action to unfold naturally with room to breathe. Higelin and De France display a natural chemistry despite being such polar opposites, and the interactions between Carole and Delphine's mother (Noémie Lvovsky) are particularly admirable in their unaffected spontaneity and emotional authenticity.

The French title, *La belle saison*, is more fitting than the English one, for the film manages to capture the natural, if ephemeral, beauty that arises from life as it is, that we all should be so lucky to enjoy at least once in our lives.

***Summertime (La belle saison)* screens at the Vancouver Queer Film Festival on Wednesday (August 17) at 6:30 p.m. at International Village.**

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