

THE FIGHTERS

Marion Cotillard and Matthias Schoenaerts reflect on their roles in **Rust And Bone**, a powerful tale of flesh, blood and love...

Words by Matt Mueller

Director Jacques Audiard always knew that he would make *Rust and Bone* with Marion Cotillard, or no one. "In her personality and in her expression, she's this perfect mix of masculine and feminine," explains the French filmmaker. "I first noticed it in *La Vie En Rose*. There were moments in that film where she was almost transcendent and would reveal the male part of her personality. I always hoped our paths would cross."

Cotillard was equally thrilled at the prospect of working with Audiard, besotted by his earlier "poetic" visions *The Beat That My Heart Skipped* and *A Prophet*. In the director's new dark fairy-tale, the actress plays Stéphanie, a killer-whale trainer who loses her legs in a marine-park tragedy but overcomes her desolation thanks to the kind attentions of a brusque street-fighter (Schoenaerts). "To go on this journey with Jacques was so exciting and inspiring," reveals Cotillard, who won an Oscar, a BAFTA and a Cesar for her performance as Edith Piaf in *La Vie En Rose* and will certainly gain traction in the looming awards race with *Rust And Bone*. "With Piaf I wanted to explore everything. With Stéphanie I didn't need to do that. The mystery I felt about her stayed with me throughout the shoot."

It's a tale of two outcasts who find each other, accidentally. Stéphanie is "an arrogant princess" - Audiard's words - whose misfortune opens her up to life; Ali is a tough single father who decides to simply help her, without compassion or pity. On Schoenaerts' first day with the actress, he arrived on set to find Cotillard in a wheelchair, staring at the ground and not speaking to anyone. She was already locked into Stéphanie's sorrowful mindset and while at first he found himself unsettled by her startling transformation, the two actors -

who both won rave reviews for their performances at the Cannes Film Festival - went on to build a powerful rapport that has been rendered on screen in one of the most evocative and moving love stories of the year. Cotillard talks about her powerful performance to *Film3Sixty* magazine...

Jacques Audiard describes you as a "virile" actress. Do you think he's right?

I never think of myself as any particular kind of actress but I do take it as a compliment. And what I know is that, in my family, the feminine side and the masculine side are very equal so that must reflect in me.

Has having your first child changed you as an actress?

It definitely changed something. On set, it was the same because when I'm in the character, then it's only the character. But even though I don't stay in character when I'm not shooting, there is this part of me... someone is sharing my body and is there most of the time. With my son, it's impossible to take someone else home.

How do you psychologically prepare to play a character who has lost both her legs?

I try to do the best I can to imagine what it would be and if I'm lucky enough it works. But losing something and being in pain... I know what that is, and then it's

just my imagination that works to try to find that authenticity of what it feels like to lose your legs. I think it's beautiful to show how someone can survive and be more complete without a part of herself that she was when she had her whole body. Emotionally, it's a beautiful journey to play.

Jacques told you to think of Stephanie as a cowgirl. What did he mean by that?

I'd say a cowboy! I think her strength is related to the love that she has for life even though she doesn't know yet that she deeply loves life. She actually doesn't know how to live with herself. She pretends she's strong, she pretends she's tough when on a certain level she's not. But she will discover that she is stronger even than what she pretends.

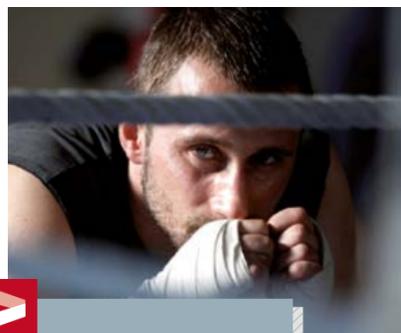
Do you consider yourself tough?

Tough, I don't know. But I definitely have strength. There are very few things that would put me down. In fact, I can't think of a single one.

Could you live without acting and films?

I definitely could live without acting. I just wouldn't be very happy.

Rust And Bone is released in UK cinemas on 2 November.



INTRODUCING...

MATTHIAS
SCHOENAERTS

Born:

December 1977 in Antwerp, Belgium

Previously seen in:

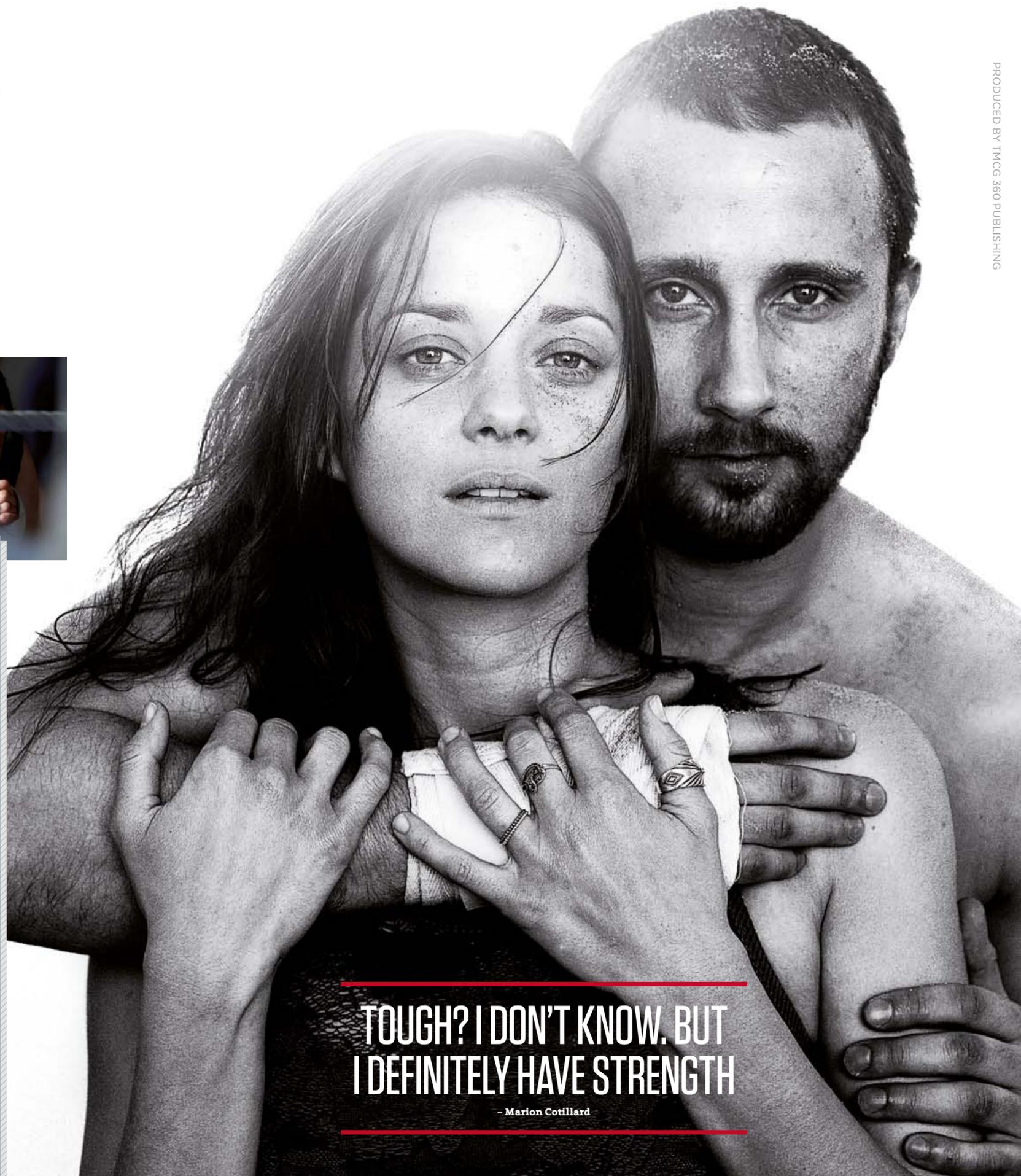
Loft, *Bullhead* (2012 Academy Award nominee for Best Foreign-Language Film) Next up: *Blood Ties* (also with Cotillard; co-written and directed by Cotillard's partner Guillaume Canet)

On playing the brutal yet sensitive Ali in *Rust And Bone*:

"It's just part of being human. We're not one thing. We can be tender and brutal at the same time."

On his surging career:

"I'm going with the flow and seeing what comes my way. But I'm not in a rush. I'll take my time."



TOUGH? I DON'T KNOW, BUT I DEFINITELY HAVE STRENGTH

- Marion Cotillard