

CYRIAC AURIOL PRESENTS

DON'T LOOK DOWN

DIRECTED BY **OLIVIER DUCASTEL**
AND **JACQUES MARTINEAU**
WITH **MANIKA AUXIRE** **GEOFFREY COUET** **SIMON FRENAY** **FRANÇOIS NAMBOT** **LAWRENCE VALLIN**

REMORA FILMS PRESENTS

DON'T LOOK DOWN

The new film from OLIVIER DUCASTEL and JACQUES MARTINEAU

Starring

**MANIKA AUXIRE, GEOFFREY COUËT, SIMON FRENAY,
FRANÇOIS NAMBOT, LAWRENCE VALIN**

**2019 - France - 90 MIN - PICTURE - DIGITAL - COLORS - 2.35 - SOUND
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FESTIVALS & BOOKING

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SYNOPSIS

A woman and four men who barely know each other find themselves in an apartment in the sky above Paris. They have all been the victims of the same perverse dominator who is locked in a room. That night, they decided to end it all. In turn, they tell each other memories that bind them to this man and enter the room to confront him. But what happens there between the monster and them remains their secret.



CONVERSATION WITH OLIVIER DUCASTEL AND JACQUES MARTINEAU

How did the desire for this unique film comes about?

J.M: One day Olivier says to me : « I have an idea, we must shoot it this summer, we'll do it to my place, I'll tell you about. ». I started to think about a script and, 10 days after, he proposes the project to me as it is. We talked about the characters, we thought about it, he gave them genres, fantasies and he said to me, « Manage it! »

O.D : The idea was a conceptual film but also a filming concept. I like this apartment a lot, I thought it was « cinegenic », I wanted to shoot there, it is an open space so I thought it was convenient for a single set project. We had to keep a room for the makeup and the team so we kept the bedroom, without thinking for a second that we could have freed her up for a day to shoot. So it was the technical and script constraint: never enter the bedroom.

That was the screenplay part. For the theme, I had the idea of trying to use some of the recent personal experiences I've had with manipulative and narcissistic boys – let's not call them perverse narcissists: and I was thinking about how to tell the story of someone who, as soon as he could escape from one pervert, met another one. In fact, it was probably too autobiographical and I had the idea to reverse the situation, to make sure that it is five people who have been in contact with the same pervert and who, as a result, meet together and get to know each other through that person. It seemed more cinematic to me.

J.M : But, as our work is often organized in a set of questions and answers, I added a constraint : I absolutely did not want scenes with two or three characters, I only allowed myself scenes with five or four characters. We could have isolated characters in the office, but I wanted to avoid that facility.



Just like what the character of Louis says ("it's not going to end up in a binge and we're not going to fight each other, that's agreed"), I wanted to avoid everything that was agreed for a closed session. I like to put things that way. The characters had to stay focused on their business. And the other thing is that when Olivier was telling me his stories with the perverts, I told him: "It's not a pervert, it's you who's crazy"! It's hard to know if the pervert is you or the other person, and what's toxic in the relationship.

What we find in *Don't look down* and which is a bit of your trademark despite the very different films, is the way in which dialogues are motors and are never purely rhetorical...

J.M : I think this is a pure dialogue film, it was really thought of that way. As we knew that no great financier was going to read the script, I let myself go! Olivier's initial constraint was that we needed tales so we decided to start very strongly with Veronika's, which is rather long. It's the only one that's really a long speech.

The others are shorter and more fragmented. But I thought to myself, "Let's go! ». The memory of having worked on Lagarce's text (Olivier Ducastel and Jacques Martineau made, in 2014, the first filmed adaptation of the play "Juste la fin du monde" by Jean-Luc Lagarce for television in the collection "la comédie Française fait son cinéma", ndla) gave me an impulse, as it is a dramatist who impresses me a lot. There are wonderful things about language in him. yes, the dialogue is the driving force behind the story, it's often like that in our scripts, I love the language, I love seeing people talking. all the actions in *Don't look down*, except those of daily life, are out of scope!



How was all the work of directing and artistic direction thought of to get out of too much theatricality and create this strange, modern and mysterious atmosphere?

O.D : it is the same DOP as for Theo and Hugo ! As working with Manuel Marmier, we thought it was necessary to make the chromatically constructed space evolve from one sequence to another while keeping the coherence of the place. So we chose a place that, from the beginning, is not naturalistic. Even if there are colors in this apartment, there are much less than in the film! We pushed them all. The rare luxury we had on this film was the rehearsal work we were able to do with the actors and this work on light.

We worked a lot with the actors on the text and the dramaturgy, with a lot of listening, a lot of adjustments for two full days. Then, there were rehearsals in space to see how the staging ideas worked. We did this work of setting up with Manuel and, just after that we did film tests with the apartment highlighted and we could readjust the atmosphere after watching these first tests. It mainly changed the connection to the outside world.

We almost didn't use cinema lighting: it was the only way the city could exist. We thought that shooting at night in this apartment without seeing the city was a shame and we wanted to be able to move from one place to another in the room.

J.M : Our desire was to make a pop movie! With the idea of pushing artificiality to the maximum in a very Fassbinderian way. Usually, what is done is to adapt a play. The idea there was to make a film that gave the impression that there would be a play that we adapted! Except I really wrote a movie and not a play. This was only written for what you see in the image. And what I really like about the film is that it is incredibly matching with the original idea.



We obtain a universe that would be at the crossroads of those of Fassbinder, Lagarce and Gregg Araki...

O.D : Yes, we're fine with that! Even though I think Gregg Araki would have entered the room!

J.M : And that Fassbinder would have gotten the pervert out!

The idea was also to shoot exclusively with actors you knew. So how did these five characters come about?

O.D : The idea was to make a movie with friends. Then there was the idea of writing both things you fantasize about and things you know a little bit about actors while covering your tracks. With the desire to offer them to play things they had never played before. The story of the female character is more amusing since originally this fifth character was a boy, a friend too. And when it was obvious that he couldn't shoot last summer, we looked for another actor a while but it didn't work.

Then I asked myself who was the person I wanted to shoot with the most. She was Manika, one of the actresses I had directed in my project with the Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique around texts by Tennessee Williams, *Des cousins dans le Tennessee*. There was really something about her, I fantasized about a "fag hag" side that interested me. And so there was something obvious to suggest to her and the four boys immediately loved the idea.

J.M : The funny thing about the characters' shape is that I didn't know Lawrence. I had just seen *Little Jaffna*, the short film he directed. That's probably why he's so much more mysterious than the others, I love these kinds of constraints. When Philip Roth died, I was very happy to read an interview in which he said that he wrote novels to discover his characters. That's exactly how I work: I have a story and it's as I write that I experience what the characters are. I love writing like that. And so, the guy in the room who never physically appears is a construction of words, he is structured by words

How could we describe each of these five characters, draw their outlines? Let's talk about it in the order of their entry into the film...

O.D : Veronika is both the one for whom the story is the most distant, and, obviously, the one for whom it has left less traces. But, finally, we realize with her that this kind of painful story always leaves marks. There are things, when she tells us, that we have the impression that they arrived the day before, and then we understand that it was probably a long time ago.

J.M : She was thought to be the most joyful, and more caustic than the others. But when you try to take things from a little higher up, you suffer! After that, it's Lawrence who enters, he's the mystery we're not going to solve, but he's the most traumatized.

O.D : But he was the one who got something out of that meeting, he discovered a lot about himself that he might not have discovered with another person.

J.M : He understood that he could fall in love with a man. I thought of him as someone who is more on the fringes of the group than what you might call humour or gay culture. The others are very comfortable with that and he is not at all.

O.D : Then it's Nathan !

J.M : It's easy there, it's Mr. First Degree, it's the one who makes us laugh the most because everything is absolutely serious for him. As a result, he has suffered a lot. That's what defines Nathan the most, he's without distance. But it allows him to say rather strong or disturbing things. Then, Marius, he's the one who doesn't believe in it. He's here but doesn't believe in their thing. And maybe he suffers more than the others because he is affected by the experience. Finally there's the host, Louis, the maniac!

O.D : It may be the one among the five characters that we think didn't come out of this story at all. He's still completely in it. And he is the one who sowed all the seeds of his misfortune.

J.M : And he is also the one who organized the deal and is in control of the situation, who leads the game a little bit and tries to believe it to the end.

O.D : At first the characters were given the first names of the actors because it was easier and, on the eve of the shooting, they had doubts. We didn't change Lawrence's first name because we couldn't find an equivalent that had both the British and Indian side. It didn't bother him, and since the character was very far from him, it allowed him to get closer to something intimate. For the others we had mainly gone on jokes! Marius, it's about the fact that Geoffrey lived in Marseilles. Louis, it was because we knew that François was going to play in Lagarce's *Le Pays Lointain*, whose hero like the one in *Juste la fin du monde* is called Louis.

For Simon we wanted a close first name that, without being exclusively Jewish, could be worn a little more frequently by boys of this age and of Jewish faith, we chose Nathan. Whereas he's not Jewish. But I had that in mind. For Veronika, I thought of Petra Von Kant's *Bitter Tears* (Fassbinder's film, 1972, ed.), and then we kept Manika's sound. And to be precise, no one in the film calls herself Veronika, but it's a first name we find at Fassbinder.

J.M : The fun idea was to cover up the tracks of the origins a little!



DIRECTORS BIO-FILMOGRAPHY

- **JEANNE AND THE PERFECT GUY**, 1998

International Berlin Film Festival 1998, official competition.

two nominations at the 1998 Césars: best first movie and best original music.

- **FUNNY FELIX**, 2000

International Berlin Film Festival, panorama. siegessäule prize, special prize of the teddy jury.

- **THE TRUE STORY OF MY LIFE IN ROUEN**, 2003

International Locarno and Toronto Festivals in 2002, official competition.

- **MARISCOS BEACH**, 2005

Berlin International Festival, panorama. label europa cinéma.

- **BORN IN 68**, 2008

Two-part television film for arte and France 2, released in theatres under the title Nés en 68 - Nous nous aimerons jusqu'à la mort, 21 May 2008

- **FAMILY TREE**, 2010 Berlin International Film Festival, panorama. Jean Vigo award 2009

- **JUSTE LA FIN DU MONDE**, 2011 Television film for France 2, adaptation of the play Juste la fin du monde by Jean-Luc Lagarce

- **PARIS 05:59: THÉO & HUGO**, 2016 Berlin International Festival, panorama, teddy award

TECHNICAL DATA SHEET

Direction **Olivier Ducastel et Jacques Martineau**

Screenplay..... **Olivier Ducastel et Jacques Martineau**

Image..... **Manuel Marmier**

Sound..... **Tristan Pontecaille**

Editing **Pierre Deschamps**

Music **Karelle + Kuntur**

Production..... **Remora Films**

Coproduction..... **Epicentre Films**

Producer..... **Cyriac Auriol**

Coproducers **Daniel Chabannes de Sars et Corentin Dong-Jin Sénéch**

Executiv Producer **Elisa Sépulveda Ruddoff**

Distribution..... **Epicentre Films**

ARTISTIC SHEET

Manika Auxire.....Veronika

Geoffrey Couët Marius

SimonFrenay.....Nathan

François Nambot.....Louis

Lawrence Valin Lawrence

