THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

PRODUCTION NOTES



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INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY MARGAUX AUDOUIN margaux.audouin@studiocanal.com INTERNATIONAL MARKETING DAVID GAUTER david.gauter@studiocanal.com

SYNOPSIS

In the near future, a mysterious phenomenon strikes humanity and unexplained mutations gradually transform parts of the population into human-animal hybrids. The creatures, considered a threat by m Calibri Bold any, are sent to specialised centre in an attempt to stop their mutations from progressing and to control their apparent violent tendencies.

When a convoy bringing hybrids to a new facility crash in a forest, paranoia spreads in the local community as the surviving creatures scatter into the wild. François and his 16-year-old son Emile embark on a desperate search for his missing wife Lena who disappeared after the crash. As François clings to the family's past, he progressively loses his grip on Emile, who has started to notice transformations in his own body, leaving his fate increasingly uncertain. But as he secretly bonds with creatures he met in the forest, Emile opens his eyes to their humanity, leaving him and his father forever changed as the authorities close in.

INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS CAILLEY (DIRECTOR)

How did The ANIMAL KINGDOM project come about after the success of LOVE AT FIRST FIGHT (LES COMBATTANTS)?

My first film started off as a real-life story, and gradually slipped into the fantasy genre during the filmmaking process. The possibilities of the fantasy genre thrilled me.

I read a script written by Pauline Munier whilst participating in a jury at the *Fémis*. The script explored the hybridization between Man and Animal and I felt that this metaphor was at the crossroads of the issues I wanted to tackle at the time: transmission, the worlds we wish to leave behind, those we inherit, those we destroy, and those that perhaps still need to be invented.

I discussed the idea with Pauline and suggested that we work together in this direction. THE ANIMAL KINGDOM follows the relationship between a young man of 16 and his father at a time when, all over the world, the 'animal instincts' of humans are awakening like a dormant gene, disturbing the invisible boundary between Humanity and 'Nature'.

What interests you about mutation, and about the mutants that serve as the basis of your film?

I'm tempted to say that I have entirely no interest in the matter! I don't come from this kind of genre. I couldn't name ten mutant films if I tried.

However, with the current ecological emergency, I believe it is vital to invent new narratives that explore our interactions with the rest of the living world. Not so much to rehash post-apocalyptic or end-of-the-world narratives that wind up repeating themselves, but to imagine new frontiers. The idea of human-animal mutation allows us to approach this question from a concrete, physical angle, in the bodies of the characters themselves. Not through the prism of inevitable collapse or another post-apocaliptic story but through the portrayal of a vital, violent and creative impulse.

I was also interested in making these mutations happen in today's world.

I love Paul Verhoeven's STARSHIP TROOPERS and Miyazaki's films, but I didn't want to project the story into the distant future or make it a mere tale. I am very keen on the eruption of fantasy into our everyday lives. This friction between reality and fiction is a precious source of empathy, of shifts, of disturbances, of comedy.

Change is here, everywhere, and society must deal with it. In this case, society does everything in its power to continue functioning normally, without having to question itself. I wanted to get to the heart of the matter from the very first sequence. I needed to show what had become the characters' new reality, without preparing the audience in any way. Hence the very mundane traffic jam scene, where a creature appears and starts spreading chaos. It ends with the blasé comment of a motorist who exclaims, "Oh, the times we live in!"

We began writing in 2019 and a few weeks later, Covid was rampant, and we were on lockdown. The events taking place around us validated the notion that we adapt very quickly. After just a few weeks, it seemed normal to see herds of wild boar in deserted town centres and undergo repeated curfews.

The standard of normal had shifted.

As part of French cinema, THE ANIMAL KINGDOM is a rather unique proposition in terms of scale. It is both spectacular and intimate...

I conceived this film much like my previous one: at the level of the characters. The tone and genre are adapted to their quest, which is in turn physical, sensory, existential, etc.

As for references, Clint Eastwood's *A PERFECT WORLD* and Sydney Lumet's RUNNING ON EMPTY both served as inspirations, as did Ridley Scott's THELMA AND LOUISE and Bong-Joon Ho's THE HOST. These films are porous. Built around their characters, they favour emotion and move beyond the constraints of the genre (the escapade, the thriller) to offer a total spectacle.

The film strongly echoes debates about difference and diversity, about those who scare certain people so much... The mutant creatures in your film are reminiscent of migrants, those who are scorned and rejected...

Yes, but not only that mutation is about difference and the way we look at it, both as individuals and as a society. The foreigner is an archetypal figure, but more globally, societal norms are at stake.

Cinema has often taken up the dualist theme of animality. On the one hand, there are monster films, on the other, superman films. Werewolves and superheroes. Forms of absolute otherness that reassure us of our place in the world.

Here it is different, the Other can be anyone. My neighbour, my daughter or a colleague.

The characters do not transform on nights of the full moon: their mutation is slow, it is progressive. They walk the line that separates us from the "rest of the living world".

If there is no absolute 'otherness', the crucial question becomes that of belonging: how do we cohabitate, live together, form a society?

As you said, the film starts with the very strong bond between François and his son Émile, in the forced absence of Émile's mother Lana, who is affected by the mutation and therefore isolated. Were you personally interested in the theme of the child-parent relationship?

Between LOVE AT FIRST FIGHT (LES COMBATTANTS) and THE ANIMAL KINGDOM, I became a father, and that changes everything.

Very early on, I had the desire to tell this story from a dual point of view, that of both father and son, two fallible male figures (re)inventing themselves.

At the beginning of the film - while faced with the changes that are shaking the world and his family -François is strong and sure of himself. He firmly believes in Lana's recovery, in the unity of his family, in a return to normality... At this point, it seems as if François and Emile are together on the same quest. In reality, François imposes his vision of the world onto his son, and Emile suffers in silence. Emile's challenge is his emancipation, which will take an unexpected path. It is about becoming himself, learning to say no and choosing his own destiny. And as his son finds his way, François loses his certainties and is brought to his knees, he faces his fear and helplessness, and the relationship is reversed. François will come to question himself and a personal transformation takes place on both sides. Emile and François learn to truly see one another as they move from a power-based relationship to one of consideration, compassion and respect. For me, that's how they become the film's heroes. I found this particularly moving in Ozu's THERE WAS A FATHER: the father's purpose is to teach his son the art of learning to live without him. It is not a question of changing or healing the other, but of welcoming and releasing unknown forces.

One of the film's essential components is the place you give to nature and the way you filmed the virtually wild spaces of the Landes de Gascogne. Trees, plants, water and sky play a major role on screen...

Prior to the writing process, we scout out potential locations, so that we have a setting in mind before heading into the storytelling. The small provincial town surrounded by an immense forest is not just the setting of a fairy tale, it is also that of my adolescence. When you cross the Landes de Gascogne, it is easy to reduce the landscape to a succession of pine forests and cornfields, but in the middle of the man-made forests, are natural oases, and untouched lagoons. These are magical spaces, unchanged for hundreds or even thousands of years. They are not well documented and difficult to access, but once you get there, it's like stepping back in time. In just a few hundred metres, you go from a field of aligned trees, a silent industrial forest, to rich and untamed spaces where plant and animal life is thriving. The forest comes to life before your very eyes. I really wanted these landscapes to have their place in the film,, because they almost tell the story of the characters' journey in and of themselves.

Given that these places are extremely complicated to find, how did you gain access to them?

We studied old maps, spoke to tree enthusiasts, and also looked at satellite images, although this meant having to identify all of the black spots in an area covering the Gironde, the Landes, and part of the Lot-et-Garonne. During the search we found an artificial basin and a thousand-year-old lagoon, it was like a treasure hunt. Along with David Cailley - my brother, and the film's cinematographer - we covered the region until eventually we found the perfect setting, which had the primary forest, the lagoon and the tree perched over the water. However, sadly in the summer of 2022, during filming, everything was destroyed by the Gironde fires. We were forced to stop filming, the crew left, and I stayed behind in a rain of ash to look for alternative locations to finish the film. We still had 5 weeks of work to do... all in the forest.

You eventually succeeded...

Yes, it was a miracle. I located a black spot on a satellite image near Biscarrosse, a very touristy seaside resort which, prior to the fires, was not at all what we were looking for. On my way there, I discovered some lagoons which were completely preserved, where due to laws dating back to the middle ages, forestry is impossible. It was the ideal location for us: an untouched, dense forest, which is so dense that it took 15 minutes to walk 100 metres! So this was an unexpected gift, in the midst of the 2022 wildfire disaster...

The need to stop shooting during the summer, and then start again in the autumn changes the lighting situation drastically, where light is so essential in THE ANIMAL KINGDOM... did this change your approach to the film?

Naturally, it changed everything... The light in September is not at all the same as in July and August. The days continue to grow shorter, and the weather risk is higher, but it also offers interesting contrasts, a more lively, oblique light than that of summer. We had to revise our filming schedule significantly to adapt to filming conditions in the varying light and weather conditions. We also had to deal with the change in vegetation. During this time of year, the undergrowth and withers and so by September, there wasn't much greenery left. So, we initially looked for areas as close to the water as possible, areas where the roots would still be hydrated. Then, the set design team, Julia Lemaire, had to inject greenery into the scenery, shot by shot, whenever it was essential.

Special effects play an important role in the film, but they are always at the service of the story and not a pretext for technological demonstration...

Yes, the characters had to remain at the centre of the film's design and staging. We had three basic rules to follow:

- 1. Start with the actor, and shoot based on the actor's potential.
- 2. Remain in the characters' point of view
- 3. Shoot in real settings, no studios or green screens.

Eighteen months before shooting, I started the design process to elaborate on what our "creatures" would look like: how to design them, how to portray them, etc. This development continued until the end of film production. The crux of the matter is the choice of technology. Each has its own advantages: make-up for texture, animation for movement, set effects for interaction with the scenery, etc. We combined these techniques as much as possible: the credibility of an effect depends very much on its constant 'mutation' within the sequence itself. If the same process is used, the viewer's eye will decipher it in a few seconds. Thus, with respect to the actor, Tom Mercier, the character of Fix is depicted with make-up (prosthetics, skin), animatronics, stage effects (doubles, cables), digital effects (3D), etc. The combination of these techniques is different for each shot.

Another important element of the film is the impressive sound work, especially in the last part where Émile really discovers the forest and those who live in it...

I contacted Nicolas Becker (SOUND OF METAL, GRAVITY, etc.) and explained what I wanted in terms of sound: an immersive approach that was close to the characters. Once again, we started with the actors. Nicolas introduced me to bird singers who have developed unique techniques to perform, imitate and even interact and communicate with the animals. They trained Tom Mercier (Fix), teaching him to "speak bird" by sucking in sounds instead of projecting them. This requires a huge effort of the chest and throat. Tom was in training for months, and everything you hear in the film comes from him. Paul Kircher also worked with the cast to develop breathing techniques and explored a wide range of sounds, grunts and cries, etc. This raw material was reworked by sound and speech editors Raphaël Sohier, Matthieu Fichet and Anne-Laure Darras. We explored a track of sonic chimeras, sometimes in a very technological way and sometimes in a very artisanal way, as cinema has always done. (Tarzan's famous cry is a mixture of a hyena and an Austrian yodel).

We understand that you asked your actors to invest a lot of time and energy, both physically and psychologically...

Certain roles required a lot of physical preparation.

It's rare for a young actor to be in almost every shot of a film that features action, adventure and emotion, day and night for over 60 days. Paul worked hard rigorously. Prior to filming, the cast worked extensively with our choreographer, Stéphanie Chêne, to explore the character's body language, movements and perception of the world around them. The same went for Tom Mercier, who plays Fix, a bird-man who is in a very advanced stage of the mutation. We had to mould and scan his entire body to build him prosthetic wings, and give him new skin, which was pigmented like a bird and partially feathered. Besides undergoing 6 hours a day in the make-up chair, Tom worked hard at jumping, stretching and sculpting his body into that of a dancer. Fortunately, early on in the shooting, I felt that we were reconnecting with one of the primary elements of acting,: dressing up, inventing one's own animal, running, jumping, screaming and flying.

Let's talk about the choice of actors, starting with the father-son duo, François and Émile, in other words Romain Duris and Paul Kircher.

Without exaggerating, I can say that I discovered French cinema through Romain. THE GOOD OLD DAZE and THE CRAZY STRANGER are among the French films that marked my teenage years. Romain is a fascinating actor who strongly embodies the father figure in this role and does so in a way not often seen in cinema. He always projects this light, a certain sparkle and a contagious, inspiring approach to acting. His work ethic and ability to listen are impressive, while his understanding of issues and emotions is quite instinctive. François is a fully developed character: and he has something whole and romantic about him. The role is also a physical one and Romain embodies all of these qualities. François is constantly on the move, and he never gives up. Romain gave him speed, precision and pure physicality. As for Paul, he simultaneously emits something both strong and awkward, which immediately attracted me. He also has hidden strengths, you get the impression that he doesn't know where he's going, that he is floating through life and yet staying afloat by a calm and powerful wave. That's the impression I got of Paul: that he is unaware of his own power. You can feel something bubbling up inside him, a strong energy, and a little bit of a wild side.

Let's talk about the character played by Adèle Exarchopoulos, which brings us to humour, an element that is noticeably present in THE ANIMAL KINGDOM.

Many of our characters are struggling to grasp normality in a world that has gone mad, which is part of the film's comedic aspect. Julia is perhaps the wisest person in this great upheaval. She would like to make herself useful, to find her place, but she is somewhat sidelined. She is so out of touch with her colleagues that when she says, "I'm going to ask for a transfer", one wonders what kind of transfer she is talking about. She finds the humans around her increasingly alien. Adèle is an extraordinary actress: she gives her character autonomy, a cold humour, a poise that is both undeniable and funny. Overall, the creatures bring disorder to society, from the attack on the riding school, to the eruption of a giant squid in the Super U. These disturbances are comedic and in-part a sense of strength, as if silenced voices are once again being heard and the world has started spinning again. I've always found that humour is the best way to depict this impulse, being not only tangible, but equally destructive and creative. Overall, the creatures bring disorder to society, from the attack on the riding school to the eruption of a giant squid in the Super U. These disturbances are comedic on the riding school to the eruption of a giant squid in the Super U. These disturbances are comedic and impart a sense of vitality, as if silenced voices are once again being heard. The world has started spinning again.

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You have reached the end of a truly cinematic adventure. How will you view this experience as your film goes on to live its public life?

It's a rather strange feeling. This film forced us all to invent and combine complex technologies, and anticipate or directly deal with ever-changing issues. We had to figure out how to depict a human being flying through the forest at night and how to continue filming in the midst of a natural disaster. It's been a long road, but we've made it, and I'm pleased to say that we're both proud and delighted. I feel that this film is ultimately much like its subject: it has constantly mutated to invent its own trajectory. I hope that this feeling is palpable when you watch THE ANIMAL KINGDOM. The story opens with François' face, as he is stuck in a traffic jam, in the middle of car horns and pollution. It closes on the same face, tired but content, almost two years later. François is in the middle of a large river, framed by the forest, where you can hear the roars and snarls of all the animal species. Between these two images is the journey of Emile and François. I hope that this journey gives us a sense of the awakening power within us, a mysterious and organic link that connects us to all that lives.

INTERVIEW WITH ROMAIN DURIS (Francois)

Genre film, emotional drama or environmental epic? How would you define "The Animal Kingdom", a film which bridges multiple movie styles?

For me, it's a bit of everything: emotional yet spectacular, auteur film yet mainstream, profound yet fantasy. The fact that all these styles are combined is exactly what makes "The Animal Kingdom" truly magical! I would have been less drawn to the project if it was fantasy but without the emotional core. And bringing these two genres together was part of Thomas's initial ambition as a director. I'm so impressed at how well he's managed to do it.

You mentioned ambition: did you fully understand this project's ambition both narratively and visually from your first discussions with him?

Yes, of course, although at the time I had no idea what the physical transformations or the creatures would look like on screen. I don't think Thomas did either at that stage! But I wanted to trust him, both in terms of the resources allocated to the film and the special effects, although you're always afraid it might look somewhat unrealistic! Ultimately, his idea of mixing make-up, on-set and digital effects in post-production worked out looking great. You really believe it! Deep down, I never doubted that it would look great, because from the outset I could see how particular Thomas was in every aspect of the project.

This includes the father-son relationship that lies at the heart of the story, in which you play François?

I actually focused more on the human relationship between François and his son Emile, played by Paul Kircher. Of course, there was the fantasy elements, that being the mutations and transformations, but the human nature of the story was just as important to me, and I worked hard to make it as tangible as possible. To tell you the truth, at times I even forgot about the fantasy aspects, which were taking up more and more of François's time, but I never lost sight of the fact that this man was thinking first and foremost of his wife, who was undergoing an advanced transformation process. At first, François is in a state of denial but as time goes on, he accepts that things are probably not going to improve. He eventually turns his focus even more so on to his son, even with all the complex emotional layers that that entails. It's a very important component of "The Animal Kingdom" and I really didn't want to breeze past it by assuming the fantasy plot would be the main focus due to the effects For me personally, it's ultimately the story of a father watching his child grow in to an adult, and in the end no longer needs him.

Did being a father yourself feed into your character at all, or do you generally tend to disregard that?

My children are younger than Emile in the film, but it does help having children of your own when you have to play a dad – whatever the age! I remember the feeling when I became a father, I was overwhelmed by an unconditional love for this being that enters your life.

The relationship that develops between actors on set helps also, was this the case with yourself and Paul Kircher?

Our relationship developed naturally. It's always tricky when you commit to a film knowing you're going to have to spend time with a co-star to get to know them better, especially when said co-star is playing your son. It can be somewhat forced, but with Paul, I never felt that way! It all happened quite organically: I arrived in the south-west where we were shooting and on day one I suggested we go for a walk. We wandered around these magical natural settings and we just clicked. This is owed to great casting. The fact that we became close off-screen made it easy for us to become father and son in front of the camera.

You mentioned the landscapes of the south-west: they were ravaged by fires in the summer of 2022, just as Thomas Cailley was shooting his film, forcing him to reconsider his plans. Did you feel this weighed on him?

It really disrupted the shoot, but the crazy thing is that it completely resonated with the subject of the film. Upheavals in nature and the world, global warming, devastating fires; there was almost a correlation. As if nature were sending us a message that was consistent with the story we were telling. In concrete terms, it was very complicated for Thomas because we had to completely stop shooting at one point and then pick up filming again later in the year, at which point it was a completely different season. This not only effected everything visually, but also everyone's schedules. All this can quickly become catastrophic for a director but Thomas was able to adapt. The shoot did, however, end up being spread over six months instead of three.

What did you make of Thomas Cailley, at the helm of what was said to be a very ambitious film?

I fell in love with him at first sight, watching him work on every (very substantial) part of this film.

There wasn't a wasted moment on set, everything we experienced fed into the filmmaking and the film, whether that was the first readings, the tests with Paul, the stunt and fight tests, our downtime spent off set, it was pretty crazy! I've made quite a few films, but I have to admit that I was amazed at how this project progressed, because in the end every result was so positive. Thomas has an exceptional capacity for concentration, a rigorous approach and an inquisitive mind, always seeking to involve us in his thoughts and questions. It shows a real intelligence in filmmaking and a real sense of what teamwork and collaboration on a set is all about. I was blown away! I loved "Love at First Fight", and from our very first discussions things went well between us, but it was when I saw him at work that I was definitively and completely won over. Thomas has a talent for choosing the right words after each take to give birth to another alternative take. And even though it is rarely talked about, our daily lives off-screen were incredible! And yet it wasn't a summer camp! It was another form of friendship linked to this film's crazy project, in the middle of a complicated and ambitious shoot.

Can I also ask you about working with Adèle Exarchopoulos, whose character as a policewoman brings a touch of comedy to a fairly dark story?

She was quite brilliant in her ability to bring something so natural and concrete to the table, with an enormous amount of humour. You realise when you watch the film, her character reacts in a more humane manner than the others. She also has a distance and an occasionally ironic way of looking at situations. I loved the way she was so positive and available. She too played her part in this project by showing us that she was very committed just like the rest of us.

Both Thomas Cailley and Paul Kircher were blown away by the fact that despite having had a long career as an actor, you still arrive on set with a sense of humility , curiosity and openness.

I don't really know what to say to that, because it's just a natural part of my temperament. From the moment I decide to make a film, I really commit to it. There are many reasons why I was so moved by the subject of "The Animal Kingdom". How can you be anything other than fresh, relaxed and bright-eyed when you arrive? The experience I now have in this profession has to be put to good use in this kind of film, which I know is hard to make. These are the projects you have to believe in and that everyone has to really commit to in order to bring them to fruition. I didn't want to miss the boat.

INTERVIEW WITH PAUL KIRCHER (Emile)

You play Emile in "The Animal Kingdom": what first attracted you to this character of a young man in the midst of a transformation?

That's precisely it: the moment when Emile makes the transition from childhood to adulthood. He's completely unprepared for what's suddenly happening to him, and yet he's forced to come to terms with it, and he ends up in a complete crisis. He's initially in denial and he's scared, before the desire to reveal himself takes over, bringing him a type of relief! Emile has the ability to always land on his feet, growing in stature and strength each time, until he finally evolves into a new version of himself at the end of the film. I really enjoyed this journey.

Were you familiar with Thomas Cailley's cinematic universe?

Yes, I really liked LOVE AT FIRST FIGHT, which already combined drama with comedic elements. When I read the script for THE ANIMAL KINGDOM, I was very interested in the relationship between Emile and his father and the fantasy dimension of the story. It was all beautifully written, but I felt that there was still a lot of opportunity to be creative, and Thomas was very keen on that idea too. When he first gave me the script to read, the final look of the creatures and the level of transformation weren't fully finalised yet. Thomas suggested that I watch a number of films like David Cronenberg's THE FLY, which helped me with Emile's physical and behavioural changes. I found this exploratory research for the role really exciting! I also watched COME AND SEE, the Russian war film by Elem Klimov, which depicts the horrors of the 1943 battles from the point of view of a teenager in Belarus. In Thomas's film, Emile and Grenouille observe an adult world that they don't particularly understand and which often seems violent and chaotic.

You're 21 years old, so you were a teenager yourself not too long ago. Did you draw on your experience during that time to create the character of Emile?

Yes of course. Like Emile I definitely think I have mastered things while some still elude me, for example there are several subjects I am certain that my stance is the correct one. There's a sort of recklessness and boldness when you're young! But I would say the character of Emile and the script gave me a lot to work with. This was particularly true during shooting: it was a very immersive experience to be together every day, especially with Romain Duris who plays my father. He took me under his wing from the start and I drew from those moments in my scenes. Whilst advance preparation is certainly important, I feel the experience and work whilst shooting is equally as important here was the added physical dimension of Emile's role, with a lot of make-up work, for example.

Did you find the use of make-up and prosthetics an inevitable burden, or did you use it as a tool?

Before shooting, I worked with a choreographer so that as Emile's transformation unfolds, I could be attuned to the movements of my character's body. Even without make-up, it gave me an idea of how I should behave. When we got to set, I was ready. The visual effects simply allowed me to bring a truthfulness to the scene. For example, I often wear claws in the film and feeling them on my fingertips added to the credibility of my performance. The technical team's work on make-up and prosthetics is remarkable, and was critical to bringing Emile and the other creatures to life.

Obviously THE ANIMAL KINGDOM is not just a genre film; as you said, it also tackles the theme of the father-son relationship at the heart of a major French production. How would you describe Thomas Cailley's work as a director?

Thomas managed to convey his vision of the story he wanted to tell to his cast and crew. It's a truly imagined and detailed world that he completely invented, and we talked about it a lot because I obviously had my own take on the story. Thomas is a precise director, meticulous on set, but while always direct, he is extremely gentle and calm in his manner with others. I've watched him work a lot with his brother David, who is the cinematographer on his films. The deep connection and understanding between them when they work is palpable, and was a great advantage to them as filmmakers and to our film. I should add that we all lived together off set and Thomas tried to spend as much time as possible with Romain and myself, at least whenever his hectic schedule allowed it, in this south-west region he knows so well.

You mentioned Romain Duris, who plays your father. The connection between you is obvious on screen. Tell us about your relationship off camera.

What's really impressive about Romain is that he has so much experience and incredible depth, but he is also open and present! He's a very inspiring actor and human being. For each of our scenes, he would ask me my thoughts and perspective, how I wanted to play them out. Romain really committed to our bond, even off-camera. I learned a lot from him, but he was never overbearing with me. THE ANIMAL KINGDOM is a film revolving around dual protagonists, and I really enjoyed this experience with Romain. Both on and off the set, our relationship offscreen served Thomas' film well.

INTERVIEW WITH ADELE EXARCHOPOULOS (Julia)

Julia's character is not what you expect. Thomas Cailley said he was counting on you to bring humour and lightness to the film. How would you describe this young policewoman?

Julia is full of goodwill, energy and hope. She is keen to get involved, make herself useful, serve the common good, but she ends up in the courtyard of a *gendarmerie* cooking sausages. As her story plays out she starts to question her own actions and beliefs. She ultimately starts to question who, in fact, are the true monsters after all? Julia is not swayed by other people, and becomes increasingly tenacious in her beliefs, using humour to help her cause. Behind her clumsiness and apparent naivety, she is perhaps the most lucid character in the story.

The film touches on themes such as prejudice, discrimination, diversity, minority rights, and our attitude towards outsiders. What are the most poignant themes in this story in your opinion?

This script is one of the most beautiful I've ever read. It's a genuine ode to the differences between us. Without ever indulging in stereotyping, the story confronts us with our own desires and limitations.

Beyond the subjects we confront in this story, what I find most moving about Thomas's films is how they observe otherness, our connection to nature, our bodies, and living things. All without judgement.

His films communicate a thirst for life and a healthy desire for freedom.

On location I was also moved by the scenery; these wild, forgotten, sublime landscapes.

THE ANIMAL KINGDOM is an assertive genre film. It's a style you've already experienced, in particular with Quentin Dupieux. As someone who loves cinema, are you a fan of this genre?

It's also a comedy, a fairytale, a love story... In fact, I choose to make films I would like to watch in the cinema. I'm not interested in the "genre" of the film but in how it makes me feel. I knew I wanted to work on this film straight away.

Can you tell us about working with your two main co-stars, Romain Duris and Paul Kircher who play father and son in the film?

Paul is unique, magnetic. The singularity and sincerity of his performance are awe-inspiring. For me, he's already a star.

Romain is extremely caring and generous to act opposite. He's a surprising actor, offering a lot always with great honesty. Paul and Romain immediately made space for me in their duo, it was simple, I was very lucky to be in this with them.

I didn't have any scenes with Tom Mercier but he really impressed me in the film. As did Billy Blain.

THE ANIMAL KINGDOM is a big, ambitious French production: what did you make of your director Thomas Cailley at the helm of this big film?

Thomas has been working on this film for years, and from the first reading that was apparent. When he defends his characters, he is so knowledgeable. When working with actors he is precise, but also welcomes whatever comes naturally in the moment.

The technical nature of the scenes, the complexity of the MFX and action scenes don't phase him; everything is seamless, serving the natural poetry that was already apparent in the script.

It's happiness on a plate.

BIOGRAPHY

THOMAS CAILLEY

After studying at La Femis in the screenplay department, Thomas Cailley directed PARIS SHANGHAI (2011), a short film that won awards at numerous festivals.

His first feature film, LOVE AT FIRST FIGHT (LES COMBATTANTS) was a public success. Presented and awarded at the Directors' Fortnight in Cannes in 2014, it received three Césars the following year, including Best First Film.

Directed for Arte, his first series AD VITAM (6x52) was selected at the Toronto International Film Festival and elected best French series of the year at Series Mania in 2018.

THE ANIMAL KINGDOM, presented in the Official Selection at the opening night of Un Certain Regard at the Cannes Film Festival (2023) is his second feature film as a director.

FILM	
2023	ANIMAL KINGDOM
2014	LOVE AT FIRST FIGHT (LES COMBATTANTS)
2011	PARIS SHANGHAI
SERIES	
2018	AD VITAM

ROMAIN DURIS

Romain Duris started his film career somewhat randomly when he was street-cast for the role of Tomasi in Cédric Klapisch's THE YOUNG PERIL. This film marked the beginning of a long collaboration and friendship with the director.

As Romain did not complete any training, he learned acting on set, which turned out to be an asset in his career as he "could play almost instinctively", as pointed out by his childhood friend, the director Raphaël Fejtö.

Over the years he starred in several films including those of Tony Gatlif, who asked him to blend into a gypsy community in Romania to prepare for his role in GADJO DILO. This role allowed him to be nominated in 1999 for the Most Promising Actor César Award. In 2002, the success of THE SPANISH APARTMENT by Klapisch confirmed Duris' breakthrough: he then played colorful characters in ARSÈNE LUPIN or MOLIÈRE before taking on darker roles in PERSECUTION or in PARIS.

In 2006 he also received several awards for his interpretation of Tom, in THE BEAT THAT MY HEART SKIPPED by Jacques Audiard.

Known for his versatility, his role in Pascal Chaumeil's commercial success HEARTBREAKER -in which he played alongside Vanessa Paradis- proved his ability to embody characters ranging from gangster to romantic leads.

In 2018, Romain Duris played in Guillaume Senez's comedy-drama film OUR STRUGGLES, which won the Best Film and the Best Director Awards at the 9th Magritte Awards. Romain Duris was also nominated for several prestigious awards including the Cesar Award for Best Actor.

He then embodied one of France's main historical figures, Gustave Eiffel alongside Emma Mackey in Martin Bourboulon's biopic EIFFEL released in 2021.

WAITING FOR BOJANGLES represents his second collaboration with the director Régis Roinsard after POPULAIRE in 2012. In this 2022 adaption of Olivier Bourdeaut's acclaimed novel, Romain Duris embodies Georges in this deeply touching love story, starring opposite Virginie Efira for the first time.

2023	THE ANIMAL KINGDOM	Thomas Cailley
	THE THREE MUSKETEERS: MILADY	Martin Bourboulon
	THE THREE MUSKETEERS: D'ARTAGNAN	Martin Bourboulon
2022	FINAL CUT	Michel Hazanavicius
	WAITING FOR BOJANGLES	Régis Roinsard
2021	EIFFEL	Martin Bourboulon
2019	THE GREAT DARKENED DAYS	Maxime Giroux
2018	OUR STRUGGLES	Guillaume Senez

	BLACK TIDE	Erick Zonca
	A BREATH AWAY	Daniel Roby
2017	MRD HIDE	Serge Bozon
	ALL THE MONEY IN THE WORLD	Ridley Scott
2016	CEASEFIRE	Emmanuel Courcol
	THE CONFESSION	Nicolas Boukhrief
	IN THE SHADOW OF IRIS	Jalil Lespert
2014	ODD JOB	Pascal Chaumeil
	THE NEW GIRLFRIEND	François Ozon
2013	CHINEZE PUZZLE	Cédric Klapisch
	MOOD INDIGO	Michel Gondry
2012	POPULAIRE	Régis Roinsard
2010	THE BIG PICTURE	Eric Lartigau
	HEART BREAKER	Pascal Chaumeil
2009	PERSECUTION	Patrice Chereau
2008	AFTERWARDS	Gilles Bourdeau
	PARIS	Cédric Klapisch
2007	THE AGE OF MANB	Raphaël Fejto
2006	IN PARIS	Christophe Honoré
2005	RUSSIAN DOLLS	Cédric Klapisch
	THE BEAT THAT MY HEART SKIP	Jacques Audiard
2004	ARSENE LUPIN	Jean-Paul Salomé
	EXILES	Tony Gatlif
2003	OSMOSIS	Raphaël Fejto
	THE DIVORCE	James Ivory
2002	SHIMKENT HOTEL	Charles De Meaux
	THE SPANISH APPARTMENT	Cédric Klapisch
	NO BIG DEAL	Bernard Rapp
	ADOLPHE	Benoît Jacquot

	SEVENTIEEN TIME CECILE CASSARD	Christophe Honoré
	HYPNOTIZED AND HYSTERICAL	Claude Duty
2001	CQ	Romain Coppola
	BEING LIGHT	Jean-Marc Barr
	TOMN THUMB	Olivier Dahan
1999	PERHAPS	Cédric Klapisch
1998	LES KIDNAPPEURS	Graham Guit
	CHILDREN OF THE STORK	Toni Gatlif
1997	deja mort	Olivier Dahan
	GADJO DILO	Toni Gatlif
	DOBBERMAN	Jan Kounen
1996	WHEN THE CAST AWAY	Cédric Klapisch
1995	MEMOIRE D'UN JEUNE CON	Patrick Aurignac
1994	THE GOOD OLD DAZE	Cédric Klapisch

PAUL KIRCHER

BIOGRAPHY

In 2019, at barely 18, Paul Kircher made his first steps on the big screen in Adeline Picault's comedy HOW TO MAKE OUT He then starred opposite Lætitia Dosch and Pierre Deladonchamps in PETITE LEÇON D'AMOUR by Eve Deboise. In 2022, he landed the title role in Christophe Honoré's WINTER BOY, alongside Juliette Binoche and Vincent Lacoste.

He was also one of the César Academy's Revelations of 2023. That same year, he will be appearing in Thomas Cailley's THE ANIMAL KINGDOM, co-starring Romain Duris and Adèle Exarchopoulos.

FILMS 2023 LEURS ENFANTS APRES EUX Ludovic Boukherma & Zoran Boukherma 2022 THE ANIMAL KINGDOM WINTER BOY PETITE LECON D'AMOUR Eve Deboise 2020 HOW TO MAKE OUT Adeline Picault **SERIES** Pierre-Francois Martin-Laval 2021 WEEKEND FAMILY 2019 CAPITAINE MARLAUX

ADELE EXARCHOPOULOS

BIOGRAPHY

Adèle Exarchopoulos appeared for the first time in Jane Birkin's movie BOXES, in 2006. Then she made a series of noticeable appearances, such as in Rose Bosch's LA RAFLE (2010). She was revealed to the general public with BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOR by Abdellatif Kechiche. The success of the film made her famous all over the world. Along with the director and his partner Léa Seydoux, she received the Palme d'Or at the 2013 Cannes Film Festival, then the César for Best Female Hope. Since then, she has confirmed her talent with original projects, such as INSECURE by Marianne Tardieu (2014) or THE ANARCHISTE by Elie Wajeman (2015). She returned to Cannes in 2019 to present the psychological drama SIBYL by Justine Triet. In 2020, she will be alongside Francois Civil and Gilles Lellouche in Cédric Jimenez's latest film "THE STRONGHOLD".

2023	ALL YOUR FACES	Jeanne Herry
2022	SMOKING CAUSES CAUGHING	Quentin Dupieux
	ZERO FUCKS GIVEN	Emmanuel Marre
2021	THE FIVES DEVILS	Léa Mysius
2020	THE STRONGHOLD	Cédric Jimenez
	CARPE DIEM	Emmanuel Marre
	MANDIBLES	Quentin Dupieux
2019	FORTE	Katia Lewkowicz
	SIBYL	Justine Triet
2018	THE WHITE CROW	Ralph Fiennes
	REVENIR	Jessica Palud
2017	LE FIDELE	Michael R. Roskam
2016	ORPHAN	Arnaud des Pallières
	THE LAST FACE	Sean Penn
2015	DOWN BY LOVE	Pierre Godeau
2014	THE ANARCHISTS	Elie Wajemen

	INSECURE	Marinne Tardieu
	JOURNEY TO THE MOTHER	Mikhaïl Kosyrev-Neterov
2013	I USED TO BE DARKER	Matthew Porterfield
	BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOR	Abdellatif Kechiche
2012	PIECES OF ME	Nolwenn Lemesle
2010	CARRE BLANC	Jean-Baptiste Leonetti
	TURK'S HEAD	Pascal Elbé
2009	THE ROUND UP	Rose Bosch
2006	BOXES	Jane Birkin

CREDITS LIST

Francois	Romain Duris
Emile	Paul Kircher
Julia	Adèle Exarchopoulos
Fix	Tom MERCIER
Nina	Billie Blain
Jacques	Xavier Aubert
Naïma	Saadia Bentaïeb
Victor	Gabriel Caballero
Maëlle	lliana Khelifa
Jordan	Paul Muguruza

TECHNICAL LIST

THOMAS CAILLEY
PIERRE GUYARD
THOMAS CAILLEY
PAULINE MUNIER
CHRISTOPHE ROSSIGNON
PHILIP BOEFFARD
DAVID CAILLEY
LILIAN CORBEILLE
ANDREA LASZLO DE SIMONE
STEPHANE BATUT
VIOLETTE ECHAZARRETA JULIA LEMAIRE
FABRICE OSINSKI
RAPHAEL SOHIER
MATTHIEU FICHET
NICOLAS BECKER
NIELS BARLETTA
FREDERIC LAINE (ATELIER 69)
JEAN-CHRISTOPHE SPADACCINI
PASCAL MOLINA
CYRILLE BONJEAN (MPC)
BRUNO SOMMIER (MAC GUFF)
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