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WORLD SALES AND FESTIVALS
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FESTIVAL DE CANNES
MIDNIGHT SCREENING
OFFICIAL SELECTION

black heaven





Haut et Court and Versus Production

present

black heaven

(L'autre Monde)

a film by **GILLES MARCHAND**

with **GRÉGOIRE LEPRINCE-RINGUET, LOUISE BOURGOIN,
MELVIL POUPAUD, PAULINE ETIENNE**

France/Belgium - 2009 - 104 minutes - Color
35 mm - Scope - Dolby SRD

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synopsis

Gaspard and Marion are in love and enjoying summer in the south of France... until they stumble upon a lost cell phone. At first they decide to track down the owner... But the game takes a much darker turn when they find him dead, in a mysterious suicide ceremony. Next to him, lies a half unconscious girl, Audrey. With her enigmatic tattoo and her gothic looks, she soon lures Gaspard into Black Hole, a dangerously addictive video game. Gaspard discovers an obscure universe, full of infinite possibilities.

Creating an avatar who is miles away from him, he sets out on a search for the beautiful but poisonous Sam, who attracts victims in the virtual world and seduces them to commit suicide in real life. Could Sam's alter ego in the real world be Audrey? Could Gaspard be her next victim? He will have to creep further into Black Hole to find out the terrible truth.



Interview with Gilles Marchand (director) Conducted by Matthieu Recarte

How would you describe your film in a few words?

It's the story of a young man who has every reason to be happy, and whose life turns into something, let's say... singular. This young man, at ease with himself, surrounded by friends, and in love with a charming girl, is irresistibly attracted to a beautiful young woman whom he feels is dangerous. What attracts him to her? Why does he follow her into Black Hole, a multiplayer online game, where he's understood she is looking for someone ready to die with her? Why isn't this young man content with his balanced and happy life?

How was the project born?

One day, I saw a young man playing a videogame in the middle of a very busy department store. He was completely absorbed by the game. On screen, his avatar had just woken up in a hotel room. The corpse of a young lady was lying on the bed, the sheets were soaked in

blood, and he was trying to flee to escape the police. Watching this young man piloting his avatar, it was obvious that in his mind, he was living this adventure. I asked myself whether a cinema audience could at the same time identify with this quiet young man and with his avatar immersed in the game. That's when the prospect of a film in which live action scenes would be interwoven with animated ones gained ground.

Did you have the suicide pact idea from the start?

Sometimes a story needs two distinct ideas to develop. My desire of a plot spanning two worlds really materialized when I thought about these boys and girls who, in Japan or in Europe, meet online and agree to commit suicide together. What struck me in these sundry events, which the media talk a lot about, is that they have an ideal. Their goal is to quit living, but there is a dimension of love in their process. We are all scared of dying alone.



For them, it's about finding the right person, boy or girl, to disappear with. This romantic ideal and the almost sexual nature of these rendezvous between strangers impress and touch me.

If I get it right, the actors didn't see any images of the game during the shoot?

That's correct, they didn't have them. Gregoire had to imagine everything that was taking place on the screen. He had to react to things he wasn't really seeing. When the rhythm of the dialogue required it, we spoke the lines to him through an earpiece. But neither he nor I had seen any animated images yet.

Gregoire Leprince-Ringuet is, I believe, the first actor you chose.

That's true. His combination of youth and maturity appealed to me right away. He was right for Gaspard. He gave Gaspard a kind of seriousness, of righteousness even, which reinforces the confusion Audrey sparks off in him.

The game was created using motion capture. Are the actors playing their avatars?

Gregoire gave his voice to Gordon, but not his body. I didn't want his movements to be recognized behind his avatar's. Another actor played the body. As for Sam, it was Moon Daily, who not only played Sam's body and voice, but also all the female characters in the game, including

the voice of the interface... And she's the one singing the song "Save the Last Dance for Me". She's very present in the film, and not once is her face visible. But she's nonetheless very pretty!

Did the game require a large team?

Quite, yes. From the beginning of the adventure, I asked Djibril Glissant to help me in the animated part. He did it from start to finish, with the small team of five people gathered for the conception all the way to when we mobilized over forty technicians from WFX and Mocaplab for the production. Djibril and I are very close, have been for a long time. During the 18 months of work, we spoke a lot to make sure the game was what we wanted. But on a daily basis, he really piloted the production, technically as well as artistically. In a way, he was my representative in the virtual world. Some may even say that he and Gordon share an uncanny resemblance... Either way, the film owes a lot to him.

The game scenes are real cinema scenes: they play with film noir mythology.

From the beginning of the writing process with Dominik Moll, our premise was that the first scenes in Black Hole needed to respect the logic of a camera driven by the player, but that from the moment Gordon finds Sam in the Heaven, we had to feel free to use all the wealth of

cinematic language. Then the game wasn't dictating the frame anymore, we were the ones telling the story. With shots, reverse shots, tracking shots, ellipses. From then on, the game had to become cinematic. I have to admit that without explicitly seeking the references, we enjoyed conceiving Black Hole by infusing it with our love of cinema. Simply with the black and white of the sets, the red of the Heaven stage curtain, or the femme fatale threatening the hero with her handgun, we were aware we were playing with film noir archetypes.

Speaking of noir, black, where does the name Black Hole come from?

It's an homage to Charles Burns' comic book, *Black Hole*. It's a masterpiece of gloom. A masterpiece full stop, for that matter.

You play with the contrast between the Southern sun and the night world of Black Hole.

The film was shot in Marseille. I was born and I grew up in that city. Most sequences were shot in places I am familiar with. I could have told the story of a frustrated boy bored out of his wits in a sad grey city, who escapes



into a colorful game where he has superpowers. But that wouldn't have been me. I wanted Gaspard to be both happy in his daily life, and haunted by a somber, tougher world. Yet we didn't want a Marseille flattened out by the heat. The Southern sun in the middle of summer can be crushing and unflattering on screen. Celine Bozon, the Director of Photography, understood my wish. She's achieved a picture that's at the same time luminous and shiny while retaining softness on the skins, and great nuances in the colors. On the one hand, South of France, sun, blue sky and blue sea, white rocks, wind in the trees; and on the other, the night that reigns over Black Hole, snow, the obscure outlines of the buildings. I wanted beauty and ideals on both sides.

M83's music plays a paramount role.

It brings idealism. Anthony Gonzales, M83's lead singer, was touring between the United States and Japan, where he is more famous than in France. He composed the main theme, which recurs obsessively. Then, with Olivier Bertrand, who is one of my best friends and advised me on music, we picked existing pieces by M83 for the key scenes in the film. The first one that we knew had to be used was "Farewell Goodbye", "the most beautiful song in the world" as Audrey introduces it to Gaspard. It's a duo between a man and a woman, and the shots between Gaspard and Audrey converse in rhythm with the voices. I like the romantic intensity of this duet: we're always on the verge of an emotional flood, as often with M83.

Louise Bourgoin is particularly in tune as Audrey.

Her screen tests were astonishing. Right away. She was making Audrey more singular than I had imagined her to be. She wasn't playing a vaguely depressive figure. She's miles from that. She was surprising, smiling, with her glamorous side, almost luscious. And at the same time she was radiating mystery, a flaw. Fragile and fatal at the same time.

The absence of parents is striking...

Yes, it feels like there is only one true adult: Marion's father. Patrick Descamps plays him. I like the fact that he is a memorable figure, almost unreal. I thought it fun that the audience could think, for a moment, that he could be a threat to Gaspard.

In his one-on-one with Gaspard, the father says: "You may not have noticed, but Marion is more fragile than she looks." But Marion doesn't seem fragile.

That's true. In fact, she's very strong. Pauline Etienne has the natural strength I wanted for Marion. And grace, to top it off. If Gaspard goes from one world to the other, it's because he's torn between Marion and Audrey. Like two ideals clashing in his head, that cannot coexist. Night and day. Marion, the luminous, simple, healthy girl; and Audrey, the mysterious, unreachable, fantastical woman. One ideal testing the other.



Interview with Djibril Glissant (Animation Artistic Director)

You conceived Black Hole jointly with Gilles Marchand. How do you make the transition from ideas to such a detailed world?

Gently. The first thing we did was to draw up a storyboard. This enabled us to define mise-en-scene, to know how we were going to introduce the characters, the locations. Then we moved forward with Arnaud Baudry, our head set designer. Arnaud put into place the atmosphere of the main sets, the blueish tint of the city, the large concrete structures, the glow of the Heaven, the magical quality of the beach. Once this was set up, an architect helped us define the logic of the city. We didn't want it to look like a creation of the mind. It's a real city in an imaginary world: one can scour it; each building has a reason to be. Even if the viewer only perceives that subconsciously, it makes a difference.

Why are the avatars masked?

We asked Bertrand Gatignol, a very talented young character designer, to create the characters. We took our time to research. He suggested masked characters, which became a leading concept. We used it to define an entire class of characters. Gilles is very flexible when it comes to integrating this type of ideas to the scenario, so he imagined Gordon could also have a mask as he gained experience in the game. This would give him a disturbing side, and make the audience feel, in concrete

terms, that he was moving deeper into a shady world. Sam's mask is the black blindfold she wears on stage, which gives a very singular color to the central song scene.

What were your references for Black Hole?

Our main model was Second Life, because it's a game without rules. It's not really a game, it's a world. Even if Second Life is quite ugly, with coarse and rigid avatar movements, the players are convinced they are moving through a dream world, partially because the game becomes a projection of their imagination. Our visual models were cinematic. From Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* and Orsen Welles' *The Trial* for the breadth of the sets, as well as from Film Noir for the contrasted lighting.

What were the challenges with this particular project?

With computer-generated images, one has to imagine what the film will look like once finished: what is seen is always incomplete. It's quite frightening, as well as exciting. We worked with hypotheses, on texture, colors, animation, and there was no way to check whether we were right until the very end. For example, we insisted on snow, and it's one of the elements that came last. Dozens of machines were requisitioned for weeks. When we saw the first sequences with snow, it was quite magical. We realized we'd been right.





Gilles Marchand

Born on June 18th, 1963 in Marseille

Director

- 2010 BLACK HEAVEN
- 2003 WHO KILLED BAMBI?
Official Selection Cannes Festival 2003
Cesar-nominated for Best First Film and Best Upcoming Actress

Co-screenwriter and artistic advisor

- 2005 LEMMING by Dominik Moll
- 2000 WITH A FRIEND LIKE HARRY by Dominik Moll
- 1999 HUMAN RESSOURCES by Laurent Cantet
- 1997 LES SANGUINAIRES by Laurent Cantet

Co-screenwriter

- 2006 BLACK MAGIC by Djibril Glissant
- 2005 THE AIRPLANE by Cédric Kahn
- 2004 RED LIGHTS by Cédric Kahn
- 2003 BON VOYAGE by Jean-Paul Rappeneau
- 2001 TENDER SOULS by Thomas Bardin
- 2001 THE MILK OF HUMAN KINDNESS by Dominique Cabrera



Grégoire Leprince-Ringuet

Selected Filmography

- 2010 BLACK HEAVEN by Gilles Marchand
- 2009 THE PRINCESS OF MONTPENSIER by Bertrand Tavernier
- 2008 THE ARMY OF CRIME by Robert Guédigian
- 2008 THE BEAUTIFUL PERSON by Christophe Honoré
Cesar-nominated for Most Promising Actor 2009
- 2007 LOVE SONGS by Christophe Honoré
Cesar-nominated for Most Promising Actor 2007
- 2006 LA VIE D'ARTISTE by Marc Fitoussi
- 2006 HORSE THIEVES by Micha Wald
- 2005 CHARLIE SAYS by Nicole Garcia
- 2002 STRAYED by André Téchiné
Cesar-nominated for Most Promising Actor 2003



Louise Bourgoin

Selected Filmography

- 2010 BLACK HEAVEN by Gilles Marchand
- 2010 THE EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURES OF ADÈLE BLANC-SEC
by Luc Besson
- 2010 WHITE AS SNOW by Christophe Blanc
- 2008 THE GIRL FROM MONACO by Anne Fontaine



Melvil Poupaud

Selected Filmography

- 2010 BLACK HEAVEN by Gilles Marchand
- 2009 THE REFUGE by François Ozon
LUCKY LUKE by James Huth
- 2008 CRIME IS OUR BUSINESS by Pascal Thomas
- 2007 A CHRISTMAS TALE by Arnaud Desplechin
- 2005 TIME TO LEAVE by François Ozon
- 2002 EROS THERAPY by Danièle Dubroux
- 2002 FEELINGS by Noémie Lvovsky
- 2000 LOVE TORN IN DREAM by Raoul Ruiz
- 1996 A SUMMER'S TALE by Eric Rohmer
DIARY OF A SEDUCER by Danièle Dubroux
THREE LIVES AND ONLY ONE DEATH by Raoul Ruiz
- 1995 ELISA by Jean Becker



Pauline Etienne

Selected Filmography

- 2010 BLACK HEAVEN by Gilles Marchand
- 2009 SILENT VOICES by Léa Fehner
César-nominated for Most Promising Actress 2009
Lumière Prize for Most Promising Actress 2009
- 2009 PRIVATE LESSONS by Joachim Lafosse



Cast

Grégoire Leprince-Ringuet	Gaspard
Louise Bourgoïn	Audrey
Melvil Poupaud	Vincent
Pauline Etienne	Marion

Crew

Director	Gilles Marchand
Screenplay	Gilles Marchand
	Dominik Moll
Producers	Carole Scotta
	Caroline Benjo
	Simon Arnal
	Barbara Letellier
Co-Producers	Jacques-Henri Bronckart
	Olivier Bronckart
Animation Art Director	Djibril Glissant
Director of Photography	Céline Bozon
Directing Consultant	Dominik Moll
Casting	Constance Demontoy
	Emmanuelle Prevost
Editing	Nelly Quettier
Music	Anthony Gonzales
	Emmanuel d'Orlando
Music Supervisor	Olivier Bertrand
Sound	Gérard Hardy
	Philippe Baudhuin
	Pierre Mertens

Production Designer	Jérémie Sfez
Costumes	Joana George Rossi
1st Assistant Director	Rafaële Ravinet Virbel

And for the animated world

Character Design	Bertrand Gatignol
Head Set Design	Arnaud Baudry
Storyboard and Set Design	Gautier Garin
Urban Design	Mitia Claisse
General Supervisor (WFX)	Nicolas Rey

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