NORD-OUEST PRESENTS



59 Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin Panorama

A FILM BY PHILIPPE LIORET



PRESS:

Viviana Andriani 32, rue godot de mauroy 75009 - PARIS - FRANCE Tel/Fax: +33 1 42 66 36 35 viviana.andriani@wanadoo.fr

IN BERLIN:

Tel: +33 6 80 16 81 39

INTERNATIONAL SALES:



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34, rue du Louvre - 75 001 PARIS - France
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SYNOPSIS



Bilal, a young 17 year old Kurdish boy, has travelled through Middle East and Europe to join his girlfriend, freshly immigrated to England. But his journey comes to an abrupt end when he is stopped on the French side of the Channel.

Having decided to swim across, Bilal goes to the local swimming pool to train. There he meets Simon, a swimming instructor in the midst of a divorce. To impress his wife and win back her heart, Simon decides to risk everything by taking Bilal under his wing.

AN INTERVIEW WITH PHILIPPE LIORET



How did WELCOME come about as a project?

First of all, it came from a strong desire to make a film about this particular subject and no other. About guys who, fleeing their homelands in distress, want at all costs to reach this Eldorado, which to their eyes is England. Yet after an improbable journey they find themselves stuck in Calais - frustrated, ill treated and humiliated- just a few kilometers from the English coastline that they can actually see from where they are.

I was speaking about this one evening with Olivier Adam, and I realized that this place was a bit like the Mexican border, our Mexican border, and that it would only take a bit of digging into the subject to come up with a fantastic piece of drama. I spoke about it to Emmanuel Courcol, and we started thinking about a story that could take place in this framework.

How did you go about it?

Emmanuel and I contacted non-profit organizations that do whatever they can to help these guys, and we left for Calais. For several days during an icy cold winter, we followed volunteers from these organizations and shared the infernal life of the refugees: the "jungle" where they find shelter, the smuggler's extortion racket, the endless persecutions from the police — an entire riot police garrison is dedicated just to them — the refugee detention centers, the constant checks of trucks in which they have squeezed themselves in order to get onto the ferries, and in which they risk their lives trying to escape CO2 detectors, heart monitors, scanners, among other things...

What most surprised us was the age of the refugees, the eldest wasn't even 25. There are even kids around fifteen who set off alone on this mad journey. When we spoke with Sylvie Copyans from the Salam Organization, we learned that several of them, as a last resort, had even attempted to swim across the Channel. We returned to Paris after several days, our minds so full with what we had seen and experienced, that we didn't exchange a single word during the car ride back.

How did the framework of the screenplay develop?

We were haunted by the story of a young guy who wanted to swim across the English Channel. It's Emmanuel who said at first: "He goes to the Calais public swimming pool to train." And then I added: "And he meets a swimming instructor." We then had our characters and the story's framework in two sentences — all the while knowing that we weren't creating a cheap "over-dramatization", nor were we betraying the truth of the refugee's experience. The subject was so strong, and it was so representative of the migrants' reality, that sincerity had to prevail.

That's how Simon's character came to be.

The documentary side to the story had to be left aside to bring the characters over to their personal stories, to the emotional interactions that condition everyone's life and are often the reason behind everything.

Observing the volunteers, I said to myself that some of them were bound to share their lives with someone who probably isn't as committed and generous as they are.

Simon is a fallible person, like all of us, he is far from perfect. At the beginning, like most people from Calais, he isn't interested in the immigrant problem, he just puts up with it: As Marion, his ex-wife says: "He looks away and goes back home." As a younger man, he just missed having a successful career in sports, and this failure has made him bitter. He has retreated into his life as a swimming instructor and today his only problem is that Marion has left him. When he meets Bilal, he helps him for all the wrong reasons. If he offers to take them in, Bilal and his friend Zoran, it's only to impress Marion, to try and prove that he's not the crazed individualist she thinks he is. He does all this in order to win her back. But things get out of control: helping an illegal immigrant is punishable by law.

He gets himself caught up in the middle of a spiral that he can't control.

And the more he is sucked in, the more he becomes conscious of the complete injustice that pervades the situation, the more he becomes attached to Bilal.

Bilal, who wants to go to England to join Mîna. The film could also be summarized as follows: a man loses a woman and his life is turned upside-down. Another, younger man, loves a woman and wants to join her at all costs.

And these two destinies meet, colliding with the absurd world order. The film demonstrates how an encounter can help someone surpass himself.

The situation makes one think of a far from glorious time period, the Occupation...

Yes, all of this could have happened in 1943, and it could be the story of a guy who hides Jewish people in his house and gets caught. Except that this is happening today, two hundred kilometers from Paris.

Were you thinking of Vincent Lindon when you wrote the screenplay?

In my previous films, I often thought of him during the idea stage. First of all because I find him to be a hell of an actor and also because I feel a form of connection between us. But, at the writing stage, I try not to think about the actors and to focus on the characters. Except that this time, we had lunch together between the two stages. I told him about the story and he told me he would do the film without even reading the screenplay. Vincent is a kind-hearted guy and I think that beyond the character of Simon, he liked the idea of embarking on this particular project. So I was thinking about him while I wrote, and since that day nothing has contradicted our working together. However, people who know both our personalities were afraid that sparks would fly on the set. Yet, as we were both working towards the same goal – the film – there was an exceptional chemistry between us that was bound to influence the final result.

What kind of actor is he?

He is able to convey feelings with just a simple movement or posture. Often, thanks to him, you can do away with a word or a phrase. He is a man who gets involved, a perfectionist. As an actor, he is always ready to listen, and tries to ring true rather than make an impression. Thanks to all of that his portrayal of Simon is astounding. I know that after a film is made it is always polite to speak well of everyone, but here, with him, I definitely made a beautiful encounter, artistically and humanly speaking. We've spoken every day since the end of filming, and we see each other often. We'll make other films together.

And Audrey Dana?

Audrey is what the Anglo-Saxons call "the girl next door", the opposite of a starlet. It took me some time to find her. I needed a woman believable as a middle school teacher who goes to serve pasta to refugees just because of simple human engagement. Yet I didn't want to see a militant suffragette turn up. I just needed a woman who felt good about herself and who had true inner generosity. Audrey has this generosity. She was a bit scared by the character of Marion, but she loved the story and I was sure she would be able to find her place in it. She's someone who is whole, who takes things seriously without taking herself too seriously.

And how did you find Bilal?

It was like finding a needle in a haystack. The biggest part of the casting process. When we were writing the character, a 17 year old who only speaks Kurdish and English, and who with Vincent has to carry the film on his shoulders, we put ourselves into a cold sweat. I didn't even know if this guy existed somewhere in the world. With Tatiana Vialle, the casting director, we traveled for weeks from Berlin to Istanbul, London, and Sweden where a large Kurdish community lives. Finally, we discovered Firat in France. Naturally, he wasn't a professional actor and the first tests were...somewhat unusual. But he had a truth and intensity about him that made a difference.

Did he want to be an actor?

Not at all. He had come as an amateur. We even had to persuade him to do it, and convince his parents. I initially planned to work on the part with him, to rehearse a great deal, but in the end I preferred to leave him his naturalness, and I didn't do anything. As the shooting date drew nearer, I became increasingly scared, and so did he. Once on the set, he was awed for three hours, then just as naturally he found his place and the right tone for the role.

There are also a number of non professional actors in the film.

All of the young Kurds that Bilal meets in Calais were found while searching for the actor who would play Bilal. Most of them come from Istanbul and Berlin. I learned a great deal from them. You have to film quickly, not rehearsing too much, letting them evolve without overly "framing" them. It was a great adventure for them — moreover for me as well. It allowed me to make a few wonderful discoveries: Derya, for example, who plays Mîna, turned out to be an exceptional actress and now wishes to pursue the acting profession. I filmed a very complicated scene with her in one take, without rehearals, relying solely on her instinct. She is incredible.

Many other actors whom I like very much have already taken part in my previous films: Emmanuel Courcol my co-scriptwriter, Blandine Pélissier, Eric Herson-Macarel, Gilles Masson... And then Tatiana had me meet key people like Olivier Rabourdin, who plays the police lieutenant - a super complicated role because we see 45 cops a day in TV shows and he had to find a way to make this one unconventional. Patrick Ligarde, the neighbor-informer, Thierry Godard, Jean-Pol Brissard, Yannick Renier...

As in many of your films, the set is a character in itself.

Particularly for the public swimming pool which acts as a catalyst: not only does it evoke Simon's failed career as a swimming champion, but it is also where Bilal learns to swim with the hope of crossing the Channel

It was very important for me to film right at the actual places where the action occurs. When you shoot in real places, you tell the story better: the streets of Calais, the gigantic Trans-Channel port, Blériot beach and its nonstop ferries coming and going...all these atmospheres give the film its truthful nature. In order to emphasize this realistic aspect, the producer Christophe Rossignon and I made a point of not going to shoot in the Czech Republic or in Romania, as often happens for budgetary reasons. The film greatly benefits from this decision.

The direction is omnipresent, yet the camera seems to be discreet, almost invisible.

There aren't a whole lot of possibilities for the camera to shoot a scene well, so you have to find the right one. I spend my time asking actors to be truthful, but the camera can also in its own way strike a "false note".

If the camera is too noticeable in a scene, if its movements are pointless or ornamental, you think: "Oh yes, it's make-believe" and I always have the impression that instead of gaining, you lose something. And then, as a moviegoer, when I like a film, it's as if I were given a gift. But if the work is too noticeable, then it gives me the feeling that the price tag was left on the package.

In the first 15 minutes of the film, it feels as if you are discovering an unknown world (France).

And yet so near. It's also a good thing at the cinema to discover the country we live in from another angle, one that we don't know. Concerning the problem of migrants, refugees and illegal aliens, an increasing number of television shows that are devoted to the subject end up getting lost in the media circus. The end result is that all of these reports and debates, all of this indignation serves no purpose because their message has been drowned out. So I prefer making a film, telling a story on the big screen of these two men — and these two women - confronted with their emotions, in the middle of this whole mess. And at the same time hoping to touch the viewer sitting in the dark, helping him or her to form their own opinion about it all. And hoping that the film will stay with them for a while.



AN INTERVIEW WITH VINCENT LINDON



What touched you in WELCOME?

I was immediately swept away when Philippe told me the story. I remember telling him at the end of a luncheon together that I would read the screenplay purely for the pleasure of it. I was already sure that I wanted to make the film. Later, after having read it, I called to tell him just how much I was taken with this very beautiful blend of roughness and tenderness, and that I was so impatient to start filming that we needed to get started right away.

What I like about Philippe's moviemaking is that he is able to take on very strong subject matters — in this case the fate of refugees in Calais — without taking a head-on approach. He'd rather that you get attached to the characters, to their emotions, those of Simon and Bilal, because everything in the film is connected: the smaller story and the larger picture. The drama is that much stronger for it.

Did Philippe Lioret talk to you about Simon?

In just a few words. The fact is, we mostly spoke about minute details. The instinctive elements that make up a character. During the shoot, we spoke for hours at the hotel bar – but not necessarily about the film. We spoke about life, women, our children, movies we liked...

How did you take possession of the character?

Once again, I'm interested in the small details. In film, I think that clothes make the man. In the swimming pool scenes, I focused on the way my sweatpants fell on my swimming instructor flip-flops. What's important to me is knowing whether the appearance of the guy I'm playing looks believable: the shoes, the whistle, the T-shirt, and a bit of a potbelly as well. Simon is a former professional swimme r who's put on weight since he's given up competition. So to become Simon, I gained weight in order to become the character. Everything has to ring true, the characters, noises echoing at the municipal pool, everything. The psychology comes afterwards; first I tackle the form, the content comes later.

How did the beginning of filming go?

One Saturday evening, having just barely arrived in Calais, Philippe took me to the "quai de la soupe" a soup kitchen where refugees go to eat. We passed by three refugees when leaving, and gave them a lift in our car. They were in a state of utter destitution, but they were all smiling. At their request, we dropped them off in a deserted place that looked like an enormous dump - there wasn't a single living soul nor a single dwelling around. Then without saying a word, Philippe dropped me off at my hotel. The situation spoke for itself. These were my very first moments in Calais, and I'd seen everything I needed to see. We started filming the very next day.

Philippe Lioret explains that you anticipated his requests.

Good! It's all that I'm looking for in my work: move where the director wanted the character to move when writing the script, and stop at the exact place and moment when we both realize that it needs to be done. When you can get to this level of understanding — and it's very rare to get there — we, both he and I know that it rings true.

Both your personalities could have ended up causing difficult conflicts.

Absolutely. A lot of people who knew us both feared that there would be some kind of conflict. And it is exactly the opposite that happened: there was never the slightest moment of doubt or lack of confidence between us. It was as if we were meant to shoot this film together. Despite several missed opportunities on other films, I always knew deep down that there would one day be this great bonding between us. I had the impression that I was meeting my twin.

How did it go on the shoot with Firat Ayverdi, who plays Bilal?

I neither considered him to be a kid, nor an amateur. He was somewhat impressed by me the first days, but then very quickly he relaxed, and in the end we were able to establish a sort of father-son rapport. As a result, I had the feeling that I was just as protective of him on the set as Simon is with Bilal.

AN INTERVIEW WITH AUDREY DANA



What brought about your decision to film WELCOME?

Every time I saw Philippe's work, I would say to myself: "here is a director I dream of working with." He came to one of the first screenings of Claude Lelouch's ROMAN DE GARE (Crossed Tracks), and he said he was thinking about me for a future film... I didn't realize it was for his next film, by the way neither did he, because he had already thought of somebody else for the part. A bit of time passed during which I knew he was thinking about it, but I still wasn't who he pictured. He thought I was too young to play Vincent's wife. And then as things happen, my name came up several times, so he decided to call me back and we met the following day. I was a proud 30 when I sat down at the restaurant table and a few minutes later, he raised his glass to celebrate my 35th birthday and called me Marion.

It was when I read the screenplay for the first time, that I really allowed myself to be happy to have been chosen for the part.

Do you feel close to the character of Marion?

The role wasn't easy for me, even if Philippe thought otherwise. Marion is a simple and understanding person, but mostly she is very calm, composed, and very centered. She's an English teacher, she's politically engaged. I feel so much more edgy and neurotic, more complicated... Faced with this solid and well-balanced girl, I felt as though I was standing on the edge of a black hole. I have the impression that up until now this has been my most difficult role. Not mentioning that she has lived for ten years with a man. Ten years is a long time and I've never been in such a long relationship. So I had to learn everything, leave everything and let myself go...put aside all my reference points and bearings... Today, looking back, I loved meeting and becoming Marion...it was a lesson in humility.

How was it working with Philippe Lioret?

Philippe has one film in mind and not another. Nothing is approximate when he writes a screenplay. His work as a writer is already that of a director.

It's not always easy to follow because he is so precise that he doesn't always understand why everyone doesn't see what he has in mind. But it's also so reassuring... He is completely in control and we know we are doing good work with him. That's it, with Philippe, we work. There's no fuss, work, nothing but work. The fact that he is so demanding becomes contagious – everyone on the set is giving their all, experiencing their most important moments... I know that if people like the film, it's thanks to him; if they find the actors good, it's also thanks to him – but if they hate it, they can blame it on him as well. The film is all him.

I remember a night on the shoot where we had so much rehearsed the text and the staging that I felt as if I was entering into a type of trance. It was the first time I ever worked like that and it taught me a great deal. And now, I believe that I will never approach this profession in the same way.

And with Vincent Lindon?

Vincent Lindon is a kid on the set. Nothing else counts but the film, and everything counts for him, his scenes, the other actors' scenes, the entire film. It is such a pleasure to work with an actor who is that much involved in his work. Even if he's already made a number of films, even if he has a great experience, he's really a kid, with his share of fears and excitement. He shares everything; it feels like he accompanied me during the film, that he held my hand. Today, now that I've seen WELCOME, it's my turn - I'd like to accompany the film, to the end of the world if I have to, because I think it's an important film that deserves to be seen by as many people as possible. It talks about love against a social background, or the opposite, I'm not sure...

It gets close to all that is essential.

And isn't that what moviegoers look for when they go to the movies?

PHILIPPE LIORET FILMOGRAPHY



2009 WELCOME With Vincent Lindon, Firat Ayverdi, Audrey Dana, Derya Ayverdi

JE VAIS BIEN, NE T'EN FAIS PAS / DON'T WORRY, I'M FINE

With Mélanie Laurent (César 2006 for Most Promising Actress),

Kad Mérad (César 2006 Best Supporting Actor)

Cesar Award nominations for Best Film, Best Director, Best Screenplay

L'ÉQUIPIER / THE LIGHT

With Sandrine Bonnaire, Philippe Torreton, Grégory Derangère, Emilie Dequenne Cesar Award nomination for Best Actor (Philippe Torreton), Best Supporting Actress (Emilie Dequenne), Best Original Music (Nicola Piovani)

MADEMOISELLE 2001

With Sandrine Bonnaire, Jacques Gamblin, Zinedine Soualem, Isabelle Candelier

TENUE CORRECTE EXIGÉE

With Jacques Gamblin, Zabou Breitman, Elsa Zylberstein, Jean Yanne

TOMBÉS DU CIEL / LOST IN TRANSIT

With Jean Rochefort, Marisa Paredes, Ticky Holgado, Laura Del Sol

San Sebastian International Film Festival: Awarded Best Director, Best Screenplay

VINCENT LINDON FILMOGRAPHY



| 2009 | WELCOME by Philippe Lioret |
|------|--|
| 2008 | POUR ELLE by Fred Cavayé / ANYTHING FOR HER |
| | MES AMIS, MES AMOURS by Lorraine Levy / LONDON MON AMOUR |
| 2007 | CEUX QUI RESTENT by Anne Le Ny / THOSE WHO REMAIN |
| | Cesar nomination for Best Actor |
| | JE CROIS QUE JE L'AIME by Pierre Jolivet / COULD THIS BE LOVE ? |
| 2006 | SELON CHARLIE by Nicole Garcia |
| | Cannes 59th Film Festival Official Selection |
| 2005 | L'AVION de Cédric Kahn |
| | LA MOUSTACHE by Emmanuel Carrère |
| 2004 | LA CONFIANCE RÈGNE by Etienne Chatiliez |
| 2003 | LE COÛT DE LA VIE by Philippe Le Guay / THE COST OF LIVING |
| _000 | FILLES UNIQUES by Pierre Jolivet / ONLY GIRLS/SOLE SISTERS |
| 2002 | VENDREDI SOIR by Claire Denis / FRIDAY NIGHT |
| | LE FRÈRE DU GUERRIER by Pierre Jolivet / THE WARRIOR'S BROTHER |
| 2001 | CHAOS by Coline Serreau |
| 2001 | MERCREDI, FOLLE JOURNÉE! by Pascal Thomas / DAY OFF |
| 1999 | PAS DE SCANDALE by Benoît Jacquot / KEEP IT QUITE/NO SCANDAL |
| 1999 | MA PETITE ENTREPRISE by Pierre Jolivet / MY LITTLE BUSINESS |
| | Cesar nomination for Best Actor |
| | BELLE MAMAN by Gabriel Aghion / BEAUTIFUL MOTHER |
| 1998 | L'ÉCOLE DE LA CHAIR by Benoît Jacquot / THE SCHOOL OF FLESH |
| 1990 | PAPARAZZI by Alain Berberian |
| 1997 | LE SEPTIÈME CIEL by Benoît Jacquot / SEVENTH HEAVEN |
| | FRED by Pierre Jolivet |
| 1006 | |
| 1996 | LA BELLE VERTE by Coline Serreau |
| | LES VICTIMES by Patrick Grandperret |
| 1000 | LE JOUR DU CHIEN by Ricky Tognazzi / VITE STROZZATE |
| 1993 | TOUT ÇA POUR ÇA! by Claude Lelouch / ALL THATFOR THIS?! |
| 1992 | LA CRISE by Coline Serreau / THE CRISIS |
| | Cesar nomination for Best Actor |
| 1001 | LA BELLE HISTOIRE by Claude Lelouch / THE BEAUTIFUL STORY |
| 1991 | NETCHAÏEV EST DE RETOUR by Jacques Deray / NETCHAÏEV IS BACK |
| 1990 | GASPARD ET ROBINSON by Tony Gatlif |
| | IL Y A DES JOURS ET DES LUNES by Claude Lelouch / THERE WERE DAYSAND MO |
| | LA BAULE-LES-PINS by Diane Kurys |
| 1988 | L'ÉTUDIANTE by Claude Pinoteau / THE STUDENT |
| | QUELQUES JOURS AVEC MOI by Claude Sautet |
| 1987 | UN HOMME AMOUREUX by Diane Kurys / A MAN IN LOVE |
| 1986 | ESCORT GIRL by Bob Swaim |
| 1985 | 37°2 LE MATIN by Jean-Jacques Beineix / BETTY BLUE |
| | PAROLE DE FLIC by José Pinheiro |
| 1984 | NOTRE HISTOIRE by Bertrand Blier |
| | L'ADDITION by Denis Amar |
| 1983 | LE FAUCON by Paul Boujenah / THE HAWK |
| | THE EBONY TOWER by Bob Knight |
| | AUDREY DANA FILMOGRAPHY |
| 2009 | WELCOME by Philippe Lioret |
| | TELLEMENT PROCHES by Olivier Nakache and Eric Toledano |
| | LA DIFFÉRENCE C'EST QUE C'EST PAS PAREIL by Pascal Laëthier |
| 2007 | CE SOIR JE DORS CHEZ TOI by Olivier Baroux / TONIGHT I'LL SLEEP AT YOURS |
| | ROMAN DE GARE by Claude Lelouch / CROSSED TRACKS |
| | Romy Schneider Award 2008 |
| | NOS AMIS LES TERRIENS by Bernard Werber / OUR EARTHMEN FRIENDS - USA title |
| | |

AUDREY DANA FILMOGRAPHY



009 WELCOME by Philippe Lioret
TELLEMENT PROCHES by Olivier Nakache and Eric Toledano
LA DIFFÉRENCE C'EST QUE C'EST PAS PAREIL by Pascal Laëthier

2007 CE SOIR JE DORS CHEZ TOI by Olivier Baroux / TONIGHT I'LL SLEEP AT YOURS
ROMAN DE GARE by Claude Lelouch / CROSSED TRACKS
Romy Schneider Award 2008
NOS AMIS LES TERRIENS by Bernard Werber / OUR EARTHMEN FRIENDS - USA title

CAST LIST



SIMON Vincent Lindon Firat Ayverdi Audrey Dana Derya Ayverdi Thierry Godard Selim Akgül Firat Celik BILAL MARION MINA BRUNO ZORAN KOBAN Murat Subasi MIRK0 Olivier Rabourdin POLICE LIEUTENANT Yannick Renier ALAIN Mouafaq Rushdie Behi Djanati Ataï Patrick Ligardes Jean Pol Brissart Blandine Pélissier MINA'S FATHER MINA'S MOTHER SIMON'S NEIGHBOR JUDGE FAMILY COURT JUDGE

CREDITS



DIRECTED BY EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

Philippe Lioret Emmanuel Courcol Olivier Adam

Christophe Rossignon

Philippe Lioret

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER LINE PRODUCER PRODUCTION DIRECTOR Philip Boëffard Eve Machuel Olivier Hélie

MUSIC

Wojciech Kilar Armand Amar

Nicola Piovani

CINEMATOGRAPHY EDITOR Laurent Dailland (A.F.C.) Andréa Sedlackova Yves Brover

ART DIRECTOR SOUND

Pierre Mertens
Laurent Quaglio
Eric Tisserand

CASTING

FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTORS

Tatiana Vialle
Isabelle Henry
Jessica Palud
Béatrice Pollet
Fanny Drouin

SCRIPT COSTUMES MAKE-UP LOCATION MANAGER

Judith Gayo Julie Belthoise

Eric Duriez Julien Azoulay

SET PHOTOGRAPHER

POST-PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR

Guy Ferrandis



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