

31 JUIN FILMS PRESENTS

VINCENT  
LACOSTE

REDA  
KATEB

JACQUES  
GAMBLIN

MARIANNE  
DENICOURT

# HIPPOCRATES

DON'T WORRY,  
YOUR HEALTH IS IN GOOD HANDS



SEMAINE  
DE LA CRITIQUE  
CANNES 2014  
CLOSING FILM



A FILM BY  
THOMAS LILTI

*Le Pacte*

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# HIPPOCRATES

A FILM BY  
**THOMAS LILTI**

WITH

**VINCENT LACOSTE**   **REDA KATEB**   **JACQUES GAMBLIN**   **MARIANNE DENICOURT**

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## **SYNOPSIS**

Benjamin is meant to be a great doctor, he's certain of it.

But his first experience as a junior doctor in the hospital ward where his father works doesn't turn out the way he hoped it would.

Responsibility is overwhelming, his father is all but present, and his co-junior partner, a foreign doctor, is far more experienced than he is.

This internship will force Benjamin to confront his limits... and start his way to adulthood.

# INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS LILTI

## **Before you became a filmmaker, you studied medicine. How autobiographical is *Hippocrates*?**

I didn't just study medicine, I practiced as a doctor. My medical career ran alongside that as a self-taught filmmaker, until the preproduction of my first film, *Les Yeux Bandés*. For my second movie, I wanted to tie together the two threads. *Hippocrates* is, therefore, an autobiographical film without being a true story. Benjamin is me, but he remains a fictional alter-ego. Like him, I was a very young intern. Like him, my father was a doctor. But beyond my personal experiences in medicine, I wanted to talk about the structure and workings of the hospital through my protagonist.

## ***Hippocrates* actually has two central characters, Benjamin and Abdel.**

That's the paradox of this project. Originally, I didn't want to focus on Benjamin, but pay tribute to the foreign doctors I met in my hospital work. In the end, they taught me medicine: the guys who are there at night or when the going gets tough, the 35-45 year-old foreigners, who have been around the block and with whom you forge bonds of friendship or fraternity. Initially, *Hippocrates* was the story of Abdel.

## **Those bonds put the question of initiation rites at the heart of *Hippocrates*. They are a crucial part of life in the hospital, where almost all the action takes place.**

Throughout the writing process, the script spontaneously and almost systematically rejected anything that happened outside the hospital. This curious phenomenon continued in editing, when more scenes outside were dispensed with. Benjamin and Abdel's trip to Pigalle was much more developed, but shrunk of its own accord, most likely because the reality of hospitals is that they are exclusive, closed-off locations. As an intern, you spend 90% of your time there. Every social rite—male friendships,

love, discovering responsibilities, the relationship with death—takes place on the inside. It became organically apparent that *Hippocrates* had to take place there.

## **The unity of place involves settling a major issue: how to film or embody the hospital?**

That's one of the major gambles in *Hippocrates*, especially since it has been filmed to excess by TV in the last twenty years, feeding the collective unconscious with a set image. One of the escape routes was to film human interactions within the setting, rather than the place, but without betraying its reality. I never lost sight of that reality when we were filming, because it drives the film and its artistic choices. For example, the diversity of settings: most hospitals in Paris are laid out like campuses, with no two buildings alike and all of them with clearly defined functions. Those different atmospheres had to be reconstituted without losing track of the characters who inhabit the buildings. That's the image of this place that sticks in my mind: men and women milling around and co-existing. The walls are nothing but a cocoon.

## **The way you film life there is a different vision than that which French cinema traditionally had of hospital life. Usually, it's shown as a world of bigwigs whose interactions are administrative within a «secure» environment...**

Contemporary hospitals are no longer ultra-modern locations: some are damaged and derelict. The heads of department are now public officials who, while far from destitute, earn significantly less than specialists in private practice. 30-40% of doctors working in public hospitals are foreigners from outside the European Union, underpaid and, to a certain extent, living precarious existences. I wanted to show that without it being the subject of the film, which isn't a story built around those themes. It's not an indictment.

**Its climax has clear social, or even political, relevance however, with the interns on the point of voting to go on strike.**

True. I didn't plan it that way—more the sense of filming a collective movement in this type of structure. It was to avoid overplaying these social themes that the story intentionally resorts to more fictional aspects, such as Benjamin's accident. That's what permits the scene you mention to occur. Movements and revolutions are never triggered by dissatisfaction or systemic flaws, of any kind, but by precise events with strong emotional impact. Generally, I tried to structure *Hippocrates* from that point of view. That scene only works because all the faces in it have become familiar to us throughout the film. The story of Benjamin and Abdel is the epicenter, but it's important to show the collective aspect, to make the audience curious about even minor secondary characters. None of them are there solely to serve a purpose; they all have something at stake, however minor. Of course, telling a story about a place like that today means saying more than that. I don't remember who said you could tell the state of a country from its prisons. I think it's also true of its hospitals, but that wasn't my aim. Without dodging that aspect, *Hippocrates* is not a manifesto.

**Is it that desire not to reduce *Hippocrates* to social commentary that led you to develop the suspense around a medical error as the thread running through the story?**

As a director, I aim for entertainment. Without veering into crime movie or medical thriller territory, I wanted to talk about medical errors and their implications. And through them, issues of impunity. The three pillars of the hospital world—nepotism, corporatism and ethics—are still very present. It's what I've always known. I wanted to discuss the perverse effects of a hierarchical environment: sure, it can protect but it does not prevent guilt, it doesn't stop anyone from having doubts. When I was a young intern, it's that relationship with impunity that caused me most grief because it enables one to glide from ethics to morality when there are grounds to wonder if, in the absence of punishment for an error, it was ever actually committed. And it's an even more important question for a young intern like Benjamin.

**The age differences between the characters have real importance in *Hippocrates*. Benjamin finds himself opposite Abdel, who is a dozen years older than him, and his father. Did this generational aspect influence you when you were casting the picture?**

Like many people, I first noticed Vincent Lacoste in *The French Kissers* (*Les Beaux Gosses*). I wouldn't say that I wrote *Hippocrates* for him, but very soon I sensed the proximity with the character of Benjamin. In any case, I wanted a very young actor and not, as is often the case, to have a 20-year-old played by a 30-year-old. Reda Kateb's natural authority, on screen and in real life, made him another obvious choice early on. There's no real explanation for my choice other than instinct. I sensed something in him very close to the foreign doctors I had worked with. So both actors seemed natural choices for their characters. Professor Barrois was a much bigger role on paper. Jacques Gamblin deploys techniques that are different than Vincent's and Reda's, provoking a contrast that became an asset by adding the necessary rigidity to the character. Between those three, there is Normandy. I wanted a woman who radiates authority while creating a sort of ambiguity because she is beautiful. I definitely didn't want to make her an embittered, a lab rat loner-doctor. Marianne Denicourt perfectly resolved all that.

***Hippocrates* also has some very picturesque minor characters, notably Philippe Rebbot who recounts an episode of Dr. House in a hilarious scene, which emphasizes that hospitals have gone from one of French cinema's favorite settings in the 70s to almost exclusive territory of TV series. How do you explain that transition?**

First of all, it's the reality: people who work in hospitals are very keen on medical series. Also, I think hospitals are the perfect place for those kinds of intrigues. TV has exploited that, from soap operas to crime series. Before that, TV took certain professions and made heroes of them, literally in some cases, but without ever really telling the story of the character's world, which is precisely what I wanted to do with *Hippocrates*. My initial idea was not to tell the story of a young medical intern, but the story behind the scenes.

## BIOGRAPHY

Before graduating from medical school, Thomas Lilti directed three shorts, *Quelques heures en hiver*, *Après l'enfance* and *Roue libre*. He is an atypical filmmaker because he continues to practice as a primary-care physician alongside his work as a writer and director. In recent years, he has developed numerous projects for TV and cinema, including his own debut feature, *Les yeux bandés*, starring Guillaume Depardieu, which was released in 2008. He also co-wrote *Télé Gaucho* with Michel Leclerc, and *Mariage à Mendoza* with Edouard Deluc.

## FILMOGRAPHY

### Director

2014 – HIPPOCRATES

2008 – *LES YEUX BANDÉS*

### Screenplay

2014 – HIPPOCRATES

2012 – WELCOME TO ARGENTINA (*MARIAGE À MENDOZA*)

2011 – PIRATE TV (*TÉLÉ GAUCHO*)

2008 – *LES YEUX BANDÉS*

## FILMOGRAPHY VINCENT LACOSTE

- 2014 – HIPPOCRATES (*HIPPOCRATE*) by Thomas Lilti  
2014 – EDEN by Mia Hansen-Love  
2013 – JACKY IN WOMEN'S KINGDOM (*JACKY AU ROYAUME DES FILLES*)  
by Riad Sattouf  
2012 – ASTERIX AND OBELIX: GOD SAVE BRITANNIA (*ASTÉRIX ET OBÉLIX :  
AU SERVICE DE SA MAJESTÉ*) by Laurent Tirard  
2012 – CAMILLE REWINDS (*CAMILLE REDOUBLE*) by Noémie Lvovsky  
2012 – PLAY IT LIKE GODARD (*JC COMME JÉSUS CHRIST*) by Jonathan Zaccai  
2011 – WOK THE KASBAH (*DE L'HUILE SUR LE FEU*) by Nicolas Benamou  
2011 – SKYLAB (*LE SKYLAB*) by Julie Delpy  
2011 – LOW COST by Maurice Barthélémy  
2011 – AU BISTRO DU COIN by Charles Nemes  
2009 – THE FRENCH KISSERS (*LES BEAUX GOSSES*) by Riad Sattouf

## FILMOGRAPHY REDA KATEB

- 2014 – HIPPOCRATES (*HIPPOCRATE*) by Thomas Lilti  
2014 – L'ASTRAGALE by Brigitte Sy  
2014 – LES CHEVALIERS BLANCS by Joachim Lafosse  
2014 – LA RÉSISTANCE DE L'AIR by Fred Grivois  
2014 – LOST RIVER by Ryan Gosling  
2013 – FAR FROM MEN (*LOIN DES HOMMES*) by David Oelhoffen  
2013 – QUI VIVE by Marianne Tardieu  
2013 – ME, MYSELF AND MUM (*LES GARÇONS ET GUILLAUME, À TABLE !*)  
by Guillaume Gallienne  
2013 – FISHING WITHOUT NETS by Cutter Hodierne  
2013 – GARE DU NORD by Claire Simon  
2013 – PARIS COUNTDOWN (*LE JOUR ATTENDRA*) by Edgar Marie  
2013 – CHRONIQUES D'UNE COUR DE RÉCRÉ by Brahim Fritah  
2013 – THE DREAM KIDS (*LES PETITS PRINCES*) by Vianney Lebasque  
2013 – ZERO DARK THIRTY by Kathryn Bigelow  
2013 – TIED (*UNE HISTOIRE D'AMOUR*) by Hélène Fillières  
2012 – THREE WORLDS (*TROIS MONDES*) by Catherine Corsini  
2012 – COMING HOME (*À MOI SEULE*) by Frédéric Videau  
2010 – LILY SOMETIMES (*PIEDS NUS SUR LES LIMACES*) by Fabienne  
Berthaud  
2009 – SILENT VOICE (*QU'UN SEUL TIENNE ET LES AUTRES SUIVRONT*)  
by Léa Fehner  
2009 – A PROPHET (*UN PROPHÈTE*) by Jacques Audiard

## CAST LIST

**Benjamin** Vincent Lacoste  
**Abdel** Reda Kateb  
**Barois** Jacques Gamblin  
**Denormandy** Marianne Denicourt  
**Stéphane** Félix Moati  
**Myriam** Carole Franck  
**Guy** Philippe Rebbot  
**Mrs Lemoine** Julie Brochen  
**Mrs Richard** Jeanne Cellard  
**Mr Lemoine aka «Tsunami»** Thierry Levaret

## CREW LIST

**Director** Thomas Lilti  
**Production** 31 JUIN FILMS  
Agnès Vallée, Emmanuel Barraux  
**Coproduction** France 2 Cinéma  
**Screenplay** Thomas Lilti  
Baya Kasmi  
Pierre Chosson  
Julien Lilti  
**First Assistant Director** Amandine Escoffier  
**Image** Nicolas Gaurin  
**Set** Philippe Van Herwijnen  
**Sound** François Guillaume  
Raphaël Sohier  
Jean-Paul Hurier  
**Editing** Christel Dewynter  
**Music** Sylvain Ohrel  
Alexandre Lier  
Nicolas Weil  
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