

WHY NOT PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

Laetitia
Casta

Joseph
Engel

Louis
Garrel



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
SPECIAL SCREENING
2021 OFFICIAL SELECTION

The Crusade

A film by **Louis Garrel**

FRANCE - 2021 - 1.66 - 5.1 / COLOR RUNNING TIME: 1H06

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Synopsis

Abel and Marianne discover that their 13-year-old son Joseph has secretly sold their most precious possessions. They soon find out that Joseph is not the only one – all over the world, hundreds of children have joined forces to finance a mysterious project. Their mission is to save the planet.



Interview with Louis Garrel

Did the idea for *The Crusade* come from discussions you may have had with the younger generation?

Not at all! It's much crazier. Jean-Claude (Carrière) and I were on a plane coming back from New York, he told me he had a very good idea for a scene. He got lots of ideas above the clouds. In Paris he read me the scene, which later become the first scene of *The Crusade*. I said: "But it's not normal!"... kids passionate about environmentalism? I thought it was an adult idea we put in children's heads, it made me uneasy, it didn't seem right. I talked about it with friends, read the scene to them, they all thought like me, it didn't ring true. Jean-Claude was a little offended, he was so certain. Three months passed and I saw on television a Swedish teenager who had gone on hunger strike, she'd decided to go into action for environmentalism, no longer able to stand the fact that no one was doing anything about it. It was Greta Thunberg. I called Jean-Claude: "Are you watching TV?" He hadn't seen it yet. I said it was uncanny, exactly like in the scene he had written. And four months later, all these kids were demonstrating.

You could say that Jean-Claude was prophetic!

He was one of the first to take an interest in environmentalism, he even wrote a book on it (*Le Pari* 1972) in which he evoked all those concerns that are now so topical. He advised me to hurry up and

make this film or else it would look like I was chasing after the event. And this is indeed what is happening – the proof lies in your first question. I like that *The Crusade* has a "live coverage" side to it, but had I listened to Jean-Claude, I would have been ahead! I was cowardly, or not visionary enough. But at the time, this quasi-anthropological collective surge of young people didn't exist.

This "delayed start" doesn't detract from the film's political relevance, or our pleasure watching it...

I think the film works because of this "live coverage" feel, and because of the kids. If I'd made it before young people had mobilized, it would have rung false, and appeared as if we had taken advantage of children. No one could have ever thought that 10, 12-year-old kids would go into action this way. I didn't start this film as an advocate. On the contrary, I look at these children because they are alien to me. My position as a filmmaker and my role as a father in the film helped me take a step back. My critical position allowed me to make the film. I'm not saying to the viewer: "You absolutely have to listen to these nice kids". There's nothing more insufferable than a radical militant film. *The Crusade* is more dialectical.

Did you choose a light comic tone to balance the seriousness of the subject, to avoid preaching?

You open more doors with humour. The problem with





“The kids’ project in the film isn’t so far-fetched.”

most militant films is that they don’t take the viewer into consideration. They give ready-made answers, they define Good and Evil, and the spectator just has to follow. With a humorous approach, the spectator has his or her place. The principle of comedy is to push reality a little further. This is precisely the first scene: how far did the kid go? This way the audience can feel the pleasure of a comedy that also explores an existential concern. I loved the idea of dealing with a very distressing topic in a cheerful way.

The utopian project of the children – shifting a sea into the Sahara Desert – recalls Alphonse Allais, who spoke of “planting cities in the country.”

Yes, but wait...When Jean-Claude talked to me about this idea, this screenplay, I was still dubious. While doing some research I discovered that in 1890 Ferdinand de Lesseps (who developed the Suez Canal) went to the Senate to propose diverting the Mediterranean Sea into the Algerian desert to create an inland ocean. This project had two goals: cooling the climate and creating arable land. The Senate studied it, but they didn’t have the technology to raise the dunes, it was too mammoth a task, way too expensive. Then Jules Verne wrote a book inspired by the project, *Invasion of the Sea*. I also discovered the story of the Salton Sea in California: a dam collapsed, and water ran into the desert, naturally creating an inland sea. Today this sea is polluted and drying up but in the 50s it was a holiday resort with beaches and hotels. In short, moving water from the sea to arid regions is possible. We send rockets to Mars, why can’t we move a sea? If Elon Musk were to investigate this matter, I’m convinced he would succeed. There are geographers and engineers who have these kinds of ideas, far-fetched at first, but possibly brilliant and feasible for global ecology. The kids’ project in the film isn’t so far-fetched.



Let’s return to Greta Thunberg, who seems the film’s leading light in a way. Without being an environmental activist, do you admire her as a crucial figure of our times?

At first, she said: “We need to deal with the issue of the environment.” She’s facing her own extinction when she hears that the planet will become inhabitable in fifty years. So she thinks everything must stop now. We think she’s exaggerating, it’s too radical. Then Covid comes along and bang, we’re all facing our own death. And just like that, we were able to stop everything with the lockdowns! I put myself in the shoes of the 15-year-olds, they must be furious, wondering: “Why are they doing it for themselves but not for us?”

The film seems to look at these children with a mixture of approval for their commitment and slight concern at their extremism.

For now, the children are demonstrating. They’re only protesting. The idea in the film is that they don’t just protest, they take action, they go all the way. They discuss feasibility, study the benefit/risk ratio, find financing – in short, they act.

The first sequence is funny because of its contrast: the parents are disconcerted by the actions of their son Joseph, who has sold their belongings without any warning. What Joseph is doing is shocking at first, but isn't he right, ultimately?

Yes, he sold their clothes, their possessions, their wine... We can get rid of the superfluous, the luxuries. We all have things at home that we don't use but whose mere presence reassures us. Joseph hasn't sold anything vital. Imagine if we sold everything that was superfluous worldwide, we would end up with a great kitty for environmental projects. The kids' idea is a good one.

The Crusade puts its finger on an aspect that seems important to me: what is shocking about Greta Thunberg and the kids who follow her commitment isn't so much their ideas as much as their age. We find it difficult to accept that minors are appropriating subjects deemed for adults only.

Yes, I agree. If nothing happens, if there is no environmental policy followed by results, we're not going to be immune to more violent actions.

Aren't groups like Extinction Rebellion or the Zadists (Zone to Defend, French protest movement) saying exactly this?

No one knows what could happen in the near future. If it becomes clear that we are heading towards extinction, the life impulse is so strong, as Freud explained, that I don't see how we can avoid violent reactions. I defend environmentalism, not on a day-to-day basis but at the level of heads of state: it's up to them to make radical decisions. If they don't, the coming generations will be radicalised, and the planet will become unliveable.

Nonetheless we can feel that things are changing: eco-districts, self-sufficient buildings, electric and maybe soon hydrogen cars, solar and geothermal energy...

Yes, but it's all too feeble, too slow, too timid. Things are happening, but will it be enough? And on the other hand, we keep our blinkers on. We can't live all day with the notion that in thirty, forty years the earth will no longer be habitable, or we'd stop living. So we try not to think about it.

The fine particle pollution sequence calls to mind the Covid situation. Was the film written before the pandemic?

I wrote and filmed it before Covid, but we had to stop during lockdown when we were shooting that particular scene. I asked a friend to film me with his phone in the empty streets of Paris. When the pandemic started, we heard the same sceptical reactions as in the face of global warming: "No, it's not possible, it's only a flu..." etc. It took the corpses to start piling up for us to realise that this was serious, that it was a global epidemic. The combination of circumstances meant that there was an echo between this scene and Covid. There's something curious about this film: we start writing it, there's nothing going on with kids, then kids come to the fore with Greta Thunberg. We write the particles alert scene and bang, Covid happens. In fact, I bet you diverting the sea to Africa will be possible after all. I might not see it in my lifetime, but it will happen. The desert will have better oxygenation, there will be rain, crops, etc... It shouldn't be forgotten that in the distant past, the deserts of Africa were green.

The scene of the particles alert is very stressful, bringing about a change of register in the film, which is rather light until then.

Yes, that's what we wanted. I would have liked to go even further into something darker, but Jean-Claude didn't agree. He wanted the film to remain optimistic. And by the way, the final scene concludes the film on a note of hope. As if we had delegated our future to the kids and that in the end, they succeed.

“I hope everyone will laugh when they see the film! If people laugh it means that we have touched the right nerve.”

“I’d really like the film to tend towards dream, towards utopia.”



It is an ending worthy of a fairytale, a fable...

I’d really like the film to tend towards dream, towards utopia. This doesn’t rule out more distressing sequences, like the scene of the alert. I thought of Peter Watkins’ film, *The War Game*, where he films a simulated nuclear attack. This sequence of *The Crusade* is an alert in the film and an alert for the viewers, so they can think: “We mustn’t allow such a thing to happen one day...”. It’s logical that at the end, only the mother, played by Laetitia Casta, is on screen, and not the father, played by me. The mother is less sceptical than him, she agrees more quickly with the children’s project. We think she is naïve, but in fact, she’s simply logical. The end is a mirage, a mirage of cinema, which means that the film itself believes in this utopian project.

In your directing, you seem to have wanted to stick as closely as possible to the narrative and the characters, as if in the heat of the moment: for example, the rapid and sudden pans in the opening sequence.

Dzigo Vertov’s theorised *mise en scene* thus: there’s a camera that knows what’s going to happen and another that doesn’t. I told my DP: “You don’t know what’s going to happen, you’re going to follow like a reporter who discovers what he is filming as he is filming it.” The camera’s point of view is that of an adult who doesn’t know what’s going on with the children. This is also the first time I’ve shot digitally. *The Crusade* is very much: “It’s happening now, right now.” Everything is shot in the present.

Your DP is Julien Poupard, who worked on *Divines* and *Les Misérables*, other films very much in the present.

I’d never worked with Julien before, but had noted he was an excellent cinematographer, especially with handheld camera. The whole of *The Crusade* is handheld, I don’t believe there’s a single tripod shot. My previous films were filmed using tripods, but when you choose this option, you start having ideas of more composed shots, more static too, and I didn’t want that at all for this film. On the contrary, I wanted it to be very alive.

That’s interesting, because here you take the absolute opposite view to your father, Philippe Garrel. You don’t have a filial superego?

No, not at all. I was very happy to shoot this way. This process forced me to rehearse a lot with the actors from the initial stages. We launched a machine that was ready to shoot, and the camera came in later and had to find angles, positions to film what had already been staged. I didn’t rehearse with camera positions in mind. I wanted the film to have a strong rhythm, the narrative train to be fast-paced, so that viewers wouldn’t ask themselves thousands of questions. Jean-Claude hated psychology and he taught me one lesson: in cinema, characters are defined by what they do, and not by pre-established psychological patterns. Their actions define them.

Nonetheless, you have inherited one of your father’s cinematic characteristics: making “family films”, with those close to you, starting with yourself. Is it a given for you to appear in your own films?

It’s an exercise I enjoy. For this film in particular, I loved telling this story about environmentalism, but to avoid it becoming preachy, I played the role of the sceptic. I think it opens the dialogue in the film and gives a space to the audience.

You directed your wife Laetitia Casta, and Joseph Engel, who was in your previous film...

I make films with people who are around me because they are ok to rehearse, and I love to rehearse all the time. It's easier with people who are close to you. With Laetitia, it's a given: she's an actress, she's talented and we live together, so we can work at home. Joseph is the son of friends, so he's easy to get a hold of for rehearsals. The other couple are a real couple who are friends of ours. The writing of the film had something of a boulevard-comedy about it, in the sense that the actors play roles very far from their true selves. I'd say to them: "I know that you don't think like your character, but I have to believe that you do." Joseph isn't at all militant about the environment in real life, but he managed to convince me that he was.

You mentioned Jean-Claude Carrière, who recently passed away. Beyond your friendship and the original idea of this film, what exactly did he bring to the writing?

He had a science of image storytelling. For example, *The Crusade* starts outright, no exposition: that's typical Jean-Claude. I saw him as an intellectual peasant: he was a well of culture and at the same time very simple, devoid of snobbery – everything he did was understandable by all. At the beginning, our screenplay was too short, but our producer, Pascal Cacheteux, said: "No problem. Shoot, and

you'll write the rest while you're filming." And that's what happened. We shot, we were interrupted, we made a work-in-progress and called in a screenwriter, Naïla Guiguet, with whom we wrote many more scenes. The budget being tight, the film got written in a relaxed way, without pressure.

For the score, you reunited with Grégoire Hetzel, who composed the music for *Little Tailor*.

Right. For the previous films, I had remixed Philippe Sarde's music... I was DJ Sarde! Here, I needed an original score. We tinkered. He composed at night, and because of Covid we recorded with the orchestra in Prague via Facetime! I showed up at Grégoire's house at 9am and the orchestra was on his computer screen. They exchanged remarks and directions on Facetime and bingo, in one and a half hours it was in the can!

When you make a film like *The Crusade*, do you hope to have an impact, however minimal, on the way the world works?

No, I hope to make everyone laugh. If it works, it means you've touched the right nerve. It is not my ambition to change consciences but to make the right film, and to make it funny. Then, more secretly, I hope it will touch 15 to 20-year-olds, that they will feel that this is a film that talks about their reality, their era, their concerns.

Interviewer – Serge Kaganski



Louis Garrel

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- 2021 THE CRUSADE | LOUIS GARREL
RIFKIN'S FESTIVAL | WOODY ALLEN
- 2020 CARAVAGGIO'S SHADOW | MICHELE PLACIDO
- 2019 DNA | MAIWENN
César Nomination 2021, Best Supporting Actor
A RAINY DAY IN NEW YORK | WOODY ALLEN
THE STORY OF MY WIFE | ILDIKO ENYEDI
OUR MEN | RACHEL LANG
- 2018 A FAITHFUL MAN | LOUIS GARREL
AN OFFICER AND A SPY | ROMAN POLANSKI
Best Film Nominee Venice FF
César Nomination 2020 Best Supporting Actor
LITTLE WOMEN | GRETA GERWIG
- 2017 ONE NATION, ONE KING | PIERRE SCHOELLER
Out of Competition Venice FF
- 2016 REDOUBTABLE | MICHEL HAZANAVICIUS
Official Selection Cannes 2017
César Nomination 2018, Best Actor
ISMAEL'S GHOSTS | ARNAUD DESPLECHIN
Out of Competition Cannes FF
- 2015 THE SUMMONING | REBECCA ZLOTOWSKI
FROM THE LAND OF THE MOON | NICOLA GARCIA
Official Selection Cannes FF
César Nomination Best Film 2017
- 2014 TWO FRIENDS | LOUIS GARREL
Critics' Week Cannes FF
IN THE SHADOW OF WOMEN | PHILIPPE GARREL
Directors' Fortnight Cannes FF
MY KING | MAIWENN
Official Selection Cannes FF
César Nomination Best Supporting Actor 2016

- 2013 SAINT LAURENT | BERTRAND BONELLO
César Nomination Best Supporting Actor and Best Film 2015
Official Selection Cannes FF
JEALOUSY | PHILIPPE GARREL
Official Selection Venice FF
Official Selection New York FF
- 2012 A CASTLE IN ITALY | VALE RIA BRUNI-TEDESCHI
Official Selection Cannes FF
Official Selection Thessaloniki IFF
- 2010 A BURNING HOT SUMMER | PHILIPPE GARREL
Golden Lion Nominee Venice FF
BELOVED | CHRISTOPHE HONORE
- 2009 THE THREE-WAY WEDDING | JACQUES DOILLON
MAKING PLANS FOR LENA | CHRISTOPHE HONORE
- 2007 FRONTIER OF THE DAWN | PHILIPPE GARREL
Official Selection Cannes FF
LOVE SONGS | CHRISTOPHE HONORE
Official Selection Cannes FF
Selected Washington DC C'est Chic FF
ACTRESSES | VALÉRIA BRUNI-TEDESCHI
Un Certain Regard Award Cannes FF
IN PARIS | CHRISTOPHE HONORE
- 2005 A CURTAIN RAISER | FRANÇOIS OZON | (short)
- 2004 REGULAR LOVERS | PHILIPPE GARREL
Louis-Delluc Award
Most Promising Actor César Award
Silver Lion Award Venice FF
Best Male Newcomer Etoile d'Or
- 2003 THE DREAMERS | BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI

Laetitia Casta

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

CINEMA

- 2021 THE CRUSADE | LOUIS GARREL
- 2020 LUI | GUILLAUME CANET
SELON LA POLICE | FREDERIC VIDEAU
- 2019 BEYOND THE HORIZON | DELPHINE LEHERICEY
- 2018 A FAITHFUL MAN | LOUIS GARREL
- 2017 THE IDEAL PALACE | NIELS TAVERNIER
- 2014 THE APACHES | NASSIM AMAOUCHE
FRENCH WOMEN | AUDREY DANA
DES LENDEMAINS QUI CHANTENT | NICOLAS CASTRO
A WOMAN AS A FRIEND | GIOVANNI VERONES
- 2012 TIED | HÉLÈNE FILLIERES
- 2011 DO NOT DISTURB | YVAN ATTAL
WAR OF THE BUTTONS | CHRISTOPHE BARRATIER
ARBITRAGE | NICHOLAS JARECKI
- 2010 THE ISLAND | KAMEN KALEV
BEHIND THE WALLS | JULIEN LACOMBE AND PASCAL SID
- 2009 GAINSBOURG: A HEROIC LIFE | JOANN SFAR
FACE | TSAI MING-LIANG
- 2007 THE MAIDEN AND THE WOLVES | GILLES LEGRAND
BORN IN 68 | OLIVIER DUCASTEL AND JACQUES MARTINEAU
- 2006 LE GRAND APPARTEMENT | PASCAL THOMAS
- 2003 ERRANCE | DAMIEN ODOUL
- 2001 LOVE STREET | PATRICE LECONTE
- 2000 SAVAGE SOULS | RAOUL RUIZ
- 1999 GYPSY | MANUEL PALACIOS
- 1998 ASTERIX AND OBELIX vs. CAESAR | CLAUDE ZIDI



THEATRE

- 2022 CLARA HASKIL | PRELUDE ET FUGUE BY SERGE KRIBUS
Directed by Safy Nebbou
Theatre du Rond-Point et Tournée en France
- 2017 SCENES FROM A MARRIAGE | SAFY NEBBOU
- 2008 ELLE T'ATTEND | FLORIAN ZELLER Theatre de la Madeleine
- 2005 ONDINE | JACQUES WEBER

Cast

Marianne - Laetitia Casta
Joseph - Joseph Engel
Abel - Louis Garrel
Clotilde - Ilinka Lony
Lucile - Julia Boème
Jérôme Lhomond - Lionel Dray
Audrey Lhomond - Clémence Jeanguillaume
Taxi Driver - Lazare Minougou
Police Chief - Farid Bouzenad
Police Officer - Basilis Athanassiadis
Police Officer - Patrice Trohel
Young Activist - Oumy Bruni-Garrel
Young Activist - Gloria Deparis
Young Activist - Emiliano Laurenti
Young Activist - Mathieu Maricau
Desert Guide - Moustapha Mbengue
Guide's Wife - Maimouna Gueye
Guide's Daughter - Sokhna Diallo
Guide's Son - Mohamed Kane
Woman Evangelist - Béatrice Michel
Woman Evangelist - Hadidiatou Sakhi
Danish Tourist - Myriam Sif

Crew

Director: **Louis Garrel**
Screenplay: **Jean-Claude Carrière and Louis Garrel**
With the collaboration of **Naïla Guiguet**
DP: **Julien Poupard**
Sound: **Laurent Benaïm - Alexandre Hecker and Olivier Guillaume**
Editor: **Joëlle Hache**
Production Designer: **Mila Préli**
Casting: **Christel Barras**
Continuity: **Anaïs Sergeant**
Original Music: **Grégoire Hetzel**
1st Assistant Camera: **Maxime Gérygn**
2nd Assistant Camera: **Lola Pion**
Props: **Zoé Carré**
Executive Producers: **Martine Cassinelli and Mélissa Malinbaum**
Production Manager: **Monica Taverna**
1st assistant Director: **Quentin Janssen**
Location Manager: **Chloé Dagonet**
Costume Designer: **Barbara Loison**
Make-up: **Marie-Anne Hum**
Hair: **Philippe Mangin**
Post-production: **Béatrice Mauduit and Steven Martin**
Colour Grading: **Richard Deusy**
International Sales: **Wild Bunch**
Running time: **1h06**
1.66 / 5.1
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