Le Skylab
a film by Julie Delpy
1979. Albertine, 10 years old, and all her relatives have gathered in the family house in Brittany for their grandmother’s birthday. All believe the Sky Lab, a piece of a NASA rocket, will fall on their heads that summer. This reunion turns out to be a crazy weekend of revelations, love and singing...

Skylab (literally lab in the sky) was the first American space station. It was launched the 14th of May 1973 and disintegrated itself over the Indian ocean the 11th of July 1979 entering the atmosphere. Many little parts fell on the west side of Australia but not in France as some expected it.
Interview with Julie Delpy

How do you go from a film like THE COUNTESS to LE SKYLAB?

I have always had a rather eclectic taste in film, since I like Santa Claus Is a Stinker just as much as Fanny and Alexander! And I equally enjoy Pasolini, Godard, Woody Allen, Douglas Sirk, Leo McCarey and Spielberg. What I like is being able to work with truly different genres. I would now like to make a science-fiction film and a thriller.

When did you start wanting to recount your childhood memories from the summer of 1979?

I started working on it in 2003. From the onset, I didn’t want a classical narrative thread but very colorful and intriguing characters in order to tell the story with very few dramatic elements. For me, you can express very powerful things with simple moments from everyday life, when hardly anything happens. Therefore, I was attached to the idea of staying with this little girl’s point of view as well as her memories while striving to keep the spectators interested through the tensions existing between the characters. I would like to specify that the film is not entirely autobiographical: I invented several characters, such as Uncle Hubert, who reminded me of certain Italian films.

Where did the movie’s title, Le Skylab, come from?

I wanted to talk about a family reunion over which hangs a threat, the Skylab, which ends up falling very far from where they are but which is ever present throughout the film. It is important to Albertine because everything could be destroyed – her childhood, her family, her first pangs of love, etc. In a certain way she undergoes another cataclysm: she falls in love and leaves childhood behind. I also liked the idea of confusing genres by making a comedy about a family with a title better suited for a science-fiction film!

The characters’ depiction, including that of the supporting roles, is fantastic. What was the process of creating them?

It is very important, for me, that they all have an existence and a depth to them. When I imagined them in the scenario, my thoughts went back to pre-war French cinema, in which supporting roles often were thoroughly written. I tried to give them texture and substance, whether it be the two somewhat uptight cousins or the pervert on the train.

We readily think of the Italian comedies from the ’70s and ’80s.

I love Italian cinema from this era – and particularly Viva Italia! – which is filled with an unbelievable life energy: people have rows and discuss politics all while playing poker and drinking! It’s great because it gives you the possibility to address serious subjects without stepping out of the comedy genre.

The family is a space for gathering but also for various forms of outbursts.

Yes, because within this family – just as politically involved a mine! – there are both left-wing intellectuals who love Brassens, Ferré and Barbara, and others who listen to Sardou, Claude François and Dalida. You need to keep in mind that the film takes place in 1979, just as the left was uniting, two years before the presidential election, which was already in every conversation. This said, I didn’t want to have a Manichean approach to left-wing and right-wing people because I feel this kind of judgment is very pernicious.

Some of the characters’ views are somewhat radical, especially when it comes to death penalty.

At the end of the ’70s, the left scared a lot of people because it hadn’t been in power for a long time and people feared they would form an alliance with the communists. In reaction to that, right-wing people had become more radical on questions such as the former colonies or, indeed, the death penalty.
Regardless of their background, women strongly voice their opinion. Most of these women are strong women who are not pushovers. In 1979, the sexual revolution had already happened and even housewives knew they no longer had to shut their trap! Although their husbands are sometimes hard on them, they certainly aren’t dominated by them.

The sheep’s point of view vis-à-vis the guests is rather amusing. It embodies the wise man’s point of view: the sheep can only contemplate philosophically as its offspring is being eaten by these “Gauls”! As it is, in the film the adults are the wild ones while the kids are more down to earth than their elders: Albertine is the one who reflects on death and who, with her cousins, cheers up Uncle Hubert. I am very familiar with this, for my parents’ generation was far wilder than mine.

You didn’t find it a bit frightening to direct the actors in a choral film? It was monstrously messy, but we had so much fun! We filmed in Brittany, so everyone was staying at the same hotel and soon all kinds of bonds were tied. On the set, the actors were happy to be there and be together. It is essential, for me, that the actors be happy. I hate tension and conflicting relationships while shooting.

How did you choose the actors? I organized a lot of meetings between actors to see how the film’s “couples” would work. For instance, Aure Atika and Jean-Louis Coulloch made a rather unusual couple that I found interesting. There was also Noémie Lvovsky and Candide Sanchez, who come from very different backgrounds. Once you’ve found this alchemy, it is as though a charm were operating.

How did you direct them? I am more interested in the actual behavior of the characters than in their psychology. This is why I wanted Eric Elmosnino to have a very tender and paternal relationship with his daughter, although this is not necessarily how he had first envisioned the character. I told him he was the kids’ uncle and godfather and I encouraged him to take them in his arms, to kiss them. Obviously, since he’s an actor who instantly grasps what you expect from him, it made my work much easier. And he brought his warmth and affection to the kids, which sets the tone for the character.

All the actors have become one with their character. This also has to do with the way they “look”. I worked a lot on each character’s clothing style with the head costume designer, Pierre-Yves Gayraud. It is really important because everyone expresses who he or she is through the way they dress. In the same vein, the actors’ body language, the way they hold a cigarette or move their hands, or even their hair style reveals a lot about who they are. This is how actors create and shape their character.

And casting the children? I devoted a lot of time to that because it was a fundamental element of the film. I had the kids come back countless times, here again to make sure they worked well together. I also held a casting session in Brittany.

We have the feeling that it was a very cheerful, very luminous shoot... It was the case, even though we only had six weeks to shoot and several of the actors were shooting other films at the same time. This complicated logistics required some juggling! But there was this terribly contagious good humor on the set and it nourished the film.

Did you know that you were going to play in the film? When I wrote the film, my part was a smaller one, that of Aunt Clémentine, the school teacher. But by the time the film made it into production, several years later, I found myself being the age my mom was at the time Skylab happened. I therefore decided to portray her on screen. It’s probably a way of honoring her.

How did you tackle the photography angle? I called upon Lubomir Bakchev, with whom I had already worked for 2 days in Paris. He’s someone I really like because he controls the frame and is therefore really close to the actors: he doesn’t have an overblown ego, he is very grounded and very reassuring – which is something I need because I tend to get stressed out! I wanted the light to be bright, cheerful, and solar, to reflect the joy emanating from the film shoot and the characters.

How did you choose the music? I worked with a musical supervisor and I only used music that was “in”. I was particularly careful with the “dance” in order to convey the feeling that we’re dancing along with this young girl when she dances a ‘slow dance’ and falls in love for the first time. I chose “Ni trop tôt, ni trop tard” by Jeanne Moreau, which I liked so much when I was little. The rest are mainly songs hummed or sung by the characters.

The interview took place in Paris in April 2011.
Julie Delpy is the daughter of Albert Delpy and Marie Pillet, both stage actors. When she was 7, she appeared in François Barat’s feature film, CIVIL WARS IN FRANCE. The critics and the public quickly took interest in her with the parts she played in the films by Jean-Luc Godard (DETECTIVE) and Leo Carax (BAD BLOOD). She was truly revealed at the age of 17 in Beatrice, a medieval epic directed by Bertrand Tavernier. Her reputation soon crossed borders, leading her to work for directors as different as Volker Schlöndorff (Voyager), Agnieszka Holland (EUROPA EUROPA) or Kieslowski (THREE COLORS: BLUE, WHITE, RED).

Although she played many parts in big productions, Julie Delpy has remained attached to independent cinema. She moved to Los Angeles in 1994 to take part in the filming of Roger Avary’s thriller, KILLING ZOE, which was followed by other television and film roles.

In the ‘80s, she took acting classes at the Actor’s Studio in New York, then learned directing at the Tisch School of the Arts (New York University). In 1998, she played the part that made her famous in Richard Linklater’s BEFORE SUNRISE, and reunited with the director and her co-star, Ethan Hawke, nine years later for a second opus, BEFORE SUNSET. The film earned Richard Linklater, Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy an Oscar nomination for best screenplay. In 2001, she played Dr. Kovac’s fiancée in seven episodes of the TV series ER.

She also started writing her own screenplays, made an album and directed several film shorts. In 2007, she wrote and directed 2 DAYS IN PARIS, a romantic comedy in which she played the leading role. The film was presented in Berlin; it received the Henri Langlois Prize as well as a Cesar nomination. In 2009, she directed and played in THE COUNTESS, based on her scenario about Countess Bathory.

LE SKYLAB is her first choral film; it was filmed in Brittany, in the place where she grew up.

She then went to New York to shoot 2 DAYS IN NEW YORK, scheduled to be released in 2012.

She now shares her life between Los Angeles and Paris.
**Eric Elmosnino - Jean**

Selective filmography

- **2012** Télé Gaucho by Michel LECLERC
- **2011** Le Skylab by Julie DELPY
- **2010** Gainsbourg: A Heroic Life by Joann SFA
  - César for best actor
- **2009** Father of My Children by Mia HANSEN LOVE
- **2008** Summer Hours by Olivier ASSAYAS
- **2007** Actresses by Valeria BRUNI TEDESCHI
- **2001** Freedom Oléron by Bruno PODALYDÈS
- **1999** Life Doesn’t Scare Me by Noémie LVOVSKY
- **1994** Colonel Chabert by Yves ANGELO

**Noémie Lvovsky - Monique**

Selective filmography

**Actress**

- **2011** Le Skylab by Julie DELPY
- **2009** Copacabana by Marc FITOUSSI
- **2007** Actresses by Valeria BRUNI TEDESCHI
- **2005** Backstage by Emmanuelle BERCOT
- **2004** Kings & Queen by Arnaud DESPLÉCHIN
- **2003** France Bouteique by Tonie MARSHAL
- **2001** My Wife is an Actress by Yvan ATTAL

**Director**

- **2007** Let’s Dance
- **2003** Feelings

*Louis Delujo Prize*

- **1999** Life Doesn’t Scare Me
  - Jean Vigo Prize – Silver Leopard at the Locarno Festival

**Bernadette Lafont - Mamie**

Selective filmography

- **2011** Le Skylab by Julie DELPY
- **2009** Meet The Elisabethz by Lucien JEAN-BAPTISTE
- **2008** Broken English by Zoe CASSAVETES
- **2006** I Do by Eric LARTIGAU
- **1999** Nothing About Robert by Pascal BONITZER
- **1994** Personne Ne M’aime by Marion VERNOUX
- **1987** Masks by Claude CHABROL
- **1985** The Hussy by Claude MILLER
- **1979** Out 1: Spectre by Jacques RIVETTE
- **1974** The Mother and the Whore by Jean EUSTACHE
- **1972** Une Belle Fille Comme Moi by François TRUFFAUT
- **1970** Elise, or Real Life by Michel DRACH
- **1965** The Sleeping Car Murder by Costa GAVRAS
- **1961** Wise Guys by Claude CHABROL
- **1960** The Good Time Girls by Claude CHABROL
- **1959** À Double Tour by Claude CHABROL
- **1959** Le Beau Serge by Claude CHABROL

**Aure Atika - Linette**

Selective filmography

- **2011** Le Skylab by Julie DELPY
- **2009** Copacabana by Marc FITOUSSI
- **2008** Mademoiselle Chambon by Stéphane BRIZÉ
  - Nominated in 2010 for a César in the best supporting actress category
- **2007** Versailles by Pierre SCHOLLER
- **2006** ILL Wind by Stéphane ALLAGNON
- **2005** OSS 117 by Michel HAZANAVICUS
  - Hey Good Looking! by Lisa AZUELOS
- **2004** The Beat That My Heart Skipped by Jacques AUDIARD
- **2003** Cash Truck by Nicolas BOUKHRIEF
  - Three Dancing Slaves by Gaël MOREL
- **2002** Mister V. by Emilie DELEUZE
- **2000** Would I Lie to You? 2 by Thomas GILOU
- **1999** Pérícula by Abdel Kechiche
- **1998** Une Vie de Prince by Daniel COHEN
- **1997** Long Live the Republic by Éric ROCHANT
  - Grève Party by Fabien ONTENIENTE
- **1996** Would I Lie to You? by Thomas GILOU
- **1991** Sam Suffit by Virginie THEVENET
Emmanuelle Riva - Mémé

Selective filmography

2011  LE SKYLAB by Julie DELPY
2008  THE GREAT ALIBI by Pascal BONITZER
1999  VENUS BEAUTY INSTITUTE by Tonie MARSHALL
1993  THREE COLORS: BLUE by Krzysztof KIBSLOWSKI
1990  THE EYES, THE MOUTH by Marco BELLOCHIO
1970  THE MODIFICATION by Michel WORMS
1967  RISKY BUSINESS by André CAYATTE
1964  THOMAS THE IMPOSTOR by Georges FRANJU
1962  THERESE by Georges FRANJU
1961  LÉON MORIN, PRIEST by Jean-Pierre MELVILLE
1959  HIROSHIMA, MY LOVE by Alain RESNAIS
1958  THE POSSESSORS by Denys DE LA PATELLIÈRE

Vincent Lacoste - Christian

Selective filmography

2012  ASTÉRIX AND OBÉLIX by Laurent TIRARD
2011  LE SKYLAB by Julie DELPY
2010  DE L’HUILE SUR LE FEU by Nicolas BENAMOU
2009  THE FRENCH KISSERS by Riad SATTOUF

Marc Ruchmann - Loulou

Selective filmography

2011  LE SKYLAB by Julie DELPY
2010  LARGO WINCH II by Jérôme SALLE
2009  ASHES AND BLOOD by Fanny ARDANT
2003  FIVE TIMES TWO by François OZON

Sophie Quinton - Clémentine

Selective filmography

2011  LE SKYLAB by Julie DELPY
2008  THE GREAT ALIBI by Pascal BONITZER
1999  VENUS BEAUTY INSTITUTE by Tonie MARSHALL
1993  THREE COLORS: BLUE by Krzysztof KIBSLOWSKI
1990  THE EYES, THE MOUTH by Marco BELLOCHIO
1970  THE MODIFICATION by Michel WORMS
1967  RISKY BUSINESS by André CAYATTE
1964  THOMAS THE IMPOSTOR by Georges FRANJU
1962  THERESE by Georges FRANJU
1961  LÉON MORIN, PRIEST by Jean-Pierre MELVILLE
1959  HIROSHIMA, MY LOVE by Alain RESNAIS
1958  THE POSSESSORS by Denys DE LA PATELLIÈRE

Valérie Bonneton - Micheline

Selective filmography

2011  LE SKYLAB by Julie DELPY
2010  LITTLE WHITE LIES by Guillaume CANET
2008  SUMMER HOURS by Olivier ASSAYAS
2005  YOU ARE SO BEAUTIFUL by Isabelle MERGAULT
2003  FRANCE BOUTIQUE by Tonie MARSHALL
2000  LES DESTINÉES by Olivier ASSAYAS
1998  JEANNE AND THE PERFECT GUY by Jacques MARTINEAU
1996  LOVE ETC. by Marion VERNOUX

Denis Ménochet - Roger

Selective filmography

2011  LES ADOPTÉS by Mélanie LAURENT
2010  ROBIN HOOD by Ridley SCOTT
2009  INGLORIOUS BASTERDS by Quentin TARTANTINO
2008  COCO BEFORE CHANEL by Anne FONTAINE
2007  LOVE ME NO MORE by Jean BECKER
2006  THE ROUND UP by Rose BOSCH
2005  THE ROUND UP by Rose BOSCH
2005  LA MOUSTACHE by Emmanuel CARRÈRE
Jean-Louis Coulloc’h - Fredo

Selective filmography

2011 LE SKYLAB by Julie DELPY
2010 LIVING ON LOVE ALONE by Isabelle CZAJKA
2007 THE KEY by Guillaume NICLOUX
2006 LADY CHATTERLEY by Pascale FERRAN
1995 CIRCUIT CAROLB by Emmanuelle CUAU

Michèle Goddet - Suzette

Selective filmography

2011 PRÉSUMÉ Coupable by Vincent GARENQ
LE SKYLAB by Julie DELPY
2009 MADEMOISELLE CHAMBON by Stéphane BRIZÉ
2006 A COMEDY OF POWER by Claude CHABROL
1999 C’EST QUOI LA VIE? by François DUFEYRON
1998 THE SCHOOL OF FLESH by Benoît JACQUOT
1990 EVERY OTHER WEEKEND by Nicole GARCIA

Luc Bernard - Joseph

Selective filmography

2011 LE SKYLAB by Julie DELPY
2007 THE HOUSE by Manuel POIRIER
2003 RUBY & QUENTIN by Francis WEBER
1998 MICHAEL KAEL by Christophe SMITH
1994 LEON: THE PROFESSIONAL by Luc BESSON
1991 FORTUNE EXPRESS by Olivier SCHATEZKY
1989 WINTER OF 54: FATHER PIERRÉ by Denis AMAR
1985 L’AMOUR PROPRE by Martin VEURON
1982 MAMAN QUE MAN by Lionel SOUKAZ
1980 MY AMERICAN UNCLE by Alain RESNAIS

Albert Delpy - Uncle Hubert

Selective filmography

2012 2 DAYS IN NEW YORK by Julie DELPY
2011 LE SKYLAB by Julie DELPY
2010 MAMMUTH by Gustave KERVERN & Benoît DELEPINNE
2007 2 DAYS IN PARIS by Julie DELPY
2005 BEFORE SUNSET by Richard LINKLATER
1999 SACHS’ DISEASE by Michel DEVILLE
1996 RIDICULE by Patrice LECONTE
1994 COLONEL CHABERT by Yves ANGELO
1990 THE HAIRDRESSER’S HUSBAND by Patrice LECONTE
1987 TANDEM by Patrice LECONTE
1986 MISS MONA by Mehdi CHABF
1976 THE TENANT by Roman POLANSKI

Candide Sanchez - Gustavo

Selective filmography

2011 LE SKYLAB by Julie DELPY
2008 LET IT RAIN by Agnès JÀOUI
2003 LE BISON by Isabelle NANTY
2002 ASTERIX AND OBELIX MEET CLEOPATRA by Alain CHABAT
2001 ALL ABOUT LOVE by Jean-François RICHET
1998 THE VISITORS II by Jean-Marie POIRÉ
With the participation of Karin VIARD in the role of ALBERTINE as a grown-up.

Cast

Lou ALVAREZ.................. ALBERTINE
Julie DELFY.................. ANNA
Eric RLMOSINO............... JEAN
Aure ATIKA.................. AUNT LINETTE
Noémie LIVOFSKY........... AUNT MONIQUE
Bernadette LAFONT......... MAMIE
Emmanuelle RIVA........... MÉMÉ
Vincent LACOSTE........... CHRISTIAN
Marc RUCHMANN........... UNCLE LOULOU
Sophie QUINTON........... AUNT CLÉMENTINE
Valérie BONNETON......... AUNT MICHELINE
Denis MÉNOCHET........... UNCLE ROGER
Jean-Louis COULLOC’H..... UNCLE FREDO
Michèle GODDET.......... AUNT SUZETTE
Luc BERNARD............... UNCLE JOSEPH
Albert DELPY............... UNCLE HUBERT
Candide SANCHEZ.......... UNCLE GUSTAVO
Lily SAVBY................ SISSI
Chloé ANTONI........... VALÉRIE
Maxime JULLIAND.......... PIERRE
Félicien MOQUET.......... JEAN-LUC
Antoine YVARD............. PHILIPPE
Anne-Charlotte MOQUET.... CATHERINE
Angelo SOUNY............. HENRI
Léo MICHEL-FREUNDLICH... ROBERT
Noah HUNTLEZ.............. JONATHAN

Family tree - July 1979
Screenplay and Directing ........ Julie DELPY
Producer ...................... Michael GENTILE
Associate Producer ........ Lauraine HEFTLER
Production Manager ........ Pascal BONNET
First assistant .............. Jérôme BORENSTEIN
Set Manager ................. Bertrand GIRARD
Casting ...................... Stéphane BATUT
Casting (children) .......... Elsa PHARAON
Director of Photography .... Lubomir BAKCHEV
Sound ........................ Michel CASANG
Sets .......................... Yves FOURNIER
Costume designer ............. Pierre-Yves GAYRAUD
Head costume designer ...... Cristina MIRETE
Makeup ....................... Marie LASTENNEN
Post-production manager ..... Isabelle MORAX
Image Editing ................ Isabelle DEVINCK
Sound Editing ............... Alexandre WIDMER
Mixing ....................... Stéphane THIEBAULT
Music supervision ........... Matthieu SIBONY

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