

XAVIER RIGAULT & MARC-ANTOINE ROBERT  
PRESENT

ISABELLE  
CARRÉ

STÉPHANE  
DE GROODT

ALEX  
LUTZ



# MEET THE GUILBYS

A FILM BY  
ARTHUR DELAIRE AND QUENTIN REYNAUD



JOSÉPHINE  
JAPY

SOLAL  
FORTE

AMINTE  
AUDIARD

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[PARIS-WILLOUBY]

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France / 2016 / 83 min / Scope



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# SYNOPSIS

Claire and Maurice have to take the whole family to Claire's father's funeral.

This tightly knit family is not only composed of Claire's vegetarian son, Alex, who's secretly fond of Maurice's daughter, Lucie, the teenage rebel, but also Claire's brother, a poet living under his sister's roof; without forgetting young Prune, Claire and Maurice's daughter, who will develop a passion for the country's emblematic cows.

They must all strive to get along during the road trip to Willouby.

# INTERVIEW OF THE DIRECTORS

**For each of you, Meet the Guilbys is your first feature film. What were you doing before this project and how did you get together?**

Quentin Reynaud: We both come from the Bordeaux region. We have friends in common and one evening we ended up sitting next to each other at a dinner party when the two of us happened to be working on separate films that were being shot in the bay of Arcachon. Arthur and I started talking and we realized that we had a very similar artistic vision and shared the same ideas about what we'd like to see on the screen. "Meet the Guilbys" came about while drawing pictures on the corner of a table that told stories about reconstituted families. But before considering the possibility of taking on a feature film, we started with short films.

Arthur Delaire: In fact, I remember for our first real work session going to retrieve the disfigured tablecloth that we had carefully saved for the occasion. Our first short film was called "Course en sac" (Bag race). We thought it would be fun to tell the story of an unbelievable day when two knuckleheads who are like oil and water acci-

dentally come upon a bag filled with banknotes. In the second short film, "Demain c'est la fin du monde" (Tomorrow is the end of the world) with Clovis Cornillac and Laurence Arné, we wanted to immerse ourselves in a more intimate and sophisticated universe from a cinematographic point of view. At the same time, we obviously always had nourished the idea of directing a feature.

QR: Yes, we kept moving forward with the "Meet the Guilbys" screenplay all along.

**How does your partnership work? How do you divide the roles whether writing or directing?**

When it came to the writing, we agreed upon the situations, characters and what was at stake for each scene. Whoever felt inspired started writing and after several pages, he would hand over the result to be read by the other, who would give his opinion and take over the writing. We kept repeating the process until we reached a version that we were both happy with. Then we polished the writing together, word by word, sentence by sentence, for consistency and fin-

ishing touches.

AD: On top of it, Quentin and I both have acting backgrounds, so we quickly started playing the scenes to see if they worked, which ended up giving more substance to the writing overall.

In reference to directing, we consider ourselves a true team: we don't divide tasks such as one person does the technical side and the other the artistic side. Everything happens through discussions that take place between the two of us before we even speak with the crew. It's a matter of consistency. There shouldn't be any disagreements between us on the soundstage; it would be too upsetting for everyone, especially the actors.

QR: I'd also add that the film was entirely storyboarded before we even started the shoot. It was the biggest part of our preparation work, a sort of Bible that was very useful to us. With the bible, the crew only had to make suggestions based on what had been sketched, and what we had imagined. Part of the film takes place inside a car; this constraint allowed us to think about how we were going to shoot the film. For

example, the scene with the whole family ended up being a sequence shot, filmed face on, with every character in the frame. The atmosphere is a bit tense and the audience is immediately thrown into their “fishbowl.”

**Going back to how the project began, what common interest was strong enough for you to want to make a film out of this story?**

QR: We both come from big families, and even if what we see in the film doesn’t exactly reflect our lives, it is a subject that we are very familiar with.

AD: There are, here and there, a few things that come from life experience, as in many first films, I suspect. But there are many things we invented as well: what we drew from personal experience is especially the authenticity in the relationships between the characters. It had to ring true so that people in the audience felt they could identify with the characters.

QR: The story’s potential seemed important to us, even more so because it is a subject that is not often addressed this way in French cinema; the known references are more from American film.

AD: Rather than setting up digs and big gags

that we are used to seeing in comedies, we wanted to make sure that there was a progressive construction of characters and situations, which would themselves provoke the comedy and laughter. It was extremely important to us that the audience have empathy for the characters so that they would identify with all their different moods.

QR: Yes, that is why we’ve characterized the movie as being a “sensitive comedy”! We also added a few unique elements: a strange receptionist in a hotel, a lost valley, aged policemen, or a town that doesn’t exist, as if you were in a dream, but without going so far as becoming a fantasy film.

AD: In fact, we wanted “Meet the Guilbys” to be a comedy while also having a dreamlike aspect to it, something poetic; it’s an artistic sensibility and originality that we respond to. However, if I have to be honest, we paid the price for being “between two genres” as soon as it came to finding investors for the film.

**Yes, in fact, when you are a young director, how do you present this type of film to a producer?**

QR: I’d say that we had both luck on our side

and very strong will power! We had an opportunity to send the screenplay to “2.4.7. Films”, in a version that is quite far from what the film became. We met with them very quickly and we all clicked – a true relationship of trust came out of it.

AD: I think they understood that we were willing to improve on the screenplay. They felt our enthusiasm and realized that we were able to react very quickly.

QR: In the end, they decided to work with us and despite a few chaotic episodes in the adventure – months when it felt like things were going nowhere – they never gave up on us or abandoned us.

**The movie bears your mark, both in the writing and the directing. What were your references and influences?**

QR: There are a lot of them!

AD: The “road movie” is its own genre following its own set of codes, and we made sure to know them well in order to choose whether or not to respect them: There’s “Thelma and Louise” (Ridley Scott) of course, but there are also more recent movies that aren’t necessarily road movies but which inspired us.

QR: Yes, we could mention “Tamara Drewe” by Stephen Frears for its general atmosphere, Alexander Payne’s “The Descendants,” for the story’s tone, “The First Day of the Rest of Your Life,” by Rémi Bezançon, and obviously Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris’ “Little Miss Sunshine,” even though at a certain point we were afraid we’d end up too much resembling a film that we consider as being perfect. However, in the end, “Meet the Guilbys” is in fact very different.

AD: These influences gave us the idea of having a specific set up for each shot, whether linked to the scenery, characters or situations. When we used a helicopter, for example, it was for a very particular scene that justified its use at that very moment of the film and not just to make the production look more expensive. We could have used it more, but we didn’t allow ourselves to. The same goes for the sequence shot, when the whole family discovers the father’s house or for simpler shots, like the school principal who we put up on a rostrum at the beginning of the film.

QR: You can also say that we are always trying to enhance the staging with other artistic disciplines. Arthur is a musician and I’m an architect.

This constantly allows us to expand our vision, without being stuck behind the monitor. It was important to us that the film have a style of its own and we spent a lot of time working with the winter light and exploring frames.

**Tell us about your actors, starting with Isabelle Carré, who’s been associated with the project practically from the beginning.**

QR: Isabelle was an obvious choice for us. She is one of the top French actresses and her name came up as soon as we started writing the first version of the screenplay. We sent it to her and she read it in two days and let us know how enthusiastic she was about it. We went to see her at the theater where she was playing to really talk about it. That was four years ago! Isabelle is the project’s veritable touchstone. She was always there supporting us...

AD: We wanted an actress who could embody the pillar of the story. In our minds, a mother is someone who absorbs all of life’s shocks and problems without giving the impression of being affected by it. She is a woman who can be gentle, but who also lays down the law and foundations. Isabelle has all of that within her; when she’s on a film set, she is able to channel all the different energies and rally people behind her.

QR: And also she doesn’t have an oversized ego. She is disarmingly natural and straightforward, a real down-to-earth person.

AD: That’s probably why the public likes her so much: these qualities come through in the characters she plays. She’s a great actress, but she’s not just that. She’s also, humanly speaking, an extraordinary woman! We never could have done the film without her.

**Stéphane De Groodt plays Maurice, Isabelle’s husband in the film. Arthur, you already knew him from the film shoot for “Barbecue”...**

AD: Yes, I was Eric Lavaine’s assistant on the film. It’s probably from that experience that the idea of working with him began to form in my mind. But the idea of actually offering him a role came when talking with Quentin: we love his universe!

QR: Stéphane has a very refreshing side to him. He sparkles with wit, is jolly and we were convinced that associating him on screen with Isabelle Carré would turn out to be very interesting. Obviously it worked beyond our dreams and they got on wonderfully off screen, there was real chemistry. Sometimes, after 6 or 7 takes,

when we had what we wanted, they would ask to do more and even suggested new scenes. This atmosphere became contagious, and it's the "family" that asked us to add the scene during the shoot where they all sing together in the car. The closeness and understanding of the whole troupe shines through in that scene, which we love.

AD: Returning to Stéphane and adding to what Quentin said, we didn't want to use him to do what we already knew he could do: his absurd humor, mastery of the French language or his wordplay. He is above all a wonderful actor with great technique, precision and accuracy. He proved it to us in this film, knowing how to react in astounding ways when his partners gave him an opening.

QR: If you pay attention, especially in some exchanges with Alex Lutz, you will notice certain glances and witticisms that made the film shoot a real joy!

### **Speaking of Alex Lutz, what made you think of him for the role of Marc?**

QR: He became involved in the project quite early on, from the first versions of the screenplay. He has a different profile than the other ac-

tors in the film. He's like clay. We hadn't thought about him when we were writing the Marc character, but when we started considering him for the role, we knew that he would make the character into someone very different than himself. Alex does this in each of his stage shows: he takes characters very far!

AD: It was in fact when we saw him on stage that we became certain. When you watch him imitate a horse it's disconcerting! Alex is of course different from his character Marc, and he wanted to play the role, invent things. He clearly communicated his excitement at every stage of reflection. He's a true character actor and this is a real performance.

QR: It's with Alex that we found our true Marc, and that occurred also through working on his physicality and his look.

AD: We were very much inspired by the rock world: The Smiths, The Stone Roses, a bit of the Gallagher brothers, Jim Morrison for the walk. We had him wear sideburns, a scar for a bad boy look and a very specific clothing style.

QR: And as early as the first day of the shoot, we realized that it worked, that it wasn't a disguise. Out of all of the actors, Alex is definitely

the one who searched the longest to compose his character. As for the person, he could have given up on us along the way, but he was wonderful, a real team player, knowing when to wait, when to call, be present – even when he was in the middle of shooting his own movie.

AD: I know he was very happy with Marc's "Peter Pan" side. Marc is a surly thirty-something who is in reality a big kid who never came to terms with his father's abandonment. Alex knew how to embody the dreamer aspect of his personality, which for us was this character's most important trait.

### **Speaking of children, what about the younger actors: Joséphine Japy, Aminthe Audiard and Solal Forte...**

QR: It's not that I want to keep repeating the same thing, but Joséphine was also there from the beginning! We didn't have her do a casting. From the moment we met her, even though she was younger than the character she ended up being, we had an excellent feeling. Joséphine brought us quite a number of things to enrich the role of Lucie, whose presence was definitely less important at the beginning. She made Lucie more of an adult, made her grow up.

AD: We wanted to avoid the cliché of the rebellious and unbearable teenager at all cost! Lucie is very sharp and knows how to make cutting and sarcastic remarks when necessary, especially when it comes to her father.

OR: We have to admit that we were very happy (as was she) to do away with her affected pretty girl image, playing with the color of her hair, her clothing and attitude.

AD: For Solal and the Alexander character, we conducted a casting with many actors. We saw a lot of good actors, but nobody that struck us in particular. Solal had this sensitivity that was essential for the role. He's a boy who is ready to listen to others, concerned by what is said, at times very much on edge. We wanted the character to appear deeply concerned by what he was saying so that his struggle, in defense of animals, wouldn't seem ridiculous. That was very important to us.

QR: He's definitely the only character in the film that doesn't have much of a comic register. You can tell that in a second Alexander could start to laugh or cry, or lose it all together! Solal in fact did some improvisation on the film shoot that was quite funny and interesting.

AD: He's a surprising actor, who is hard to label.

He has an entirely authentic imaginative side to him, coupled with an actor's true talent.

QR: Aminthe was also chosen during a casting but we very quickly knew (from the first video screen tests) that she would have the role. It's delicate to compliment her too much because beyond being an actress, she's still a child and you have to be very careful. But for us, she is clearly gifted! She regularly stunned us.

AD: In a number of films with kids, we know that there are directors who "manipulate" their young actors to get what they want and give the impression of being truthful. Aminthe is a real actress with a very specific awareness of the character she was playing.

QR: She also made incredible suggestions and gave surprising improvisations, notably in the scene when they all fight in the car about Marc's cigarette or at the very end of the film. Watch her. Even when the others are speaking, she is there, she occupies the space.

**How do you look upon the last four years of life and work that have gone by in order to bring "Meet the Guilbys" to the screen?**

AD: There are a number of difficult moments that have stuck in my mind because it is compli-

cated to successfully bring a film together from A to Z. We have a competitive spirit and thus constantly stayed positive and today, when I see the result, I have the feeling that we were right to believe in what we were doing.

QR: It's difficult for me to answer that question: maybe I'll have the answer a year from now! I know that the film no longer belongs to us and so much the better. People will make it their own; but I still don't have enough distance to look back on it.



## CAST

Claire Lacourt	Isabelle Carré
Maurice Guilby	Stéphane De Groodt
Marc Lacourt	Alex Lutz
Lucie Guilby	Joséphine Japy
Alexandre Le Tallec	Solal Forte
Prune Guilby	Aminthe Audiard
Angélique	Jennifer Decker <i>de la Comédie Française</i>

## CREW

Directors	Arthur Delaire
	Quentin Reynaud
Producers	Xavier Rigault
	Marc-Antoine Robert
Director of Photography	Yannick Ressigeac
Sound	Delphine Malausséna
1 <sup>st</sup> Assistant Director	Christian Alzieu
Script Supervisor	Isabelle Querrioux
Casting Director	Michaël Laguens
Production Manager	Nora Salhi
Post-production Manager	Christina Crassaris
Costume Designer	Emmanuelle Youchnovski
Make-up Artist	Fabienne Robineau
Decorator	Mila Preli
Editor	Anita Roth
Sound Mixer	Melissa Petitjean
French Distributor	Mars Films
International Sales	Films Distribution