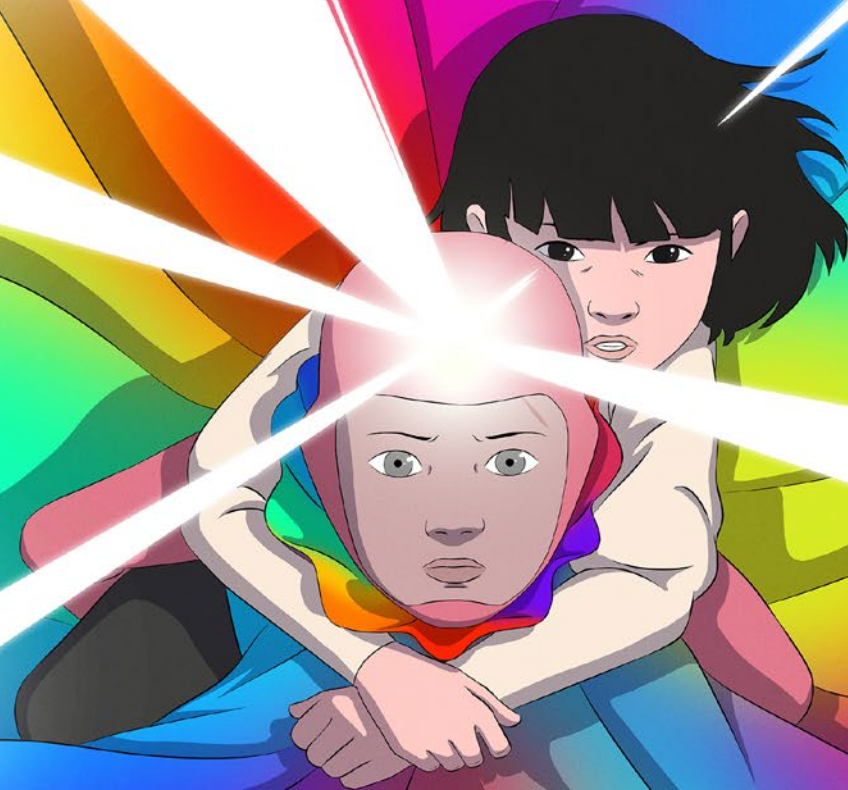


Remembers & mountainA present



ARCO

A film by Ugo Bienvenu



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
2025 OFFICIAL SELECTION
SPECIAL SCREENING

ARCO

A film by Ugo Bienvenu

With the voices of

**Alma Jodorowsky, Swann Arlaud, Vincent Macaigne,
Louis Garrel, William Lebghil, Frédérique Cantrel, Oxmo Puccino**

France • 2025 • Colour • 1H28 • DCP 2K

**Special Screening
16th May at 19:15
Salle Agnès Varda**

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Synopsis

In 2075, Iris, a 10-year-old girl, sees a mysterious boy in a rainbow suit fall from the sky.
It's Arco. Iris will take him in and help him by any means possible to get home.





Director's intention note
Ugo Bienvenu

After writing and directing several short films, music videos and a few adult science-fiction graphic novels, I wanted to write a family film in the same genre. A film for us and our children to share, in crystal clear form, close to the adventure stories that left their mark when we were younger and which are, in a way, our common base.

This is the special power of cinema: watching the same thing at the same time. In short, sharing.

Science-fiction authors from previous and current generations, whatever the media, have most often approached the genre negatively, tending to show a world dying, a future almost always impossible to live in.

The times in which we live in are particularly uncertain, complex, difficult to live in. I therefore needed the opposite, a story that would give hope and invite us to imagine a world, not of tomorrow (which already seems doomed) but of the day after tomorrow. A desirable, possible horizon, a world in which it would be good to live, a goal to achieve.

If science-fiction of the 1970s did not cease to confirm its theories, as if its "predictions" had turned out to be accurate, I am increasingly convinced that it is up to our generation to make predictions of a different nature, and depict a broader and more beautiful world, so that it can one day happen.

«It seems to me that, more than ever before, that anything is feasible, we must believe that the best is possible, we must imagine it for the best to happen.»

So, I started to imagine a future where things would work, where people would continue to live, where beauty, humanity and love would always be possible. After months of fruitless research (as it is always the case, always) I threw in the towel. What I was looking for was new to me. No more cynicism, or analysis, no more great theories – in short, the opposite to my usual *modus operandi*. Here, it was a question of thinking differently, delicately, looking for the fragility in everything. It was no longer a question of disagreeing but finding ways out.

And one day, like he fell from the sky, a character took shape under my fingers on the page of my notebook, a rainbow child appeared.

From then on, this vision, this little being, never left me. As I often do, I sent a sketch to Félix. He gave him a name: Arco, and so Arco's story, his world, began to take shape. It showed a return to a simple life where humans evolved in harmony with nature. The die was cast, and we began writing.



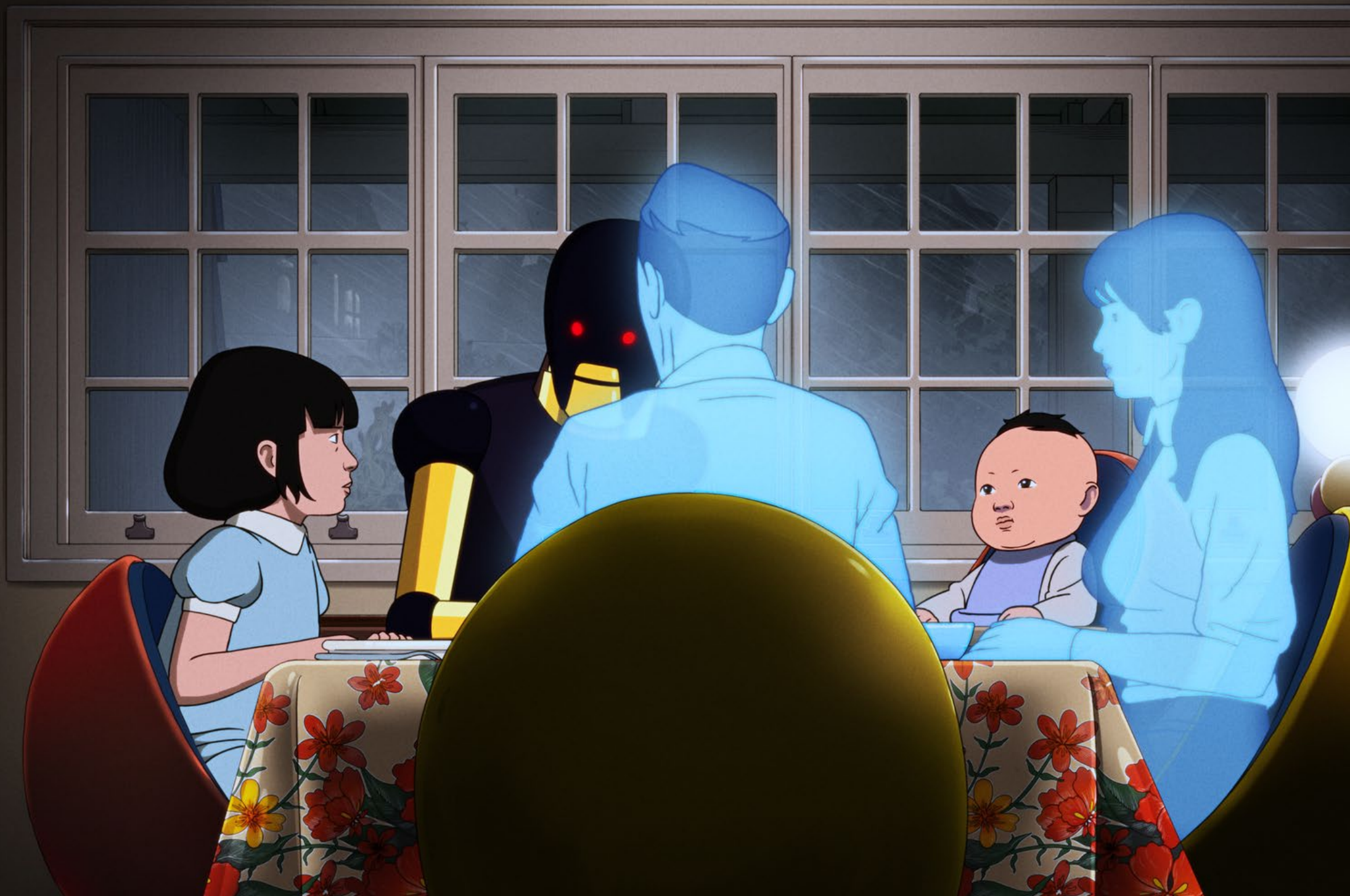


This child of the future, like all his contemporaries, would be able to time-travel by means of his rainbow suit, like a discreet observer of the history of humanity. Every rainbow observed since the dawn of time would have been someone from the future observing us from above.

Arco has transgressed the rules of time-travel and finds himself trapped in his past - our near future - a kind of augmented present where our mistakes (augmented reality, ultra-communication, controlled society, ecological problems, robots taking over human tasks...) have cut humanity off from itself. An extreme caricature of the years that have just passed, one in which excesses are exacerbated even further to better show the failings of our present, and by contrast, what is beautiful in the world.

In this near future, young Arco is taken in by little Iris, a product of her time, raised by her nanny bot. She sees her absent parents through video-hologram mostly. Iris lives in a world of illusions, where everything is now augmented reality, where nature, constantly plagued by disasters, is assisted by a technology that only delays the tragedy.

It is through the virgin gaze of Arco, who comes from a simpler world, that the absurdity of the world we are heading towards, that of Iris, comes to light. It is precisely this world, where imagination has given way to a sacrosanct logic, where hard facts have replaced any poetry, that is the true antagonist of the story. A straightjacketed world, where mankind has little room for manoeuvre, a world that will not cease to close in on the two children.



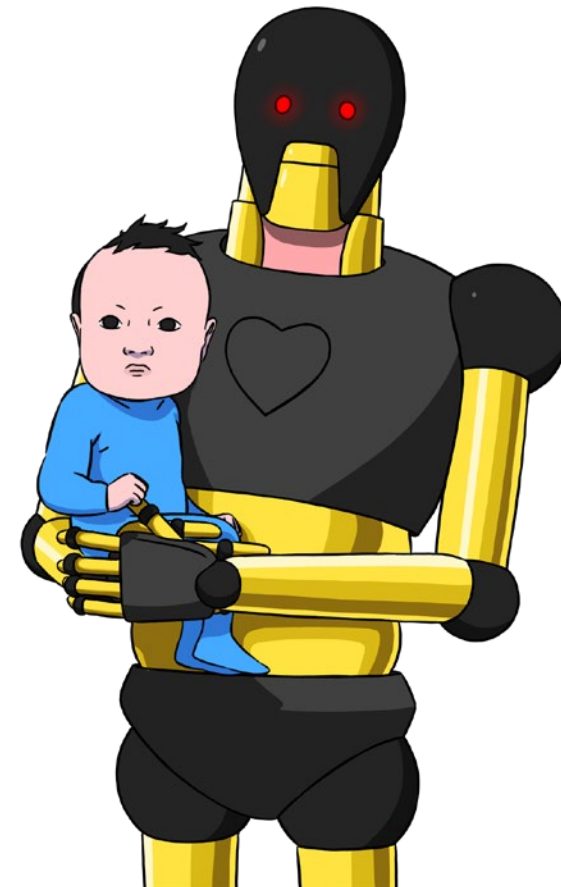
«The major challenge of writing was to stay on the level of the children, address the topic through their lens, their imagination, their fears.»

If the methods of writing this film were different from my previous works, the film itself is nevertheless in line with my work. Transmission has always been central: questioning the modalities of a common future, possibilities of happiness, love, humanity in a world that often sorely lacks these.

We meet again with Mikki, my favourite character, a constant figure of the passer-on of parentality and memory that runs through all my work. It is the adventure triggered by this encounter that should never have happened between two children from different eras, and I hope to plant the idea in everyone's mind that we can together build together a better world, give a little hope to our generation.

The graphic vein remains the same: realistic, because to me, the condition of adhering to what we don't know is reality.

So, in order for viewers to understand what I propose, I ground them in a true, tangible reality, so that they can dive into the story without fear, or misguided questions. The film is made in 2D animation, a technique familiar to me (almost all my productions are made in this style) and particularly expensive. In my view, this is the only technique capable of truly enchanting the world, of perfectly transcribing a truth, in a way that is not factual but sensitive.





«From the initial stages, my idea was to make a film for everyone, in a classic style, ambitious, in the line of the adventure films that left an indelible mark on me and have inspired me to do what I do.»

To name a few: *E.T.*, *Peter Pan*, *Pinocchio*, *My Neighbour Totoro*, *Ponyo*, *Kiki's Delivery Service*, *The King and the Mockingbird*, or *Kirikou*. So many general-public films, light-hearted on the surface yet demanding; films that empower us for reality, question our humanity, our relationship to others and the world.

The transcription and preservation of my complicated drawing style to motion (since it mixes realism and sensitive moments) has always been one of the central issues of my work and research in animation.

It is this requirement that has pushed me to create tailor-made production and manufacturing structures. These are oriented towards the understanding of what constitutes a graphic and narrative identity, allowing a general style that is in my opinion key, if not in our profession, to the objects that I love and want to see exist.

Thanks to our multiple activities within the Memories Studio, we were able to work calmly on the film, as we wished, alternating phases of writing, image and screenplay, one nourishing the other. This allowed what I like in fiction: a mixture of the unconscious and structure, giving poetry and emotions their power.

The crystalline purity of the character of Arco prompted me to work with all my heart on this project. When they leave the theatre after seeing the film, I hope the audience will never again see the magical phenomenon that is a rainbow in the same way. I hope that they will be able to project themselves into the promise of another future.



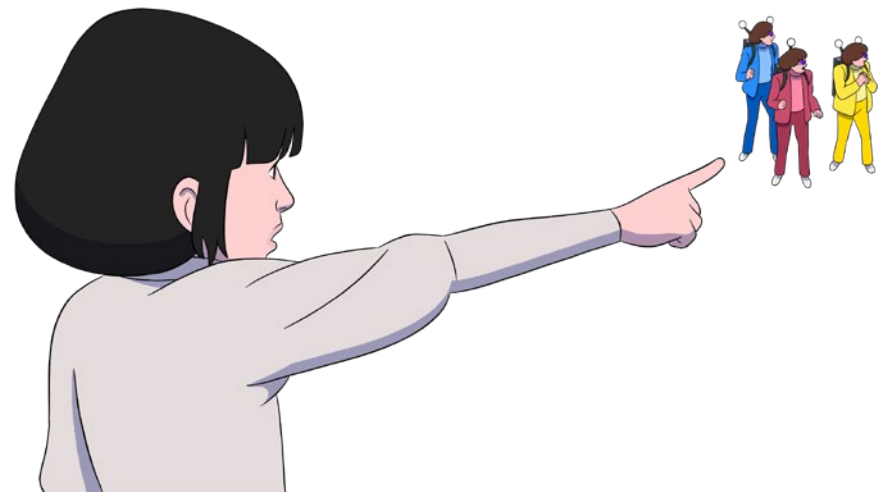
Director's technical notes
Ugo Bienvenu

«What I like most about my job is its artisanal dimension.»

2D animation is a medium where each manufacturing problem requires a new solution. Everything must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, each new problem having its own unique solution. That's what keeps the work exciting, it renews itself every day.

My background is paper. My last animation productions in this medium date back to 2015, and these took a considerable amount of time. So I looked for a software that could perpetuate my technique, the handmade style. I developed a strong partnership with TVPaint, a French company that has developed tools to preserve the qualities of the practice while jumping into a new era. If each drawing is done by hand, the software offers tools to facilitate work at all scales, also allowing the creation of special tools (perspective guides, brushes, deformation grids, among others).

This film was able to come into existence because we launched the production of an advanced animatic (as we always have done for the short films we produce at Remembers), allowing us to extend the writing, to test the effects in real size, to verify its effectiveness and to give the outside world a more concrete idea of what the film could be. This phase of work allowed us to eliminate as many uncertainties as possible, to quantify the work with extreme precision and to anticipate complex areas of production. This document, made by no more than five people in the span of one year, really helped all the departments involved in the making of the film. It was if you will, the bible of this project, the absolute reference of all our intentions, all our choices, framing sets, timings, all there already in substance.



One of the most complicated matters in animation is the preservation of volume, whether in our characters' faces, the bodies of the robots or the precision of the splices of the sets. It is on this, on the so-called "construction", that we spend the most time, yet it is not the most creative part. We have developed in-house methods to overcome this problem, using 3D models of the faces of our characters and some of our sets (for the interior sequences for example). We've also done this for the bodies of the robots, which tolerate slight fluctuations in volume less than the human characters.

Made on Blender, an open-source software, these models have basically extended the methods put in place by Disney Studios (among others). They used sculptures of their characters and paper models of their sets (in *The Lady and the Tramp* for example). With these new tools, we can place the camera angle with accuracy, place the elements following our quick "rough", frame by frame, thus increasing by tenfold the ability of an animator to clean an animation. Where a finished drawing used to take an hour for a brilliant animator, the same drawing now takes about ten minutes.

These 3D supports for 2D animation allow us to use precious time in more crucial areas, and above all increase the quality of the rendering, the line itself, in short the general quality of the image.

Another particularity of our *modus operandi* is that the work is less fragmented than in a traditional production. Indeed, in animation, more often than not, technicians feel dispossessed and are frustrated by the way in which their work is finalised by other people. So we tried as much as we could make the animators responsible for their shots and sequences (sometimes even up to the colourisation). Our goal was also to eliminate the unnecessary loss of time in communication and handling of documents by new people. Each person involved in the film thus became the guarantor of their work, responsible for what they made.

The transition from one task to another in animation is a crucial moment. It is often during these key moments that information is lost. The industrialisation of processes is often when this problem occurs, which is why we decided from the beginning of the production that it would take place entirely in Paris, in our studio, with a chosen workforce, most often trained by me. Indeed, I realised very quickly that to carry out my projects successfully, I had to surround myself with people who understood everything about my method, and who were trained to my style, with sensibilities close to mine.

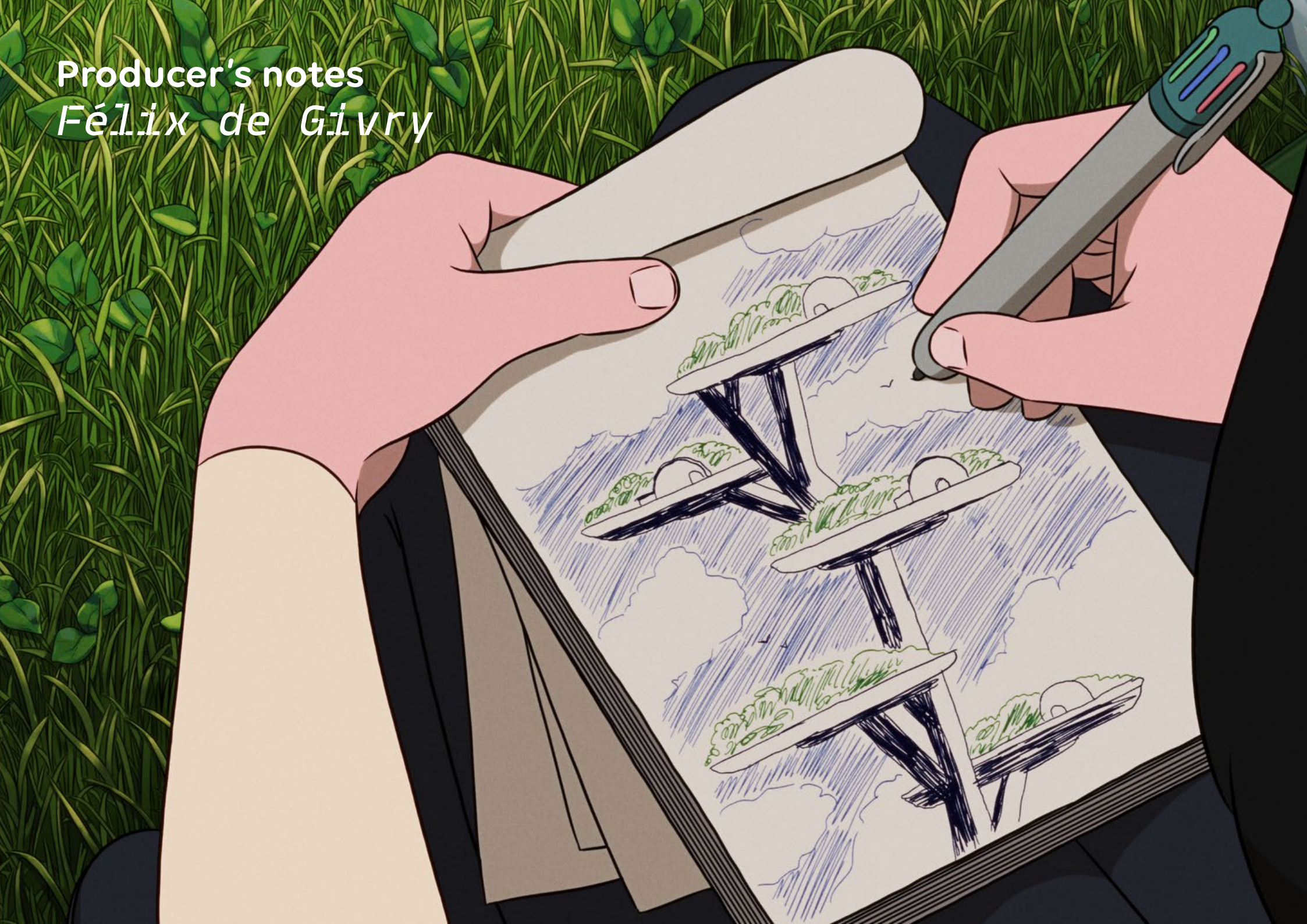
I taught at Les Gobelins School of Animation in Paris for six years, and at Ateliers de Sèvres Art School for three, developing a privileged relationship with young talented students with whom we work today. Moreover, I deeply believe that work is a living place in the noble sense, that's where we meet people who may become our friends. Sometimes we find love, we share life, and we are better when we are together physically. The interaction between the different people who worked on this film has, I think, contributed to the success of its production.

The complexity of the production with such a team over a period of 12 months lies in the time they spend together. This is why we have been working for several years to build a technical and artistic family. We reckon that human compatibilities within our teams are crucial.

«Loyal people with whom we have developed daily strategies is the only way to maintain the technical and creative control essential for the project.»



Producer's notes
Félix de Givry



«This project is the result of a collaboration that began several years ago and goes far beyond the framework and classic temporalities of the development of a film.»

Ugo and I met for the first time in 2013 on the set of *Eden* by Mia Hansen-Løve, in which I was acting. Ugo was the “hand double” of one of the lead actors. Even before I got to know him, I was enthralled by his unique style and his virtuosity.

Ugo was constantly drawing, silently in a corner, as if it was easier to express himself with a pen than with words. We stayed in touch. At the time, I owned a music label, Pain Surprises, and I produced a first video clip for the group Jabberwocky – *Fog* (2015) – directed by Ugo. The story of a sacrificed young girl who – already – fell from the sky.

In 2018, after producing a second video, then co-directing a short film together for the 3ème Scène at the Opéra Garnier, we each left our respective companies to join forces. It was the logical evolution of my entrepreneurial adventure with Pain Surprises and Ugo’s with Miyu Productions.

Our common desire was to build an ecosystem which would allow us some form of independence and freedom as authors-directors. *Remembers* was born.

However, unlike most author-director production companies that are often only used at the development or the co-production stage, our wish from the outset was, with Ugo, to create a production studio. From the beginning, we sought to develop our own technical tools based around a precise know-how. All the greatest animated films to date – those of Disney or Studio Ghibli, including the more recent model of Pixar – have been made by a studio organised by and around the director, with a very particular know-how and working methodology that is often very specific and developed around a style. Over the past four years, we have built *Remembers Studio* around a sensitive, loyal team made up of former students from the greatest French animation schools (Gobelins, EMCA, ASA, Arts Décos Paris...) who know each other well and are used to working hand in hand.





Before embarking on the production of Arco, our first 2D feature film and unquestionably ambitious, we chose to create an animatic as accomplished as possible. It's a process we thought about from when we began to write. I've already mentioned that Ugo draws like he breathes.

«We immediately decided that it would make complete sense to have a form of cohabitation between the different stages of writing the story, usually separated from each other, i.e. the script, the storyboard and the animatic.»

For almost three years, we worked on these three stages almost simultaneously. Ugo made progress on the storyboard while we wrote the treatment, that would then become a screenplay before going back through the mise-en-scène and drawing stage. And so on.

«The other singularity of this project in terms of production was our desire to make the film uniquely in Paris.»

In the 20th arrondissement, and without delegating certain tasks (as is customary for animated feature films) to other studios in the regions or in Europe. Making the entire film in the Paris region (we also did the image, the sound post-production and the recording of the music there) is unconventional. We knew that this unconventional approach meant a more complex path, particularly in terms of financing, since it cut us off from certain financial levers.

But it is a choice that lies at the very heart of the project and our desire as manufacturers, and for which we have chosen to take responsibility. Having the luxury of making the film between three studios located ten minutes walk away from each other allows you to knit together a small team, to work on a just-in-time basis, to remove intermediaries and in particular a lot of time wasted in transfers and recoveries of various files. Besides, it is an organisation designed around the work method tested and approved by Ugo over the last ten years.

This is how he tells stories, all the media he has in his hands, in a rather mysterious and magical way, communicate: words, drawings, movement. It's also because Ugo is a great technician and animator that we approached the enormous challenge of a first feature film in such an unconventional way.

In addition, we wanted to see Arco in cinemas from the outset. As Ugo said, cinema is the place of sharing. It is the place where dreams are projected with the hope that a part of reality will be transformed. This is our most precious dream with this film: that it conveys a form of hope and belief that is becoming increasingly rare today.



An illustration of a woman wearing a red hijab and a large, flowing rainbow-colored cape. She is depicted in a flying pose, with her arms outstretched and a determined expression on her face. The background is a soft, cloudy sky. In the bottom left corner, the dark roof and a window of a house are visible, and a green tree stands in the bottom center.

Producer's note

Sophie Mas

«Natalie and I fell in love with the project from the moment we heard the pitch for Arco»

I am French. Natalie moved to Paris in August 2022. We had set our hearts to work on projects here for a long time, with local teams, on French-language films. In the course of my work, I have over the past 15 years, collaborated with French people living or working abroad, mainly in the United States, noticing the extent to which their know-how and talent were valued over there, after producing films such as *May December* by Todd Haynes, *Call Me By Your Name* by Luca Guadagnino, *Ad Astra* by James Gray or *Murina* by Antoneta Alamat Kusijanovic.

Our choices, with Natalie, are motivated above all by meeting the creators who combine vision and poetry, who have the ambition to share their dreams and emotions with the widest possible public.

Joining Remembers Studios for an animation project in Paris was invigorating because of the novelty of the medium. It also fit logically with what we have been doing: developing and financing films internationally, finding private American funds with the aim of giving Remembers Studio more freedom, aside from a more traditional European co-production system.

Viewing of the animatics, which lasted 40 minutes, but especially meeting Ugo and Félix, convinced us for good. It was imperative to join this team and help the film to be made in the best conditions.

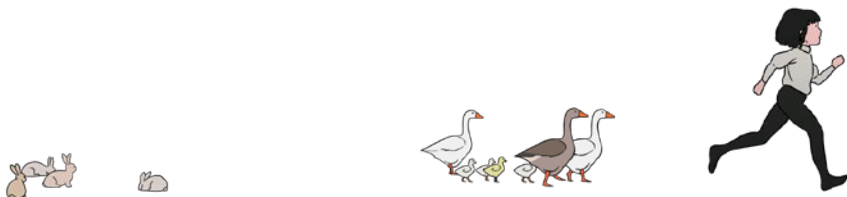
In order to continue to guarantee the level of creative independence that Ugo and Félix had allowed themselves within their studio Remembers during the development of the script and the animatic, during this risk-taking phase that allows a project to be born hidden from view, and to grow, we had to depart from our usual principles and decided to invest our own equity.

The goal was to help contribute to perfect the story, measure the risks, refine the rhythm, as well as showing a more accomplished animatic, and to find key partners: sales agents, French and international distributors, TV channels.

«We are deeply convinced that Arco is a major cinema film. It succeeds in touching the heart, bringing out tears even as you're smiling.»

Ugo Bienvenu, accompanied by his talented co-author Félix de Givry, is a unique and priceless author-director whose genius cannot remain a secret for much longer.

We are proud to have achieved all this in Paris, without relocating production at any time. It is clearly a challenge that suits the ambition of the project and the determination of the team. It is also a medium that we want to pursue, that MountainA continues to co-produce films with Remembers Studio, and helps develop more talents here, in Paris.





Composer's notes
Arnaud Touillon

It was during lockdown that Ugo called me to talk about Arco for the first time. Just an idea at the time: that of a boy travelling back in time through rainbows and a girl who takes him in and helps him get back to his world. I don't remember all the details of our conversation, but two directions prevailed already at the time:

«Themes you can whistle when you leave the cinema' Ugo told me – and the desire for the music to breathe a spiritual dimension into the story.»



«Composing the music for this film stayed with me for several years.»

At first, more in the background of my daily activities, exchanging models from time to time while Ugo was working on the screenplay, then, little by little, the process intensified. We had already collaborated on several short projects during which we were able to explore some musical directions together and identify our common affinities: a similar taste for melancholic melodies, outdated soundtracks from the 1950s, shared literary and film references, and a common desire to integrate these childhood musical memories into contemporary stories. All of this finally found a wide field of expression with Arco.

If this mutual understanding helped us find the musical colour of the film quite quickly, we still had to go through long discussion about the place, the role that the music should play in the film. Should we have a theme for each character? Each era? Was it necessary to create a link between situations to signify connections between the characters?

After exploring, abandoning, re-working many avenues, the music ended up being articulated mainly around two themes. One was associated with Arco's world – optimistic, carrier of hope, heroic at times. The second theme, more melancholic and unadorned, was associated with the world of Iris, a reflection of her unstable world that aspires to the balance, the simplicity of Arco's world. A romantic motif also recurs several times, suggesting a budding love story between the two characters.



«In the midst of all the questions that punctuated the composition, one of our few certainties was that the singing, the human voice, had to play an important role in the soundtrack. For its universality, its traditional link with the sacred.»

From Iris' point of view, the arrival of Arco in her world represents a supernatural, almost metaphysical experience. If music can bring a second degree of reading to the story, it is notably by giving a miraculous nature to Arco's presence, in this world almost contemporary to ours.

The same considerations led us to choose an orchestral instrumentation, for its timeless quality, and as a contrast to Iris' futuristic and robotic environment. For most of the soundtrack, I favoured rather small instrumental ensembles, in order to create an intimate and organic atmosphere, where we can hear the grain and ruggedness of each instrument.

For some specific parts, such as Arco's flights and the film finale, the orchestration was voluntarily broader and more powerful, in order to emphasise the dramatic magnitude of the scenes, and to highlight them in contrast to the rest of the score.

We were fortunate to work with the Sofia Orthodox Choir and the musicians of the Paris Opera, whose exceptional musicianship helped to breathe life into Ugo's images.

More contemporary sounds, synthesisers and also a Cristal Baschet, a Fender Rhodes and ondes Martenot are integrated into the soundtrack, as a support to the orchestra, enriching the sound spectrum and creating textures to embellish the musical background.

Ugo and I wanted an overture for the film, a luminous pop-ish tune, to bridge the gap with the outside. I was fortunate to have the pleasure of collaborating for this track with the singer November Ultra, who harmoniously merged with the spirit of the film. She was able to find lyrics and a delicate melody to accompany us softly out of the world of the film.



Cast

Iris Margot Ringard Oldra

Arco Oscar Tresanini

Clifford Nathanaël Perrot

Iris' Mother Alma Jodorowsky

Iris' Father Swann Arlaud

Mikki Alma Jodorowsky et Swann Arlaud

Dougie Vincent Macaigne

Stewie Louis Garrel

Frankie William Lebghil

Arco's Mother Sophie Mas

Arco's Mother (finale sequence) Frédérique Cantrel

Arco's Father Oxmo Puccino

Ada Joséphine Mancini



Crew

Director **Ugo Bienvenu**

Screenplay **Ugo Bienvenu et Félix de Givry**

Produced by par **Félix de Givry, Sophie Mas, Natalie Portman, Ugo Bienvenu**

Music **Arnaud Toulon**

Executive Producers **Audrey Tondre, Remembers Studio**

Artistic Direction and Characters Design **Ugo Bienvenu**

Artistic Supervision **Félix de Givry**

Storyboard **Ugo Bienvenu, Adam Sillard, Jocelyn Charles, Tamerlan Bekmurzayev**

Animation Director **Adam Sillard**

Assistant Director **Anaëlle Saba**

Concept Assistant **Simon Cadilhac**

Compositing Supervision **Benoît Galland**

Colours and Sets Stylist **Louise Seynhaeve, Ugo Bienvenu, Fabio Besse**

Sets Supervision **Fabio Besse**

Colour Continuity **Louise Seynhaeve**

Post-production Director **Clara Vincienne**

Editing **Nathan Jacquard**

Editing Assistant **Albert Bonnier**

Sound design **Nicolas Becker**

Sound Editing **Andrea Ferrara**

Mixing **Damien Lazzerini**

Foley Artist **Grégory Vincent**



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