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Present

FALCON LAKE

A film by **CHARLOTTE LEBON**

A love and ghost story



100min / Canada, France / French, English
DCP / Sound 5.1 / 16MM / Image 1.37

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SYNOPSIS

Bastien and Chloé spend their summer vacation with their families at a lake cabin in Quebec, haunted by a ghost legend. Despite the age gap between them, the two teenagers form a singular bond. Ready to overcome his worst fears to earn a place in Chloé's heart, the holiday becomes a turbulent pivotal moment for the young boy.

DIRECTOR – CHARLOTTE LE BON



Charlotte Le Bon grew up in Quebec before moving to Paris. She worked as an actress with French directors such as Michel Gondry and Jalil Lespert. In the US, she shot films with Lasse Hallström, Robert Zemeckis and Sean Ellis. Charlotte is an artist exploring her taste for strangeness through paintings, drawings and lithographs. Her passion for genre films led her to write and direct *Judith Hotel*, a short film presented at Cannes in 2018. *Falcon Lake* is her first feature film.

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

2020 : *Walk Away* - MOTTRON - musical clip

2018 : *JUDITH HOTEL* - short feature

DIRECTOR'S INTERVIEW

Your film is inspired by the graphic novel *Une sœur (A sister)* by Bastien Vivès. How did you find out about it?

It's Jalil Lespert, actor, filmmaker and friend, who gifted it to me. He simply told me: "I think this is for you and if you like it, I will help co-produce it as your first feature film". He was right. I found it obvious that this very sensitive and subtle story had immense cinematic potential. At first, even Bastien Vivès was surprised by the idea of adapting it. He was convinced that the story couldn't be translated to the screen. For me, the real challenge was to make the story my own, for it to be a personal piece. Thanks to the collaboration with François Choquet on the script, we succeeded in giving it a new identity that was satisfying. It's a loose adaptation.

The events of the graphic novel take place in Brittany by the sea. *Falcon Lake* is located in Quebec by a lake. Is this the first step of interpreting it?

The landscapes and regions of the Laurentides, north-west of Montreal, have been familiar to me since childhood. I needed that familiarity not only to reassure myself but also to challenge my main character, who is French. I liked the idea of confronting him to this alterity in order to exacerbate a feeling of isolation that is true to one's emotional awakening. A wooden house quite isolated, a lake, forests. In this "basic" setting evolves a small group of vacationers, including teenagers Chloé and Bastien, who themselves are in the middle of a romantic holiday.

Reckless teenagers, surrounded by a hidden danger. This is reminiscent of certain other films...

I am a fan of horror films. They are my first visceral memories of cinema. When I was younger in Quebec, my friends and I used to spend nights watching films like *Scream*, *I Know What You Did Last Summer* or even *The Shining* later on, scared to death and happily so. Fun fact, I filmed *Falcon Lake* in a little town of the Laurentides called Gore. Our headquarters were located near a cemetery and at midday everyday, the crew ate near the tombs. It was strangely pleasing.

Do you feel like you are at a crossroads of various cultures?

Being from Quebec and anglophone from my parents, French and francophone throughout my career and life. I'm kind of a smoothie of all of that. It's a great inheritance, an existential and intellectual richness. I know what alterity is from having lived it.

You were filming in the middle of the summer. Was that a necessity for you?

Summer in Quebec is magic, especially in the Laurentides. After months of winter and freezing cold, the heat brings liberation. A liberation of the spirit and body, a liberation of nature in all its generous splendor. We make the most out of it but with the feeling that it won't last, that the fall is going to ambush us bringing back the harshness.

During that time of all-out hedonism, does disquietude linger?

I want to show that this nature and all its beauty can be worrying at the same time. The waters of the lakes are marvelous but they're dark waters, sometimes lukewarm. I always saw swimming in a lake as a double-edged experience: the joy of splashing around but never without some slight

anxiety. We never know what is at the bottom, at the very bottom. And this feeling can become incredibly worrying. This is what I think takes us aback whenever we have the infamous feeling of "déjà vu". This is the main thread of *Falcon Lake*: We don't know what's happening at the bottom but we have this feeling of having lived it already.

How did you arrange this osmosis between the feeling of ambiguity distilled by the landscapes, and the already complex characterization of the two main characters?

From my point of view, Chloé needed to impress Bastien not only with her beauty and insolence, but with her strangeness and darkness as well. She has this feeling of not belonging to any group, neither family nor friends. Her fascination for tragic stories and ghosts are singular elements that isolate her and show the loneliness that she secretly feels.

Bastien, on the other hand, is a 14-year-old boy who is navigating through a *twilight zone* where the child is still there while the silhouette of the adult is being formed. It's on this playing field of intermediates that Chloé and Bastien will meet, understand and love each other.

One of the strengths of *Falcon Lake* is your ability to translate in images what's going through their heads...

Probably because I myself lived through these moments of doubt so specific to adolescence, as much from a sexual point of view as an existential one. It's a unique adventure, crucial and sometimes painful as are these times of metamorphosis and transition. Adolescence is a subject in cinema that is exhilarating as long as we do not give in to seriousness or even mellowness.

Is *Falcon Lake* also a comedy?

Sometimes, yes! Too much seriousness annoys me. *Falcon Lake* is a teenage comedy where all jokes are allowed, even those who push the limit. There is a scene where one of the boys from the band gets out of the lake screaming because something touched him and tried to pull him down towards the bottom. But this growing angst gets quickly diffused by how he turns it into a joke. He says something fondled his balls. I love the word "couilles" (balls), it makes me instantly laugh out loud.

How did you choose your two actors for the main roles of Chloé et Bastien?

I won't say that I like them because I actually love them. I saw Joseph Engel in *L'Homme Fidèle* (A Faithful Man) by Louis Garrel. He was very young at the time, about 10 years old. After discovering this secret child, I hoped to convince his parents to leave him with me in Canada for a month. It took some time... But coincidentally, Joseph was 14-years-old during filming, meaning in the very middle of this hesitant phase where actions and behaviors begin to contradict and even challenge each other. With his body, his sensibility, he gave it all: a teenager in all his splendor but infused with the emotional intelligence of an adult. Generally in teenage movies, male characters are a bit ridiculous, passive and unpleasant. I wanted a boy that was handsome, troubling and funny.

For Chloé's character, my search took more time. Sara Montpetit responded to an online casting call that received more than 400 applications. I immediately saw that she would be the ideal Chloé: no simpering and a certain nonchalance, totally unaware of her beauty. Despite her being

18-years-old at the time of casting, I could feel that she carried with her a wisdom and an intelligence that are disconcerting. I then learned that she played the role of Maria Chapdelaine in Sébastien Pilote's eponymous film.

Falcon Lake is the story of two fallow desires that very gradually meet each other...

No love at first sight indeed. Three years separate Chloé and Bastien. At that age, it's an immense gap. She's almost a woman, he just became a teenager. They very carefully become close, test and seek each other. To say it a bit more solemnly, *Falcon Lake* is a little investigation into desire. There's fire on the lake!

You're also an actress. Didn't you feel like getting in front of the camera and play a role in your film?

I admire those capable of operating on two different fronts: directing and acting. To me these two exercises of command and control are not compatible. Although I did learn directing through acting and being on set, getting behind the camera really did give me a new confidence. Without going into cheap therapy thoughts, I think I finally got over my imposter syndrome. I hate seeing myself on screen, it's almost a phobia.

You shot on 16mm print. Why this "old school" choice?

The materiality of print gives a more subtle and surprising aesthetic than digital where everything feels too balanced, sometimes bland. Moreover, with print, you can't just do a lot of takes and just pick the good one out of the batch for economic reasons. This leads to a certain discipline to have on set as there is a physical material to respect.

Did this discipline help you?

As all filmmakers do, I wanted a bit more time to shoot. 26 days of shooting is not a lot. We worked between two pandemic waves, the gravity of the outside world on everyone's mind, but thankfully with a bit of nonchalance too. The crew had this summer camp energy, with a few couples forming while we were there. But it was not a vacation for my Director of Photography Kristof Brandl and myself. We were battling against the weather, the light, against time... Never giving in to make sure nothing's missing, down to the smallest detail. For instance, the objects in the house look like they've been there forever when they've been set by our wonderful prop master Alex Hercule Desjardins. But this permanent mobilization imposed a very stimulating tempo. We had to act fast, now, and do it well.

What needed to be done in the edit?

To purify. With the editor Julie Léna, we removed a lot of dialogue scenes in favor of silences, static shots that are obviously silent, but just as meaningful. Stolen shots, moments of nature. The lake, the clouds, the forest. In two key moments there is a shot of a dead tree, exactly like in George Stevens' *A Place in the Sun*.

With the full involvement of the cinematographer Kristof Brandl, for whom *Falcon Lake* is also a first feature film, there was an unspoken agreement to seek in the landscapes emotions and colors that

we recognize but which could also divert us. Kristof also grew up in the Laurentians and I knew that we had the same sensitivity to the spaces in which we shot.

The film's sound and music are also in this intermediate state: both present and discreet...

With Séverin Favriau and Stéphane Thiébaud, we wanted the sound to tell the world of the film but also its hidden world. There are almost electric sounds of cicadas and birds that you only hear in Quebec. Humming, bass... There is also the world of parents, of adults, which is background noise. Like when you're a teenager.

On-the-nose music is like a parasite to me. Sad music for a sad scene, it bores me! Thanks to the talent of Shida Shahabi and Wilhelm Brandl, the music is sometimes ominous, sometimes cheerful, always attentive to the general, bittersweet ambiguity...

What word would sum up *Falcon Lake*?

Melancholy, it's one of my favorite words. This melancholy that I experienced at the highest point in my adolescence, and which still follows me, is a safe haven for me, helping me to move forward. We must not fight melancholy but tame it to make it an ally. A friend for life, against sadness.

PRODUCTION COMPANIES

CINEFRANCE STUDIOS (France)

METAFILMS (Canada)

ONZECINQ (France)

CAST

Bastien

Joseph Engel

Chloé

Sara Montpetit

Violette

Monia Chokri

Romain

Arthur Igual

Louise

Karine Gonthier-Hyndman

Titi

Thomas Laperrière

Oliver

Anthony Therrien

Stan

Pierre-Luc Lafontaine

Paul

Lévi Doré

Bryan

Jeff Roop

CREW

A film by

Charlotte Le Bon

Written by

Charlotte Le Bon

In collaboration with

François Choquet

Loosely based on the graphic novel

« A Sister » by Bastien Vivès
Casterman Editions

Cinematographer

Kristof Brandl

Editor

Julie Léna

Artistic Director

Alex Hercules Desjardins

Producers

David Gauquié
Julien Deris
Sylvain Corbeil
Nancy Grant
Jalil Lespert
Dany Boon
Jean-Luc Ormières

Executive Producers

Tim Headington
Theresa Steele Page
Charlotte Le Bon
Emilie Georges
Naima Abed
Whitaker Lader

Sound

Stephen de Oliveira
Séverin Favriau
Stéphane Thiébaud

Original score by	Shida Shahabi
Assistant director	Marilou Caravecchia-Pellettier
Costumes	Gabrielle Lauzier
Make-up	Sandra Ruel
Hair	Christophe Guitart
Production management Canada	Pascal Bascaron Nicolas Chabot
Production management France	Charles Jaeger
Post-production manager	Francesca Betteni-Barnes
A French-Canadian co-production by	CINÉFRANCE STUDIOS METAFILMS ONZECINQ
In collaboration with	LEY LINE ENTERTAINMENT LES PRODUCTIONS DU CH'TIMI
With the financial support of	CANAL+ SODEC TÉLÉFILM CANADA EURIMAGES - CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT REMBOURSABLE POUR LA PRODUCTION CINÉMATOGRAPHIQUE ET TÉLÉVISUELLE QUÉBÉCOISE LE FOND HAROLD GREENBERG CINÉ+ CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR LA PRODUCTION CINÉMATOGRAPHIQUE OU MAGNÉTOSCOPIQUE CANADIENNE
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Canadian distribution	SPHERE FILMS
International sales	MEMENTO INTERNATIONAL