

PHILIPPE GODEAU
PRÉSENTE

JARED LETO



MR. NOBODY

UN FILM DE JACO VAN DORMAEL

tiff. toronto
international
film festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION 2009

 66
VENEZIA 2009
Competition

SARAH POLLEY · DIANE KRUGER · LINH-DAN PHAM
RHYS IFANS · NATASHA LITTLE · TOBY REGBO · JUNO TEMPLE
ÉCRIT ET RÉALISÉ PAR JACO VAN DORMAEL · PRODUIT PAR PHILIPPE GODEAU

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A FILM BY **JACO VAN DORMAEL**

2.35 SCOPE • 137' • DOLBY SR-D – DTS • VISA N° 112.536

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SYNOPSIS

A young boy stands on a station platform.
The train is about to leave.
Should he go with his mother or stay with his father?
An infinity of possibilities rise from this decision.
As long as he doesn't choose, anything is possible.

Every life deserves to be lived.

CAST

<i>Adult Nemo / Old Nemo</i>	Jared LETO
<i>Adult Elise</i>	Sarah POLLEY
<i>Adult Anna</i>	Diane KRUGER
<i>Adult Jeanne</i>	Linh-Dan PHAM
<i>Nemo's father</i>	Rhys IFANS
<i>Nemo's mother</i>	Natasha LITTLE
<i>15-year-old Nemo</i>	Toby REGBO
<i>15-year-old Anna</i>	Juno TEMPLE
<i>15-year-old Elise</i>	Clare STONE
<i>9-year-old Nemo</i>	Thomas BYRNE
<i>15-year-old Jeanne</i>	Audrey GIACOMINI
<i>9-year-old Anna</i>	Laura BRUMAGNE
<i>Dr Feldheim</i>	Allan CORDUNER
<i>Young journalist</i>	Daniel MAYS
<i>Harry</i>	Michael RILEY
<i>TV host</i>	Harold MANNING
<i>Eve</i>	Emily TILSON
<i>Joyce</i>	Roline SKEHAN
<i>Noah</i>	Anders MORRIS
<i>Henry</i>	Pascal DUQUENNE
<i>5-year-old Nemo</i>	Noa DE CONSTANZO
<i>Clara</i>	Chiara CASELLI

CREW

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY	Jaco VAN DORMAEL
PRODUCER	Philippe GODEAU
CO-PRODUCERS	Alfred HÜRMER Marco MEHLITZ Christian LAROUCHE Jaco VAN DORMAEL
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS	Nathalie GASTALDO Mark GILL Daniel MARQUET Jean-Yves ASSELIN
DP	Christophe BEAUCARNE A.F.C.
EDITORS	Matyas VERESS Susan SHIPTON
SOUND	Dominique WARNIER Jane TATTERSALL Frederic DEMOLDER Lou SOLAKOFSKI Emmanuel de BOISSIEU
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	Renaud ALCADE
SET DESIGN	Sylvie OLIVE A.D.C.
COSTUME DESIGN	Ulla GOTHE
MAKE-UP AND HAIR	Kaatje VAN DAMME
CASTING	Toby WALE Fiona WEIR Joanna COLBERT
VISUAL EFFECTS SUPERVISOR	Louis MORIN
'FUTURE' GRAPHIC CONCEPT	François SCHUITEN
ORIGINAL MUSIC	Pierre VAN DORMAEL
PHOTOGRAPHY	Chantal THOMINE DESMAZURES

A PAN-EUROPÉENNE PRODUCTION CO-PRODUCED WITH INTEGRAL FILM, ALFRED HÜRMER - LAGOFILM, MARCO MEHLITZ - CRISTAL FILMS PRODUCTIONS, CHRISTIAN LAROUCHE - TOTO & CO FILMS, JACO VAN DORMAEL CO-PRODUCED BY FRANCE 2 CINÉMA - FRANCE 3 CINÉMA WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF CANAL+ - CINÉCINÉMA - FRANCE 2 - FRANCE 3 IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SCOPE PICTURES - DEUTSCHER FILMFÖRDERFONDS - MEDIUMBOARD BERLIN-BRANDENBURG - FILMFÖRDERUNGSANSTALT - LAND BRANDENBURG - ARD DEGETO - COMMERZBANK PRODUCED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH TÉLÉFILM CANADA - SODEC - SOCIÉTÉ DE DÉVELOPPEMENT DES ENTERPRISES CULTURELLES - QUÉBEC - VLAAMS AUDIOVISUEL FONDS - RÉGION WALLONNE - RTL TVI AND FORTIS FILM FUND WITH THE SUPPORT OF EURIMAGES - PROGRAMME MÉDIA DE L'UNION EUROPÉENNE AND TAX-SHELTER DU GOUVERNEMENT FÉDÉRAL BELGE PRODUCED WITH THE HELP OF CENTRE DU CINÉMA ET DE L'AUDIOVISUEL DE LA COMMUNAUTÉ FRANÇAISE DE BELGIQUE ET DES TÉLÉDISTRIBUTEURS WALLONS

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A CONVERSATION WITH PHILIPPE GODEAU

After THE EIGHTH DAY Jaco told me: *"For my next film, I'm going to do something a lot more simple, not very expensive and that won't take so long!"* (Laughs). But then, as time went by, events took a different turn... A film is organic: it evolves constantly. The delivery took a very long time. That's because Jaco isn't one of those people who has to do things for the sake of doing them. He is an artist before he is a film director. He needs time to reach his aspirations.

FINANCING

I read the screenplay for the first time in Cannes in 2004. It could have been budgeted at 50 million Euros then, which meant it was impossible to finance. Jaco is a friend first, so I told him things as they were: we had to find co-producers. So we worked together to turn it into a less expensive project. Of course it was still going to be an expensive and difficult film to achieve but it wasn't impossible. Nobody was prepared to take such a gamble on a six month shoot with all the risks involved. Pathé and Wild Bunch joined me later on the project, not because of the cast (we had no actors signed at that point) but due to Jaco's reputation which is very rare today, especially on a project of this scale. The sums they were prepared to invest were nowhere near enough to cover the budget though. This led me to take very high personal guarantees on the film so we could get the machine going. To sum it up, if I hadn't been prepared to put up the money up front, gambling on the fact that I could repay myself as possible investors joined the project as it went on, MR. NOBODY would have stayed on the shelf.

Admittedly, if Jaco hadn't been my friend, I would have never thrown myself into this adventure. But I didn't do it only for the sake of our friendship or else we would have probably hit a wall. Quite simply, by becoming his friend I got to know him and have total trust in him. I knew that he wouldn't let me down and that I wasn't taking the risk on my own but that we were taking it together. I knew we'd encounter obstacles on the way but I was certain that we would face them together.

JACO AND I

Jaco and I met during TOTO THE HERO, then worked together on THE EIGHTH DAY. Even though each film is different the foundation remains the same: mutual trust. Each of us needs time to ourselves. Jaco needs to pursue his artistic aspirations and I try to make it financially possible. We see each other all the time but we almost always talk about other things. We both know that if we make progress separately we do not need to report to each other. Our relationship is very natural. I don't stand behind his camera and tell him what to do and he doesn't get involved in the financing. But on set he needs to know what I think. He fully trusts me when it comes to the films' releases: choosing the poster, the trailers. We complement each other well, I think.

THE SHOOT

The film did not overrun the six-month shoot by even one day. The financial scale of it did exceed what we had originally planned but in a controlled way. And looking back, the shoot was the most enjoyable part of this adventure. Admittedly, the days were long, the working schedule crazy between Belgium, Canada and Germany... But we had no major problems. All difficulties were resolved thanks to the sheer pleasure radiating from the whole team. Even though Jaco makes so few movies, he is surrounded by people close to him. I've never seen him as happy as on the set of MR. NOBODY. This is one of the reasons I encourage him to work more often!

POST-PRODUCTION

Post-production takes a very long time for this kind of film: the editing lasted over a year. I think it's a real challenge to have enough hindsight while being stuck in it for so long, as Jaco did. It is not surprising that it's during this stage that both of us had to have the most discussions. I had the detachment he couldn't have. That period was quite complex for a perfectionist like Jaco: he could have spent 10 years working on it, exploring all the possibilities of the editing and coming up with an entirely different film. But he got through it and we're delighted with the end result. Jaco masters his technique while never losing the

poetry and always keeping his vision intact.
Everything blends really well with him.

OUTCOME

With MR. NOBODY, I am very happy to show that following directors and accompanying them allows one to go further, to take risks. Jaco and I did not fall asleep on our collaboration; it pushed us, each in his own way, to go further, to accomplish what seemed impossible. It would not have been possible for me to produce this film if I hadn't produced the others, if I hadn't been familiar with his way of working.

In the end I am happy and proud of this film because it isn't like any other I've seen. It succeeds in conveying lots of things that I would have liked to tell my own children about life, the choices one has to make... Jaco doesn't preach, he makes me feel, live and relive. It is a tour de force!

A CONVERSATION WITH JACO VAN DORMAEL

Why wait so long before returning to a film set?

I was living. And I was writing. Of course I'd have never imagined this film would take so long. But the more I wrote, the more I had to write. As long as I wasn't satisfied I kept on experimenting with different paths. Perhaps I'm a compulsive monomaniac? In the end, the screenplay took seven years to write, every day from 10am until 3.30pm, which is when school finishes for my kids. The great advantage is that writing is totally compatible with family life. I had no pressure. In the movie world a five-year-old film is an old film. It's very comfortable to be a "has-been".

What was the starting point for MR. NOBODY?

MR. NOBODY is a film about complexity. The challenge was to talk about complexity in a medium that tends towards simplification. It's also a film about life. While in cinema, every scene is indispensable and everything comes together in the end, my own life is full of holes, of chance occurrences, of useless scenes, and moves inevitably towards death. That's what makes it beautiful.

It's a film about doubt... but I could be wrong. But above all it's a film about choice. What part does chance play in the choices we make? Why do we make one choice and not another? What is it that makes our life what it is? How much is choice and how much is the interaction of a multitude of little causes of which we have no knowledge? Has a stranger on the other side of the planet unknowingly altered the course of your life by boiling an egg? When I'm madly in love and tell myself "*I could never live without her*", what would have happened if I had never met her?

My starting point was a 12-minute short I made in 1982 called E PERICOLOSO SPORGERSI. A kid runs behind a train with two possible choices: to go with his mother or with his father. From there we follow two possible futures. I started one version based on the fact that a woman jumps or doesn't jump on a train. Then SLIDING DOORS by Peter Howitt came out, followed by RUN LOLA RUN by Tom Tykwer. I had to find something else. And that's when I realised that the story I was trying to

tell was not binary, that I was above all interested by the multiplicity and complexity of choices. When you have to make a choice, there are never only two options but an infinite number resulting from the first two. It's a branching out. With this screenplay I wanted to make the viewer feel the abyss that is the infinity of possibilities. Beyond this, I wanted to find a different way of telling a story. I wanted the gaze of the child on his future to meet the gaze of the old man he has become on his past. I wanted to talk about complexity through cinema, which is a simplifying medium.

While reality around us is more and more complex, the information is more and more succinct, political speeches are more and more simplistic. What interests me is complexity. Not the simple answers, which are reassuring but bound to be false.

When you begin to write your story do you know how it will end?

Not at all! If I were an efficient screenwriter it wouldn't take me seven years to write a script. With me, there's something organic about writing, like a growing plant. I seem to go in all directions. A bit like Cheval the Postman's Ideal Palace. (Ferdinand Cheval was a French postman who spent 33 years of his life building the extraordinary Palais Idéal). Like Nemo I have great difficulty making choices. So I have masses of possibilities. Then I do some trimming. But the less I know where I want to go, the more mysterious it gets, the more it eludes me, the more it interests me.

When did you know you had finished the writing?

As writers will say, you know you've finished writing a novel when you're sick of writing it! There was a point when I thought I couldn't do better. From then on it was time to re-write it with the movie camera and actors in a visual way. In fact, when I start to ask myself where I will position my camera, I know that the writing is over and done with.

How do you make the transition from writing to directing?

I wanted each life in MR. NOBODY to have a different cinematic language. I also wanted to use the camera in a very specific way for each life so that one would know which life we are talking about from the first shot of a scene. We filmed the life with Anna (Diane Kruger) like their adolescence:

I used with Anna and Nemo as adults the same set up I'd used with them as teenagers so that the two emotional charges would merge on screen. The life with Elise (Sarah Polley) plays on the distance between her and Nemo, with one of the two characters out of focus, filmed with a hand-held camera, in a realistic way. In the life with Jeanne (Linh-Dan Pham) we used an out of shot technique. The feet appear on screen before the face. The heart of the matter is always out of shot, as if no one's paying attention to it. The life of the teenager in the coma is completely out of focus. The life of the widower is composed of different independent camera movements; they are contemplative, with no connection with the character's movements. The life of "the one who was never born" is flat, unreal; everything in it is clean. To achieve this, I began by cutting out certain scenes on paper. Then, before we started filming, for a period of two weeks, my DP, Christophe Beaucarne and I filmed stand-ins on video to be able to hone the language of each life.

Why did you choose Christophe Beaucarne?

He's a friend and was one of my first students at INSAS, the film school in Brussels. We work really well together because we try to outdo each other with experiments. We have a lot of fun with things that only interest film makers. How to avoid reverse shots? What to do so the camera cannot be seen when it is actually moving through a mirror? We enjoyed imagining tricks that one cannot see to give the whole ensemble a strange feeling. Nothing spectacular, just off-kilter moments.

Was any one character particularly hard to write?

Not really. The biggest challenge was probably to hold over the length of all the polyphonic layers - each life told out front - without abandoning any; to find the right construction and the fluidity for this intertwining. The writing of the wives is built on a paradigm based on the relationship each of them has with Nemo. There is the case where he is in love with her and she's in love with him too (Anna), he is in love with her but she isn't quite in love with him (Elise), she is in love with him but he isn't totally in love with her (Jeanne). In the end, the story with Anna - the one where both are in madly in love - is lived out in waiting, in absence, whereas the

other two lives are lived daily but in the tragedy of non-reciprocity.

Why did you cast Jared Leto as Mr. Nobody?

I try not to have a face in mind when I write. I keep the field of possibilities open. Fortunately, in the case of MR. NOBODY I needed an actor who could transform himself, as much physically as vocally, rhythmically, his breathing... It's pretty obvious from the many films where he is unrecognizable that Jared has a taste for transformation. This was confirmed on set. The more different from himself he has to be, the most at ease and the most brilliant he is. That's when he is at his most natural, like in the scenes in which he plays an old man. Jared is an actor of transformation. Kaatje van Damme, our make up artist really helped the actors to be able to differentiate the diverse lives, to make the link between the teenagers and the adults so they could be one person and one person only.

Let's talk about the three wives of his "lives".

Sarah Polley who plays Elise...

She was the first actress I thought of for the role and I was very lucky that she accepted the part right away. I'd finished writing and saw her in Isabel Coixet's THE SECRET LIFE OF WORDS and MY LIFE WITHOUT ME. It was a real shock. She is such a great actress. For the part of Elise, I needed someone who was going to be able to make this seemingly disagreeable woman trapped in her depression endearing. We don't experience her depression from the inside but from Nemo's point of view. We had to be able to love her, in spite of not being able to understand what is happening to her. She herself doesn't understand. That's what is so heart-rending, this inability to comprehend. She is searching for the reason for her suffering, even though this depression could simply be a disease, with all the unfairness that entails. It makes her feel all the more guilty because she knows that it is terrifying for the man who shares her life. When I saw Sarah play her character, I didn't know it was humanly possible for an actor to cry and stop crying on demand each time someone says "Action!" and "Cut!" for weeks on end! And this without any special preparation and while laughing in between takes. But at 29, Sarah already has a 22-year career behind her. She glorified an extremely difficult part.

What about Linh-Dan Pham as Jeanne?

I met her in London. I had imagined Jeanne as a character who suffered in silence. This woman who doesn't feel loved will never reproach her husband with it and will try to be the perfect wife, to do what's asked of her until the end, in order to save what she thinks is their love. I auditioned Linh-Dan - whom I'd already seen in THE BEAT THAT MY HEART SKIPPED by Jacques Audiard - and it was obvious after five minutes that she was the one.

And Diane Kruger who plays Anna?

Diane said yes two days after we offered her the role and the next day she was in Brussels! I was very touched by her enthusiasm for the project. She is someone who puts herself out on set, who trusts you, who lets you direct her with precision and nuance. She doesn't hold back, she's ready to take risks. She knows within herself when she's got it right. Jared and she make a very close couple on screen, they emanate a disconcerting complicity. I've often seen her playing very feminine women but I had a feeling that she could be at ease just as much in a completely different register, in the role of someone who doesn't care so much about her looks, whose feet are firmly planted on the ground and her head in the clouds. Her character, Anna, doesn't hold on to anything, doesn't own a thing, she is ready to pack her bags and go at any moment. It suits her to a tee. In this film, she has such grace and magnificent strength.

And the actors who play Nemo's parents:

Rhys Ifans and Natasha Little...

Of course I'd seen Rhys in NOTTING HILL by Roger Michell where he was incredibly funny. But I had also found him particularly disconcerting in ENDURING LOVE by the same director, where he played a bashful gay man in love. So I knew he was multifaceted which was indispensable to play the rupture between the light-hearted father and the man who suddenly sees his life shattered. My casting director in London suggested Natasha. She amazed me from our first meeting. She is a great theatre actor, one you hardly need direct. You just have to tell her the result you want to achieve and she produces it right away. Her role was decisive for the film: it was necessary that the mother should

destroy the childhood happiness but that one would feel the need to go with her at the same time. That's what Natasha managed to achieve.

What kind of director are you?

In fact, it's the actors who tell me how to direct them. I try to find what each of them needs. I was surprised by the teenagers, to whom I simply had to explain where their characters needed to go, without going into details about how to get there. They had what was crucial: control of their loss of control! But again, as with the writing I can't really be precise about how I direct actors. I only know that I take immense pleasure in watching them, in telling them how I'd like this or that scene to be. Some actors need to be talked to a lot, others not at all. You have to tell some their character's past, whereas this would disturb others. It's up to me to adapt to each actor so they can get the most pleasure from their work and can reach a moment of grace when they will allow the loss of control that permits them to become the character. Jared gets there by exhaustion, others through trust.

What was it like to be on set again, after such a long time?

I have never had so much fun on set, primarily thanks to everyone around me. Things flowed very naturally. I was never tired. I think that even though I wasn't making films I did evolve. I thought differently so I shot in a different way.

Did the fact that you had people of different cultures amongst your crew, shooting a film that began in Belgium, continued in Canada and finished in Berlin, make things complicated?

There was a Franco-Belgian core crew to which others were added. Sylvie Olivé, the set designer, did essential work to help me translate my screenplay into images, also to find a visual language for each one of Nemo's lives, by playing with colour. Three little girls: one wears a red dress (Anna), the second a blue one (Elise) and the third a yellow dress (Jeanne). We kept these three colours as visual codes for each of their lives. Thus in the life where Nemo chooses the little girl in yellow, the whole set is tinted in yellow whereas red and blue are absent. Same logic and same consequences for the two other stories.

It could sound very forced, but on screen it works very discretely. It's as if in choosing a life, he renounces colours and goes towards monochrome. In childhood, all the colours exist. For Old Nemo only white remains.

Were you worried about shooting any scenes in particular?

I was a bit anxious with the love scenes between the teenagers. I wanted to show that physical attraction in teenage years is as strong as in adulthood. It was necessary to keep a sense of modesty but obtain something powerful at the same time; I didn't want any aloofness in the eyes of their characters, so there shouldn't be any uneasiness between the actors or because of the presence of the crew. Very quickly, I was reassured because it was a matter of choreography. During intimate scenes - intimate because of the words or the eyes - my camera stayed only on their faces. On the other hand, for the sensual scenes we did quite a lot of choreography; for example they had to kiss standing against a wall, roll over and find themselves lying in bed. To shoot this scene, we had the bed standing up against the wall and the two actors had to pretend they were lying down when they really were standing and the camera swivelled. As a result, any sense of modesty flew out the window to allow room for the choreography.

One of the biggest challenges you faced was the creation of the future...

This was down to three people: Sylvie Olivé, François Schuiten, who supervised the future in general and Louis Morin, who was in charge of special effects. I completely relied on these three whose job it was to create a future never seen before in the movies. It was a very tough goal, to say the least. The more we researched, the more obvious it became that everything had been done before. The idea of tourism on Mars came towards the end. It allowed us a sort of discrepancy, a shift. For the container that holds the sleeping bodies on the ship, we had to do a lot of research, in particular on how animals hibernate without getting bedsores. Sylvie Olivé was inspired by cellophane-wrapped meat packaging. She did a lot of research and finally found the right colour latex at an S & M latex maker in Paris before she was able to run some tests with a reversed vacuum cleaner to try to vacuum hang someone. It took months to

make this look quite normal and original. Sound was also a crucial factor for this future world. Sound taps directly into the unconscious, it alters the image and allows one to imagine what one cannot see.

Music plays an essential role. Which way did you want to go?

There are some pre-existing songs like "Mr Sandman" which I knew I wanted since I began the script. Then, with my brother Pierre - who has written the music for each of my films - we worked on simple themes and out of synch loops. A mixture of superficial simplicity and underlying complexity. He wrote themes that overlapped to form new ones, each theme continuing to exist while being mixed with the others. I did not want the music to be overtly emotional, so Pierre and I chose a minimalist orchestration, no symphony orchestras, more often than not just a single guitar. We wanted the instrument and the player to be felt. This stance actually sums up the whole adventure: a maximalist project with a minimalist approach.

How would you describe your partnership with Philippe Godeau?

Philippe is a good friend: that sets the tone for our relationship. A very courageous friend at that to take on such a project and take the risks he took. I spoke to Philippe about this project right from the start; he was the first person to read the script. It was an enormous challenge for him, to put together a film like this, shot in so many countries with the sort of budget usually allocated to action films or comedies. But thanks to the finances committed for the 26 weeks shoot, I think we succeeded in making an atypical film, not a formula film.

Now that the adventure is over, can you tell us who is this MR.NOBODY for you?

"One, a hundred, a thousand and nobody". As a spectator, I love cinema because it allows us to live an experience by proxy, one that our lives will never be able to offer. Cinema allows us to multiply the possibilities of life: to live for a few hours the life of an inhabitant of Uzbekistan or to be a trapper in Alaska. The experiment that MR. NOBODY suggests is to not choose but to explore everything in order to understand that all experiences are interesting

in the end. That is what I would like the audience to feel: that there are no good or bad choices. That it is all in the way we live them. In this respect, the question of freedom is one of the essential themes of my film. What is it that makes me feel free? When I can respond positively to an impulse, a desire? But where does this impulse come from? From my past? From my education? From my parents? From what my grandparents experienced? What is freedom of choice? What is "free will"- in my view an oxymoron? With MR. NOBODY I wanted to make some sort of philosophical tale without a moral. The old Nemo, after seeing all his convictions shattered, after learning to live peacefully in a state of uncertainty, could have said to conclude: *"In life, things are fun or they're not. If it's fun, do it, if it isn't, don't."*

A CONVERSATION WITH THE ACTORS

Did you know Jaco Van Dormael's work before working on MR. NOBODY?

Jared Leto: I'd heard many wonderful things about his films but had never seen them before we met. It was a pleasure to watch his work and I was absolutely awed by the films and the performances.

Sarah Polley: TOTO THE HERO is one of the most beautiful films I've seen. Jaco has an original way of looking at the world and a unique imagination. His films are like no others: they really show who he is, his altruism, in a striking way.

Diane Kruger: To be honest, I didn't know his name. But I loved TOTO THE HERO. The screenplay touched me: it was as if the actors took you by the hand and lead you into a dream.

Linh-Dan Pham: I'd seen TOTO THE HERO and loved it. It has the same poetic and imaginative qualities that you find in MR. NOBODY, the same moving and joyous qualities that take you back to childhood.

How did you get the part?

JL: The first time I saw Jaco was after a show I played in Utrecht in the Netherlands. I'd been told he was coming just before I went on stage with my band 30 SECONDS TO MARS. It was really a last minute meeting. I had read his script a few months before and was blown away by it. He was very kind, humble, and incredibly interesting in that first meeting and also very unassuming. Less like a director and more like a sculptor or something. I was very excited to work with him and told him directly.

SP: As soon as I found out that Jaco was preparing a new film I wanted to be a part of it at any price. I let this be known and quickly had the screenplay in my hands. As I read, it became clear that I wanted to play Elise. We agreed to meet in New York and I trained myself to convince him that I was the one he needed for the part. He arrived... hoping that I was going to accept! (*Laughs*). We were on the same wavelength. It set the tone of what this adventure would become: everything followed on from there as if by magic. I've never been so happy on a set.

DK: I fell into this project by chance. Originally, someone else was supposed to play that part. In order to convince me to accept the part I was lucky enough to watch a first montage of scenes shot

between my character and Jared's as children. It was absolutely sublime, so the next day I went to see Jaco in Belgium. Each time I meet a director I try to dress as the character would. I chose to wear a red dress. Jaco was overwhelmed when he saw me: without knowing it, I was wearing red like Anna, the colour of her universe. That was the beginning of the adventure.

LDP: Because the film was going to be shot in English Jaco didn't really want to do any casting in France. He thought that no French actor could play their part without any accent at all, as required. One day I got a phone call from his first assistant, Renaud Alcalde, who explained to me that Jaco had seen THE BEAT THAT MY HEART SKIPPED by Jacques Audiard and wanted to work with me. His casting director called me soon after, and that phone call was a real test of my English! He rang back five minutes later to tell me that he was sending me the screenplay so we could organise a meeting. I discovered how Jaco worked, very smoothly, with a lot of direction but with room for freedom.

How did you react when you first read the script?

JL: I was literally blown away. At the risk of sounding clichéd, Jaco is a true genius, a master. You sense that when you watch his work or when you read his writing. The script is very original and adventurous, unbelievably complex yet very fluid. What he writes, what he conveys is unusual and original. He's very unconventional, miles away from the clichéd scripts that are everywhere. He has a unique voice. It was a real privilege for me to be able to work with someone like him.

SP: I read and re-read it several times. I'm not sure if it was because I hadn't understood it all or if it was just for the pleasure of re-immersing myself each time in this delightful experience. Sinking into this screenplay is like devouring a major novel. I even had my whole family reading it, it fuelled quite a few discussions.

DK: Soon after I started reading it I couldn't believe my luck! It was such a great opportunity. Even if the script was not easy at first because it's so rich I got the same feeling I had when watching ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND by Michel Gondry. All these questions about the choices we make in life. I thought Anna's character was very poetic and easy to identify with.

LPD: I kept having to come back to what I had already read, I wondered how Jaco was going to be able to hold so many ideas in one film. I could feel it was going to be in the same vein as TOTO THE HERO so I didn't hesitate for one second! On top, Jaco only makes one film every 10 years so I wasn't going to miss that!

How would you define your character?

JL: Mr. Nobody is everyone and no one all at the same time, an illusion, the product of his own dreams. He's love, he's hope, he's fear, he's life and he's death. This is without doubt the most complex character I've ever played. It was a challenge to keep all these lives concentrated into one character for the duration of the filming without losing myself. But we had outlines and things that helped me to keep track of where we were.

SP: Elise is a young woman who carries a lot of love inside her. She yearns to be the best of mothers but just can't do it. She's frustrated because of this inability to live the way she would like to live, all of this stemming from her depression. She doesn't understand why she can't pull out of it. Over time she develops a feeling of shame and guilt towards her husband and her children.

DK: I believe Anna is the most complete of all the characters. She never makes any compromises, in any one of her lives. She gets married and keeps her promise until the end: she will not fall in love with anyone else. Maybe she's the woman I would like to be...

LDP: Her name is Jeanne. She loves Nemo Nobody with a passion but he doesn't love her. Their meeting was a misunderstanding. She thought he was honest and full of love for her. But as soon as they start a family she realizes that something is missing in their relationship, that he's never really there. I think stories like this are very common, I myself question the concept of the couple... how does love evolve with time? When passion dims, does love fly away? It also shows that lives that seem perfect on paper might not be so perfect in reality. Seemingly all is well for Jeanne and Nemo: a beautiful couple with beautiful children living in a magnificent house, yet it doesn't work, it's tragic... that moves me deeply.

How did you prepare?

JL: I had to use the script before anything else.

I relied a lot on the text, and my imagination. All these lives are lived by one and only one person. If the film breaks a lot of rules, it's still only one character that I play, with many different lives. So I started looking for differences rather than similarities. But ultimately, I didn't want to play 12 clearly different people, but 12 different versions of the same person according to the different choices he makes. Because this is actually the same person in 12 different existences.

SP: Honestly, I didn't find this character very difficult to play. I had complete trust in Jaco and it all happened in the most natural way. We just talked and our conversations were enough to clarify things. When you feel that a director trusts you and that this trust is reciprocal, nothing scares you. Everything flows.

You instinctively find in yourself what is necessary for the part. There was such a friendly and happy atmosphere on the set; it's in these moments that being an actor becomes the most beautiful profession.

DK: Jaco explained to me in detail how he envisaged the character. But what really helped me become Anna was becoming a brunette myself and wearing her clothes. Jaco defines every character's world with a rare precision. Anna is a very long way from who I am in real life, which made becoming her even stranger.

LDP: Jaco gives you a lot of freedom from the very beginning. I really had to work on my English accent because I had an American accent when I auditioned for the part. I had a coach who came with me on set. I quickly realised that whenever the accent rang true, the acting just followed. For the character itself, it was easier. To be madly in love is something I can understand, I didn't have to search very hard or use any Actor's Studio techniques!

Tell us about Jaco on set...

JL: Jaco's an actor's director. He knows where he's going and communicates it in every detail. He's loving and very thoughtful. He's very specific about what he wants and open to his actors as well. I had a very clear idea of what I wanted in the scenes where I played Nemo as an old man and he really encouraged me with it. And I think it was, during the rehearsals of these scenes, one of the first time where I made Jaco happy. I started to play with the idea of who

this old man was, started to get into the physicality of it, and his enthusiasm was infectious and encouraging. It was a unique opportunity to play a 120-year-old man. It's also a very difficult thing to do because it's a cliché-riddled landscape. I was helped immensely by Jaco's direction, the make-up crew, the cinematographer, and even the set design... it all helped transport me to a place that stoked an enormous amount of creativity. Those weeks in prosthetics were some of the most physically and mentally challenging I've done and everyone really helped me with their patience and understanding. And, at the end of it all, it's more Jaco's performance than mine. We've all done this film for him because we believe in him. He's a very special human being, a very kind man, a gentle soul and a true artist.

SP: Jaco is deeply cheerful, somebody who knows how to share his enthusiasm. He empathises permanently with his actors. He never takes his eyes off you. He is with you. You feel secure. This is the best possible direction for an actor.

DK: A lot of directors fall in love with their leading ladies, but Jaco was in love with each and every character... He had spent ten years writing about who Anna would be and I could just feel the love he had for her... Becoming Anna felt amazing. On set, he truly looked at me, at Anna. He integrated every idea that I had for the character, in a very natural way. He always knew what to say to unblock a difficult scene or situation.

LDP: He's always in a good mood! He says that life is too short and often very hard so we should have fun and enjoy ourselves as much as we can. He surrounds himself with people he loves. Once he's chosen you he opens his and his cinema family's arms to you. I thought the filming was warm and friendly which encourages you to give your best. I love his view that you needn't suffer for art. Technically he gives you lots of freedom then corrects you as the shooting goes on. In general, he doesn't need lots of takes but you feel that no small detail escapes him. These little details might be perceived as insignificant - a fleeting glance - but they often shape a scene.

What was your experience during the filming?

JL: It was such a long shoot. Of course, you have to leave your life as well if you shoot a movie for 6

weeks. But 6 or 7 months takes a different approach. The fact that some days I had to juggle 10 or more different Nemo Nobodys also required a different approach. Looking back I'd say that mine was quite scientific and very cerebral. I was able to rely on Jaco's watchful eye to carry and support me. There was a sensibility unlike anything that I've experienced before on a set. A lot of the crew had worked on Jaco's previous movies, so there was familiarity and a lot of respect for what was going on. It was wonderful to be invited into that family. I really loved it.

SP: Thanks to the atmosphere Jaco created I took a lot of pleasure in being amongst the team. I didn't feel the need to isolate myself in order to concentrate before my most difficult scenes; only during the first few days, when I wanted to be sure that I'd be capable of reaching the darkness in which Elise can get lost. But I quickly realized that I didn't need to be alone in a dark space to reach that state. The whole crew was so passionate about Jaco's work that it just carried us.

DK: The atmosphere was really happy. I've worked on very friendly sets before but there was a family feeling here that was totally new for me. Jaco has known most of the technicians for years. It never felt like work, and even when I wasn't needed for a scene I was on set to watch the others or simply to have a good time with them.

LDP: Because the shoot lasted so long, I had to tread carefully which isn't easy but each time I came back it felt as if I had never left the set.

Which scene did you dread the most?

JL: The thing that I was most afraid of was playing the Nemo opposite Sarah Polley because this was the furthest from my own experience. I've never been shut down or helpless in the way he is. So in those scenes, it was really difficult for me, because I wanted to be stronger than Jaco had written it. For him, this Nemo is someone who doesn't know what to do, how to do it, when to do it and what to say. That's really challenging when you have someone in front of you that you love in such pain. Playing a father was very difficult as well. I didn't know how to approach it because I don't have children. I was most nervous during these scenes. I was lost but Jaco was very patient with me and helped a lot.

SP: Elise's daughter's birthday scene. I was terrified

because I felt humiliated playing this crazy mother in front of all the children. I thought these kids were going to stare at me and think I was crazy myself! (*Laughs*).

DK: Romantic scenes are always a challenge. It's so easy to fall into cliché, particularly with Anna's scenes which are so extreme, either tragic or reconciliatory. We had to be careful to not over-act... that's what worried me most.

LDP: The bed scene where Jeanne tries to confront Nemo Nobody with his lack of love for her and reproaches him amongst other things for not even knowing the number of sugar cubes she takes in her coffee. I dreaded it because it's emotional but also because it's a key moment in their story. Jeanne tries to save their relationship only to hit a brick wall because Nemo simply doesn't react.

If you had to keep one image from this adventure, what would it be?

JL: There are so many. We shot in Brussels, Antwerp, Montreal, London and Berlin. It was the adventure of a lifetime. This was a really special project to be involved with and not something that's ever going to come along again. Having that journey is something I will be thankful to Jaco for forever. And I hope that the movie is everything that he dreamed it would be. It was a pleasure to work with him. If Jaco is happy, I'm happy.

SP: I can only remember spending most of my time laughing, which seems odd if you consider the part I play but I'm not lying, it really happened this way.

DK: Amongst the beautiful moments I experienced the most unforgettable was the last day of shooting. Sarah and Linh-Dan had already finished, Jared had a couple more days to shoot but I was the last girl to leave. Jaco was crying and Philippe (Godeau) was so sad. It was very moving, I'll always remember it.

LDP: The day in Canada when we shot the three weddings of Nemo Nobody with his three wives, Diane Kruger, Sarah Polley and me. Minutes before we began to shoot Jared had explained to us that he had a particular style of kissing for each one of us, I got the sexy kiss, I liked that! (*Laughs*).

DIRECTOR FILMOGRAPHY

Feature Films

- 1996 **THE EIGHTH DAY**
DOUBLE BEST MALE ACTOR CANNES 1996
NOMINATED BEST FOREIGN FILM GOLDEN GLOBE 1997
- 1991 **TOTO THE HERO**
CAMERA D'OR CANNES 1991
EUROPEAN FILM AWARDS 1991:
Best Actor (Michel Bouquet);
Best Photo Director (Walther Van Den Ende);
Best screenwriter (Jaco Van Dormael);
Best first film (Jaco Van Dormael)
JOSEPH PLATEAU AWARDS 1991:
Best Actor (Michel Bouquet);
Best Actress (Mireille Perrier);
Best Belgian Director (Jaco Van Dormael);
Best Belgian Film
CESAR FOR BEST FOREIGN FILM 1992

Short Films

- 1985 **DE BOOT**
- 1984 **E PERICOLOSO SPORGERSI**
GRAND PRIX AT FESTIVAL OF CLERMONT-FERRAND 1985
- 1983 **SORTIE DE SECOURS**
- 1982 **L'IMITATEUR**
- 1981 **STADE**
LES VOISINS
- 1980 **MAEDELI-LA-BRÈCHE**
STUDENT ACADEMY AWARDS, USA 1981

JARED LETO FILMOGRAPHY

- 2008 **CHAPTER 27** - *J.P. Schaefer*
- 2007 **LONELY HEARTS** - *Todd Robinson*
- 2006 **LORD OF WAR** - *Andrew Niccol*
- 2005 **ALEXANDER** - *Oliver Stone*
- 2002 **PANIC ROOM** - *David Fincher*
- 2001 **REQUIEM FOR A DREAM** - *Darren Aronofsky*
- 2000 **AMERICAN PSYCHO** - *Mary Harron*
- 1999 **FIGHT CLUB** - *David Fincher*

SARAH POLLEY FILMOGRAPHY

- 2009 3 NEEDLES - *Thom Fitzgerald*
SPLICE - *Vincenzo Natali*
- 2006 THE SECRET LIFE OF WORDS
- *Isabel Coixet*
DON'T COME KNOCKING - *Wim Wenders*
- 2004 DAWN OF THE DEAD - *Zack Snyder*
- 2003 MY LIFE WITHOUT ME - *Isabel Coixet*
- 2002 THE WEIGHT OF WATER - *Kathryn Bigelow*
- 2001 NO SUCH THING - *Hal Hartley*
THE CLAIM - *Michael Winterbottom*
- 2000 THE LAW OF ENCLOSURES - *John Greyson*
GUINEVERE - *Audrey Wells*
- 1999 EXISTENZ - *David Cronenberg*
THE LIFE BEFORE THIS - *Jerry Ciccoritti*
- 1997 SWEET HEREAFTER - *Atom Egoyan*
- 1994 EXOTICA - *Atom Egoyan*
- 1989 THE ADVENTURES OF
BARON MÜNCHAUSEN - *Terry Gilliam*

as Director

- 1994 AWAY FROM HER

DIANE KRUGER FILMOGRAPHY

- 2010 PIEDS NUS SUR LES LIMACES
- *Fabienne Berthaud*
RUN FOR HER LIFE - *Baltasar Kormakur*
- 2009 INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS
- *Quentin Tarantino*
LASCARS - *Albert Pereira Lazaro*
- 2008 POUR ELLE - *Frédéric Cavayé*
NATIONAL TREASURE 2:
The Book of Secrets - *Jon Turteltaub*
- 2007 L'ÂGE DES TÉNÉBRES - *Denys Arcand*
GOODBYE BAFANA - *Bille August*
- 2006 LES BRIGADES DU TIGRE
- *Jérôme Cornuau*
- 2005 JOYEUX NOËL - *Christian Carion*
- 2004 NATIONAL TREASURE - *Jon Turteltaub*
TROY - *Wolfgang Petersen*
- 2002 MON IDOLE - *Guillaume Canet*

LINH-DAN PHAM FILMOGRAPHY

- 2010 TOUT CE QUI BRILLE
- *Hervé Mimran & Géraldine Nakache*
- 2009 CHOI VOI - *Bui Thac Chuyen*
LE BAL DES ACTRICES - *Maiwenn*
- 2008 LE BRUIT DES GENS AUTOURS
- *Diastème*
DANTE 01 - *Marc Caro*
- 2007 HAVE MERCY ON US ALL - *Régis Wargnier*
- 2005 GAMBLERS - *Frédéric Balekdjian*
THE BEAT THAT MY HEART SKIPPED
- *Jacques Audiard*
CÉSAR FOR THE MOST PROMISING ACTRESS
- 1994 JAMILA - *Monica Teuber*
- 1992 INDOCHINE - *Régis Wargnier*

RHYS IFANS FILMOGRAPHY

- 2010 NANNY MCPHEE AND THE BIG BANG
- *Susanna White*
HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY
HALLOWS pt1 - *David Yates*
GREENBERG - *Noah Baumbach*
MR. NICE - *Bernard Rose*
- 2009 THE BOAT THAT ROCKED - *Richard Curtis*
- 2007 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE
- *Shekhar Kapur*
FOUR LAST SONGS - *Francesca Joseph*
HANNIBAL RISING - *Peter Webber*
- 2006 CHROMOPHOBIA - *Martha Fiennes*
- 2004 ENDURING LOVE - *Roger Michell*
- 2003 DANNY DECKCHAIR - *Jeff Balmeyer*
- 2002 THE 51ST STATE - *Ronny Yu*
THE SHIPPING NEWS - *Lasse Hallström*
- 2001 HUMAN NATURE - *Michel Gondry*
KEVIN & PERRY GO LARGE - *Ed Bye*
- 2000 LITTLE NICKY - *Steven Brill*
JANICE BEARD 45WPM - *Clare Kilner*
LOVE, HONOUR & OBEY - *Dominic Anciano*
- 1999 NOTTING HILL - *Roger Michell*
HEART - *Charles McDougall*
- 1997 TWIN TOWN - *Kevin Allen*

NATASHA LITTLE FILMOGRAPHY

- 2009 A CONGREGATION OF GHOSTS
- *Mark Collicott*
THE BOYS ARE BACK IN TOWN
- *Scott Hicks*
- 2005 VANITY FAIR - *Mira Nair*
- 2004 GREENFINGERS - *Joel Hershman*
- 2001 ANOTHER LIFE - *Philip Goodhew*
- 2000 THE CRIMINAL - *Julian Simpson*
- 1999 THE CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE
- *Christopher Miles*

TOBY REGBO FILMOGRAPHY

- 2010 HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY
HALLOWS pt1 - *David Yates*
- 2009 GLORIOUS 39 - *Stephen Poliakoff*

JUNO TEMPLE FILMOGRAPHY

- 2010 GREENBERG - *Noah Baumbach*
- 2009 GLORIOUS 39 - *Stephen Poliakoff*
CRACKS - *Jordan Scott*
YEAR ONE - *Harold Ramis*
- 2008 THE OTHER BOLEYN GIRL
- *Justin Chadwick*
WILD CHILD - *Nick Moore*
- 2007 ATONEMENT - *Joe Wright*
- 2006 NOTES ON A SCANDAL - *Richard Eyre*

ADDITIONAL MUSIC

Musical Consultant: Valérie Lindon for RE FLEXE MUSIC

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