

Fly Me Away





Synopsis

Thomas, a blasé young man, spends his nights in clubs and his days in bed. Until his father, Dr. Reinhard, fed up with his son's escapades, cuts him off completely and forces him to take care of one of his young patients.

Marcus, 12, was born with a serious congenital disorder. He lives with his mother in the poor suburbs of Paris and spends his days either at the hospital or in a center for sick children. This encounter will disrupt their lives and change them both, profoundly and forever.



Interview with Christophe Barratier

You haven't made a film in four years...

That's always been the case, ever since I started making films. As I'm usually always at the origin of my projects, I take my time doing research, writing many versions of the script, without thinking about how long it takes. A rather slow process, therefore. Even though I've been asked to work on many screenplays over the last 15 years, very few of them interested me enough to make me consider dropping what I was working on at the time. This time, the script that Dimitri Rassam sent me in October 2019 (written by the Patellière-Delaporte duo with Anthony Marciano) won me over me right away, even though I was already committed

to the TEMPS DES SECRETS project. With the writers, we took a few weeks to make some adjustments. Obviously, I had to make it my own. We shot the film in February 2020, on a very tight schedule that really made it clear to me how useful pressure can be when you need to get something done. Claude Chabrol once told me that he preferred to shoot every two years, or even every year, because by taking too much time, by making projects too sacred, "we doom ourselves to making chefs-d'œuvre, or masterpieces," whereas what counts is to make an "œuvre," or work. A piece of advice that it took me a while to listen to but that I fully understand today.

FLY ME AWAY is adapted from a true story. What part of Marcus' and Thomas' stories spoke to you?

I'd say that it's without a doubt the chance encounter of these two characters who are both handicapped in the struggle for life. Marcus' disability prevents him from leading a normal life, whereas Victor, perfectly able-bodied but unable to find his path, is always trying to flee from reality. Their naïveté and innocence touch me a lot, maybe because I can relate to it. That might not be a good thing for a producer, but for a director it is. In any case, it's a recurring trait in the characters of my films. It's probably not by chance that Dimitri thought of me when he was looking for someone to direct his project.

Is FLY ME AWAY, like the rest of your work, a story about mentorship?

It might be unconscious, but I'm realizing that my stories often feature a mentor who, in the end, turns out to be more fragile than the one he's giving advice to, ultimately becoming the character who will go on to change and evolve himself. This side of the story is obvious in LES CHORISTES, but also in FAUBOURG 36, with the character of the father. LE TEMPS DES SECRETS, the adaptation of Pagnol's novel, which I have just shot, is also to a certain extent a story about mentoring. I'm clearly unable to leave childhood behind.

More than a dramatic comedy, is FLY ME AWAY a "coming of age" story?

Definitely. Thomas, a spoiled and immature rich kid, is unable to find his place in life, and ends up relying on a young, underprivileged handicapped child to help set him on his way. The wisest person is never the one you think. Marcus learns to live with his handicap and Thomas realizes that he, too, suffers from an emotional handicap.

The story is also about a character who's unable to break free from his family history. Having Victor Belmondo play this role, grandson of the illustrious actor, doesn't seem like a trivial choice!

Victor does have a whimsical side to him, both incongruous and iconoclastic. But don't be fooled: he has received a very intensive training. The boy has a lot of talent and is very professional. He trusted me right away, he listens a lot, and works a ton. Apart from an obvious family resemblance, he also inherited from his grandfather a certain grace, a slender, almost elastic side, with a seemingly nonchalant attitude, but without ever falling into mimicry. He was just as convincing in the comic scenes as in those where we see inner wounds emerge. Perhaps because he also has them, deep down? It's true that, beyond their cheerful appearance, "jokers" often have a nature that is more complex, darker even. In any case, he and Yoann (whom I cast myself) "found" each other very quickly. For me, their great rapport in life is obvious on the screen.

You also come from a cinematic family...

My parents were actors, constantly on tour, and I was taken care of by my grandmother, herself an actress, for 3 or 4 years. She told me about her films, Guitry's, Carné's, Pagnol's... I was a rather solitary child, but I don't think it was a problem for me, solitude became a kind of friend. I probably sought a balance by listening to music, playing, reading, watching a lot of films. I believe that the characters of Marcus and Thomas each experience solitude in their own ways. Marcus is unable to have a social life because of his disability while Thomas suffers from a childhood wound that he tries to hide in empty relationships. This film is more about being alone than about being handicapped, but in a light-hearted way, in a whimsical atmosphere, without being moralizing or overly compassionate.

How did you “discover” Yoann? You are a master at directing young actors...

Valérie Espagne and her team led a huge casting operation, which resulted in an equally huge shortlist. I had to see 200 children on video and then 80 in person. As is often the case, things become obvious in 5 to 10 seconds, like with any actor but even more so with children. You can ask an adult to play against type, but a child can't force his nature. He has to be the character and you take him exactly as he is. Yoann quickly stood out from the pack. He possesses the ability that certain actors have who know how to go beyond the text to create a character with an extra dimension, which is impossible to imagine when writing. Actors teach us things about our craft: whether it's Gérard Jugnot, Clovis Cornillac or Yoann, I sometimes tell myself that they don't do a scene exactly as I wanted, but much better. That's when you see that they are great actors.



While we're on the subject of great actors, you managed to convince Gérard Lanvin to be a part of the adventure...

I called him following all the protocol one is supposed to follow in such occasions, seeing as he's one of the great actors of French cinema. I've admired him since EXTÉRIEUR, NUIT or UNE ÉTRANGE AFFAIRE, then later on in MARCHE À L'OMBRE or LE GOÛT DES AUTRES. I'd always dreamed of being able to meet him on a set. Contrary to what you may think, he's one of those rather cerebral actors who need multiple layers of writing to compose their character and, above all, to trust their director. He's a very precise person, with a strong character! Hanging around actors since I was born has helped me overcome my fear of directing such personalities, while still being very respectful. Trust is also earned with respect.

The film's musical side is important, like its title borrowed from Jean-Jacques Goldman, FLY ME AWAY...

The aura surrounding the film is inextricable from the emotions conveyed by this title. Victor Belmondo, like Yoann Eloundou, even look as if they're being carried by the wind when they move. The music of Philippe Rombi, my faithful

composer, is also very light, airy. I am a musician by training and the emotion that music triggers plays a huge part in my creations. In this film, Philippe Rombi played on sequential motifs, in a "crescendo-decrescendo" dynamic. I even dusted off my guitar to participate a little, rediscovering the magical emotion of being in front of the microphone!

A big part of the film was made after the first lockdown. Can you tell us about the atmosphere on set?

We shot for five weeks before being interrupted by the March lockdown and we were back on set in June. Those three months off must have been very helpful because each of the characters had a newfound energy afterwards. There was so much joy in being together again that even the rushes were better.

This film can be seen as a hymn to life. A post-Covid film?

Maybe unconsciously! One can also simply see FLY ME AWAY as a "feel-good movie," a nice reboot film for theaters, with good feelings, in the noble sense of the word, in any case feelings deeper than we imagine.





Interview with Victor Belmondo

What spoke to you in the script?

It's an emotional film on every level. The dramatic parts and the funny parts match and mirror each other, which offers Thomas, my character, a wide range with regards to acting and a real evolution from beginning to end. It's a real chance for an actor like me who doesn't have much experience yet.

How would you describe Thomas' character?

Thomas is the son of a well-known doctor but is unable to find his own path in life, he hasn't become an adult yet. He's a man who suffers from acute loneliness. Partying and going out lets him escape from reality. When his father forces him to take care of Marcus, Thomas thinks he can introduce him to the meaningless things that he fills his life with, but this boy allows him to grow up and takes him back to what's important in life.

Is becoming an actor a childhood dream for you?

As far back as I can remember, I've always dreamed of becoming an actor. Every time I saw a stage when I was in school, I felt this deep sense of knowing that I belonged there. I never had any doubt about what I wanted to do.

What kind of director is Christophe Barratier?

He's very precise in what he does and works very hard. He's a musician, and you can see it in the way he "conducts." He knows his score and he knows where he wants to go. You just have to let yourself be guided. He's a real director of actors who leaves nothing to chance, no matter how relaxed he may seem.

The film deals in particular with transmission and the difficulties involved with father-son communication. We hope your relationship with Gérard Lanvin is easier in real life...

He broke the ice from our first meeting: I discovered someone who is very human, real, humble and simple. He made the shoot easy for me. Every day, Gérard would regale me with anecdotes from the different sets he had been on, or with memories of certain actors and directors. Being a film buff, I loved hearing about that kind of thing, I was like a kid! It really was like a mentorship, in fact. Today, we still message each other almost every day. When you have a relationship off-camera, you can feel it on-screen. Acting's above all a human profession.

Is it more difficult to play opposite a child?

I may have gotten really lucky but everything was actually very simple. Every day, Yoann surprised me a little bit more, he was as comfortable in front of the camera as a seasoned actor. I never saw him stressing out or losing his temper. I quickly noticed that he had something special.

You also seem to be comfortable in comic roles. Is this something that could tempt you?

I want to try everything. My instinct is not to go for comedy even though I do really enjoy comic scenes. But I'd also like to do more drama, more everything!

You seem to want to remain out of the spotlight. Was FLY ME AWAY a way to show who you really are?

It was a first leading role that gave me the opportunity to work on my range of emotions, to better show what I am capable of playing. I actually prefer to reveal myself on a film set more than on Instagram. If I give the impression that I want to remain discreet, all the better. The "in-your-face" side of comic scenes bothers me much less than what you see on social media these days...

The shooting was interrupted by the pandemic. How did things go once you were able to resume filming?

After the lockdown, we were all so happy at the idea of being together again, a real positive energy developed as well as lots of affection between us. In terms of acting, things were immediately easier, as if there were a new momentum. Sequences that were difficult for me before the lockdown became totally clear. I see Fly Me Away as a film that's truly alive, one could even say "organic." It's full of life at every level, which is exactly what we need right now.

Do you agree with the term "feel-good movie?"

Completely, just like the term "good feelings" (in French, "bons sentiments" or "fine sentiments") which often comes with a negative connotation, unfortunately. It's a film that makes you feel good and I view it as such. Right now, more than ever, we need to laugh, to feel, to live new experiences. As such, we shouldn't be afraid of saying it.



Interview with Yoann Eloundou

This is your first film. You actually seem very comfortable in front of the camera, though.

My mother is not a professional actress, but she does act in some plays. When I saw her on stage when I was a kid, it immediately made me want to act. I started taking acting classes in second grade, 7 years ago.

Christophe Barratier chose you during a casting call. Are you used to this world?

At the end of 2019, while I was on vacation with my father in Cameroon, my mother saw the casting call. I immediately reached out. I had a good feeling after the first audition, then I met Victor and Christophe... I felt very good with them, right from the start.

Did you know of Victor Belmondo and Christophe Barratier?

I had obviously heard of Christophe Barratier for LES CHORISTES, so I was quite excited to meet him. I knew the Belmondo family a little and I had seen Victor recently in the films MON BÉBÉ. He immediately made me feel comfortable with him.

How did you feel when you read the script?

I read the script from beginning to end very quickly and thought that this movie was going to make people happy. What I particularly like about the film is that, in the end, it's actually Marcus who saves Thomas, not the other way around. He shows him that he needs to grow up and realize how lucky he is.

What do you like about Marcus's character?

Despite his disability, the fact that he has no friends and his difficult day-to-day life, Marcus is still full of life, with a smile on his face. He manages to keep that zest for life, which I think is great. Marcus is mature for a twelve-year-old. He holds his head high despite his illness. During the filming, I spoke with a severely handicapped boy, and I found the same courage in him. It taught me to appreciate life. And I feel better, more at peace, better in my skin. It's a film that makes you happy, especially in this time of pandemic and fear.

Do you feel close to Marcus?

I'm often told that I have this lively, cheerful side, that I lift people's spirits with my good mood. I don't know if it's true, but when I see Marcus, who is a very expressive character, he makes me smile. For me, this teenager is like a sun.

Does your desire to be an actor come from your wanting to make people happy?

I've wanted to be an actor since I was 6-7 years old. When I was little, I liked to travel to other worlds with the help

of movies. When I figured out that what was happening on screen never actually took place, that it was all make-believe, I realized then that acting is a craft that lets people escape in an amazing way. Growing up, I discovered more dramatic films, I wanted in turn to give emotions to others, it's something that makes me really happy.

Who are your favorite actors?

I have so many. Johnny Depp, Jean Dujardin, Timothée Chalamet and Will Smith are big inspirations for me, especially. I like blockbusters as much as auteur cinema.

What were things like on set?

Everyone was so nice that I started to wonder if they were acting! I got along with everyone. I really felt like I was going to summer camp, even though I had to take correspondence courses during the shoot. At my middle school, nothing changed, I didn't feel any jealousy, and that's a good thing, because it means that my normal life is separate from my film experience. I don't dream of being famous. I especially like the mood on film sets.

Did Gérard Lanvin impress you?

I'd never seen a film with him. And I think that made our relationship easier. He liked the fact that I could say hello while still looking him in the eyes. He's a very honest person and his compliments are sincere. In fact, we should say that the truth comes out Gérard Lanvin's mouth!

Did you take any initiatives while you were on set?

Christophe Barratier was very open to that kind of thing. He even often asked me about the vocabulary used by young people, if things needed to be changed in the script. Building trust with him was natural and easy. When I talk about summer camp, it's also because Christophe felt like a camp counselor who's always telling jokes and teasing you. I think a part of him has remained a child at heart.



Do you have a favorite scene?

The one in the Parc des Princes! We were supposed to shoot that scene during a real PSG match but with the pandemic, we had to shoot in an empty stadium and with a green screen. Things were totally crazy with the extras, though. Everyone was shouting. I also really enjoyed shooting in La Baule, in June. We were all coming out of lockdown, it really felt like a summer camp.

Was there a scene that was hard to shoot?

There were some scenes that were more or less physically difficult, like the scene in the sports car in a down jacket when it was thirty degrees. But I think the scene in which Marcus argues with his mother will stay in my mind as the best and the worst to shoot. In any case, there was a special atmosphere on the set that day: while we would usually joke a lot between takes, this scene was all silence and concentration.

Where do you see yourself in twenty years?

I obviously dream of being an actor and maybe even writing a movie. If I can't achieve my dream, I'll accept it, but before that, I'm going to fight to do what I want to do. All teenagers are very afraid for their future right now. I'm no exception: I'm not optimistic about the future, which is why I try so hard to enjoy life today. So, I stay cheerful but am still worried about the future.

What kind of actor would you like to be?

I'd rather be in dramas, although I do love comedies. Dramatic films make me look at life from a new perspective. Crying in movies makes you think and opens you up to other people's lives.



Interview with Gérard Lanvin

How did Christophe Barratier persuade you to be in FLY ME AWAY?

The idea of playing a father who makes his son do something, who doesn't give him a choice, appealed to me, but that was just the start of it. Then, Dimitri Rassam, the producer of FLY ME AWAY, suggested that I go try out alongside young people who were Victor's age. Working for someone like Dimitri, who has worked on so many films, obviously appealed to me. Finally, when I found out that Christophe Barratier - whose films I have seen - was going to direct, that for me was the icing on the cake.

What kind of director is Christophe Barratier?

His kindness, his intelligence, his calmness and his determination won me over me right away. This man has all the qualities of a great boss. And when you're dealing with a great boss, you'd have to be an idiot not to go for it! Being in a film is like a long-distance race. We'd discuss the roles beforehand during meetings in which Christophe would also give us his opinion, his intentions. And there were also readings with Yoann, Victor, and the whole team. As such, on the set, we'd know what Christophe expected from us. We didn't have much time, and there's no point questioning what the director wants, even if he was open to other people's suggestions in the moment.

FLY ME AWAY is a somewhat enigmatic title...

It's a title that says it all about this film: it allows you to take off and soar towards emotion, towards weightlessness. I have no desire to go see an action or fight movie for my return to theaters as a moviegoer. With FLY ME AWAY, I was moved and lifted out of the gloomy daily life that we've all been dealing with since the beginning of the pandemic. FLY ME AWAY has made me even more eager to return to normal life... and therefore to movie theaters.

You've become the master of film duos.

I never learned to act, I've always felt that actors rely on their own nature. My way of doing things is to listen to others, to play with their eyes. When I act with Victor, I pay attention to the way he responds to me and thus anticipate his intentions. It's difficult to play a father and son when you don't know each other at all. Without an ideal duo, a film like this just doesn't work. Just like Victor and I, Yoann and Victor got along wonderfully. Little Yoann was acting for the first time and without him, it wouldn't be the same movie. He has quite the character - with his eyes and his smile, he also allowed Victor to let go of his emotions. Yoann is a real find, he never ceases to amaze you. He plunges himself fully into whatever emotion's he's playing, without ever having learned how. He joined this project as a real actor.

There is a real emphasis on mentorship in this film that dovetails well with your way of seeing movies as something collegial, as a group effort.

Mentorship is an essential part of this profession. My challenge is to try not to give lessons! I explained to Yoann that I was as afraid as he was, that we were all together on the shoot. I told him that he would succeed if he kept this same desire and if he always played off the other person's gaze. But I only gave my opinion, not advice. In fact, Yoann amazed me, he was not at all intimidated and was completely ready. When I saw the film, it made me cry. It's a beautiful story with happy emotions because loving each other just feels so good, like sharing these thoughts on togetherness. It's the same thing with mentorship: it feels good. The challenge is considering yourself to be credible while not showing off because of your many years in the field. For me, being receptive to others, playing off the deep nature of the other, that's what transmission is all about. You can make films without taking yourself too seriously, and above all consider that it's a profession where you exist only with the other and his or her emotions. I talked about this with Yoann but I got the sense that he already knew!



After thirty years of filming, do you still feel stage fright?

Stage fright stems from self-doubt, which is something that all normal people have. I come to a set obviously filled with doubts, but still with the hope of being able to do my role. Once you hear the word “camera-action,” you can’t hesitate, even for a split second, you have to be ready. But fortunately, you do things together, and with the director when he’s good. Which is the case with Christophe Barratier!

Victor Belmondo plays opposite you. We can’t just ignore how much he looks like his grandfather, whom you met...

I told Victor that I was happy because at least I would have made a film with a Belmondo! (laughs) Seriously, though, Victor knows that everyone loves his grandfather, whom I also respect enormously. But he doesn’t need other people to say it to him. What I remember most about Victor’s way of playing a role is that he doesn’t fake it. Victor connects to his emotions, uses his nature, is generous and receptive.

He understands that he's not acting alone. Apart from his talent as an actor, Victor has personal qualities that I like a lot. We have actually remained quite close. In an era addled by reality shows and social networks, Victor has remained true to himself. He's a very respectable person. He's also physical: he fills the space and has a real presence. Did you see his eyes and his smile?

Would you be tempted to make another film with Christophe Barratier?

I'm waiting for him to ask me! We said that we liked each other a lot... I just hope now that he'll have a role for me one day. I am faithful to the directors I like: I wanted to go back and work again with Nicole Garcia, Agnès Jaoui... With so many people, it's up to them to see if they need me.

Being an actor means waiting for other people to call you?

I belong to a generation that has been somewhat forgotten today. There are very talented actors in their 30s and 40s. But in these films, there are not necessarily roles for people my age. I also like the exchange between the different generations on the shoots, like living with others for several weeks, sharing a daily routine. This fairground aspect is the advantage of our jobs.

Young Marcus gives Thomas a “to do list” at the beginning of the film. What would yours be?

I only want one thing, and it's the same for everyone for the past year: a return to normalcy, a life with others, and with all the joy and energy that comes with it.

Are you afraid about the future of movie-going?

I may be an optimist, but it seems to me that the idea of going out to the movies can never die, because everyone who loves movies wants to share their emotions with others in a theater. Sunrise has always followed sundown since the beginning of humanity! I'm positive that we'll be able to return to a normal life, for me it's a given. Life's not just about sitting on your couch watching movies via streaming. Like many people, all I want to do is to buy a movie ticket, to be in front of a big screen with amazing sound. Besides, the film's soundtrack has come out beautifully, but you only realize that in theaters!



Cast

Thomas	Victor BELMONDO
Dr. Reinhard	Gérard LANVIN
Marcus	Yoann ELOUNDOU
Julie	Ornella FLEURY
Maïssa	Marie-Sohna CONDÉ
Léa	Lili AUPETIT
M. Rouvier	François BURELOUP
Aunt Léa/Sandrine	Daphné DE QUATREBARBES

Crew

Director	Christophe Barratier
Screenplay, adaptation and dialogues	Matthieu Delaporte Alexandre de La Patellière Anthony Marciano Christophe Barratier
Produced by	Dimitri Rassam Alexandre de La Patellière Matthieu Delaporte
Coproduced by	CHAPTER 2 FRANCE 2 CINÉMA LDPR II PALOMAR
In collaboration with	SOFITVCINE 7 GALFIN 1&2 LA BANQUE POSTALE IMAGE I3
Broadcasters	FRANCE TÉLÉVISIONS OCS W9
Distribution	PATHÉ
Director of Photography	Jérôme Almeras (A.F.C)
Production Designer	Emile Ghigo
Costume Designer	Jean-Daniel Vuillermoz
Sound	Daniel Sobrino Thomas Gastinel
Original score by	Philippe Rombi
First Assistant Director	Rodolphe Kriegel
Production Manager	Antoine Theron (A.D.P)
Location Manager	Clotilde Martin (A.F.R)



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LDPR II

PALOMAR

SOFITVCINE 7



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OCS

W9

