



Remi

Nobody's Boy

JERICO PRESENTS

DANIEL
AUTEUIL

MALEAUME
PAQUIN

VIRGINIE
LEDOYEN

JONATHAN
ZACCAÏ

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF

JACQUES
PERRIN

AND
LUDIVINE
SAGNIER

Remi

Nobody's Boy

A FILM BY
ANTOINE BLOSSIER

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY HECTOR MALOT

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SYNOPSIS

Adapted from Hector Malot's celebrated classic novel, *NOBODY'S BOY* follows the adventures of Remi, a young orphan raised by the kind Mrs. Barberin, then torn away from his adoptive mother at age ten and placed in the care of Signor Vitalis, a mysterious traveling performer.

With him, Remi learns the arduous life of a wandering entertainer and sings to earn his keep. With their loyal dog Capi and the little monkey Joli-Coeur, Remi's long journey through France and the encounters, friendships and solidarity he experiences along the way, that eventually lead him to the secret of his origins...





— Interview with — ANTOINE BLOSSIER

What made you want to adapt Hector Malot's novel?

I enjoy switching genres from one film to the next, exploring new codes. After my last two feature films, *LA TRAQUE*, a horror thriller, and *À TOUTE ÉPREUVE*, a teen comedy, I felt like directing an adventure movie that was anchored in French

culture, while also being modern. My wife was the one who suggested Hector Malot's book. I had a vague memory of it, but mostly remembered the cartoon that had charmed my generation's childhood. I was initially hesitant. "Read it from a Spielbergian perspective" she insisted, reminding me how brilliant my favorite director is at telling tragic stories through the eyes of childhood and innocence (his trademark) and imparting a "magical" dimension to the most heartbreaking realities, and an epic feel to his period pieces. Desire was born; a very conceptual desire,

which gradually evolved toward themes I became very attached to - transmission, self-realization, going above and beyond...

Hector Malot's book was published in 1878. How do you modernize such a story?

Precisely through the use of this magical "filter" and notion of adventure. I tried to give it the feel of a tale, the kind we asked for as kids, from under the comforter, and that we now tell our own children at bedtime. And, while respecting the French identity of Hector Malot's work, I immediately sought to put forth an imagery akin to that of the films I grew up with, the ones my family and I have watched ritually: anything produced by Amblin (Steven Spielberg's prodco) of course, like *E.T.*, *GOONIES*, etc.; but also Disney classics such as *PINOCCHIO*, *BAMBI*, *DUMBO*.

I wasn't into naturalism.

This was a very ambitious project.

I'm lucky to work with producers - Eric Jehelmann and Philippe Rousselet - who deeply love great cinema. They took to the project and were very attentive to it. Without this artistic dimension and its epic quality, the film wouldn't have been as interesting, despite the excellence of Hector Malot's work. In terms of logistical ambition, there may have been a part of madness in me - one recognizes the difficulties as they occur...

There have been several adaptations of the novel. Did you know them?

I saw them of course. Curiously, the manga is the most faithful rendition, not only in its plot but also its art direction, which manifests in minute details that, to some, have become Proustian madeleines of today: the laces around Remi's hat, Joli-Coeur's outfit...

You've taken several liberties with the book...

I had no choice. «Sans Famille», which was originally written as a weekly episodic series, takes place over the course of four years. Unless we were prepared to shoot a 12-hour saga, it was impossible to keep all of the book's twists and challenges. I had to reduce the timeframe to one year and tried to adapt the dramaturgy of what is essentially a chronicle, to the more classic three-act structure of a screenplay. I then focused on the aspects and themes most touching to me - the relationship between Remi and Vitalis, who is able to perceive this child's gift and gives him the opportunity to reach beyond himself. The greatest liberty I took was this: I gave Remi a remarkable voice, which turns out to define the rest of his life. When he sings, he is touched by grace! He doesn't have this ability in Hector Malot's book.

What prompted the idea of the flashbacks with Jacques Perrin in the role of an elderly Remi?

The book is structured that way, only the storyteller is younger, taking his first steps in adulthood. By turning him into an older man looking back on what he has accomplished in life, I wanted to give the tale more of a storybook dimension. One in which he is better placed to pass on his experience to the children hearing his story. I like that cozy fireside atmosphere, as a storm rages outside, there is something reassuring about that situation. Something iconic. In the spirit of oral tradition around the theme of transmission. We are in an iconography that comprises several elements taken from fairy tales, in minute details: the cake the child eats at the beginning, the mysterious atmosphere of the manor house's architecture... Not to mention the memory of Vitalis, so consistently present as Remi tells the story of their adventures.

The part that takes place in England was also a departure from the book...

Not that much! I tightened it because it's quite long, but most people think it was added; they've forgotten that part, and have also forgotten that in the book, Vitalis actually dies a lot earlier. I love the scenes in England. As soon as Remi encounters the Driscolls, we enter the imagery of Victorian London, full of intrigue and mystery, calling to mind the adventures of SHERLOCK HOLMES or, more recently, HARRY POTTER.

In the film, the lighting and sets are quite astonishing. It's rare to see such scale in French cinema.

The tradition's been lost, somewhat, but it has existed - many tales have been marvelously adapted in our country.

So you are reviving tradition... by modernizing it. Can you describe how you worked?

On all fronts. We had to pull off creating a dimension we're not accustomed to - a sort of "reality + one", in order to enter a somewhat fantastical universe, remaining real but not natural, always on the wire; it was truly a balancing act. It's done through lighting and camerawork, but not only that; the art direction and set and costume design were also very important. As we designed each set, production designer Sébastien Inizan and I found a lot of inspiration in Walt Disney's first sketches. For example, imagining the Barberin farm, where Remi grew up. The windows are a bit narrower than they should be, the beds slightly wider. We should always get the sense of this child's perspective, who sees the world as bigger, and that of the narrator, fondly recalling his childhood memories; two very specific filters.

How long did you prepare?

Officially, five months, officiously, nine. In NOBODY'S BOY, there are three times more sets than in an average French movie. We had six location scouts instead of one, and my director of photography, Romain Lacourbas, made himself available very early on, which is highly unusual. He and I started working six months before the shoot, rather than the more customary three weeks. He and I have known each other for a long time. He's accustomed to working on American TV series - his credits include the photography for «Marco Polo» - and has a feel for grandness, for wide open spaces and for light. Plus, he's an incredible operator. A real camera "geek" in the noble sense of the word, perfectly at ease on set maneuvering three cranes at once. I needed his proficiency in order to pull off my vision for the film, from a technical standpoint. NOBODY'S BOY would not have the scope it has without him. Very early on, we conceived a mood board for the film. Each scene was represented by five or six images - paintings, photos, film stills - that conveyed the lighting, atmosphere and colors we had in mind for the sequence. We ended up with a sort of 200-page bible, which we gave to every department head, who then contributed their own input. The film's art direction owes a lot to that bible.

The locations for NOBODY'S BOY include Occitanie, Aubrac and the Tarn regions of France, landscapes that have not been filmed very often.

I loved shooting there, even if the weather was sometimes a little rough. The Aubrac region is not a very common location in French cinema, probably for reasons of logistics. It remains rather wild country, which is what makes its charm. I liked the gigantic Western landscapes, that were so cinematic. It was like being in France and someplace else at the same time. We had to bring cranes to locations that were very challenging to reach, it was complicated but it meant a lot to me. Just as it was important to me that the villages where we shot have a postcard feel about them: Cordes-sur-Ciel, Castelnau-de-Montmirail... gorgeous places that are part of our heritage. Disney knew what he was doing when he sent graphic artists all over Europe, to soak in the architecture of the tales he was adapting. It is, in a way, like reconnecting with one's roots.

NOBODY'S BOY was filmed in Cinemascope...

This is a decision Romain and I made very early on. We used old lenses, like the ones that shot classic American films. This was justified by the wide-open spaces inherent to such an epic approach to Hector Malot's story.



You magnify them...

Those landscapes were so beautiful; it would have been a shame not to do them justice. In addition to which, there was a considerable amount of special effects involved – a lot of matte painting, in order to prolong them, enhance the sense of adventure. In addition to which, there was a considerable amount of special effects involved - a lot of matte painting, in order to prolong them, enhance the sense of adventure.

Somes scenes are spectacular - like the tempest in England for example...

We shot that in a studio over the course of three days. It was a very complicated scene to block. What backdrop to use? What type of snow will catch the light on camera and convey that feeling of depth, when the actors are in reality walking a mere sixty feet away from a wall? The sequence had to have a dreamy feel about it, almost abstract, tending toward minimalism - we stick to the child's point of view, the characters have lost their points of reference... I have no idea how many tons of fake snow we used. As they trudged along on a conveyor belt, the actors had it in their eyes. They suffered.

You mentioned HARRY POTTER in relation to the England segment. How did you shoot Driscoll manor, where Remi ends up?

The exteriors were shot in Troyes and the interiors were entirely recreated, in an abandoned house. It must have been hell for Remi, who can't believe the couple he discovers is the one who gave birth to him. By opting for a Victorian décor, I wanted the Driscolls and their lawyer to look like they came straight out of a Sherlock Holmes investigation, to introduce a form of dark humor into a mainstream French film. To me, Mother Driscoll is like the Italian Mamma in Richard Donner's GOONIES, a film I am very fond of.

The film is clearly nourished by many references to American films.

Spielberg's E.T. and Tim Burton's EDWARD SCISSORHANDS have shaped the man and the director I have become. But my love for cinema reaches way beyond those two filmmakers. I love Terrence Malick, French classics, Disney... In order to work, I need to recall the emotions that certain films brought me. The point isn't to emulate them but to incorporate those sensations into the storytelling.

What made you choose Daniel Auteuil for the part of Vitalis?

It felt obvious to me. He would hate to hear me say this but too bad: not only is he an incredible actor, but he is also part of our heritage. I liked the idea of him having played opposite Le Papet in Claude Berri's JEAN DE FLORETTE and MANON OF THE SPRINGS, and now being "the mentor, the elder". It completes the circle. Daniel committed to the part very early on and very quickly. He called less than fortyeight hours after getting the script.

Maleaume Paquin, the little boy who plays young Remi, is quite extraordinary. How did you find him?

Maleaume is the fifteenth kid I met when we were casting, and I was immediately struck by him. I was expecting a long and difficult search and felt perturbed that I'd found him so fast. I saw another four hundred children before making a decision. I wanted to be absolutely sure of my choice. Would he be physically able to handle the thirteen-week shoot? I asked him to come back several times, giving him different scenes to play, harder and harder ones. He was terrific and I understood that he was solid.

How did you work with him in preproduction?

Maleaume is a “performer”. He sings (fortunately for the film), is an athlete, a good student and he wants to do well. The coach, who rehearsed with him for almost two months, mostly worked on getting him to relax. She saw him two or three times a week to train him. Because the film was not shot chronologically, the challenge was also to get him to understand what stage of emotion and maturity his character was experiencing at what moment of the story, and find the key words that would help him locate those specific frames of mind within himself. I often saw him in rehearsals. It was crucial for me to gain his trust: if a kid doesn't have faith in you on set, it's over. When Maleaume got to the set, he knew all his lines by heart. After three weeks, it was no longer necessary to brief him on his character's mindset. He had assimilated every indication that had been given to him.

There are many secondary characters in the film. Was it difficult to convince known actors to accept these small parts?

Even though they don't appear that much, I felt strongly about reconnecting with the tradition of French cinema, so it was important for me to cast familiar actors in those roles. I made sure theirs were strong parts, and Ludivine Sagnier, Virginie Ledoyen and Jonathan Zaccà very quickly and straightforwardly joined the cast of the film. It was not an easy shoot for them, the production schedule was all over the place and they were very gracious about it.

You had eight hundred extras on set, that's huge!

They invested themselves tremendously. We asked the men to grow beards, which our barbers then trimmed to fit the time period but with something slightly off-beat about them, a touch of magic. The men and women all worked on modeling themselves to the context and the film's timeframe. It was quite marvelous.

Another challenge, and not the least of them, was working with animals...

Darkness, the Border collie who plays Capi, is a real circus dog: he is accustomed to doing the tricks you see in the movie in street performance, and he has an incredible relationship with his master. When we shot the scene where Vitalis and Remi get caught in the storm in England, and Vitalis says to him “Goodbye, friend”, I said to his trainer: “I'd like him to hesitate, to tell Vitalis with a bark: ‘Don't die!’ and, realizing his master isn't going to make it, to go off thinking he needs to find help”. My first assistant made fun of me as if I had gone mad. The trainer asked me for five minutes and by the time I called action, Darkness was doing everything I asked. Impressive.

Tito, the Capucine monkey, who had already played the same part in Daniel Verhaeghe's TV adaptation of the novel, starring Pierre Richard, was more of a “personality” and that's what I chose to emphasize. I wanted to capture reactions and emotions and to use the directing and editing to create this character. When he puts on his hat and everyone finds that astonishing, the shot was actually played in reverse.

What about the scene you shot with wolves...

I find them magnificent. The security measures were drastic. We shot that sequence in two stages, first two days, then three, and Maleaume never saw them. It was a thoroughly storyboarded sequence, totally broken down and dissected. We had to have a body-double, real wolves, dogs... it was a real challenge.

What was the film's main difficulty?

Giving the film a homogenous feel. Considering all the sets, locations and different characters, it was essential to find harmony - especially in the color scheme. It couldn't be improvised, hence the mood board Romain and I devised.

Tell us about the music, which plays a very central role...

I wanted it to be symphonic and thematic, inspired by great French compositions by the likes of Michel Legrand and Vladimir Cosma, yet also infused with the sounds of John Williams and Danny Elfman, Spielberg and Burton's composers. It had to have breath, breadth and energy. Quite a challenge! The idea was to stick everything into a shaker, give it a thorough blend and digest it until we pinpointed the film's identity. Romaric Laurence, who worked on all my feature films, was initially very worried about this challenge. He started out by composing the lullaby that Remi sings, then veered away from it and finally returned to it: all the themes of his composition are based on it. His music permeates most of the film - it is present in seventy-two minutes of the film, which is average for an American movie, against the forty-two minutes average of French film. Personally, I find his work admirable. The film would not have such a strong identity without his music.

A few words about the editing?

This was the first time I worked with Jennifer Augé, whose credits include LA FAMILLE BÉLIER and LA PROMESSE DE L'AUBE. She brought tremendous sensitivity to the film's editing. I am used to defining a very specific edit very early on, which doesn't result in much leeway at this stage of production, despite the risk of it being slightly rigid. She brought a lot of life to the film, by holding on to subtle looks, happy accidents, uninhibited moments...

How does one carry such a responsibility?

Once again, there is a part of recklessness. I was particularly well surrounded, I know the set and workings of moviemaking very well, having been production manager and assistant director for a long time. But I had multiplied the difficulties, and this was in fact the first shoot where, every morning, I woke up with a knot in my gut, wondering if everything would go well.





— Interview with — DANIEL AUTEUIL

You committed very early on to this film...

I read Antoine Blossier's screenplay and called him right away. I liked the idea of reconnecting with a classic text, a great popular story, family-oriented and universal. This exercise ends up being quite rare nowadays. There was a lot of ambition in this project, the promise of an adventure.

Had you read Hector Malot's novel?

When I was a child, my mother bought me the double volume, and wrote on the title page: "For Daniel, to read later", which is what I did... much later. I mostly remembered the screen adaptations that were made. It's a very powerful story, which still rings true today: how does one escape poverty, struggle, find the way...?

Antoine Blossier took several liberties with the original story.

He did it very skillfully, adapting it to our times. He slightly sways its course, jostles it a bit, gives it rhythm and enables it to enter the 21st Century. It was the only way to make it into a great film of contemporary cinema.

What were some of the things you liked best about his take on the book?

This gift he gives the boy, Remi, feels like a promise; the narrator's age... Thanks to this very elderly man, we are fully immersed in the tale.

Did you know Antoine Blossier's two previous films?

No. I figured: "If he can get his project off the ground, it means he has qualities." These are things one feels instinctively, without any sense of calculation.

NOBODY'S BOY demanded a very long preproduction period. Were you involved at the various stages of it?

Antoine kept the flame alive: he sent me regular updates, showed me his work on the sets and costumes. I could feel the people around him actively working in an atmosphere of cheerful effervescence. I went along with the movement. Artistically, the project was very ambitious, every detail was carefully thought out, every department was involved at every stage, it was all extremely deliberate.

How did you prepare for the part of Vitalis?

I let my beard grow, rehearsed a little with the animals - which was easy, I've always had animals around me. That's it. I do light preparation, you know.

Vitalis is a rather elderly man. Was it unsettling for you to be cast into this new age bracket?

Why would it be, since I am playing my own age? That's where we actors are very fortunate, at every stage of our lives, we can perform characters of that age.

Antoine Blossier draws a parallel between the character you played opposite Yves Montand in JEAN DE FLORETTE and MANON OF

THE SPRINGS, and the one you play in NOBODY'S BOY. He sees this as a process of passing on the torch ...

That's his own projection. However, even though thirty years have gone by and Claude Berri's films look very different from NOBODY'S BOY, the two undertakings do share, it's true, a similar ambition.

How do you feel about Vitalis, this man who chose to leave behind a life of fame, luxury, and an art he was passionate about, to wander the roads of France, thinking that he is thereby atoning for the death of his wife and son?

He is a man consumed by guilt. Basically, Antoine's interpretation enables him to transmit to Remi what he was unable to pass on to his son. By reaching a form of redemption, Vitalis contributes to the emotion that permeates the film.

In NOBODY'S BOY, you have a long monologue in which Vitalis, who has just been arrested by the police, opens himself up completely to Remi, going over his errors, his weaknesses and flaws in a deeply moving confession. In his story, which goes on for two whole minutes, you manage to convey images of the Scala de Milano, of a family, with so much emotion that we almost feel like we're going into a film within the film. It takes a great deal of talent to pull off such a performance.

What can I answer to that? Nothing could ever take from me the infinite joy of doing this work, so fun and sometimes so difficult, that is the dramatic art.

You seem to do it in such a relaxed way, before and after each take, that it's all the more impressive.

I have a lot of experience by now, I was fortunate enough to get to know great artists, and have the time to learn to never place the burden of work on others, such as the director, cast or crew member. Those are issues one must keep to oneself. Lightness is politeness.

Maleaume Paquin who plays Remi, was eleven at the time of the shoot. Despite this necessary lightness that you speak of, was it difficult to work on so many scenes with a child?

It's not a question that occurred to me. I played normally, as did he: he's a fullfledged actor, who performed his part. It did happen that he sometimes got his priorities a bit mixed up when singing; he was investing way too much emotion into it, even when it was a playback, but had he not been able to sing as he does, he never would have been able to express what happens on his face at those moments. I encouraged him, I'm a good partner...

The strange thing was finding myself playing opposite his stand-ins. Because according to the law, a minor can't work more than three days per week, so there were other children who stood in for Remi when he didn't have any lines. That felt odd.

There are many different sets and locations in the film. Was that hard on you?

Not at all! Quite the opposite, in fact I love it, I've always loved that about filmmaking! This idea that we create an atmosphere somewhere, in a street, in a

playground and then presto! We leave and everything returns to normal. We're not dealing with the sacred relationship that exists on a theatre stage. As it was, the locations where we shot were particularly stunning. We the actors, had only to let ourselves slip right into it. We were aware that we were part of a larger than usual endeavor, with vast means, in remarkably privileged circumstances, and all to serve the story, the process of creation... It was a happy moment that we fully enjoyed. But all film shoots are privileged and happy times for me. That's why we make movies. The rest after that is out of our hands.

The storm scene you shot on a sound stage is spectacular.

We shot it over several days on a studio lot, and it's not the best memory I have of the shoot. They kept hurling fake snow into our faces, it was rough, no fun at all. Yet by the same token, it's in those time that it's good to be a French actor, because if this were the US, it would have been done with special effects in which they would have placed sensors all over our bodies and faces to generate holograms out of our silhouettes, that would have played in our place. Whereas we were there, in the snow, suffering, and I feel certain that the result is better for it.

You are also a director. Are there moments where certain, very technical shots inspire you for your own films?

When I am an actor on a set, that is all I am. On NOBODY'S BOY, I was delighted about the budget deployed to serve this story, which deserved it - it needed cinema and cinema rose to the challenge. But my first allegiance is to the director. I try to anticipate his or her needs, I see myself as a soldier, a good soldier.

What do you expect from the film's release ?

A lot. The production and distribution companies have already released a few tidbits on the Net and, in just a few days, thousands of viewers have seen them. It's clear that there is great anticipation from the audience.

Film director - AMOUREUX DE MA FEMME -, theatre director - L'ENVERS DU DÉCOR-, film actor - Yvan Attal's LE BRIO -, voice actor - Wes Anderson's ISLE OF DOGS. Over the past two years, you've been tireless...

I just completed the shoot of José Alcalá's T'EXAGÈRES!, co-starring Catherine Frot and Bernard LeCoq. I'm brimming with energy and thrilled to be doing my job. I'm making the most of that.



— Interview with — MALEAUME PAQUIN

How did you end up in NOBODY'S BOY?

My agent signed me up for a casting call. I went to a few auditions and was cast. I had already worked on photo shoots and commercials, but this was the first time I was offered a film role. I didn't know Hector Malot's book and Antoine Blossier, who wanted me to focus on the screenplay, asked me to wait until the end of the shoot to read it. I still haven't read it. I'd rather just keep the memory of the shoot. What I like about Remi is that, despite all the terrible things that happened to him, he never gives up, he keeps moving forward.

How did you work on your character?

I started working early on with a coach, and I also went to the production offices for rehearsals. It was difficult at first because I had

never taken acting classes, but then it was fine. The hardest were the scenes in which I cry: I really had to feel Remi's sadness. So, I thought about my great-grandmother's death and the tears would come. To help me remain in that emotion, Antoine would shoot take after take. In the end, those scenes became my favorites.

Tell us about the times when you sing.

I had to practice, to learn the lullaby. It was easy because for a long time, I was in the children's chorus at the Paris Opera and I love to sing. It was because I broke my voice at one point, that my parents signed me up with a casting agency: I was very upset and it was a way for them to comfort me. My voice has come back since then. We had to shoot over twenty takes for some of those sequences, because I couldn't understand that I had to concentrate



on my acting above all else, whereas I was focusing on proving that I was a good singer.

How was the shoot?

I spent a lot of time with Darkness and Tito, the dog and the Capucine monkey who play Capi and Joli-Coeur, because the handler was getting me prepared for working with them - I love animals, I really bonded with them! And I also spent a lot of time with my stand-ins. Beyond that, it was different according to whether I was shooting with Ludivine, Virginie or Daniel. Most often, it was with Daniel. He gave me advice - to not look at the camera, to not despair when I messed up a take, tips to help me concentrate... But it was Antoine and my coach who helped me the most. They were really by my side. It's kind of scary when you first discover this world. I knew there was a lot of money behind the project, so I had to be at my best! In the end everything went well.

How did you react when you saw the finished movie?

It felt weird. At the beginning I was noticing nothing but my flaws, but after about ten minutes, I completely forgot that I was the one playing and I thought it turned out very beautifully. Up until now, I really liked cinema as a viewer, and now I'd like to keep acting. I'm playing in a new movie now, Julien Rappeneau's FOURMI, and hope to work on others. I'm told I'm okay the way I am, so I want to keep perfecting myself on sets rather than take classes. I'm not giving up my studies, I'm twelve and in 7th grade, and I might not always get jobs, so it's good to have a fallback. My friends go nuts over the amount I was paid - which I don't even know, my parents were in charge - but I just talk about the pleasure I got out of being in front of the camera, they don't always get it.





— Interview with — VIRGINIE LEDOYEN

The part of the aristocrat Remi and Vitalis meet on a houseboat is just a supporting role in NOBODY'S BOY. What lead you to accept this role?

A number of elements. The cartoon adaptation of Hector Malot's book really impacted my childhood - even today, I still feel great tenderness toward that manga. I knew Antoine Blossier, whom I'd met a few years ago and almost worked with; a talented young man, whom I like very much. His screenplay appealed to me. Even though this was a small role, I wanted to be part of the adventure of this great modern and timeless tale; a heritage film, an ambitious picture, of which there are so few in France, not quite a kid movie and not quite an adult movie, but one that brings both those audiences together.

This woman you play is kindly and charitable, but also completely clueless...

There is a certain darkness in her, she is capable of using her social status to buy people. She tries, for example, to buy Remi's presence, to get him to be a companion for her disabled daughter, without thinking that he might aspire to a greater future than being a manservant. But she is thinking of her daughter, she is sincere. I like that ambiguity in her.

You're not used to small parts. Is the work very different?

As I was only on set every once in a while, it was fun to discover each time a new universe, new sets, sometimes on sound stages, other times on location. There was always something magical about it. This was a big shoot but it was very well prepared. Antoine knew exactly what he wanted and never showed the slightest sign of stress. It wasn't brutal at all, to just be there for a few days.

It doesn't leave you much time to build a role...

That's true, but as this is a tale, one can be more on the nose, which leads to a certain purity and gentleness.

Did you have references in mind before the shoot?

I didn't need any: everything was already designed with very specific aestheticism - costumes, our characters' style...

What sort of actors' director is Antoine Blossier?

He isn't necessarily very directive. All the work he puts into preparation affords him that freedom. With him, it's fluid, simple, very light, very gentle.

What did you think about little Maleaume Paquin, who plays Remi?

He is astonishing; he's not the type of little boy who just plays on command. On set he was serious, and became very professional very fast. This was his first film shoot and he quickly found his marks. And Maleaume has an amazing voice.

What do you think of the finished film?

I've been disappointed in the past by adaptations of beloved childhood works. But not here. It is true to my memory, yet offers a plethora of new possible angles. And it looks breathtaking.

You often stretch yourself between auteur films and mainstream movies...

It's the essence of our work, to wander from one world to another. And it's also what I enjoy as a viewer.



— Interview with — JACQUES PERRIN

What did you remember of Hector Malot's book?

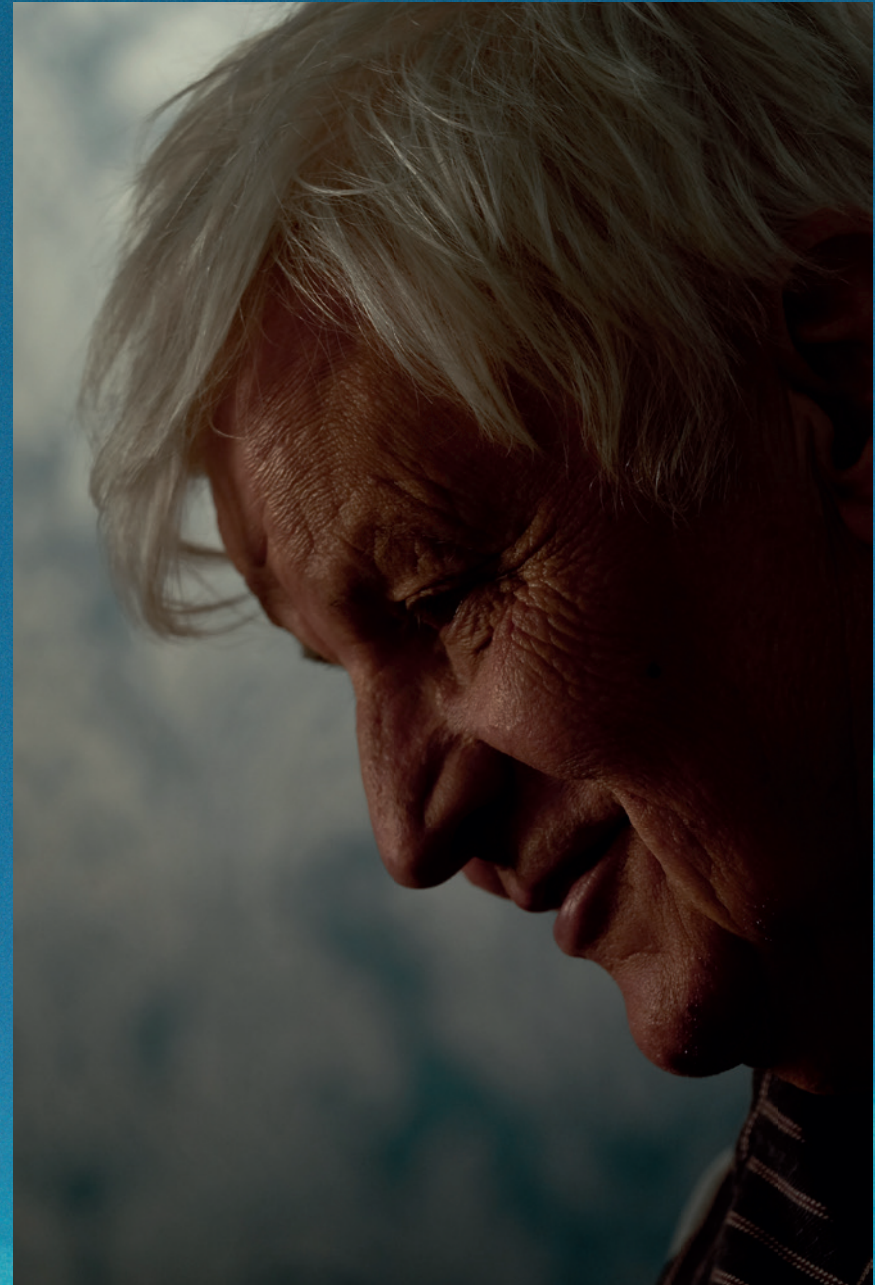
It's a book I've always known. My parents read it when they were kids and I in turn read it as a boy. I remember a sad story with, as is often the case with slightly dark tales, a glimmer of hope that always stayed with me. Later, I saw the film adaptations that were made and all of them pulled the hero toward doom. The power of Antoine Blossier's screenplay is, on the contrary, to give him hope for the future. He falls but always gets back to his feet, misfortune is no longer his fate. Antoine unfurls this tale in a storyteller's décor, nonetheless keeping all the contours of a certain realism destined to support the dangers faced by the film's protagonists, and he pulls off a modern film that can appeal to today's audiences.

You haven't appeared in a film in a very long time.

Antoine Blossier remembered me. Even if I do still work behind the camera, I've been slightly forgotten as an actor. I must say that it did warm my heart that a young director called upon me.

Had you seen his previous films?

No. It was his screenplay and the way he talked to me about the project, that got me onboard. It is often said that to do a good adaptation of a known work, one shouldn't be afraid to betray it, because it is precisely by taking these liberties that it is possible to reconnect with the initial emotion. I felt that Antoine had succeeded in reconnecting with that emotion. I find it wonderful, for instance, that my character has become a very old man.



The film is ambitiously directed.

By allowing for this film to have the necessary budget, the producers gave this young director the means to match his ambition. The Americans don't hesitate to invest big on a project. In France, less so. And yet, being a producer myself, I know it is necessary to go along with a film, for it is the soul, it carries us and not the other way around. It gives us the responsibility to make it the way it should be. Producing is not doing an accountant's job, it's a passion. We need money? Let's find it!

What experience did you take away from this shoot?

NOBODY'S BOY is one of those enterprises that was nourished by a great deal of thought and work. Everything was planned in advance. There were just a few things to fine-tune when one or the other of us actors veered from the line. We would then all work together to return to that line and rise to our own part of responsibility for the film. Antoine Blossier directed us very well... by not directing us. When I was younger I played in another tale, Jacques Demy's adaptation of a book called PEAU D'ÂNE [Donkeyskin in English]. NOBODY'S BOY is every bit as good.

There are many pictorial and film references in the movie.

A director who makes a fine film and loves cinema is automatically nourished by other works. They naturally pervade his vision and are never overstated. NOBODY'S BOY is not an homage film.

You shot no scenes with Maleaume Paquin. What was your reaction when you saw him in the movie?

I am always awestruck by the grace of children who play well. They give themselves so naturally to their performance and emotions, whereas we adults are pretending to a degree, as we make use of our craft. I want to say: "Look to the children, for they give us the just tone."





— Interview with — LUDIVINE SAGNIER

Did you know Antoine Blossier?

Not at all. We met once and I found him so motivated by his project, in content and in form, that I accepted the part of Mother Barberin right away. I could feel that this was not a matter of him appropriating a franchise, but rather of defending a very personal vision, infinitely less mournful and despondent than the series that I watched on TV as a kid. By making it into a coming-of-age story based on transmission, he raised it to another level.

Were you interested in the film's cultural heritage aspect?

Very much so. I find it reassuring that old classics are being resurrected into modern versions. This brings us closer to our childhood and to stories our parents used to tell us to help us get to sleep, and it allows our own children to discover works

they might not otherwise get around to reading. I take great pleasure in knowing that my kids will see me in a film they can identify with.

Most of your scenes take place in the little Aubrac farmhouse where Remi lives with Mother Barberin, his adoptive mother.

For the exteriors, we shot in breathtaking locations. And Antoine and the art department did an amazing job on the interiors. We were really inside a tale. With these scenes, I built a very strong relationship with Maleaume, the boy who plays Remi. He and I got along right away. I understood that I had a certain authority over him and he felt that too; we used that. Even if I don't appear for very long, it was important for the closeness between us to feel tangible, in order to then grasp the solitude and distress that Remi feels when he goes off with Vitalis.

The sequence when Vitalis forces Remi to come with him up the hill as Jonathan Zaccàï, who plays your husband, prevents you from running to them, is very emotionally charged.

On set, everyone - Antoine, the coach, the DP - was shouting directives to Remi. I took him aside and said "Don't listen to anything, just keep your eyes on me. In this scene, there is no one but you and me." The way he latches on to my presence as he is being pulled away into the distance turned out incredible.

You'll be working with him again on Julien Rappeneau's FOURMI.

It's a coincidence, but it's also because so few boys his age possess his human and artistic qualities. Maleaume is as humble as he is diligent, his relationship with adults is very subtle and he never just relies on his talent; I find him very touching.

How did you prepare for Mother Barberin's character?

The costume, the hairstyle and the set's patina helped me a lot. I immediately felt projected into the context. And Antoine is as inspired as he is inspiring.

We haven't seen much of you in the last few years. And you are now brimming with projects in the works.

I took time off to raise my daughters. Now that they're a bit older, I am allowing myself to return to work. After Jean-Paul Rouve's LOLA AND HER BROTHERS, which is coming out in November, I've committed to Fabienne Berthaud's UN MONDE PLUS GRAND, and a part in the new season of Paolo Sorrentino's series THE YOUNG POPE. I will also appear in the new Kore-eda picture and in a first film out of Belgium.



— CAST —

Daniel Auteuil	Vitalis
Maleaume Paquin	Remi
Virginie Ledoyen	Mrs Harper
Jonathan Zaccã	Jerome Barberin
Jacques Perrin	Older Remi
Ludivine Sagnier	Mrs Barberin
Albane Masson	Lise





CREW

Director	Antoine Blossier
Based on the novel by	Hector Malot
Screenplay	Antoine Blossier
Production Supervisor	Laurent Sivot
Director of Photography	Romain Lacourbas (AFC)
Production Designer	Sébastien Inizan
Script Supervisor	Christine Richard
First Assistant Director	Brieuc Vanderswalm
Editor	Jennifer Augé
Casting Director	Gigi Akoka
Production Manager	Vincent Plant
Costume Designer	Agnès Beziers
Sound	Marc Engels
	Gurwal Coïc-Gallas
	Marc Doisne
Original Score	Romaric Laurence
Post-production Supervisor	Léa Sadoul
Associate Producer	Fabrice Gianfermi
Produced by	Éric Jehelmann
	Philippe Rousselet
Co-production	JERICO
	TF1 FILMS PRODUCTION
	TF1 STUDIO
	NEXUS FACTORY
	UMEDIA
With the participation of	OCS
	CINÉ+
	TF1
	TMC
In partnership with	UFUND
With the support of	PROCIREP