



## note of intention

My last feature film, "La Tendresse" is a partly biographical story that I impulsively wrote by reactivating my remembrances and my emotional memory.

For my new project, « **en amont du fleuve** », I wanted to try something new, I wanted to ask Hubert Mingarelli (author of the book I adapted for "Noir Ocean"), to write a scenario for me. I gave him the premise: two men in their fifties sailing upstream on a boat in the wilderness. A third man, also in his fifties, joins them during the voyage.

I knew these three men. Three actors with whom I had worked, with whom I wanted to work again, that I wanted to bring together. To write a tailor-made scenario for Olivier Gourmet, Sergi Lopez and John Lynch (principal role in "The Quarry").

Hubert, enthusiastic, began to work. For six months, we asked each other questions, exchanged ideas. Who were these protagonists? What bonds bound them together? Why did they have different accents? What was the role of the hostile natural environment that surrounded them?

I imagined a psychological adventure story, an atmospheric film inspired by writers like Jack London, Tobias Wolf, Jim Harrison, Raymond Carver ...

Hubert and I were on the same wavelength.

I love to direct actors. To control them and yet at the same time to leave them free. To stimulate them, to make them understand where I'm trying to go. Most of all, to love them. The idea of being the foreman, a bit like being an orchestra conductor, and to have in front of me three men in the prime of life with a perfect technical and emotional mastery of their art does not scare me. On the contrary, it is extremely stimulating. Olivier, Sergi and John are Stradivarius'. They are capable of giving all the subtlety, colour, ambiguity and emotion to magnificently bring to life on screen the roles that they play.

Certain people find it difficult to talk about themselves for many different reasons. My characters, Homer and Joé, half-brothers, are such people. Homer, traumatised by an absent father who ignored his existence, Joé by the violence of this same father.

The lack of words, of verbal communication interests me and can be found in a number of my films. The silences, what is left unsaid, leaves room for the spectator's interpretation, their personal imagination. I like that.

The character Sean, who joins the two brothers, is enigmatic, a liar and an outlaw.

Returning from the voyage, Homer will be able, no doubt, to really live his life, liberated from the phantom of his father.

Joé, the solitary man, discovers a brother who moves him and who will perhaps be the principal character of his next book.

As to the narration, I have the impression that I am digging into earth that I already know but that I want to go deeper. If Joé and Homer are half-brothers, it is not by chance. In some of my previous films, blood-ties, filiation, the image of the father or his absence are strongly present. "Upstream" is part of this same lineage.

For many years now, in fact, for most of my technical collaborators, since forever, I have collaborated with the same technical team.

Henri Morelle on sound.

Michèle Hubinon as editor.

Didier Frateur as camera men.

Thierry and Annick Leproust on scenery.

Yan Tax on costumes.

Dick Naastepad on make-up.

Dominique Guerrier, first assistant director.

Monique Marnette will assist me with a master hand in the production management of Man's Films Productions.

I am not getting any younger but happiness, the knowledge that we have of each other and connivance seem to grow from film to film.

We worked with a Croatian Art Designer and several Croatian technicians that I do not know yet but I look forward to meet. Among other things, the decoration team, script boy, a location manager and his team, and a production manager...

After a road movie, "Tenderness", we are now boarding for a boat movie « **en amont du fleuve** », with the same enthusiasm.

#### A few words from Digna Sinke, Dutch coproducer

How long have I known Marion? She was co-producer of my first feature film, and had just made "Le Lit" herself. That was in beginning eighties. We never lost sight of each other. SNG Film was involved as co-producer of The Quarry, but other attempts at cooperation did not run according to plan. With « **en amont du fleuve** », there was a new opportunity. I was enthusiastic about the screenplay and determinedly assisted in the search for a way to make the film. The days I spent at the shoot in Croatia had an impact on me. The landscape, the actors, the professionalism, also that of the Croatian crew. Of course Marion too. So natural. Just as I know her. Those long ties of friendship and cooperation is something remarkable. That this all has resulted in this film makes me glad.

#### A few words from Hubert Mingarelli , co-writer

Writing this scenario with Marion was a first experience. I usually work alone, I write novels. Which means that I am always right. And when working with someone else, I am not always right. Fortunately, we both basically wanted to write the same thing. A story about men who appear strong on the outside, but like everyone are hiding a weakness on the inside. That is what interested me the most. That is what I try to talk about in my own stories.

Everything was new. First of all, writing together, finding together the direction to take and how to get there. And then knowing the faces of the characters we bring to life. Especially those of Olivier Gourmet and Sergi Lopez. It was uncomfortable at first. I don't know the faces of the characters in my novels. But finally, they became real characters and not just actors.

Having them go up a river in a small boat was important. That allowed them to always be together and within earshot. And going up a river means advancing toward the beginning of things. As they, individually, each searched to get closer, to find the source.

Perhaps the most surprising thing in this two-voice writing is that we shared the task without it having to be expressed. Me in the feeling for the characters, and Marion in the action.

First and great experience.

## Homer

He's fifty years old. This is a big, massive man. His face, a little heavy becomes friendly when he smiled. Homer was raised by his mother who has never revealed to him who his father was. This absence was much suffering and has complexed him during his childhood. This is a loner who through hard work managed to get his small trucking company in Belgium. He smokes and drinks too much. He's impulsive and can become angry when he's drunk. He hides his edgy sensibility under gruff airs and has difficulty to express his feelings. It is probably single. He is also moving by his clumsiness. We feel that this is a good guy full of naivety.



## Olivier Gourmet

- « La Marche » de Nabil Ben Yadir – 2013
- « La Tendresse » de Marion Hänsel – 2012
- « Le Gamin au vélo » de Luc et Jean-Pierre Dardenne – 2011
- « L'Exercice de l'État » de Pierre Schoeller – 2011

Hardly younger than Homer. Not very tall, stocky, round face, playful, great dimple, short hair, coarse salt and pepper. He speaks with a strong Spanish accent, quiet, soft and balanced, he speaks with short sentences and carefully observes his surroundings. As a child he was maltreated by his father and left his family as a teenager. He travelled around the world, experimenting all kind of situation. Today, he writes novels and lives in Mexico City. Little is known about him and his life, but we feel that he tries to understand Homer and gradually, attaches to him.



### Sergi Lopez

- « La Tendresse » de Marion Hänsel – 2012
- « Tango libre» de Fred Fontaine – 2011
- « La Régate » de Bernard Bellefroid - 2009
- « Le Labyrinthe de Pan» de Guillermo Del Toro - 2006



## Sean

Man in peculiar bony face, very dark eyes and hair. marked nose. Thin body, slender.  
He is Irish. Sean is enigmatic. He was active in the IRA. This violent period of his life influenced his choices of existence.  
Adventurer, liar, dealer. One can not help but have empathy for him, but what was his real relationship with the father of the half-brothers?



## John Lynch

- « Pilgrimage » de Brendan Muldowney – 2016
- « The Fall » -TV serie – 2013- 2014
- « Private Schedule » de Pat O'Connor – 2012
- « The Quarry » de Marion Hänsel - 1998

## style, rythm

Filming sailing upriver, the banks going by, the movement of the water. Joé fishing, Homer watching him. Homer getting drunk, his brother watching him. Moments of silence. Two men attempting to understand who they are for each other, who timidly try to express what they are feeling and to understand one another.

The rhythm and style of the first part of the film will be contemplative.

After the boat arrives at the falls, when our characters go by foot through the canyon and then the mountains, the rhythm accelerates, allowing the elliptical construction of the scenario. The camera will be closer to their bodies, climbing the rocks, walking through the forest.

Many night scenes as well where we sense the environment rather than seeing it. Faces dimly lit by the kerosene lamp, closely framed.

The third part is more narrative when a new protagonist, Sean, enters the game. More dialogue, action. The discovery by the brothers of their father's activity and his suicide. In the epilogue, we will return to a slower rhythm, images of the water, fewer dialogues, a sort of peace settles in.

The vision that I currently have of the film will only fully take shape after further location scouting and most importantly the very precise work of creating the storyboard. What I have written today gives the direction. I can already hear the sound track. The ubiquitous purr of the diesel engine, the swirls in the water, the cries of alarm given by disturbed birds. The silence when moored. In the canyon, particular, indefinable sounds, echoes rebounding from the cliffs. During violent rainstorms, we will only hear the rain that submerges everything.

An original composition By Paul M. van Brugge, Dutch composer. Parcimonious and beautiful. Music following from time to time this journey.

## why Croatia ?

One constant element in my films is the importance given to nature which often becomes a protagonist and influences the behaviour of the characters. It isolates them, locks them up without a chain or fence in a world that is too strong, too big, that they cannot master ("Dust", "Si le vent soulève les sables", "The Quarry", "Nuages, lettres à mon fils"). Being in nature, observing it, filming it, magnifying it through the image by using the cinemascope format, the format I have used for most of my films and which allows this grandeur.

Finding the ideal location required much exciting research.

The river must be navigable, with a water depth sufficient for our little boat but with a minimum of river traffic. The vegetation on the banks must be varied. There must also be waterfalls, a wild canyon and a primary forest. All this in a country where the distances, infrastructure and cost of production must be manageable.

Croatia seems to bring together all that.

The collaboration with the Croatiaoan producer, Kinorama, was perfect.

The locations scouting, professional team very dedicated, organisation of the shooting, the control of the budget, very well managed and the obtaining of the cash rebate, economical fund recently put in place made the shoot possible and optimal.