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INEXORABLE

DIRECTED BY FABRICE DU WELZ

WITH
BENOÎT POELVOORDE , ALBA GAÏA BELLUGI, MÉLANIE DOUTEY

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SYNOPSIS

Desperately seeking inspiration for the follow-up novel to his bestseller *Inexorable*, Marcel Bellmer moves in his wife's old family mansion with his family. As they accustom to their new life, a silhouette lurks around the house, a young girl named Gloria. She seems fascinated by Marcel's literary work and determined to take root in the family. With her insidious presence, mysteries of the past unfold...



INTERVIEW WITH FABRICE DU WELZ - DIRECTOR

What was at the origin of *Inexorable*?

I wanted to attempt a thriller, a "home invasion" thriller in the image of 1990s sexual thrillers such as *Basic Instinct*, *Single White Female*, or *The Hand That Rocks The Cradle*. I loved these movies that were filled with sexual tension. I wanted the spectator to get entirely caught up, be sucked into this vortex, to drown in Benoît Poelvoorde's lies. With *Inexorable*, I hoped to explore other territories. It's probably the end of a cycle for me. I wanted to direct an efficient suspense story that would speak to a general public all the while keeping my gothic and romantic sensibilities.

In fact the film finds itself somewhere between Ingmar Bergman and Dario Argento's cinema.

Visually speaking, it's the reinterpretation of a "giallo" (*ED: an Italian horror thriller, whose golden age was between the 1960s and 1980s.*), practically a gothic film, between Mario Bava and Dario Argento, even if the film is very realistic. I am the sum of the films I've seen. Many things rise to the surface, unconsciously sometimes.

How did you prepare for the film?

I made *Inexorable* in reaction to *Adoration*, my previous film. It is much more written. I asked myself a lot of questions concerning the staging, always looking to be as efficient and sharp as possible. The basic idea was to grab the viewing audience by the throat with a very Chabrolan-inspired realistic beginning, and to never let go. I also thought a great deal of Julien Duvivier's *Deadlier Than The Male*. I prepared my sequences in pre-production with my director of photography and artistic director, using a mood board filled with visual references and themes encompassing lies, secrecy, claustrophobic dramas, and the idea of a pared-down, geometric staging.

Beyond being a thriller, *Inexorable* is also a film about couples, desire or the end of desire, secrets and lies, and the challenges of fatherhood.

Yes, it's a movie about the difficulty of living together and the impossibility of being alone. "*Neither with you nor without you,*" we are always in this paradox, this nonsensical existential contradiction. I think that some viewers will see the thriller while others will pick up much more. *Inexorable* has themes about relationship intricacies, familial complexities, and the sheer burden a family can be. Themes that I needed to explore through the codes of a film that has you on the edge of your seat.

You seem to be fascinated with children. You were going to direct a post-apocalyptic film with child cannibals. There are mysterious children in *Vinyan*, two teenagers in *Adoration* and now a young girl in *Inexorable*. Does

your education in Jesuit schools have anything to do with it, or was it the shock of seeing *The Exorcist*?

(Laughter) Childhood is an eminently cinematographic theme. Particularly when it comes to harmful childhoods filled with agony, trials, and tribulations. *Adoration* was very different; it was a sort of awakening. Here it's a question of an unhappy, compromised childhood. I'm very nostalgic about my childhood. The films and music I discovered as a teenager left a great impression on me. Films such as *The Haunting*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, and *The Exorcist*. You never get over movies like these.

Certain shots and the omnipresence of Vivaldi's *Nisi Dominus Cantata* bring a sacred dimension to the film.

Art is fueled by sacred things, and that which is sacred is essential. The sense of the sacred has disappeared. We no longer build cathedrals but Starbucks cafés instead. The same goes for cinema. I want to see films that have faith, with an absolute and all-encompassing dimension. I don't know if I have the talent to make cathedrals, but I'm working on getting there. I like exploring the sense of the sacred just as much as baser instincts, especially with great actors.

Is there a lot of you in the character of Marcel Bellmer?

Naturally. There is a lot of me in Marcel, but also in all the other characters. You know, I'm in love with Benoît Poelvoorde, he's an actor who electrifies me. Through him, I express a part of myself that I'm not fully aware of; I fill him with my phobias and my doubts. But there is also a lot of myself in Gloria's character.

In the movie, Poelvoorde's characters states: "*Writing is a vital need, it's not meant to please.*" Even you have declared: "*Cinema allows me to really live. I can't make a comfortable, easy film; I need to live and feel the heat of the fire, dance on a volcano.*"

Yes, that's my excessive romanticism, and it's true that filmmaking is no small matter. But here, the portrait I've drawn of Marcel is one of an impostor. I very much liked this character's duplicity. This film is about a man's explosion in midflight, phenomenally embodied by Benoît.

Let's talk about Benoît Poelvoorde. You'd asked him to be in all of your movies and he had always refused. Then, finally, your first experience together, *Adoration*, turned out to be complicated, to say the least.

I met Benoît in a bistro when I was 16. He had just finished shooting *Man Bites Dog*. I fell in love. I was gobsmacked, who was that guy? Then, over the years I saw all of his films. I was friendly with some of his close friends. He does things the same way a Depardieu would – he has a sort of compulsive need to live life to its fullest. For *Calvaire*, I offered him the leading role. He refused. Then, I

asked him to be in almost all of my films, and he refused every time, swiftly brushing aside my offers. He agreed to be in *Adoration* mainly as a favor to Vincent Tavier (Ed. producer for *Alleluia* and *Adoration*). And naturally our personalities were bound to clash. There were some very tense moments, but it's because we are both hyperactive, and we have different energies that feed negatively off of each other on a film set. It's certain that I'm a very demanding director, a "pain in the ass," and fortunately just as well because that's how a director should be. We patched things up between us, and I offered him the role in *Inexorable*, explaining that he was truly the only person I wanted. It is, I very much hope, the beginning of a long working partnership with Benoît, because for me he has the depth of a Jean Gabin or a Michel Simon. He's a giant.

Benoît Poelvoorde is very modest, and he has a reputation for hating intimate scenes and kisses. Here he is really baring himself in every meaning of the word. Why did he accept?

You'd have to ask him. He trusted us. He knows how demanding and obsessive I can be. He calls me a "ball-breaker," but he was in a safe place. I asked everything of him, all of the time. He also felt very much at ease with his partner, Mélanie Doutey, who is an old friend of his. That allowed him to really let go.

How did you direct him?

You never know what Benoît is going to be like when he arrives in the morning. He can be in a very good mood, or in a foul mood. Sometimes he just doesn't come and other times he says he won't be coming and then he shows up anyway! The problem is that some days are more difficult than others. But it is also fascinating because you never know what he is going to be like. So you have to be creative and adapt yourself to everything. I love it! And when he is there, he lets go entirely, he is relentless in his work. He is like clay that I can model. I let him improvise and then I just say: "*a bit more to the right, to the left...*" And that's it! Besides, with age and experience, I no longer goad actors like I have in the past. It's pointless. With JoeyStarr (Ed. *the epic shooting of Colt 45 was very conflictual*), I should have been smarter, less head-on. With age I have learned to pick my battles.

Tell us about your actresses.

I discovered Alba Gaïa Bellugi in a series on Arte television, *Trois fois Manon*, with Marina Foïs, about a young girl who was a victim of abuse. I immediately had the feeling that I needed to work with her and capturing her on film instead of digital put her to her greatest advantage. Melanie Doutey is incredibly gentle, then irritating, and human. She reminds me of my mother. As for Janaïna Halloy, who plays little Lucy, she's a revelation. I discovered her during a casting session. She understood everything even when I didn't give

her any text. She was able to anticipate everything. It's her first film and she was only eleven years old!

In how many days did you shoot the film?

About twenty! But I have a smooth-running, tight-knit team. Everybody knows each other perfectly. And I worked with Jean-Yves Roubin and Manuel Chiche, producers I trust who are able to channel my energy. There aren't good films without good, indeed great producers.

Not making things any easier on yourself, you won't use digital, and you shot the film in "Glorious full color Kodak" Super 16.

My team works very well with Super 16, which we also used for *Adoration*. It's flexible, fast, and there is more texture to the image. You just have to be careful when manipulating the film and the magazine, as well as the video feed, which is often defective. But my eye is used to it, and I stay very close to my actors when I shoot.

Manuel Dacosse's work – the director of photography for *The Strange Color of Your Body's Tears* and *The Emperor of Paris* – is extremely impressive.

Manu is my "work wife": I "divorced" Benoît Debie, who was the director of photography for my first films, and my second marriage was with Manu (laughter). We are very happy together and we understand each other instantly. He likes to experiment. He sculpts light and I impose a lot of constraints on him. I am obsessed with chiaroscuro, contrasts such as seen in Vilmos Zsigmond or Gordon Willis' work (*Ed. Respectively the directors of photography for The Deer Hunter and The Godfather*). I'm looking for a specific texture in the image. In addition, Manu is very fast because we use very little light. I favor using one source of light only, like the Flemish masters. And as there is only one source, it has to be justified. It implies that the artistic director and production designer, Manu de Meulemeester's work is equally crucial. In my mind directing really comes down to how well the three of us work together.

Where did you find the film's magnificent and eerie abode?

In the Ardennes. It blew us away. But I wasn't able to do what I wanted, which was to paint the walls to make it even more mysterious and organic. We had to be quite ingenious.

And Tom Kan's wonderful credits?

He's a genius graphic artist and I have wanted to work with him for years. His collaboration with Gaspar Noé was just crazy. He's the Saul Bass of our era. I bumped into him two or three times and we tried to work together. For *Inexorable*, his opening and closing credits tell a story up to the very last seconds of the film.

What is your next project?

I'm already working on my next film. The screenplay is finished. I'm starting the casting process, but it's still a secret.

BIOGRAPHY - FABRICE DU WELZ

After studying at the Liège Conservatory for Dramatic Arts with Jacques Delcuvellerie, Fabrice pursued his training at INSAS, the Brussels Film School.

In 1999, his short film *A Wonderful Love*, won the Grand Prix prize at the Gérardmer Festival, giving moviegoers a glimpse of his potential to create unique worlds.

In 2004, his film *Calvaire* with Laurent Lucas and Jackie Berroyer was presented in Cannes (International Critic's Week), evidencing that he was one of the standout figures in Belgian cinema.

Between 2008 and 2013 he directed *Vinyan* (selected for the Venice Film Festival in 2008) with Emmanuelle Béart and Rufus Sewell and was hired to direct *Colt 45*, produced by Thomas Langmann.

In 2014, he worked with Laurent Lucas again for *Alleluia* (second film in his trilogy taking place in the Ardennes, after *Calvaire*) which premiered at Cannes Directors' Fortnight.

In 2015, he shot *Message from the King*, produced by David Lancaster (*Drive*, *Whiplash*, *Nightcrawler*) and Stephen Cornwell (*A Most Wanted Man*) in Los Angeles, with Chadwick Boseman, Luke Evans, Teresa Palmer, Alfred Molina, and Natalie Martinez. The film premiered at the Toronto Film Festival in 2016 and was immediately picked up by Netflix.

In 2018 he made *Adoration* with Benoît Poelvoorde, Fantine Hartuin, and Thomas Gioria, which was released early 2020.

In 2021, *Inexorable* premiered at the Deauville Film Festival and was selected for the Toronto International Film Festival as well as the London Film Festival.

CREW

Directed by **FABRICE DU WELZ**

Produced by **JEAN-YVES ROUBIN**

Coproduced by **MANUEL CHICHE**
VIOLAINE BARBAROUX

Written by **FABRICE DU WELZ**
AURELIEN MOLAS
JOSEPHINE DARCY HOPKINS

Associate Producers **ARLETTE ZYLBERBERG**
PHILIPPE LOGIE

Executive Producer **CHRISTOPHE HOLLEBEKE**

Cinematography **MANU DACOSSE**

Script **DOMENICO LA PORTA**

Set Photographer **KRIS DEWITTE**

Editing **ANNE-LAURE GUEGAN**

Post production **JULIEN SIGALAS**

Sound **LUDOVIC VAN PACHTERBEKE**
JULIE BRENTA
EMMANUEL DE BOISSIEU

Music **VINCENT CAHAY**

Choreography **DAMIEN JALET**

Art Director **EMMANUEL DE MEULEMEESTER**

Costumes **MAÏRA RAMEDHAN-LEVI**

CAST

BENOÎT POELVOORDE

ALBA GAÏA BELLUGI

MELANIE DOUTEY

JANAÏNA HALLOY FOKAN

ANAËL SNOEK

JACKIE BERROYER