



— THE STRANGE CASE OF JACKY CAILLOU



A Film by Lucas Delangle

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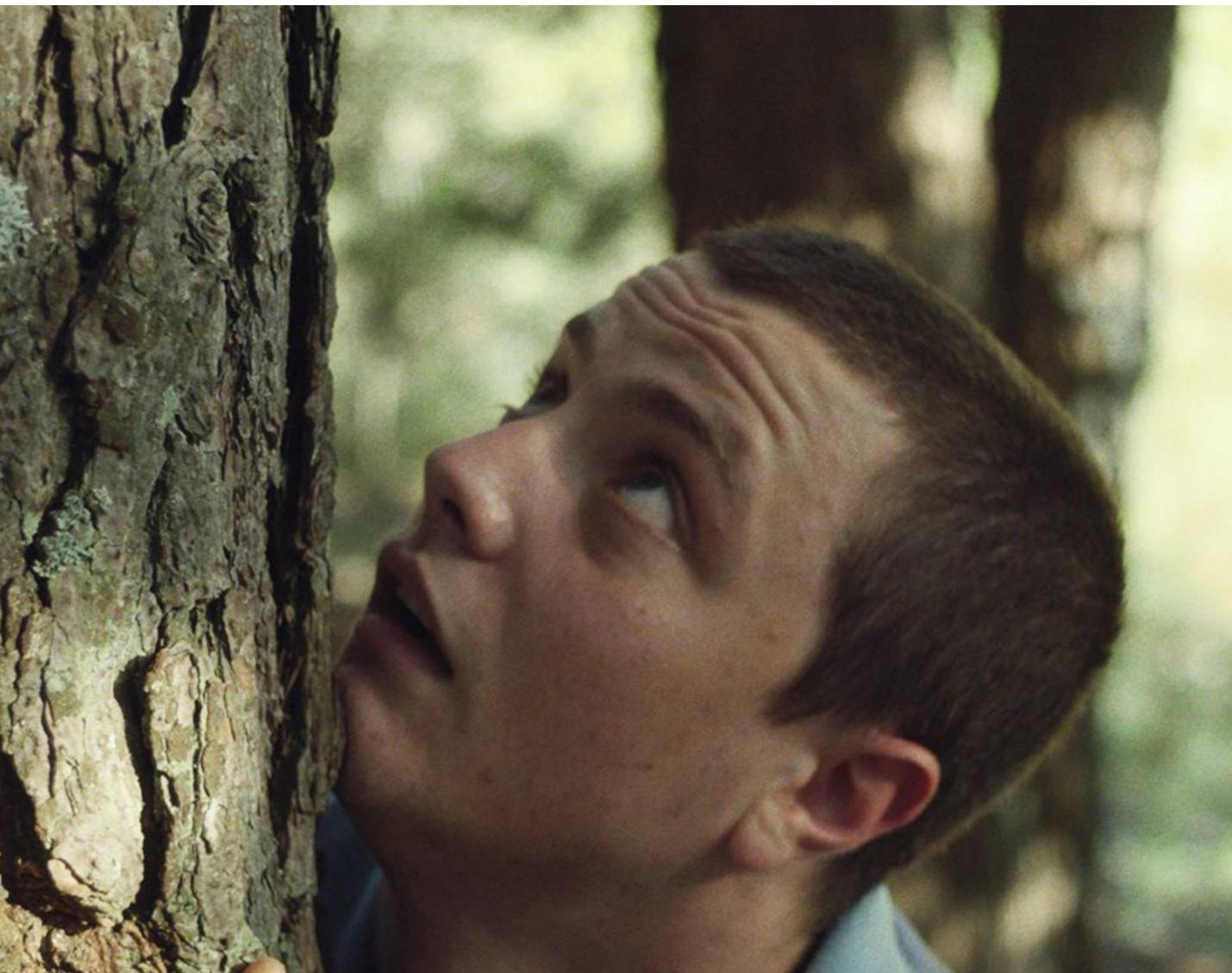
— SYNOPSIS

Small village, high in the French Alps, today.

Jacky Caillou lives with his loving grandmother Gisele, an magnetic healer respected by all. Elsa, a young woman comes from the city to consult: a strange hairy dark stain grows on her back...

When the village starts to suffer herd killings, and his grandmother pass away, Jacky urgently needs to understand if he inherited the ancestral gift. Will he manage to save both Elsa and his village?

A CONVERSATION WITH LUCAS DELANGLE



Where does your attraction for magnetism come from?

I was born in a small village in the Sarthe, a region of hedgerows very close to the Mayenne, full of magnetizers and healers. In fact, a book about healers in the Mayenne was published, it's a sociological investigation called Words, death and spells by Jeanne Favret-Saada.

In the small village where I grew up, my father was a family doctor. He knew many magnetizers. He was very Cartesian and did not believe in them at all. When I was a child, he used to tell me their stories. I was very bored in this small town and these stories fascinated me, as if something extraordinary or magical could happen.

I became curious about it and started meeting people, without knowing that I was going to make a film about it. I met a lady who was exercised her gift with a master. I couldn't really understand why she was so interested in magnetism... And then, after a while, I realized that her son was seriously ill. But he, the son, didn't believe in it. And magnetizers can't work if the patient doesn't believe in it. So she said to me, "I want to be ready if one day he changes his mind". There was something about this hope that I loved, a hope with which I could make movies. This hope and the invisible aspect of magnetism was a perfect field for cinema.

In your previous film, the short documentary Du rouge au front, you tell the story of a mother-son relationship, which led to your meeting with Edwige Blondiau. Where does this renewed attraction for this maternal bond come from? In Jacky Caillou, it's between a grandmother and her grandson. Also, how do you turn a documentary character into an actress in a fiction film?

Magnetizers' gifts are often passed on

from father to daughter and from mother to son. I wanted to keep this link. Edwige Blondiau, who plays Gisèle, Jacky's grandmother, was part of this documentary and I liked her so much, I wanted to make a film with her. I wanted to give her the part of a great and respected healer, whom people come to see from afar, even though she is not at all evanescent. She has a very earthy side, with her accent, her northern way of speaking. I enjoyed immersing her in a fiction made with the people of the region, where I mix actors and non-actors.

I found it interesting to put her in a castle setting, to turn her into a guiding figure. I wanted to give her a background far from her reality, one that seems rich, bourgeois... She looks at paintings of people that could be her ancestors, as if they were part of a famous family of magnetizers. It was necessary to establish a counterpoint with the first impression she gives. She is playing a character and she's enjoying it.

One wonders how to stage magnetism... In Du rouge au front, there is already the strong presence of the motif of the hand, which we find again in Jacky Caillou.

It was necessary to materialize this power and I felt that the hands made it palpable, whether they were trembling, very wrinkled, different, as the hands of the grandmother and those of the grandson... In Du rouge au front, there are many shots of hands that have a slightly different meaning: when they play, they raise their hands in the air. Maybe it's a personal obsession but it's not intentional.

It was not my idea to reproduce a motif from one film to the next. Jacky Caillou is a film where "hand" becomes a key word. We filmed hands and worked in an artisanal way, with non-professional actors, with a special care to "hand-made". This can be seen in the use of the zoom lens, which

has a “hand-made” feel. I used it in several shots: when Jacky spies on Elsa being magnetized by her grandmother; on the actors’ faces, especially when Jacky magnetizes the lamppost... I was happy to reuse this zoom, because it is a hand that moves the frame. In the dolly and the steady-cam, you can feel a machine moving. This way there is something that comes from the body. It sounds theoretical, but you can feel it if you look in a certain way. This “hand-made” aspect brings to the film a feeling of fragility, which is very important in order to properly tell this story of magnetism. The film had to look bare, without too much artifice.

There are indeed few special effects in Jacky Caillou. Therefore, how do you capture the magic of magnetism?

It’s an invisible force, so we have to find ways to materialize it all the time in the image. This is done through close-ups on the hands, the faces (the one who is magnetized and the one who magnetizes), through an intensity, and then, through the air that exists between the hands and the body. For example, there is a tracking shot of Jacky’s hands approaching Elsa’s back, where you can feel the distance: when you get to her, her back stiffens. The idea was to always go through the body, not to support the action with sounds or special effects, but rather with very simple things like the shadow of Jacky’s hands on Elsa’s back. It is these visual patterns that create the magic.

Why did you set the movie in this particular region and these mountainous landscapes?

I spent a lot of time walking around, especially in the Alps. I realized that I had written the very first scene 50 km from the shooting location, 5 years ago. I was at a friend’s house on vacation and I was writing there. So there was, perhaps, the imagination of that particular mountain in my script. Without realizing it, I was looking for it. So I drove around and around in my car...

I was looking for several things: a village that could be seen from high up (for an important sequence in the film...), and an architectural combination that was not easy to find. There are often a lot of Provençal houses with tiled roofs. They are difficult to film because they are visually homogeneous, just like the cottages found higher up. In the Alpes de Haute-Provence, it is an in-between, composed of bricks and mortar. There are houses that are more Provençal, others that are more like cottages, and still many tin roofs. Where I shot, there were painted houses because Italians came there on vacation and brought back paint. So they had these brightly colored facades, which are quite rare. This mixture, without too much renovation, was important to me. So was the diversity of the landscape. In this area, there are empty spaces, stony, rough, and also a lot of forests. I walked around and mostly talked to people and asked them for advice. And Jacky’s house is right next door! With the exception of the hospital, the entire perimeter of the film is within a 30 km radius. It’s very tight, two valleys: the Issole valley and the Verdon valley.

In this area, how did you build the village community?

Since there is a wolf in the film, flocks of sheep... I said to myself: we’re going to shoot in the mountains. On location, I wanted to work with people who had never acted before and who were real farmers. I did a casting and found them, one at the bar, the other a friend of a friend... by spending a lot of time there. On the other hand, the actor who plays Mathieu, the rural policeman, is Romain Laguna [director of the film *Les Météorites* on which Lucas Delangle was a scriptwriter]. This cop, constantly overwhelmed by the situation, on the verge of a nervous breakdown, suit him well.

This character is very frustrated to be alone in the mountains. There are many lonely men in the film, because that’s the way the place is. That explains why Mathieu gets angry when Georges, an older man, recites a poem about all the women he’s met in his life, back when there was more gender diversity in the village. It’s the kind of

barroom brawl where you don’t quite get the ins and outs, between the poet who stops everyone to tell his story and the one who wants to party and dance.

In this scene, why did you cover the story of the characters with very loud music?

Outside the same bar, we understand, despite the music, that Jacky and Elsa are talking about their parents. It was important to address this issue: Jacky’s parents are dead and Elsa’s mother left home when she was 16. Playing very loud music and forcing them to scream was a way to defuse the dramatic, delicate and sad side of this moment. In rehearsals, I couldn’t find the right tone with the actors, it’s very difficult to say “My parents are dead” and sound like “Pass the salt”. But with deafening music, it works! She doesn’t hear, asks him to repeat. At the same time, it’s all the more shaking. They both stop talking as if there was room for sadness.

What is striking about the non-professional actors is their use of language. How did you work with them?

In the film, there is very little improvisation. With my writing partner Olivier Strauss, we wrote everything in advance. I was very careful to keep the text. But I took things that belong to them, because I spent a lot of time with them. George Isnard, who plays a breeder, says “anyway” regularly, just like that, for no purpose. So I said to him “This will be your mark, you’ll say it then”. The same goes for Edwige Blondiau, who plays Gisèle, she tends to mix two expressions to make a new one. She says for example: “he’s going down the mountain”. I had fun re-proposing to her to use this mixture of conflicting expressions.

Did you think about the casting of Jacky according to the duets he is part of? With his grandmother, with Elsa, with his policeman friend...

It is Jacky who meets everyone. He is the main character that we follow, and there is hardly a scene without him in the picture. The other characters don’t necessarily meet each other. So yes, I thought about how his character would work with each of them. I also wanted the townspeople to be played by actors, Lou Lampros and Jean-Louis Coulloc’h, who play Elsa and her father Hervé. So that the strangeness would come from them, the actors, rather than from the locals. They were perhaps a little more sophisticated in their acting, in their mannerisms. It is very clear with Hervé who has a particular way of speaking. I imagined them as a duo with Jacky, long before I asked myself if Jean-Louis Coulloc’h and Lou Lampros would work as father and daughter. I asked myself: Jean-Louis Coulloc’h and Thomas Parigi [who plays Jacky], how will it work together? Lou and Thomas, how will it work?

How did you find the actor who plays Jacky, Thomas Parigi, who was acting for the first time?

I met him in Marseille. I was looking for a “Jacky” everywhere. As I walked down the streets, I looked at people and said to myself, “Could it be him? And then I went to a bar, a little depressed. There was a concert and Thomas [Parigi] was coming in to play music, but soon everyone left the bar to talk outside and have drinks. So he did his concert a bit alone. I went to see him at the end and congratulated him. He said to me “Nonsense, I screwed up everything, it’s the first time I play in public, I got confused... “. I said to myself that this was very “Jacky”. So I didn’t let him go. I explained to him that I was preparing a film, that I was making tests with people who did not usually play. He ended up coming, I felt that he wanted to. When we did the first tests, he had something of the character: awkward, very sweet and quite dreamy. He dared to explore a lot, and had the obsession that corresponds a lot to the second part of the film, which is darker. And ... It’s a naturalistic fiction, about a territory, but

with a fantastic presupposition. It's a world in which miracles can happen and where someone can turn into a wolf. It could look like magic realism. From then on, the tone goes with the character's naivety and the constant hope that fantasy will emerge.

I imagined an exalted character. When he sees the resurrection of the bird, his eyes are as big as marbles, and the same goes for when he looks at the sky... That's what sets the tone of the film. The characters can bring something funny, without being on the side of comedy.

The relationship between Jacky and Elsa is a story of care, desire and obstinacy. How do you keep the mystery about Elsa's character?

There is a strong mystery that comes from the actress. Lou Lampros has a wild side, very intense, a way of acting as if she was playing her life every second. The mystery comes from this young woman. Why go to a magnetizer? Her father is not so sure that it works... I wondered whether to film the transformation live or not, but I didn't want to be in a fantasy film. I wanted it to be more magical than that. I wanted it to be more like a dream, more poetic.

Is the mark that evolves on Elsa's back a symbol of emancipation?

It is so much in the film that it is difficult to answer! Indeed, she is a woman who aspires to freedom, who has a patch of hair on her back, which they try to remove... And she ends up escaping! What more can you say? (laughs)

The unhappy love story takes place in the background of a wolf hunt. How did you integrate Jacky's quest with the community around him?

I was shooting with real farmers to whom I had to tell the script, in a village where, when you arrive by car, you can see graffiti on the walls that say "Wolf stop!" or "Death to the wolf!". It's very important for them. It's a topic

of conversation that can easily turn into a fight. So we had to find a way of discussing the film in spite of their very different points of view. The breeders suffer a lot from wolf attacks. They are not at the point of doing hunts, but they have the impression that the situation is unfair and that the wolf is allowed to multiply in sparsely populated territories.

With the flocks, we shot documentary scenes that support the fiction. In the film, there are three-four dead sheep, killed by the wolf in the meadow. At the same time, in the village, during the transhumance, there were 1500 sheep crossing the mountain. This was an opportunity to create a mass effect with shots in which there are many sheep: we only see three dead bodies on the screen, but when we see hundreds of living animals, we have the impression of a greater massacre.

The final scene, which I like very much, also relies on the involvement of the inhabitants. All these people, gathered in the emergency room, are waiting. We did shots of a few minutes on each of them, silent, looking a little lost... I asked myself many questions about how to capture the look of someone who has been waiting for ten hours in the hospital. I find them beautiful: they have incredible faces and understand the emotion of the moment.

Did you have any references in mind when making the film?

I thought a lot about Alain Guiraudie, who masters the mixing of genres and fiction anchored in a territory. He has a lot of humor, and manages to make actors and non-professionals coexist in a beautiful authenticity. I also had in mind Happy as Lazzaro and its magical realism. Jacky could be a distant cousin of Lazzaro. He is naive, a bit of a dreamer. I remember that when I was writing the script, I was thinking about that. Jacky is a young man who is bored and has the hope that suddenly something extraordinary will happen. As he is vain, he thinks that the extraordinary will happen through him. It may not be the case...

You have to believe in it a little for it to work" was the leitmotiv of the film?

This sentence applies to many things! To love stories, to our attitude when we go to see a film, when we make it... In Jacky Caillou, everyone believes in this fictional territory.



— BIOGRAPHY LUCAS DELANGLE

Director

Born in Sarthe in 1987, Lucas graduated from La Fémis in directing. Upon graduation, he worked as assistant director on Claire Simon's documentaries, *The Competition*, *The Woods Dreams Are Made Of* (2015), and as a scriptwriter on Romain Laguna's first feature film *Meteorites*. In 2017, he directed a medium-length documentary *Du Rouge au Front*. *The Strange Case of Jacky Caillou*, written with Olivier Strauss is his first feature film.

— FILMOGRAPHY LUCAS DELANGLE

2017

Du Rouge au Front (short film - documentary)



LES FILMS DU CLAN

Les films du clan is a production company, created by Charles Philippe and Lucile Ric in 2010.

Having produced 20 short films, including *I'm Cold Meat* by Romain Laguna (official selection for the 2019 César Awards, Unifrance Award at the Festival Tous courts in Aix en Provence, Best Actor Award at the Festival Paris Courts Devant, broadcast on Canal+), *Feedback* by Margot Gallimard (Best Short Award at the International Women's Film Festival in Créteil), *Crazy Hair* by Christophe Deram (in competition at the Outdoor Short Film Festival in Grenoble, broadcast on OCS and Amazon Prime), *Home to you* by Olivier Bonnaud (in competition at the European Short Film Festival in Brest), *Lorraine Can't Sing* by Anna Marmiesse (Audience Award for a short film script at the Festival Premiers Plan in Angers, broadcast on France 2), and *Body* by Léonor Serraille (in competition at the Brive International Medium-Length Film Meetings), les films du clan is devoted to quality, intelligent and contemporary films, with a focus on discovering new talent.

In 2017, our company produced its two first feature-length films : *Starving Generation*, a comedy by Léa Frédeval, with Louane Emera in the main part, distributed by Studiocanal and co-produced by France 2 Cinéma, and *Meteorites* by Romain Laguna, made with

the help of CNC's avance sur recettes, and selected in competition at the San Sebastian Film Festival and Toronto's TIFF. This film received an award at My French Film Festival and introduced young actress Zéa Duprez, who was among the César's Revelations in 2020. *The Strange Case of Jacky Caillou*, directed by Lucas Delangle, also supported by CNC's avance sur recettes, is the company's third feature, shot in 2021. It will premiere in Cannes 2022, in the ACID section.

Les films du clan is working on several feature films, including *Paternel* by Ronan Tronchot (currently in post-production), with Grégory Gadebois and Géraldine Nakache, *Un monde violent* by Maxime Caperan, featuring Kacey-Mottet Klein and Félix Maritaud, and *Tenir Jusqu'à l'aube* by Margot Gallimard, adapted from Carole Fives's fourth novel.

Charles Philippe graduated with honors from the Production department in La fémis and worked for several years as a line producer. After studying in the Distribution department at La fémis, Lucile Ric worked in marketing for Wild Bunch Distribution. Their complementary profiles make them able to offer writers and directors a faithful and solidary.



CAST

Jacky	Thomas PARIGI
Elsa	Lou LAMPROS
Gisèle	Edwige BLONDIAU
Hervé	Jean-Louis COULLOC'H
Mathieu	Romain LAGUNA
M. Bert	Georges ISNARD
Loïc	Sivan GARAVAGNO
Le Maire	Jean-Marc RAVERA

CREW

Director	Lucas DELANGLE
Screenplay	Lucas DELANGLE Olivier STRAUSS
Cinematography	Mathieu GAUDET
Editing	Clément PINTEAUX
Sound	Gaël ELEON Laura CHELFI Paul JOUSSELIN
Music	Clément DECAUDIN
Production	Les films du clan
Producer	Charles PHILIPPE Lucile RIC
Country	France
French Distribution	Arizona Distribution
International Sales	Best Friend Forever

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