

Marc-Antoine Robert and Xavier Rigault present

LIGHTS OUT

(SIMON WERNER A DISPARU...)



OFFICIAL SELECTION
UN CERTAIN REGARD
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

A FILM BY
FABRICE GOBERT



**TEENS OFTEN FEEL SURROUNDED BY DANGER.
AND SOMETIMES, THEY'RE RIGHT...**

SYNOPSIS

March 1992, in a small town in the suburbs of Paris.
During an alcohol fuelled party, teenagers discover a body hidden in the bushes of a forest. A body that seems lifeless.

Two weeks earlier.

Simon, a 16 year-old teenager, has not shown up for class. Blood stains are found in a class-room. Run-away, kidnap, suicide, murder?

A few days later, Laetitia, a student from the same class goes missing without her parents knowing where she has gone. A young girl with no dark background or connection to Simon.

The next day, Jean-Baptiste, a third student, also disappears.
Rumors start to spread. The psychosis begins...

Music by Sonic Youth.



INTERVIEW WITH FABRICE GOBERT

In your film, you play with different movie genres - teen movie, thriller, cop movie - without ever getting trapped in any of them. What is your position on the notion of genre?

That was the idea: to be at the crossroads, to navigate between different genres. I wanted to start out a little like a thriller, and then go from one genre to another, freely.

As a spectator, I love that idea. I think switching from one genre to another makes sense in certain narratives. It is an interesting way to express what is going on in the minds of the characters.

Your characters give the film its structure: each one has a chapter. What made you choose that approach?

Again, I love that kind of cinematographic structure when it serves a purpose. Jeremie, Alice and the others all come up with their own "scenario," each in their own way. In a certain sense, they are trying to become heroes, heroes of their own life. They desperately want something to happen to them... Each part makes us see the story in a new light, taking on a different point of view and flashing back and forward in time, and throwing new light on the characters as well. By moving the characters to the forefront or to the background, depending upon the chapter, I wanted to progressively bring out the complexity of their personalities.



We can tell right away that it's not 2010, but we're not too far back in the past either.

Why did you set the story in the past?

I started out with an experience I had when I was a junior in high school in the suburbs of Paris in 1992. A student from my school had disappeared and we heard nothing from him for several weeks. I wanted to talk about the group of friends I had at the time, about the questions that it inspired among us. From there it seemed obvious that the action had to happen in the early 90's.

Secondly, I realized the difference that made with regards to the present day: no Internet, no cell phones... Setting it back in time gives the whole movie a certain strangeness. Jeremie and the others live in a place that looks like a thousand others, in a time that is hard to identify. That adds to their feeling of being out of focus.

The high school, and town as well, make us think of American movies...

Yes, that was exactly the idea. We looked for locations in the suburbs of Paris that could be potential locations for American movies, to follow that vein in the imagination of our main characters. I wanted an area with houses that all looked the same, with a little front lawn. We also had to feel like we were close to the forest. We finally found the perfect spot in Essonne.

I also wanted a high school that fit the period, built of concrete and open to the outside, with lawns, large windows and wide hallways... Bondoufle High School was perfect, and very cinematographic as well.

How did you create your galaxy of characters?

Using the same logic, I started with typical American teen movie characters that I thought would be interesting to adapt to Parisian suburbia. Each of the film's characters tries to fit into a stereotypical role: the hunk, the athlete, the loudmouth, the outcast, the bombshell, etc. As if they were trying to define themselves in relation to these models, without really succeeding: the athlete has his leg in a cast, the funny guy gets made fun of, the smart kid is bad in math, the pretty girl is brainy too...

How did you work with the actors on *Lights Out* / *Simon Werner a disparu...*?

I had a pretty clear idea of the characters and I talked a lot with the actors about them before shooting. I wrote up biographies for each one that talked about their relationships with their parents, their grades, their sexual experiences and their taste in movies, books and music. I created a playlist of songs from that period for each character. After that, each actor added his or her own personality and way of walking and talking and made the character real.

Music plays a big part in the film...

I listened to a lot of music in high school, especially rock. I had a list of titles from the early 90's that we listened to on the shoot. Some made it into the film. I wanted the original soundtrack to be written by a rock group, if possible one symbolic of the times. We needed something special for the music to become a real character of the film. A character that would never be exactly where you expect it to be. An entity of its own that would express what the heroes of the movie couldn't express themselves.





So you called Sonic Youth...

During preproduction, I listened to Sonic Youth a lot. There was something that really fit the world of the film, something that just felt right that came from the strength, originality and melancholy that emanate from their songs. The producers and I started dreaming of them composing the music. We contacted them, without expectations, and to my great delight they were interested.

Can you talk about the film's lighting?

My reference is the American photographer Gregory Crewdson, who transforms ordinary landscapes of suburban America into extremely frightening, disturbing places. The light is created and artificial; it expresses the unconscious mind of the characters being photographed. That was really one of the film's main ideas: to use the entire palette that cinema offers (light, editing, music, etc.) to transcend the life that the film's characters consider to be too ordinary.

For the Director of Photography, I immediately thought of Agnès Godard, whose work I admire very much. I think she has a special talent for sublimating the ordinary and creating mystery and strangeness. She wanted to experiment and try to be audacious with this film, and I was thrilled!

You adopt a distinct lighting and framing style in function with the perspective of each character...

The film is divided into four chapters, each one being centered on a main character. For Agnès, it was a little like having to shoot four different films. Without being too formulaic, each one had to have its own grammar. For the first part, which is Jérémie's part and the most conservative, we shot with a standard lens. We wanted to follow him all the time, so the camera was often moving... In the second part, which is Alice's, we really wanted to stay on Ana Girardot's face. We used longer focal lengths and stayed tight on her. Since she's kind of the "high-school star," we also always had a spotlight on her, which highlighted her presence. Jean-Baptiste Rabier was filmed in long shots. He is a lonely character who works well in scenery, especially on the empty high school grounds. He is kind of the high school's architect. For the last part, which is Simon's part, the camera always moved with him.

For you, adolescence is a cinematographic age?

It's in any case a subject that interests me a lot. The teenagers in the film struggle to define themselves, to exist... They also have to manage their fears and anxieties, the stress from their parents and society... They feel threatened and find it hard to see their future.

In the beginning what interested me had to do with phantasms, with the way we dream up our lives and others' lives as well. It's a universal theme, which is surely more intense at that particular time in life.

*After studying business and cinema from 1994 to 1998 (Edhec and Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris III), Fabrice Gobert worked as assistant director on documentary films. In 1998, he shot his first short film **Camille** - selected by several festivals - before directing for Arte in 2005, as part of the documentary series **Lettre à un jeune cinéaste**, creative interviews with Michael Haneke, Lars von Trier and Emanuele Crialese on the subject of their first films. He also directed episodes of the youth series **Age Sensible** for France 2. **Lights Out / Simon Werner a disparu...** is his first feature-length film.*

CREW

ORIGINAL TITLE:

SIMON WERNER A DISPARU...

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY:

Fabrice GOBERT

ORIGINAL MUSIC:

SONIC YOUTH

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Agnès Godard

*(Home, Nuovomundo, Strayed / Les Egarés,
The Dreamlife of Angels / La Vie Rêvée des Anges,
Beau Travail)*

ART DIRECTION:

Frédéric LAPIERRE and Frédérique LAPIERRE

COSTUMES:

Bethsabée DREYFUS

EDITOR:

Peggy KORETZKY

PRODUCED BY:

Marc-Antoine Robert and Xavier Rigault / 2.4.7. Films
(Persepolis)

FRENCH DISTRIBUTOR:

DIAPHANA DISTRIBUTION

France - 2010 - Format: 35 mm - 1.85 / DOLBY SRD

Running time: 93'





CAST

JÉRÉMIE: Jules Pelissier

ALICE: Ana Girardot

RABIER: Serge Riaboukine (*Angel-A, Crimson Rivers 2, Look at Me*)

YVES: Laurent Capelluto (*A Christmas Tale* - Most promising actor at the Cesar Awards 2008)

JEAN-BAPTISTE RABIER: Arthur Mazet

SIMON: Laurent Delbecque

FRÉDÉRIC: Yan Tassin

LAETITIA: Selma El Mouissi

LUC: Esteban Carvajal-Alegria

CLARA: Audrey Bastien



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