



Locarno Festival
Official selection



THOSE WHO WORK

OLIVIER GOURMET

A FILM BY
ANTOINE RUSSBACH

ADÈLE BOCHATAY

With OLIVIER GOURMET - ADÈLE BOCHATAY - MICHEL VOÏTA - DELPHINE BIBET - PAULINE SCHNEIDER screenplay EMMANUEL MARRE and ANTOINE RUSSBACH with the collaboration of CATHERINE PAILLE dop DENIS JUTZELER editor SOPHIE VERCROUSSE sound JÜRGLEMPEN sound editor BENJAMIN BENOIT mix MATHIEU COX 1st assistant BENOÎT MONNEY script ELODIE VAN BEUREN set ELISABETH HOUTART costumes ANNA VAN BRÉE make-up LEÏLA FERTIKH production manager BERNARD DE DESSUS LES MOUSTIER color grading PETER BERNAERS production ELODIE BRUNNER - ELENA TATTI - THIERRY SPICHER - OLIVIER DUBOIS - BERNARD DE DESSUS LES MOUSTIER - FRANÇOISE MAYOR - ANKE BEINING-WELLHAUSEN - ARLETTE ZYLBERBERG a production BOX PRODUCTIONS and NOVAK PROD in coproduction with RTS Radio Télévision Suisse - TELECLUB AG - RTBF (Télévision belge) and SHELTER PROD with the support of l'OFFICE FÉDÉRAL DE LA CULTURE (OFC) - TAXSHELTER.BE-ING and TAXSHELTER DU GOUVERNEMENT FÉDÉRAL DE BELGIQUE produced with l'AIDE DU CENTRE DU CINÉMA ET DE L'AUDIOVISUEL DE LA FÉDÉRATION WALLONIE-BRUXELLES with the participation of CINÉFORUM and the support of LOTERIE ROMANDE with the support of FONDS CULTUREL DE SUISSIMAGE - PROGRAMME MEDIA-DÉVELOPPEMENT - SUCCÈS PASSAGE ANTENNE SSR SRG - POUR-CENT CULTUREL MIGROS - FONDATION ERNST GÖHNER and STAGE POOL FOCAL international sales BE FOR FILMS distribution OUTSIDE THE BOX.





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SYNOPSIS

A man of action who made his way up the corporate ladder by the sweat of his brow, Frank has dedicated his life to work. Whatever the place or circumstances, the time of day or night, glued to his telephone, he manages ocean cargo that he charters for large corporations. Faced with a crisis situation, Frank takes a brutal decision that gets him fired. Shaken to the core, betrayed by a system to which he has given everything, he is progressively forced to do some soul-searching in order to save the only relationship that still counts in his eyes: the one he has been able to maintain with his youngest daughter, Mathilde.





BIOGRAPHY

With Swiss and South African parents, Antoine Russbach was born in Geneva where he lived until the age of 20. He then studied directing and screenwriting in Belgium at the IAD (Institute of the Broadcasting Arts in Louvain-La-Neuve). In 2008, he co-directed "Michel" with Emmanuel Marre. The film was selected for a significant number of festivals, where it won several awards, notably in Teheran, Angers, Brussels and Paris. In 2009 he directed "Les Bons Garçons" [The Good Boys], his thesis film, which competed at the Angers Premier Plan film festival and in international competition in Clermont Ferrand. "Those who work" is his first feature film, and will premiere at the Locarno Film Festival.



FILMOGRAPHY

2018 **Those who work**
2009 **Les bons garçons [The good boys]** (short)
2008 **Michel** (short)



DIRECTOR'S INTERVIEW

“THOSE WHO WORK” IS YOUR FIRST FEATURE FILM. WHAT SPARKED THE IDEA FOR THE FILM? WHAT WAS YOUR INSPIRATION?

Everything started with the desire to make an ensemble film: “Those who work, those who fight, those who pray,” which would allow me to sketch a portrait of the general state of society today. The basic concept followed the medieval model made up of The Third Estate (those who worked), the nobility (those who fought), and those who prayed (the clergy). This structure made it easy to demonstrate how difficult it is today to find one’s place in society, unlike more established or traditional societies where everyone had a predefined role. Although the medieval system was problematic in numerous respects, it undoubtedly helped to avoid this type of distress, which is to not know where your place in society lies. I wanted to choose someone who would represent today’s equivalent of each of these classes in order to depict their anxiety and their disorientation, which is at the same time the price one has to pay for freedom. I wanted to bring this tension to the screen, this malaise that is inevitable in an open and free society. So this was the starting point; I then decided to divide the film into three sections, and to write and direct a trilogy.

THE MAIN CHARACTER PLAYED BY OLIVIER GOURMET IS A “WHITE COLLAR” GENEVAN WHO HAS SACRIFICED HIS PERSONAL LIFE FOR WORK: WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THE WORLD OF MARITIME FREIGHT IN PARTICULAR?

I asked myself the question: “who feeds us?” I started to become interested in distribution chains, the long journey that food takes to arrive in our plates. It represents an enormous human effort, but an invisible one, because we only see the tip of the iceberg – the supermarkets. From there, I looked into the people who work in the administrative offices and those who manage and handle the maritime freight. They are at the heart of the system, but they only have a virtual relationship with this world.

It’s hard-core capitalism, in all its glory and violence. One of the starting points for the screenplay was also alienation at work – here that of white collar workers – which is not a traditional standpoint for social cinema. We expect office employees to be their own bosses, telling them that they belong in the dominating class, when in fact they are as fragile and vulnerable as the rest. The protagonist Frank is in this situation. He’s just a pawn, but given his salary and responsibilities, he ends up confusing his interests with the company’s interests, which leads him to make an irreparable mistake.

THE FILM DEPICTS AN EXTREMELY HARSH WORLD THAT MIRRORS THE CONTRADICTIONS IN OUR CONSUMERIST SOCIETY. WHAT DID YOU WANT TO CONVEY TO THE AUDIENCE?

One day I found myself at Primark. I have to admit that I got excited when I saw hundreds of articles on the shelves that only cost 2 Swiss francs; but at the same time, I couldn’t help but ask myself what

was the moral cost of it all? It's hard to deny that we find it quite convenient... Is it a necessary evil? Should we, can we accept it? The movie should be a space where the spectator can truly think about these issues. I'm essentially fearful about one thing: that I might condone their beliefs.

I'm trying to make sure that the spectator doesn't automatically fall back on his or her dogmatic ideologies, his or her beliefs and habits, but on the contrary, to ruffle the spectator's vision of capitalism, whatever his or her political orientation. I hope that this film speaks to everyone. If, for instance, we don't agree with capitalism and a consumerist society because we think it's a negative thing, which should be eliminated, then we have to accept to no longer eat anything that comes from a supermarket. I don't think people are ready for that, in fact. On the other hand, downright refusing to acknowledge, indeed denying that the system that feeds us is immoral is just as caricatural. It's truly hypocritical to not see that while it's a problem at the same time it's a wonder of humanity. What we are able to accomplish is simply incredible.

THE THEME OF WORK ALLOWS YOU TO ARTICULATE CERTAIN MORAL QUESTIONS. FROM A CINEMATOGRAPHIC POINT OF VIEW, HOW DID YOU CREATE THE FILM'S ESTHETICS?

The idea was to leave enough space and time for the audience as an observer to develop their connection with the main character. We are extremely focused on the main character. The camera is always following him even though it lags one step behind what happens. Thus, we never know more than he does, we are even behind when it comes to his reasoning. The director of photography, Denis Jutzeler, and I agreed that the actors could freely use all the space at their disposal. This results in camera work that doesn't tell you where to look; additionally, we decided to use no music. Thus there is no clue to tell the audience what to feel. We're using an abrupt and austere cinematic language which makes the audience actively responsible so that every person can become invested in the story, living and interpreting the film the way he or she wishes.

YOU CHOSE OLIVIER GOURMET FOR THE MAIN ROLE, WAS IT SIMPLE TO DIRECT SUCH A SEASONED ACTOR?

It was extremely easy: he's a very independent and responsible actor; he knew exactly what to do without ever overdoing it, all the while being the heart of the project and always giving his all, bringing as much as possible to the role. For me it was an extremely pleasant experience, without any unnecessary conflicts. He's a hard worker – every evening at the hotel, after spending the day on set, he kept working on his role. Working by his side left a lasting impression on me.

IN FRANK'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS FAMILY, THERE IS ONE BOND THAT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE OTHERS: WITH HIS DAUGHTER MATHILDE. HOW DID YOU BUILD THIS RELATIONSHIP? WHY DID YOU PUT SUCH AN EMPHASIS ON THE YOUNGEST CHILD?

We started with the idea of a great big family with "too many" children. I liked the idea of a character being a slave to the clan he created himself.

The entire family submits to Frank's authority, because they all depend upon his money. This is the way that Frank is able to control his children, who aren't able to become independent. His desire to keep them near gradually morphs into something almost tyrannical, a tyranny with their consent, to the point where no one is able to love anyone anymore. Frank sees his children like spoiled rotten middle-class kids, which he never was, and his children only interact with him when they need money.

This burden is offset by Mathilde, his youngest daughter. She's not yet entirely dependent upon him the way her siblings are and because of her young age, still loves her father unconditionally. She represents the opportunity for him to do better, to redeem himself. Frank makes the courageous decision to build something with her, deciding to show her the violence and brutality of his profession. It was very important for him to have someone with whom things were still possible.

During the shoot, Olivier Gourmet and Adèle Bochatay worked beautifully together. They were able to create a natural family-like relationship. I think that their mutual understanding is quite blatant on screen. That allowed me to lighten the film, editing out scenes that were over-explanatory, as their acting language speaks for itself to the audience.



OLIVIER GOURMET'S INTERVIEW

WHAT DID YOU THINK WHEN YOU FIRST READ THE SCREENPLAY?

The screenplay immediately resonated with me. I straightaway saw in the story and the character Frank Blanchet a pertinent and sensitive reflection of today's society. After reading the script, I had several conversations with Antoine in Brussels, during which we had in-depth discussions about certain scenes, as well as the film's esthetics, rhythm and identity. I was immediately interested in this first feature film and the moral questions raised by this young director.

ALL THE WHILE BEING CREDIBLE IN YOUR SUIT AND DRESS SHIRT, I HAVE THE FEELING THAT YOU WEREN'T PARTICULARLY FAMILIAR WITH THE WORLD OF FINANCE AND MARITIME FREIGHT. HOW DID YOU PREPARE FOR THE ROLE?

Indeed it is not a world that I know very well or which resembles me. Much to the contrary! But it wasn't very difficult. My preparation consists in observation work. When I was studying, I was trained to observe and especially to listen in order to draw inspiration from what's around me. It's essential to have a certain sensitivity and receptiveness for your acting to be credible.

Even if Frank Blanchet seems very different from Olivier Gourmet, my personality and my world, in the end, we aren't all that different. Everyone has at least a small part within them that wishes for money and success. I too have to earn my keep, pay my bills. It's not always easy. So that can be easily projected onto a character. Frank Blanchet is an extreme example, but in everyday life, we are sometimes cornered into making brutal and unfair decisions. The engine that guides our soul works the same way. Whether you're a restaurant chef, factory worker or doctor, our inner workings and motivations are the same...

YOU CARRY THE FILM, PLAYING THE LEADING ROLE. HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH SUCH A RESPONSIBILITY?

I try not to think about it. I don't overly pressure myself, even if you are aware of it on set. But you're not alone, there's a director and a crew of professionals; we build the film together. You can be the best actor in the world, but if the director isn't able to galvanize and direct people with the strength and conviction of his project, the film can be a failure. Thankfully that wasn't the case for this film.

Indeed the pressure isn't on me; it's on Antoine, without a doubt: it's his first experience with a feature film. My role is to serve the director and the story he wants to tell. I know I have to be available and ready to listen. My responsibility is to be focused and in shape, to sleep well, know my lines, but especially to enjoy what I'm doing and keep it going everyday with everyone on the film set.

YOU SPEAK ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING YOUR LINES, HOWEVER "THOSE WHO WORK" IS STRUCTURED AROUND MOMENTS OF SILENCE AND INTERNALIZATION. HOW DO YOU SAY MORE WITH SILENCE THAN WITH WORDS?

Films using moments of silence are part of my DNA. I'm more inclined towards screenplays that go in that direction. I think that silences, looks and glances and body language can better convey certain problems and tensions. It's like in everyday life; our silences often are a way to hide problems to protect those close to us or because you're less than proud of something you've done. There are many reasons why people wall themselves in silence.

Movies that address these issues, when there's too much talking going on, don't move me. What gets



to me, are characters that undergo a transformation, and no longer have the words to describe what they're going through. As a result, you have to use body language and silences to express what is happening in their inner worlds. The screenplay for "Those who work" was written like that. Before the shoot however, I must have told Antoine that some scenes were too talkative or overly explanatory; that in life we don't say that or we say it differently. As the film is very close to certain human realities and truths, we needed to go in that direction.

AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE FILM IS THE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR YOUNGEST DAUGHTER, MATHILDE, PLAYED BY ADELE BOCHATAY. IT WAS HER FIRST EXPERIENCE IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA. WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO WORK WITH HER?

She was very well cast, wonderful, more than natural and very present. She proposed things, questioned and understood her character with the naivety, modesty, candidness and strength that children have when they step thoroughly into their character. With children, you have to be able to listen and be available. You can't impose how you want things to go with them; you just have to let things happen. It's only rarely that you need to lead them elsewhere, when you realize that they're not going where you'd like them to go. It's the same with any partner, but it's easier with a child. Often a partner has already thought through and premeditated how they are going to play something. As a result it's more difficult to lead them in a different direction, while a child is more instinctive, available and malleable.

DO YOU HAVE TO LIKE A CHARACTER TO PLAY HIM? DO YOU LIKE FRANK BLANCHET?

It's not easy to like Frank Blanchet at first, even though he is in fact touching. His character carries a concrete message about society today, an urgent message that needs to be discussed. Frank Blanchet makes me want to take action and I thus enjoyed making this character come to life on screen. He allows us to reflect and resist; he keeps us on our toes. He embodies the trigger of something horrible, but we can readily recognize ourselves in him.



CAST & CREW

With OLIVIER GOURMET, ADÈLE BOCHATAY, MICHEL VOÏTA, DELPHINE BIBET, PAULINE SCHNEIDER

Screenplay by ANTOINE RUSSBACH and EMMANUEL MARRE

With the collaboration of CATHERINE PAILLE

DOP DENIS JUTZELER

Editor SOPHIE VERCRUYSSÉ

Sound JÜRIG LEMPEN

Sound editor BENJAMIN BENOIT

Mix MATHIEU COX

1st Assistant BENOÎT MONNEY

Script ELODIE VAN BEUREN

Set ELISABETH HOUTART

Costumes ANNA VAN BRÉE

Make-up LEÏLA FERTIKH

Production manager BERNARD DE DESSUS
LES MOUSTIER

Color grading PETER BERNAERS

Production ELODIE BRUNNER, ELENA TATTI,
THIERRY SPICHER, OLIVIER DUBOIS, BERNARD
DE DESSUS LES MOUSTIER, FRANÇOISE
MAYOR, ANKE BEINING-WELLHAUSEN,
ARLETTE ZYLBERBERG

A production BOX PRODUCTIONS &
NOVAK PROD

In coproduction with RTS Radio Télévision,
Suisse TELECLUB AG, RTBF and SHELTER PROD

With the support of L'OFFICE FÉDÉRAL DE
LA CULTURE (OFC), TAXSHELTER.BE – ING and
LE TAX SHELTER DU GOUVERNEMENT FEDERAL
DE BELGIQUE

Produced with L'AIDE DU CENTRE DU CINEMA
ET DE L'AUDIOVISUEL DE LA FEDERATION
WALLONIE-BRUXELLES

With the participation of CINÉFOROM

And the support of LA LOTERIE ROMANDE

With the support of FONDS CULTUREL
DE SUISSIMAGE PROGRAMME
MEDIA-DÉVELOPPEMENT, SUCCÈS PASSAGE,
ANTENNE SSR SRG, POUR-CENT CULTUREL,
MIGROS LA FONDATION ERNST and
GÖHNER STAGE POOL FOCAL

Distribution OUTSIDE THE BOX



TECHNICAL DETAILS

Sound Format 5.1

Ratio 1.90

Running Time 101'

Original Version French, English

Year of Production 2018

Countries of Production Switzerland, Belgium



INTERNATIONAL SALES AGENT



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