

Welcome *Aboard*

a film by *Jean Becker*

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Louis BECKER presents

Patrick CHESNAIS

Jeanne LAMBERT

Welcome *Aboard*

a film by *Jean* BECKER

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY *Eric* HOLDER PUBLISHED BY FLAMMARION

ADAPTATION AND DIALOG *François* D'EPENOUX *Jean* BECKER

WITH THE COLLABORATION OF *Marie-Sabine* ROGER

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF MIOU-MIOU *Jacques* WEBER

Synopsis

Taillandier is a well-known painter in his sixties, but despite his success, he suddenly decides to give up his art. Overwhelmed by depression, he walks away from his home with no destination in mind, and leaving no explanation for those close to him. During his travels, he has an unlikely encounter with a young girl who has also strayed from the path of life – Marylou, rejected by her own mother.

This lost child and this man at the end of his tether travel together for a while. And eventually, they end up living like father and daughter in the peace and quiet of a rented house, giving each other the helping hand they both need to make sense of their lives once more.

Encounter with

JEAN BECKER *Screenwriter and director*

Why did you decide to adapt Bienvenue Parmi Nous, the novel by Eric Holder?

My son gave it to me to read and at first, I found it a very dark novel. I took quite a lot of time to make my mind up, but once I'd worked out how I could make it lighter and more optimistic, I decided I could turn it into a film. It is the story of a man who is lost, and who meets a 15-year-old girl who has been abandoned by her family. She still has a grip on life and shows him the way forwards as if she were his daughter. I saw the potential in that to talk about the subjects dear to me.

What did you want to address with this story?

That's hard to analyze. I took the framework and then everything fell into place during the writing process. I thought about what they might say, given the circumstances. I decided we'd let them live from one day to the next, letting their developing emotions carry them. Everything starts from their unusual encounter. They then find themselves at the seaside, but they could just as easily have found themselves up a mountain! That's just how it happened. He starts walking and ends up taking this girl along with him, without even thinking. They are two drifters who end up on a beach.

How did you set up this encounter?

The idea of working with Patrick Chesnais came to me very early on, and thinking about him as the character helped influence the writing. I gave him a treatment to look at and once he'd come on board, I wrote it for him.

I've wanted to work with Patrick for a long time. Even back when I was making ONE DEADLY SUMMER, I had him audition for it but the production company didn't want to use him. To me, he is one of the most interesting actors there is. He really carries something within him. He has his own universe, a way of expressing himself that is truly unique, and which means you never feel that he's acting. Patrick is amazingly natural. The character might seem a little gloomy, but when he smiles, the feeling that triggers is more powerful because of it. With him, a smile is more powerful than a burst of laughter in many other people. It doesn't matter if he complains or sulks; his humanity always overflows from the hard shell he has grown around himself.

Did you construct Taillandier's character based on him?

I imagined a man who could have the same physical attitude as Patrick, but if the character had only been full of bitterness, he'd never have been able to take on the child. To truly understand what happens to him at the beginning of the film, I worked on his depression. I even went to see a specialist and had him read the story. He told me that it sounded fine. Patrick's character, Taillandier, takes her in because she is lost like he is. And gradually, he grows fond of her. He becomes responsible for her and that is what eventually makes him change and is also what saves him in the end.

How did you find the actress to play her?

My casting director Sylvia Allegre saw Jeanne Lambert last year for my last film, *MY AFTERNOONS WITH MARGUERITTE*. Sylvia thought she was interesting and kept her details. We had taken on a youth casting specialist to find our Marylou but Sylvia suggested I look at Jeanne. And despite the other suggestions, I was sold. I could really sense an instinct in this girl. She can have a somewhat misleading appearance of superficiality, she can be extremely deep. I also liked the fact that she was somewhere in between the puppy fat of childhood and the body of a young woman.

Weren't you afraid of basing part of the film on a debutant?

Of course. But I also felt she was ready for it. I did some tests with Patrick and I could see that it worked. I soon felt reassured, although we did have to adjust a few details at the beginning. She knew her lines perfectly; we just had to encourage her not to recite them. I think the text was good enough that she comes over very naturally. She just had to say her lines as herself and then it was fine. Patrick was often blown away by the energy she put into the task, but if she ever went too far, I reined her in.

So she got to work with two grouches?

Patrick wasn't grouchy with her, he absolutely loved her. And one grouch was plenty! But everything became very easy very quickly. Once she got into it, she was excellent. She didn't necessarily need the concentration I asked of her because she was very good right away. But I found it reassuring to know that she was more involved.

Miou-Miou and Jacques Weber are also in your story...

They are two excellent actors. Miou-Miou doesn't have a big role but she nonetheless agreed to act alongside Patrick Chesnais. I was worried she'd say no. We needed an actress of her caliber to make her character truly exist in just a few scenes. She brings humanity, warmth and personality to the film. As for Jacques Weber, the role of the friend suits him perfectly. He gives off such kindness and such human warmth. He was very happy to be part of the movie.

With hindsight, how would you define your style of filmmaking?

There are two things that really interest me: human relationships and emotion. A film can inspire everything, from laughter to sadness, and I try to ensure that an emotion of some kind emerges with each scene. I like the idea of the audience going from emotion to emotion with no downtime in between, and that every film is emotionally moving. That's what I appreciate and what I look for in other people's films – old or new – and in books, music or even paintings. I observe, I listen and then suddenly I feel something. It doesn't happen immediately. It's as true for a painting as it is for a jazz solo by Charlie Parker. You have to be open and that's what I try to inspire in other people. In my films, I have always tried to orchestrate encounters between two people who never normally would have met, and who have no connection to one another. That's what happens here as it did in *MY AFTERNOONS WITH MARGUERITTE* and in *CONVERSATIONS WITH MY GARDENER*.

The idea of bringing people together, beyond their preconceived ideas, is something that is common to all your films. Is that something that particularly touches you?

Absolutely. We never take enough time to talk to people. When I was younger, I spent two-and-a-half years out of work after my first film, which wasn't very successful. I wasn't in a great place. I wanted to talk to people so I took the metro and I walked the streets and I got talking to complete strangers and hooked up with some surprising people. I even went out for a drink with some of them. I think that today, people are afraid of doing that. The slightest hint of contact is often perceived as an attack. That's a real shame.

Do you think there's a dominant emotion in your films, or is your career a voyage that becomes more intense and varies from feeling to feeling?

It's a bit of both. For example, I didn't like the ending of my film. I thought it was weak. Every night, I went to bed thinking that the ending wasn't right. I thought about it non-stop. I had included a recurring joke that was concluded right at the end when the girl is staying with the family. It may have been funny but knowing what had become of her mother seemed to me to be much stronger. I decided that in the end, the girl had to find her mother again. That's the end of something but it's the start of something else as well. Perhaps there'll be an "afterwards". How? I don't know. As soon as the ending is in sight, some viewers will hope for a reunion, others will be more pessimistic, but the question will be there. So the emotion is very powerful, whether it is full of hope or full of melancholy.

Are those difficult moments to direct?

Yes, like the suicide was. It's hard to show a man who is unable to kill himself. I filmed the moment when he took the gun and loaded it but I decided that the only way to succeed in making people accept it was to make it happen incredibly quickly. He takes the gun, aims it, yells and goes. It's over. You understand that he can't do it. It's the speed that makes you believe it.

How did you decide on the place for them to meet?

They had to go somewhere but not too far; two or three hours away. From Paris, that means the Normandy coast and Deauville. They head for a plausible end of the world – as far as the sea. I hadn't precisely defined the place. I was looking for a seaside resort during the early summer, before high season. I envisaged them swimming and him being inspired to paint. I also really like the sea and the particular light it gives off. That was an additional emotion.

When did you first feel the alchemy between Patrick Chesnais and Jeanne Lambert?

I started by shooting the exterior scenes on a beach on Oléron Island. At that point in the story, the characters are already more at peace with one another and with themselves. Right from the very first few scenes, Patrick and Jeanne were already far beyond what I had imagined. They made the script even better.

Did you find the emotions you wanted to bring out in your actors?

And some! For example, I was really looking forward to seeing Patrick do his monologue at the table when he talks about painting and someone he met who had a big impact on him. I was knocked out. His rhythm, his pauses, his gaze – it was all amazing. It's in these kinds of scenes that you can measure an actor's ability to embody a character.

Patrick has that rare talent. With people of his talent, you can give them something and they do what they want with it. It doesn't matter what it is as long as they do it.

You have a reputation for giving your actors a great deal of freedom...

Making a film is about teamwork and collusion. I can't stand improvisation, but I let the actors say their lines in their own way. If they divert too much from what I imagined or if what they offer me isn't right, I tell them so. But most of the time, that openness and communication adds to the film.

I have great confidence in what actors come up with. My wife often says that when I film them, I'm too close to my actors. But to me, there are so many emotions that pass across their faces that if you're too far away, you lose them. If you really get up close, you'll be able to capture it.

Have you always had that approach?

Since I've had a little money to make movies, I always use two cameras, one closer in than the other. With just one camera, you don't always have time, you have to change lenses and while you're doing that, you might lose what the actor can give you. Whereas with two, you can work in two perspectives, and are able to go closer in, or show something more general. Then you choose which you want when you're editing. I started using two cameras for certain scenes in *THE CHILDREN OF THE MARSHLAND*. And for *A CRIME IN PARADISE*, I sometimes used three or four. I've kept up with this good habit ever since.

How would you define the image of your film? It starts in the night, enclosed, and then moves towards the light...

We are heading into the darkness until the scene where Taillandier tries to end it all. His encounter with the girl takes place at night, in the rain, and then yes, we gradually move towards the sun. The horizon appears. The contrast is so powerful that the winter scenes I wanted to include to give a notion of time passing almost make you feel like it's springtime.

In the film, Jeanne watches the film ONE DEADLY SUMMER on TV...

I wasn't meaning to show off, and besides, I don't think very many people will realize that I directed that film too. I was simply looking for a scene with a girl and her mother that would be emotional for Jeanne to watch. Why look any further? I use the material I need.

What do you think this film will deliver to the audience?

I hope that once the film is finished, people will continue to feel its emotion afterwards. I can't remember who once said to me that it's never good when people leave the cinema and immediately wonder where they left their car. I hope that people will walk and get lost before they realize their car is parked in the opposite direction. I want people to take the emotion of the film away with them. Many films have that effect on me, sometimes years later. I often think of *DAYBREAK* or *MIDNIGHT COWBOY*. And that's what – in all modesty – I am trying to share with my audience. I put myself in their place and think about what touches me, hoping that it will touch them, too.

This film, perhaps more than your other films, reveals the fount of emotions that you are...

I have an old friend and every time he sees one of my films, he teases me, saying, "I'll never understand why such a disagreeable, nasty man like you can make films with such emotion." Every time. Everyone has a hard shell but in what one does, in making a film

for example, one shows a little of what one is. I have that very powerful sensitivity which has played tricks in my life – I'm too emotional. If you don't have things to feel or to experience from time to time, then what can you cling to? What's the point?

Do you know where this film figures in your career yet?

It's a very important film for me because the story speaks to me and because my son suggested it to me. In more personal terms, it marks – at last – a real opportunity to work with Patrick Chesnais. He has become a friend now, so long after we first met. I really liked working with this man for whom I have so much affection.

Filmography JEAN BECKER

- 2012 WELCOME ABOARD
Based on the novel by Eric Holder
- 2010 MY AFTERNOONS WITH MARGUERITTE
Based on the novel by Marie-Sabine Roger
- 2008 LOVE ME NO MORE
Based on the novel by François d'Epenoux
- 2006 CONVERSATIONS WITH MY GARDENER
Based on the novel by Henri Cueco
- 2003 STRANGE GARDENS
Based on the novel by Michel Quint
- 2000 A CRIME IN PARADISE
Based on the original screenplay by Sacha Guitry
- 1998 THE CHILDREN OF THE MARSHLAND
Based on the novel by Georges Montforez
- 1995 ELISA
César for Best Music
- 1983 ONE DEADLY SUMMER
César for Best Actress for Isabelle Adjani
César for Best Supporting Actress for Suzanne Flon
César for Best Editing
- 1967 TENDER SCOUNDREL
- 1965 PAS DE CAVIAR POUR TANTE OLGA
- 1964 BACKFIRE
- 1961 A MAN NAMED ROCCA

Encounter with

PATRICK CHESNAIS *Taillandier*

What was your reaction when Jean Becker offered you the role?

He called me one morning and asked if I was available to shoot a film with him. I immediately said yes. Then he sent me a treatment and I called him right back to say that I understood why he'd thought of me for the part. I could bring something to the film. That's the question I always ask myself: what can I bring to the film? But I also always wonder what the film can bring to me...

What can WELCOME ABOARD bring to you?

It's a film that gives me pleasure both as an actor and as a member of the audience. Moreover, pleasure is what we want from life in general. That notion remains a question of personal taste of course, but this film seemed to be promising; promising pleasure.

What do you think of Jean Becker's films?

I particularly loved CONVERSATIONS WITH MY GARDENER and THE CHILDREN OF THE MARSHLAND. In his work, there is a kind of magic that is hard to define. Some films lack strong characters, despite them being something to which the audience is very sensitive. But working with Jean Becker confirmed to me that he explores his characters very deeply and that is what characterizes his films. The essence of his movies, the fundamentals if you like, are very often the characters – their stories and their encounters. In WELCOME ABOARD, Taillandier and Marylou have nothing in common. They should never have met, yet they find themselves thrown together and they end up discovering one another, loving one another even. It's a "standard," a genre almost. What makes it exceptional is the treatment and the sensitivity each brings to this set up, to this encounter. For example, in CONVERSATIONS WITH MY GARDENER, they are two men who share a very emotional story. In WELCOME ABOARD, it's a story of love with no ambiguity and no sexuality. A man who is no longer young meets a young teenager and they give each other a helping hand.

How would you define your character?

He's a man who has everything: success, a charming wife, well-adjusted children and a beautiful home. And he is an artist. But despite that, nothing interests him anymore. It is rare for depression to affect people who are desperately hungry or freezing cold. Without wanting to generalize, depression tends to often affect people who, in theory, have nothing to be depressed about. Taillandier doesn't have to worry about how he's going to survive – he is an accomplished artist, he is growing old as we all do, but he's still in pretty good shape. Then suddenly, depression takes hold.

Before the shoot, I read William Styron's *Darkness Visible*. Depression struck that giant of American literature without the slightest warning, like a car crash, and he talks about this in his book with amazing force. Depression disarms people and leaves them with no desire to fight back. That's what happens to my character.

Yet he still has the strength to run away...

Not necessarily. His ultimate goal is to return one last time to the place where he was happy as a child, and to finish his life there. But he can't go through with it. Despite himself, there must be a last remaining will to live that he cannot quash.

In what respects would you say you relate to the character?

Characters are also what you make them. In the start, there was a suggestion of a character who is depressed. I don't suffer from depression but I can imagine what that would be like. I know that I can play a depressed person and therefore can play the mysteries of depression and the reactions that come with it. Indeed, all human beings are depressed to some extent or other. The simple fact of being alive, of living on the earth and knowing that we are all going to die can be a source of depression. Looking for pleasure is also a game of hide-and-go-seek with depression. I have often played characters with problems, and with whom I have always felt comfortable. Some had a depressive side to them, others have had enough of something and are weary. Something has been broken. At the age of 20, at the Conservatoire, I remember playing in Alfred de Musset's *Fantasio*, a guy who'd been through it all. Despite my young age, I felt at home with these characters that demonstrate a distance from the hustle and bustle of the world. I understand that despondency, that relationship with the burden of life that is sometimes crushing. Characters in crisis offer a fabulous playground for an actor. That's the case with *Taillandier*. He takes a gun, he drives through the night and he has no idea where he is going.

What was it like working with Jean Becker? Does he have a special way of working?

I think he understands me very well. Because he was close to the characters played by the actors, he was by definition close to the actors. Literally as well as figuratively. The two cameras are very close and try to capture a maximum. He will spare nothing from an expression for the benefit of the shot or the framing. He knows there is no truth in a set. And although his films are beautiful to look at and visually very detailed, the characters are his priority. He never loses sight of them. He never lets them slip away.

In this film, you are married to Miou-Miou and friend to Jacques Weber. You know them both well...

I've made four films with Miou-Miou and it's always a real treat to work with such a wonderful actress. We make a great family! Jacques Weber is an old friend and we've worked in theater together a great deal. We were in the same gang at the Conservatoire. We trained together and share lots of very special memories. But this is the first time we've made a movie together. And it was great to get back together again.

And you met Jeanne Lambert...

I really liked her and I think the reality of our encounter really serves the film. I like what she is. She is special because she has a lot of heart, she is generous, she gives her attention to others and she pays attention to what is going on. She gives a great deal and that is very important to me. Our relationship was based on humor. I teased her, pulled her leg and played the grumpy old man – a bit like my character.

How did the seasoned actor that you are perform with someone just starting out?

Debutant or seasoned, I don't think that changes very much. In terms of ones' capacity to inspire trust, we were on the same wavelength. Our relationship was all about exchanging and sharing. The tools she used to express herself as an actress made me want to respond to her in my own way and I think that contributed to the success of the film. These two characters were very well written from the outset. The man I am and the young woman that Jeanne Lambert is were able to feed off the script to create a strange alchemy. Sometimes, she struggled and it was interesting to see her reaction because she was so determined. It was sometimes tough and she put up a good fight!

Were there any scenes you were particularly looking forward to?

There were many that tempted me. The film offered a wide range of performance that corresponded to several of my capabilities. I am both a little distracted, my head in the clouds and quite capable of tripping up, but at the same time, I can be tough, violent, ironic or embittered. We are many different things in life and I'm a bit like that. It's true, I can be a bit grumpy, but I'm also very attentive to other people. I think I'm a nice guy. So you have to be able to take on the character and really explore the situations offered to you. My character goes through many different things until he wakes up, until he smiles. On the beach he smiles, after having been in a period of revolt, of bad moods and aggression. And you better not get on the wrong side of him because he's always got a comeback, which proves that he still has some vitality about him. It's not as if nothing is important anymore. He reacts. He's not yet at the end of his tether. Moreover, he ends up experiencing this love, this encounter. I enjoy portraying loving feelings. And here it's a very special kind of love; nothing clichéd, not a paternal love and not a sexual one either. It's a love that will give him back a taste for life.

There are nonetheless some fairly paternal feelings...

Like an older guy in terms of wanting to go to bed early and being wary of life whose dangers he understands, whilst she behaves like the adolescent she is. That could be viewed as paternal behavior and I know that feeling well. But I don't think it's the case here. It goes beyond the carnal – she brings him back to life. And that's why I call it love.

What does this character represent to your career?

Something fairly important. I was able to express myself as an actor in the way one needs to be able to express oneself. This character gave me that possibility. When you've made many films, it's always a pleasure to rummage around, to explore, and to push the limits of the character in an attempt to create some strong links. And it was very enjoyable getting to that place. There was immediate pleasure, sometimes with its questions – as is the case each time you get involved in creating an oeuvre. Of course there are questions and doubts. But the main sensation is one of a simple and gratifying experience.

Were you alone in this process of creating a character or did Jean Becker help?

I always do it alone, but accompanied by the director, under his or her gaze. There is a technical side to it, in terms of placing the camera and other parameters, but that is characterized by small choices although they can count for a lot. That must, of course, be part of the director's vision.

What makes this film different than many other stories that get told is that behind it, there is the vision of this director, Jean Becker. He's not someone who just simply packaged up a story. Jean was very involved in the film. He really thought long and hard about it. I could always feel his input and his perspective. And his perspective is neither anodyne nor trivial. Jean Becker has a global vision and he expects his actors to bring their contribution to the creative process. He always asks extremely pertinent questions: "Do you think the character would do that at this point?", "What do you think?", etc. He pushes you to think, at the appropriate moment. And then he shoots something different so that afterwards, you can compare and make a choice. You are working with a director who has a great deal of experience and who shares his questions and tries to work out the answers with the actor. I like working like that. It helps me.

What do you think the film can bring to the audience?

I think this film is a kind of modern-day fairytale, a story that does you good. It involves people who travel a long way to find peace – but for how long? It's a fable that will resonate with many people, magnificently filmed by someone who really knows how to express emotions in the same way that life does.

Filmography PATRICK CHESNAIS

Patrick Chesnais has made around 65 films. Here are his most recent titles as well as a selection of those which particularly marked his career.

- 2012 WELCOME ABOARD by Jean Becker
- 2010 FILS UNIQUE by Miel Van Hoogenbemt
TU SERAS MON FILS by Gilles Legrand
- 2009 IN GOLD WE TRUST by Eric Besnard
- 2008 BLAME IT ON MUM by Cécile Telerman
LE CODE A CHANGÉ by Danièle Thompson
- 2007 HOME SWEET HOME by Didier Le Pêcheur
MELODRAMA HABIBI by Hany Tamba
THE MAIDEN AND THE WOLVES by Gilles Legrand
- 2006 THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY by Julian Schnabel
Best Director, Festival de Cannes
- 2007 THE PRICE TO PAY by Alexandra Leclère
HÉROS by Bruno Merle
- 2005 J'INVENTE RIEN by Michel Leclerc
- 2004 TU VAS RIRE MAIS JE TE QUITTE by Philippe Harel
JE NE SUIS PAS LÀ POUR ÊTRE AIMÉ by Stéphane Brizé
César nomination for Best Actor
European Film Awards nomination for Best Actor 2006
- 2003 CASABLANCA DRIVER by Maurice Barthélemy
MARIAGE MIXTE by Alexandre Arcady
- 2001 VERY OPPOSITE SEXES by Eric Assous
THE LANDLORDS by Rémy Waterhouse
LE VENTRE DE JULIETTE by Martin Provost
IRÈNE by Ivan Calbérac
- 2000 CHARMING FELLOW by Patrick Chesnais
Grand Prix for Best Director at the Festival de St Jean de Luz
- 1999 KENNEDY ET MOI by Sam Karmann
TE QUIERO by Manuel Poirier
- 1998 MAN OF MY LIFE by Stéphane Kurc
THE CHILDREN OF THE CENTURY by Diane Kurys
- 1996 POST-COITUM by Brigitte Roüan
Best Actor at the Festival Francophone in Namur 1997
Best Actor at the Festival Jean Carmet in Moulin 1997

A selection of his previous films:

- 1992 LA BELLE HISTOIRE by Claude Lelouch
1991 DRÔLES D'OISEAUX ! by Peter Kassovitz
1990 PROMOTION CANAPÉ by Didier Kaminka
TRIPLEX by Georges Lautner
LA PAGAILLE by Pascal Thomas
1989 THERE WERE DAYS... AND MOONS by Claude Lelouch
1988 LA LECTRICE by Michel Deville
Louis Delluc Prize
César for Best Supporting Actor
LES CIGOGNES N'EN FONT QU'À LEUR TÊTE by Didier Kaminka
THANK YOU SATAN by André Farwagi
1984 FEMMES DE PERSONNE by Christopher Frank
1981 NEIGE by Juliet Berto
Youth Cinema Prize, Festival de Cannes 1981
1979 HIS MASTER'S EYE by Stéphane Kurc
FIRST VOYAGE by Nadine Trintignant
THE IMPRINT OF GIANTS by Robert Enrico
1976 THE CASTAWAYS OF TURTLE ISLAND by Jacques Rozier
MONSIEUR ALBERT by Jacques Renard

Encounter with

JEANNE LAMBERT *Marylou*

How did you come to be working in movies?

It was a gradual and very natural process. When I was 16, in order to channel my energy and to help me evolve on a personal level, my father advised me to take up acting. I had never done it before in my life. So something that started out as therapeutic gradually became a passion. Whether it was working emotionally or physically, I really enjoyed getting my teeth into it. It was in the theater that I really learned about the notion of effort. That was the first time I had pushed myself to my limits for something I enjoyed. I was the youngest in the group, which brought together people of all ages, and it was there that I learned to accept myself, to share and to perform. My teacher, Philippe Peyran-Lacroix, encouraged me to do some auditions and I did that for a year-and-a-half, still continuing my theater classes and acting a little on stage. I did over 30 casting sessions before I got my first role.

Did you already know Jean Becker's work?

I saw ONE DEADLY SUMMER on TV when I was 10 years old and it really struck me. The story was very unusual and Isabelle Adjani and Alain Souchon were amazing. I also saw STRANGE GARDENS and a few others of his. When I found out I'd got the role, I bought all of Jean's films so I could watch them and that's when I realized that in his films, even very well established actors give something else; another emotion. His choice of actors and the way he directs them is what makes him different. That was the case for Isabelle Adjani but also for Vanessa Paradis in ELISA. So without wanting to compare myself, I was slightly awed that he picked me.

Do you remember your first meeting?

I met Jean during the tests, in the last phase of the casting process. It was the first time I'd worked with a director and it felt as if we were on the same wavelength. When Jean spoke to me, I instantly understood what he was trying to say, and where he wanted me to go. He doesn't really like the term "director of actors" and I understood why during the shoot.

During the tests, I had to play the scene where I visit my mother who is hurt and in hospital. He described the scene and the context to me. I really felt that he felt the emotions I had to experience. It was like he was acting with me. That was very touching because I felt his presence. And even before he called, "Action!", I was in tears. He gives you confidence and energy.

What did you think when you read the script?

I found this story of an encounter and a voyage very moving indeed. I was immensely fond of Marylou's character. I really identified with her, with her reactions and her romantic side. Marylou is a rebellious teenager and she's angry at the adult world. You can really see that in her first encounter with Taillandier. She is suspicious of him and I understand why because at that age, you're suspicious of adults; they are a bit like the enemy. That's why we teenagers often rebel against our parents, but I think that it's also because we're mad at ourselves, too. We don't accept ourselves – not yet – and we transfer that uneasiness onto adults.

A young person who goes to see WELCOME ABOARD would immediately identify with Marylou because to me, she is a universal teenager. Beyond her complicated family history, she is going through the crisis that all teenagers experience. Any teenager would immediately understand why she is angry, but they would also understand what they must become aware of. Marylou has the right to be angry against her stepfather and her mother, but she also has to seize the opportunity that is her crossing paths with someone like Taillandier.

Even grumpy adults can make a positive contribution then...

Absolutely! And I learned that doing theater and working with people much older than me; people who were aged up to 65. I felt equal to those people and I felt they accepted me. I found it hard at the start because I was too shy. And that's what happens between Marylou and Taillandier. I understood my character because I *was* her, but without the family drama.

How did you approach your character?

Working on my character took me back three years, towards something more adolescent and more childish. That was translated into how I carried myself and how I ate. I went back to an age when children don't care about anything. It wasn't as if I had to construct something with her because I immediately saw myself in Marylou. We had many things in common. I brought my past to her, and also what I am today.

How did you feel when you found out you'd be acting opposite Patrick Chesnais?

I was quite intimidated because I'd seen several of his films and extracts from his plays, too. The last time I saw him in a movie, it was IN GOLD WE TRUST and I really loved his character. Whatever he is in, his character is always amazing and there's always humor in it. He is someone I find very moving. In contrast to how Jean Becker put me at ease when we met, Patrick Chesnais is the kind of person who waits for you to come to him. So the first time I met him, I was very scared because I was quite intimidated and also because I thought I'd have trouble relating to him. But in the end, he came to me because I was too shy. And we immediately had the same relationship as Marylou and Taillandier. He was protective, loyal, and we were together all the time. I am very lucky to have started my career with people like Jean and Patrick.

Do you remember your first scene?

How could I forget? My first day of shooting with Miou-Miou and Patrick! It was a breakfast scene from near the end of the film and it was amazing. It was the first time I'd been made-up, the first time I was really getting into my character, both physically and mentally. In fact, it was the first day I really did my job. When I heard the word "Action!", it was magic. After that, I was emotional, happy... I was in a spin!

What did you think of the finished film?

I was moved by the partnership. They protect each other. That's what it was like during the shoot and I found that hugely moving. I found it hard to get an overview or to judge my own performance because when you watch back the scenes, the emotion I felt during the performance and the atmosphere of those special days came back to me. In another way, feeling so close to Marylou and seeing myself acting all that adolescent angst also reminded me of my own past that wasn't so long ago. I must have been intolerable! The scene when I really accepted myself on screen was the last one. That perfectly sums up and concludes the film. It was both the end of the film and the end of the shoot.

What did this experience teach you about yourself?

I learned to take my time, both in my performance and in the preparation. I also learned to forget the text and not to recite it. I really discovered how to trust in myself and trust in other people, and to let go in order to give things the space to exist. Now I know that I really want to be an actress.

If you could only keep one memory of the shoot, which would it be?

It's difficult to choose because there were so many! But the scene that comes to me first is the one where Marylou and Taillandier are having breakfast in the garden, looking at the sea, just before they head out to buy him some painting equipment. It was the first scene when I felt a real complicity between them. We shot it very quickly, and it worked right away. We found it really easy to act that complicity because it really did exist between us. For that, reality helped the story along.

Do you have an idea of what this film might mean for you?

I feel it's an encouragement; an encouragement to work more. I think it's simply amazing to have started out with this film. I'm incredibly lucky. I know that if I do other shoots, they won't ever be the same. But I hope I get to work with people who are as kind as Jean and Patrick and who love cinema as much as they do. I thank them for giving me this gift.

CAST

Taillandier	<i>Patrick Chesnais</i>
Marylou	<i>Jeanne Lambert</i>
Alice	<i>Miou-Miou</i>
Max	<i>Jacques Weber</i>
Maitre D'	<i>Xavier Gallais</i>
Woman from the agency	<i>Raphaëline Goupilleau</i>
Salesman	<i>Didier Benureau</i>
Butcher	<i>Urbain Cancelier</i>

CREW

Director	<i>Jean Becker</i>
Producer	<i>Louis Becker</i>
Adaptation and dialogue	<i>Jean Becker, François d'Epenoux</i>
With the collaboration of	<i>Marie-Sabine Roger</i>
Based on the novel by	<i>Eric Holder</i>
Published by	<i>Flammarion</i>
Production manager	<i>Bernard Bolzinger</i>
Photography	<i>Arthur Cloquet</i>
Editing	<i>Jacques Witt</i>
Sound	<i>Franck Nakache</i>
	<i>Frédéric Ullmann</i>
	<i>Vincent Montr Robert</i>
	<i>Christophe Vingtrinier</i>
Set design	<i>Thérèse Ripaud</i>
Costume design	<i>Annie Perier Bertaux</i>
Casting	<i>Sylvia Allegre</i>
Assistant director	<i>Dominique Talmon</i>
Location manager	<i>Amélie Supau</i>
Produced by	<i>ICE 3 - KJB PRODUCTION</i>
Coproduction	<i>STUDIOCANAL –</i>
	<i>FRANCE 3 CINÉMA</i>