



SYNOPSIS

24 year-old aspiring artist Charlie leads a simple life, struggling to make ends meet. When her older brother comes into her world after twelve years in jail, things change. She's willing to help him rebuild a normal life, but their growing mutual affection might be too fragile to last.



INTERVIEW WITH NATHAN AMBROSIONI

How did you become the youngest director in France to have received the CNC's advance on earnings?

First of all, I don't come from the cinema world at all. I'm from a small town in the south of France called Grasse. When I was 12, I developed a passion for horror films. I sold all my toys in order to buy a video camera and shoot films with my friends. Since then, I've directed seven short films, with only three people working on the first, then slightly more on the second, and so on.

How did you broaden your taste in films from other genres than horror?

The real turning point was when I saw *MOMMY* by Xavier Dolan. I watched it with my mother one day to make her happy. I loved it, and it made me realize that films had the power to make an audience feel a wide array of emotions – not just fear. I'm passionate about the type of cinema that manages to provoke sensory reactions. I love going to the cinema and seeing people cry in front of a film: managing to make 300 audience members feel something at the same time, that's fascinating! I thought, 'I want to make films like that'. When I looked up Xavier Dolan's biography, I realized one was allowed to make films at a young age, and without necessarily having to follow a traditional path. I started developing and broadening my sensitivity. That's when I began to write *PAPER FLAGS*.





Where does the story come from?

I wanted to write a film about freedom. I was 17 and knew that I was going to leave the nest one day. I asked myself a lot of questions about how I was going to deal with that newly-found freedom. One day by chance I stumbled across an article in the newspaper Liberation which really shook me. It was a portrait of an inmate who had just finished his sentence and came out of jail without any rehabilitation support from the State whatsoever. He had to find his family and friends on his own; but when you get out of prison after twelve years, what's left of the world you once knew?

This man talked about freedom as a tangible, close, yet unreachable thing. It attracted and terrified him simultaneously. His questions about freedom, in a way, echoed with mine. I've lived a rather plain life, and that's what I wanted to write about: a simple story with no complicated twists and turns. I wanted a story focused on human emotions, and to film actors feeling those emotions.





How can you talk about emotions that you yourself are too young to have felt?

The characters come from the same social background as me. I've learned to observe them. And even if I haven't actually gone through what they have, I've seen films that talk about those emotions, and I know people that have felt them. I met some that have struggled to control their anger. This man that has just come out of jail, I'm not particularly familiar with him, but I like getting to know him and trying to understand him. That's what cinema is all about: learning about something you haven't lived yourself.

The staging of the film fits with the characters...

Yes, I wanted the audience to be close to them, to look at them, to dance with them. An actor is so much more interesting than a landscape to me...I also wanted the characters to be the ones telling us where the action was taking place, and not the other way around. We only had 23 days of shooting, so we had to move fast. But when we had some time left, we improvised a lot: Noémie walking in a wasteland, Guillaume playing with sunlight...None of that was written.

Choosing to do close-ups, showing fragmented bodies... is that a way of expressing emotion?

It goes towards empathy. We're so close to them, it's like we're talking straight at them. I like sensuality in films, not in a sexual way, but as a way of feeling someone's skin, or hearing someone breathe. For instance, Guillaume found this recurring gesture where he touches his shaved head. Noémie shows how luminous but also how pain-stricken her character is, just by her facial expressions. The two characters needed to frequently go through a wide range of powerful emotions.

How can we understand the father's position?

In the articles I read, a prisoner said: "I tried to call my father, he picked up and hung up when he heard my voice. Since then, my calls go unanswered..." In my opinion, he's not a hateful or violent father. He loves his son but doesn't accept that love. He can't stand loving a child who isn't like the others, who you can't introduce to your neighbours.



In a way, the film's purpose is to put Charlie and Vincent on equal terms again...

Physically, Charlie is Vincent's little sister, and he's the big brother. But life has put Vincent in the position of the little brother, who needs a sister. He wants to be an older brother to her again. In the final scene, they understand that they don't need to love each other just because they're family. They realize that they're two separate entities. They're sure to see each other again, but now isn't the right time. I want to believe they'll meet again soon.





ARTISTIC LIST

Charlie	Noémie Merlant
Vincent	Guillaume Gouix
Pierre	Sébastien Houbani
Jean (Father)	Jérôme Kircher
Emma	Alysson Paradis
La psychologue	Anne Loiret

TECHNICAL LIST

Director	Nathan AMBROSIONI
Screenplay	Nathan AMBROSIONI
Producer	Stéphanie DOUET - Sensito Films
Co-Producers	Orange Films, Eclair, TSF
Director of Photography	Raphaël VANDENBUSSCHE
Sound Engineer	Laurent BENAÏM
Editing	Nathan AMBROSIONI
Sound Editing	Alexandre HECKER
Mixer	Jocelyn ROBERT
Costumes	Elsa DEPARDIEU
Make-Up	Catherine ICHOU
Music	Matthew OTTO
Line Producer	Isabelle HARNIST

