



Evolution

Director: Lucile Hadzihalilovic
Production Companies: Les Films du Worsso, Noodles Production, Volcano Films, Scope Pictures, Left Field Ventures
International Sales: Wild Bunch
Producers: Sylvie Pialat, Benoît Quainon, Jérôme Vidal
Co-producers: Sebastián Alvarez, Geneviève Lernal, John Engel
Line Producer: Julie Grumbach
Production Managers: Nico Villarejo Farkas, Sebastián Alvarez
Production Co-ordinator: Gisela Remolins
Post-production Supervisor: Natacha Leitao-Fuchs
Post-production Co-ordinator: Alexandre Isidoro
1st Assistant Director: Julie Grumbach
Script Supervisor: Avelina Prat
Belgian Casting: Doriane Flamand, Michael Bier
Screenplay: Lucile Hadzihalilovic, Alanté Kavaité
With the collaboration of: Geoff Cox
Director of Photography: Manuel Dacosse
Camera Team: Colin Lévêque, Laure Portier, Angelo Faccini, Jean-Baptiste Gaillot
Digital Effects: L'Autre Compagnie
Editor: Nassim Gordji-Tehrani
Art Director: Laia Colet
Art Direction Team: Nuria Llinares, Nuria Guardia
Art Direction Team (Canary Islands): Alejandro Delgado, Eva Mazo, Jerome Gilbert, María Ballester
Costumes: Jackye Fauconnier
Special Make-up Effects: Jean-Christophe Spadaccini
Titles: Alex Bata
Sound/Sound Editing: Fabiola Ordoyo
Re-recording Mixer: Marc Orts
Production Sound Mixer: Daniel Fontrodona
Thanks: Gaspar Noé, Stéphanie Derderian, Vincent Maraval, Philippe Akoka
Cast:
Max Brebant (*Nicolas*)
Roxane Duran (*Stella*)
Julie-Marie Parmentier (*the mother*)
Mathieu Goldfeld (*Victor*)
Nissim Renard (*Franck*)
Pablo-Noé Etienne (*boy*)
Nathalie Le Gosles (*doctor*)
Chantal Aimée
Laura Ballesteros
Eric Batlle
Mafer Blanco
Anna Broock
Celestino Chacon
Annie Enganalim
Silvia Ferre
Imma Ferrer
Ulrika Garcia
Magdalena Komarova
Mireia Leon
Mateo Lopez
France-Belgium-Spain 2015
81 mins
Digital

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Lucile Hadzihalilovic

Evolution

Lucile Hadzihalilovic on 'Evolution'

Were you always going to set the film in and out of, or beside, the sea?

No. It seems strange but in the beginning it was only the hospital – a hospital in a city, with nothing outside. Then at some point it seemed obvious I needed to get out, and suddenly, of course, the seaside and the ocean seemed a perfect echo of what was happening inside.

And there's the dichotomy of above and below the waves.

True, and it's a different way to have an underground – I always have a tendency to have some kind of underground – but now it's not underground, it's underwater, so a bit different and very exciting, strange and strong because it's so visual and there are so many things to be seen underwater. It's not just obscurity.

The process of making the natural seem strange is right there at your fingertips, with all these sea creatures that are utterly mysterious and mystifying.

Even an image as simple as the starfish. We've seen so many images of children playing with starfish at the seaside, but when you really look at it it's such a weird creature. We didn't use all the information we gathered about them, or other creatures, but it became a kind of food for the film.

All the time we spend watching the movement of the sea, its light and other shapes we can't quite identify, lends a kind of primordial feeling of what happens to us in species form but also as individuals in our own bodies.

At some point the script had a lot more about these kind of elements, and then we had to make it shorter. But visually it works, showing this harder form of life under water, and that it's still there.

Did your cinematographer Manuel Dacosse shoot the underwater images?

He shot some in a pool, but it would have been too hard for him to manipulate the camera in the sea with an oxygen tank on – there are currents and the camera's very heavy. We worked with an underwater cameraman who knew the surroundings, so he also helped as our location scout. I'm no diver, so it wasn't like I knew any of the scenery! He found us the underwater landscape that provides the second shot of the film, for instance, and he knew when the light would be there and so on.

It wasn't so easy to tell him what we wanted in terms of camerawork, though, because he was more used to documentaries – so for him the clearer the sea was the better, whereas we wanted the opposite, with a lot of organic elements in the water, and we wanted more steady long shots, when he was more used to moving. The difficulty was we didn't have any return feed of the image while he was shooting, for some technical reason... He was very willing and good, but it was sometimes a miracle.

And these are digital images?

Yes, unfortunately. We tried to put as much texture as possible into them, so it's not too dead an image.

It worked really well, because you don't have the grain doing its own swirling, so you just see the swirling of the underwater environment itself.

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Those for me are the best images. Interiors too are okay, and the night scenes are fine – better, even, in digital, because you have more latitude. But I was very afraid about the exteriors, because the sun was so strong. Manuel and I were not so happy filming it digitally, but we really didn't have a choice. It's funny because the idea with digital is you can see more and better, but they're not mental images. For me, the images should lend an oneiric feeling, a dream or nightmare or whatever, but not realistic; and it's very hard to fight against that with digital. It's good to have an out-of-focus texture; you can add that a bit digitally, but it's not the same image. And there's not the stroboscopic feeling; that's totally lost.

Did you know Lanzarote before you wrote the script?

No. I just knew I wanted the sound to be somewhere in the south, and I wasn't sure where I could shoot that; maybe Corsica? And I wasn't sure where I could find the villages. At some point one of the producers suggested we could shoot in the Canary Islands, and that it was a good place to get money. It seemed like the mood was totally the right one. We scouted a few islands and found this village on Lanzarote – in fact there are two villages in the film, one on another island, a bit different. I was sure from the first moment that it was a perfect place to shoot, because it was just so strange and strong with nature, with these volcanic rocks and black sand, the wind of the sea and the sense of isolation. The village is like somewhere you could have been on holiday, but also has a medical mood, because of the white and the cubic shapes. I felt we wouldn't have much to do there to create a different reality. It's very important for me that the locations exist for real, not only in your dream: it's not oneiric or realistic, it's both.

It was more difficult to find the hospital. We needed one that was real, abandoned – obviously – but not totally ruined, where we could paint the walls but not destroy it, because we didn't have the money to rebuild anything. We found this huge one outside Barcelona, which maybe hundreds of Spanish horror films have been shot in. But I hope no Spanish people will recognise it! We painted it green – maybe that makes it a bit different.

Did you know the work of the Lanzarotean artist and architect César Manrique?

No, because I didn't know the Canary Islands before we went there. I think the village I had in mind came more from de Chirico – his streets and houses, and the colour: there's a realistic element and suddenly you have a building which is red. It's not what we did in the end, but it was an inspiration. Likewise the surrealist painters: Tanguy, Max Ernst, Leonora Carrington. They're not a specific reference, but I'm very familiar with their images, paintings whose universe I find very inspiring.

Do you identify as a surrealist filmmaker?

It's funny because of course de Chirico is a real surrealist, but I didn't consciously think I was going in that direction. It's about taking from yourself to things. Maybe in ten years I will say, 'Oh, it's a surrealistic film,' but I don't yet have the distance.

Interview by Nick Bradshaw, *Sight and Sound*, June 2016