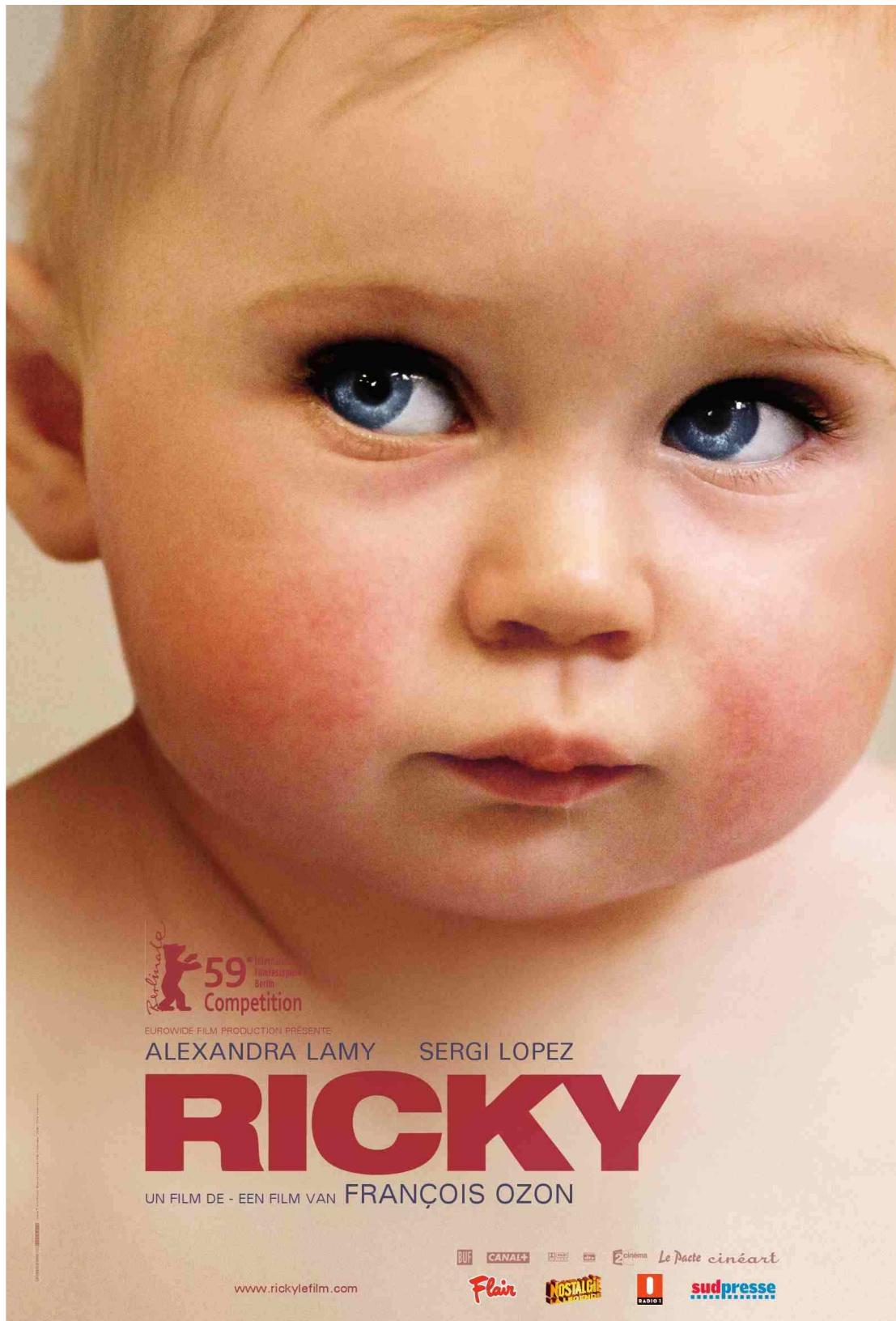


Persmap



RICKY

Een film van François Ozon

Frankrijk · 2009 · 35mm · color · 90 min. · Dolby Digital · 1:1.85

Katie, een alleenstaande moeder, woont samen met haar dochtertje Lisa in een buitenwijk van Parijs. Wanneer Katie aan het werk is in de chemiefabriek wordt ze verliefd op haar collega Paco. De liefde is wederzijds en ze krijgen een relatie. Katie raakt al gauw zwanger en bevalt van een kerngezonde maar ongewone baby: Ricky. Na een aantal maanden gebeurt er iets merkwaardigs met Ricky..



International Film Festival Berlijn – Competitie 2009

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CAST

Katie - Alexandra Lamy
Paco - Sergi Lopez
Lisa - Mélusine Mayance
Ricky - Arthur Peyret
Doctor - André Wilms
Journalist - Jean-Claude Bolle-Reddat
Librarian - Julien Haurant
Butcher - Eric Forterre
Salesman - Hakim Romatif
Supermarket Manager - John Arnold
Odile - Maryline Even

CREW

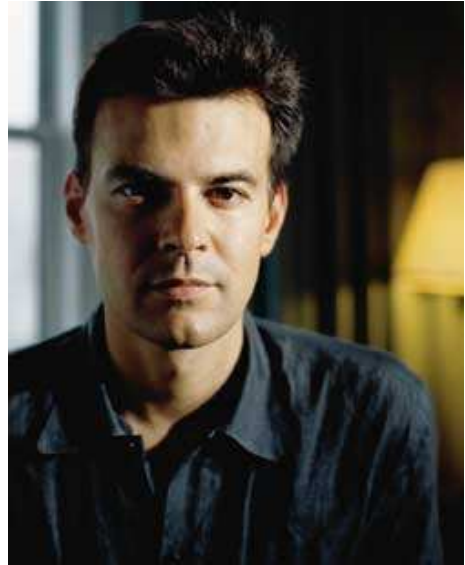
Directed by	François Ozon
Screenplay by	François Ozon
Freely adapted from MOTH by	Rose Tremain (VINTAGE BOOKS)
with the collaboration of	Emmanuèle Bernheim
Produced by	Claudie Ossard and Chris Bolzli
Image	Jeanne Lapoirie, AFC
Sound	Brigitte Taillandier
Sets	Katia Wyszkop
Costumes	Pascaline Chavanne
Make-up	Gill Robillard
Hair	Franck-Pascal Alquinet
1st assistant	Hubert Barbin
Script supervisor	Clémentine Schaeffer
Casting	Sarah Teper (a.r.d.a), Leila Fournier, Children and extras Anaïs Duran
Editing	Muriel Breton
Sound editing	Olivier Goinard
Sound mixing	Jean-Pierre Laforce
Visual effects artist	Georges Bouchelaghem
Mechanical SFX supervisor	Pascal Molina
Visual effects	BUF
Stunts	Pascal Guégan, Marc Bizet
Stills photographer	Jean-Claude Moireau
Production manager	Philippe Delest
Post-production supervisor	Christina Crassaris
Original music	Philippe Rombi

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INTERVIEW with François Ozon

The starting point for RICKY was a short story by English novelist Rose Tremain...

In English, the title of the story is MOTH, those nocturnal butterflies who are drawn to light. In the French version, the story was called LÉGER COMME L'AIR (LIGHT AS AIR). I liked it immediately when I read it, but I didn't think I could adapt it. The story is very short and its mood reminded me of ROSETTA by the Dardenne brothers: the characters are poor, underprivileged white people living in a trailer park in the heart of the United States. Because of the setting, I wasn't sure how to approach the story, how to make it mine. And although I liked the way an extraordinary, amazing event disrupts the characters' otherwise bleak existence, the fantasy element frightened me. It seemed impossible to render. But then I realized that what touched me about the story wasn't so much the fantasy element as the way it talks about family, our place in it, and how a new member - a new partner or a new child - can shake up the balance.



You're constantly mixing comedy and fantasy in the film. When Katie and her daughter are tending to Ricky's wings, we don't know whether to laugh or cringe...

There's an irony in Rose Tremain's writing that corresponds to my own, and I wanted to preserve that in the film. Whenever the story gets too unreal or bizarre, elements of humor and distance come in to release tension and make the scene work.

Katie and her daughter really enjoy looking after this extraordinary baby. And I hope the audience will share their pleasure. It's funny to see ordinary maternal emotions being expressed in a completely abnormal situation. All parents are fascinated by their progeny's first mile, first burp or first step. They worship their baby's body. Ricky's wings accentuate that behavior.

Katie never sees the wings as a handicap. To her they are a real gift, an asset. She finds them amusing, takes delight in them. If there's anything monstrous about them, it is revealed only by Katie's behavior, the way she wants to keep Ricky under lock and key and not expose him to the outside world. Her maternal instinct tends to be selfish, claustrophobic and a little bit castrating.

What does Ricky's difference mean to you?

I think one of the few emotions we share with animals is the maternal instinct. That's why I also included several references to Paco's 'animal' side. People will undoubtedly interpret the wings as religious symbolism. But the bloody little stumps are gory, the wingspan is impressive and the wings are brown and not white, so they don't immediately bring angels to mind.

Ricky's size and physique emphasize just how extraordinary he is.

Arthur, who plays Ricky, is a big, beautiful baby. His size is all the more imposing next to Mélusine, who plays his older sister Lisa. Mélusine is very petite. In films, babies are often idealized. We rarely see them hungry, screaming, dirty... It was important to me that the baby be a real character, expressing his needs and emotions.

Arthur wasn't the liveliest baby at the auditions. Many crew members advised me to choose a different one. But I loved his face, his almond-shaped eyes, his chubby cheeks like Paco's, and his blond hair like Katie's. He fit in with the family.

As with the baby in SEE THE SEA, I directed Arthur like any other actor: I spoke to him and explained what I wanted. We quickly adapted our shooting schedule to his naptimes and mealtimes. The funny thing is, he really took his role seriously and got better and better with each scene. So much so that

we finished the shoot earlier than planned. In 3 or 4 takes, he did exactly what we wanted. When he started to fly, he really got into it, he was thrilled! Whereas his stand-ins never enjoyed it at all.

Ordinary, everyday life playing out in extraordinary circumstances: RICKY reminds us of UNDER THE SAND with its mixture of realism and fantasy.

I'm only interested in fantasy when it's presented in a believable way that allows for audience identification. That's why I wanted to show the process of Ricky's wings growing in precise detail. In the short story the wings appear suddenly, without any explanation. Overnight, the baby has wings.

How did you imagine the process?

The writing process involved imagining the physical changes the baby would experience, as well as the realistic reactions of those close to him.

The first question was: When do the wings appear? Are they present at birth or do they show up later? I thought the lumps should begin to appear when the baby was several months old, that way they would embody the deterioration of the adults' relationship. Also, that time span would allow the family a long moment together before any doctors got involved.

So Ricky's wings begin to grow when he's about 7 or 8 months old. As far as that process went, we simply took our inspiration from the way baby birds' wings develop: little lumps slowly begin to form, then mature into stumps with feathers pricking through the skin like tiny fingernails. We tried to replicate the actual way birds' wings develop as best we could, while respecting the esthetics of the film and its narrative. The idea was to have the different stages of wing growth punctuate different stages of the family members' relationships: the wings appear as bumps that Katie interprets as injuries Paco has perpetrated against the child, leading her to separate from him. When the feathers begin to grow and Ricky begins to fly, the mother and daughter grow close again, etc.

You've got some major ellipses in the film, especially in the beginning.

The ellipses keep us moving through the various stages of a typical love story: the loneliness, the meeting, the forming of the couple, the little girl feeling left out, the arrival of the baby. It's all necessary to bring us to the heart of the story: the birth of Ricky.

And why did you start the film with the scene of Katie talking to the social worker, then go into flashback?

I knew this deliberate choice would provoke a variety of interpretations, and I like that. I want to give the audience the freedom to react to the story in their own way, to invent their own interpretations based on personal experience. For me, the scene takes place in the middle of the narrative, just after Paco has left and Katie is on her own with Lisa and Ricky. I wanted to show this 'mother courage' at a breaking point, doubting her abilities as a mother, her desperation pushing her to consider placing her child in foster care. Inserting it at the beginning of the film allowed me to rapidly establish the character's social background and introduce the recurring theme of the maternal bond. I also liked the idea of playing around with audience expectations about flashbacks. The realism of the scene implies we are going to see a social drama, making the fantasy element all the more surprising.

RICKY is a film about family, but the main character is a woman...

I like portraits of women and I wanted to explore the theme of maternity again, but in a different way than I had done with SEE THE SEA. In that film, two facets of the maternal instinct were illustrated through two very different women: the good mother and the monstrous mother. In RICKY, those two aspects are present in the same mother, Katie, and we follow the complex evolution of her maternal impulses. At first she's a lioness, seeking to protect her young, then she becomes a more playful, childlike mother, playing with her baby almost like a child plays with a doll. And finally, she is a mother confronted with the reality of a baby who needs care, a child she's going to have to share, and eventually let go of.

Do you think the maternal instinct is more complex than the paternal instinct?

I find it more interesting, because the child comes out of the mother's body. Often, mothers feel their children are extensions of themselves. The physiological side of birth and the organic link between mother and child fascinate me. And yet the father, Paco, is also a complex character, whereas the father in the short story clearly only comes back for the money. I wanted to deepen the relationship between the man and the woman. It's true Paco wants to make money off Ricky by charging the journalists to see him, but his motivations are not purely cynical, he's also being logical: with the money earned, they could buy a house, and have enough space to raise Ricky in better conditions. Of course, Paco only comes back when he learns that Ricky is an unusual child. But in his defense, he hadn't had much room to let his paternal feelings develop - Katie had quickly excluded him. I think it's not unusual for fathers to find themselves feeling squeezed out, and the film explores that too.

Why did you choose Sergi Lopez for the role of Paco?

I'd wanted to work with him for a long time. I wrote the character with him in mind, especially the scenes where Katie talks about how hairy he is. Sergi is a very subtle actor. He's sensual, there's something feminine about the way he moves, and yet at the same time he's extremely virile, which appeals to women and reassures them. He brought ambiguity and humanity to a character who could seem quite negative on paper..

And Alexandra Lamy?

When I saw her on TV in UN GARS, UNE FILLE (A GUY, A GIRL), I thought she was an interesting actress. She's got a gift for comedy and repartee, she's quick, her timing is excellent. She reminded me of American actresses from the screwball comedies, but I sensed she was also capable of excelling in a more dramatic role. Also, Alexandra can embody the common, unrefined side of Katie's character. I felt that with her, the audience would find the story more believable than if Katie had been played by a more high-profile actress. My main objective with Alexandra was to slow her down, help her feel comfortable with silence and absence. I wanted her to take her time.

What about shooting without make-up?

Alexandra knew about that from the start and had no problem with it. She's in no way a narcissistic actress. It was important that Katie not be in seduction mode. I wanted to see her skin, her body as it really is, not idealized, not overly beautified... the goal being to stay as close as possible to reality. At the same time, contrary to the usual clichés, I wanted to show the beauty of the working-class suburb where Katie lives, capture the photogenic potential of the housing estate and the lake with its reflections. I tried to combine realism with a certain amount of stylization. I was interested in depicting Katie's social background because it allowed me to accentuate the notion of confinement that exists in every family. If Katie had been from a middle-class background, she probably would have consulted a top doctor. As it is, she prefers to hide the baby away because she doesn't feel like she's part of the system. And the arrival of this baby is like a wonderful stroke of luck, a wonderful event in her otherwise gray, dull existence. The baby is a real source of richness, both literally and figuratively, that she wants to keep for herself.

Did you see the special effects as an obstacle or were you excited at the prospect of using them?

When the project was in the development stages, we were a bit nervous. Special effects + a baby: that's a lot of obstacles. But in the end everything went smoothly, much better than the investors and the insurance companies expected. I like special effects when they're an integral part of the story, when they serve the story, like in Jack Arnold's THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN, which was a reference for me. Or in David Cronenberg's films: he knows how to exploit their organic side. I tried to keep things simple, to avoid doing flashy or overly technical shots because we were using special effects. On the contrary, I wanted to integrate the effects into a straightforward mise-en-scene, with daily life and concrete actions taking place within static shots, reverse shots and

continuous shots. This made the special effects that much harder to conceive, as they are usually integrated into quick shots and rapid-fire editing, leaving no time to really see them, only enough time to get a sense of them. The special effects guys at BUF were actually pretty nervous themselves, when they saw the final cut of the film and realized what they were up against!

Ricky is not a very realistic name in the context of the film.

The baby was called Ricky in the short story. When I began adapting it, I kept the name and in the end, I got used to it and it stuck. For English speakers, the name is outdated and sounds a bit silly today. I thought it was funny, it reminded me of the American TV shows I used to watch as a child. And since Lisa's the one who chooses the baby's name in the film, one could say the whole story is a figment of her young imagination...

- 2009 RICKY
- 2007 ANGEL
- 2006 A CURTAIN RAISER (short movie)
- 2005 TIME TO LEAVE
- 2004 5X2
- 2003 SWIMMING POOL
- 2002 8 WOMEN
- 2001 UNDER THE SAND
- 2000 WATER DROPS ON BURNING ROCKS
- 1999 CRIMINAL LOVERS
- 1998 SITCOM
- 1997 SEE THE SEA (middle length)

INTERVIEW with ALEXANDERA LAMY

Were you surprised that François Ozon thought of you for the role of Katie?

When my agent called to tell me I had an audition with François Ozon, I was indeed surprised. I have a theater background, I studied at the Conservatory, but most people associate me with my role in the television comedy sketch show UN GARS, UNE FILLE (A GUY, A GIRL), which is very different from François' work. That was actually just as well, because I went to the audition totally relaxed, convinced I'd never get the part. No nerves, no anxiety, I just wanted to have fun.



How did that first audition go?

I did my two scenes, and I sensed that François was touched. He had me redo a couple of things and then said simply, «We'll let you know». I didn't hear from them for several months, so I assumed he'd found someone else. But then my agent called to say François wanted me to come back and do some more tests. At this point it was down to two actresses, so now I was nervous as hell! I played the scenes again and did some tests with the little girl who was cast as Katie's daughter. When I saw Mélusine, who looks like me, I felt reassured and thought I might have a chance at getting the part! Oddly enough, the Katie character resembles me more than any of the comedy roles I've been proposed so far in film.

Like many of François Ozon's films, RICKY is above all the portrait of a woman.

Yes, and like with Charlotte Rampling in UNDER THE SAND, François fought to get the actress he wanted, his choice wasn't immediately obvious. François has his own universe, with real female characters with strong personalities. Katie's not the type to think things over before she acts. She doesn't question herself. She's instinctive, like an animal. If she wants a man, it's right now. If she doesn't want him anymore, it's the same thing. She's also excessively maternal. It's hard to have a child who's different. With Ricky, the difference is extreme! How do you deal with it? At first, Katie is worried, she wonders how he'll get along, will he walk, will he talk? But then she takes the situation in hand and comes out stronger by confronting reality. Katie takes Ricky's wings in her stride. He's her child, she loves him unconditionally, as mothers do.

We sense Katie and her daughter Lisa really enjoy caring for this exceptional baby...

They have fun watching Ricky grow and evolve, and the shared experience brings them closer together. This part of the film has a comedic touch that really means a lot to me. The script is darker than the finished film, and François and I discussed this at length. At first he didn't want me smiling in these scenes, but he had the good sense to let me try some lighter, more joyful approaches, and he ended up using them.

Katie is hard, even castrating, when she accuses Paco of harming Ricky...

Katie is hard in the way I imagine someone with a hard life could become. Someone who works the assembly line in a factory and lives in depressing surroundings. We sense she's carrying heavy baggage. Lisa's father undoubtedly left her. In the scene where she's waiting for Paco to come home, ready to accuse him of having hit Ricky, François asked me to remain seated. We might have expected her to stand up to confront him about it, but she remains seated, so we sense she's made her decision before even speaking to him. She blames him for what happened to Ricky and she's not going to discuss it. When Ricky's wings grow, proving Paco's innocence, she could call him back, but instead she chooses to savor this amazing event in her otherwise dreary existence on her own. She even says to her daughter, «I haven't thought of Paco since Ricky got wings». Katie is down to earth and has a kind of working-class sensibility that I really like. When she discovers her son's wings, her reaction is, "They're bound to fall off"! Of course she also has moments of anxiety, but she doesn't dwell on that, she's a woman of action.

Why the choice of wings to symbolize difference, in your opinion?

To me, the wings symbolize the angelic side of childhood. As well as the desire for freedom and the importance of letting our children leave the nest, even if it's difficult. I love the scene at the lake, when Katie sees Ricky and says to him, "My God, how you've grown." Ricky's no longer a baby, he's now a little boy, and Katie is relieved to see him doing so well. She in turn feels free and fulfilled, ready to rebuild her family. And get pregnant again.

Katie comes from a particular social background, her son Ricky is very unusual, yet she has such a universal quality. How do you explain your ability to create such a strong identification factor?

Maybe because I never think about my appearance when I'm acting. I don't pose, I don't worry about only showing my best profile or standing in a certain way. I don't see myself, I don't examine myself, I forget myself entirely to enter the mind and body of my character, and I guess that shows on screen. I like actresses like Meryl Streep, who don't care if they're beautiful or not. They make us want to enter the character with them, because they resemble us.

How did you approach the character?

I did what Katie would do: I didn't think about it too much, I just let the character come to me. I didn't do much research or try to understand her motivations. I just learned all my lines, well in advance, without thinking too much about how to play them. I wanted to arrive on the set a 'virgin'. Katie reacts instinctively and I wanted to be like her. Even when I'd rehearse with François, I'd often

do what we call an *allemande*: I'd walk through the scene without really acting the lines. That way, when you hear "action", you're fresh, you haven't played the scene out, and the director himself benefits from the element of surprise.

Did François show you any particular films to inspire you?

Yes, WANDA by Barbara Loden. Katie's story is completely different from Wanda's, but they share the same spontaneity. Wanda doesn't think things over much, she lets life happen to her and follows her own logic. She sleeps with men according to her instinct, stays with them even if they beat her... and abandons her children without guilt.

What was it like shooting a film with children and special effects?

I loved Arthur, the boy who plays Ricky, but people don't always have a lot of patience with babies, especially on film shoots. He's wonderful in the film, but sometimes it took a few takes, with us making faces to get him to laugh, or hopping around to attract his attention and get him to stop staring at his mother, the boom mike or even the camera! It takes a lot of effort and it's pretty exhausting. Mélusine is adorable and very talented, but with her too, it was important to create a bond, play with her. As for Ricky's wings, they weren't always visible during the shoot. Sometimes there were dummy ones, but more often you had to imagine them on the baby. I had to bear in mind that if I held my head at a certain angle or picked up the baby in a certain way, my face would be blocked by the wings.

You and Sergi Lopez form a highly believable couple.

Sergi is a great acting partner, we share the same instinctive approach. François gave us the freedom to change a few words here and there, so we really listened to each other, we acted in sync, looking right into each other's eyes. Sergi is also a great father, he was very attentive with the kids. He's like a big teddy bear, very sensitive, his emotions are right on the surface. He really cried in the break-up scene, and at the same time he can be frighteningly ambiguous, as when Paco comes back.

Tell us about how François Ozon directs actors.

A lot of filmmakers are primarily preoccupied with the image. François puts the actors first. If he's blocked a scene in a certain way but we can't pull it off because it doesn't feel right, he understands that. He's flexible when it comes to dialogue and movement. And he frames the shots himself, which I love. I could feel him watching me, listening to me, drawing me out. I felt supported. François won't let you go until you've given what you've got to give. Oddly enough, in comedies where I've played roles that are closer to the role I'm known for, directors have been afraid to trust me, afraid I'd just repeat my character from A GUY, A GIRL. François gave me that trust. He chose me because he felt I was best suited for the role, not just for show or to prove he could break my image.

- 2009 RICKY by François Ozon
- LUCKY LUKE by James Huth
- 2008 MODERN LOVE by Stéphane Kazandjian
- 2007 CHERCHE FIANCÉ TOUS FRAIS PAYÉS by Aline Issermann
- 2006 ON VA S'AIMER by Ivan Calbérac
- 2005 VIVE LA VIE by Yves Fajnberg
- THE BRICE MAN by James Huth
- AU SUIVANT! by Jeanne Biras
- L'ANTIDOTE by Vincent de Brus
- 2003 LIVRAISON À DOMICILE by Bruno Delahaye
- DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY by Denis Parent

INTERVIEW with SERGI LOPEZ

Were you familiar with François Ozon's films before working with him?

No, I don't see a lot of films and I don't live in France. But I'd met him before, during a promotional tour. And I knew people who had worked with him. Not having seen his films didn't worry me - my ignorance is part of who I am. I don't choose projects based on a filmmaker's previous work but rather on the script he's proposing. I want to be in the moment and follow my instinct when I'm reading a script, that's what matters. You don't want to be biased, you want to get into the story.



What was your reaction when you read RICKY?

I was immediately won over by its almost magical simplicity. The story goes straight to the heart of things, like a tale. Paco and Katie's relationship begins in a very direct way and moves forward quickly.

What about Ricky having wings?

Despite this surreal detail, RICKY is not science fiction. It's actually a realistic film about something that's not realistic. It's unsettling to see how a flying baby fits into mundane daily life. In RICKY, the characters experience the supernatural in a very natural way.

What do you think about the fact that Ricky's 'otherness' is embodied by wings?

Everyone has fantasized about flying, it's a dream people share across the globe. Ricky could be seen as an angel, but François doesn't get into that symbolism. He shows us a much more disturbing reality. Ricky's otherness is amusing at first, but reality soon takes over. Ricky is half monster, half angel. He's a cute blond baby with blue eyes, but there's something monstrous about his wings as they develop. His wings are like a miracle, but we don't know if the miracle is positive or negative, it all depends on what the family will do.

In that sense, Paco is very pragmatic. Some may think he returns home to make money off Ricky.

That's right. Paco sees in Ricky an opportunity to make money, which will in turn allow the family to come back together and be happy. Paco is neither good nor bad, it's up to the audience to decide what they think of him. I like films that leave room for imagination. RICKY is not a sweet, pretty story, it's not a 'nice' film. I liked that ambiguity, that's why I accepted the role. Nothing is black and white, you don't know if this family will stay together. They're not a bad family or a good family, they're just a family. Not a very well-adjusted family, but I'm not convinced a well-adjusted family is a good thing. I'm getting tired of innocuous Pollyanna stories full of cheap hope. Pretty little stories with gratuitous happiness, containing no rites of passage or experience of unhappiness seem empty to me. I subscribe to a philosophy of joie de vivre, but a joie de vivre that can't exist without pain.

RICKY is also the portrait of a mother.

Yes, and I understand why François would want to explore that theme. It's so huge, being a mother, in both moral and physical terms. In comparison, being a father seems rather incidental! And yet, the film also explores a fundamental truth about being a father. The experience of fatherhood starts with this simple phrase: "You're going to be a father". Then the abstract notion suddenly becomes real in the form of a strange little being who breathes, has needs, doesn't look quite how you expected... In the film, this concept of the baby as a 'little monster' who bursts into your life and makes you a father is reinforced by Ricky's wings.

What's it like shooting with very young children?

Not easy, but I've got kids myself and I really like children, I communicate well with them. We bond easily. Babies can't work the way we can, we have to conform to their biological rhythm and that can be complicated. But they're great because they don't act, they just are. They're real, which helps compensate for the weirdness of playing in the absence of special effects.

And working with Alexandra Lamy?

As with François, I didn't know her previous work and had no preconceived notions. I got to know her on the shoot. We got along great. I found her pretty, friendly and most of all, very funny. We have a similar approach to acting, we're both very instinctive. We didn't discuss Katie and Paco's relationship, we let ourselves be guided by the context of the shoot, the situations, the dialogue, the direction François gave us... I'm not one of those actors who feels the need to go to the end of the earth in search of his characters' motivations.

How about working with François Ozon?

François is extremely methodical. He knows exactly what he wants. He sees the film in his mind and works very quickly. He likes to keep things moving, no wasting time. He's very impatient. Impatient to get to the next scene, to the next day of shooting, to the editing, to the next film too, I imagine. He likes his actors. Choosing them is part of his work as a director. He sees something in you that corresponds to the character, and from there he lets you express yourself the way you see fit. He doesn't intervene unless he doesn't like the direction you're going in. But he never drives you mad explaining the 'essence' of a scene before you shoot. You sense he loves his work and has made a lot of films, he's strong inside and doesn't need to throw his weight around.

What do you think about the end of the film, in particular the fact that Katie is pregnant again?

In a conventional film, you'd say: 'Wonderful, life goes on'. But François plays around with traditional images. When we see Katie pregnant, we can't help wondering if the baby inside her will have wings, fins, or paws!

SELECT FILMOGRAPHY

- 2009 RICKY by François Ozon
- LEAVING by Catherine Corsini
- LA RÉGATE by Bernard Bellefroid
- PETIT INDI by Marc Recha
- LES DERNIERS JOURS DU MONDE by Arnaud and Jean-Marie Larrieu
- MAP OF THE SOUND OF TOKYO by Isabel Coixet (en tournage)
- 2007 PARC by Arnaud des Pallieres
- THE HOUSE by Manuel Poirier
- 2005 PAN'S LABYRINTH by Guillermo del Toro
- 2004 TO PAINT OR MAKE LOVE by Arnaud and Jean-Marie Larrieu
- 2003 BYWAYS by Manuel Poirier
- DIRTY PRETTY THINGS by Stephen Frears
- JANIS AND JOHN by Samuel Benchetrit
- SOME KIND OF BLUE by Alain Corneau
- 2002 THE RED KNIGHT by Hélène Angel
- JET LAG by Danièle Thompson
- HYPNOTIZED AND HYSTERICAL by Claude Duty
- WOMEN OR CHILDREN FIRST by Manuel Poirier
- 2001 THE MILK OF HUMAN KINDNESS by Dominique Cabrera
- A HELL OF A DAY by Marion Vernoux

- TE QUIERO by Manuel Poirier
2000 HARRY, HE'S HERE TO HELP by Dominik Moll
TOREROS by Eric Barbier
1999 EMPTY DAYS by Marion Vernoux
A PORNOGRAPHIC AFFAIR by Frédéric Fonteyne
1998 THE NEW EVE by Catherine Corsini
1997 WESTERN by Manuel Poirier
MARION by Manuel Poirier
1994 À LA CAMPAGNE by Manuel Poirier
ATTENTION FRAGILE by Manuel Poirier
1992 ANTONIO'S GIRLFRIEND by Manuel Poirier
-
-

INTERVIEW with PIERRE BUFFIN, VISUAL EFFECTS

What was your reaction when you read the script for RICKY?

It's the kind of script you read and think: this is audacious and intriguing, especially coming from François Ozon. His films always walk a fine line, right on the edge of strange. You feel things might shift at any minute. Seeing the finished film, I was even more surprised! I didn't expect such powerful realism.

How did you approach the job?

Most directors know nothing about special effects. Our job is to explain how they work, reassure them and show them how we can make their vision come to life on the screen. I always try to encourage and help directors who show up with crazy ideas like these! Our first priority is to define a plan of action, determine what we can do and how it will affect the shoot. For example, François was going to have to frame virtual movement, imagine the various trajectories the baby would follow with the special effects. Everything had to be mapped out before the shoot.

So you must get involved very early on.

Yes, right from the planning stages of the shoot. Sometimes we even get involved during the writing stage, as we did with RICKY. François came to us with questions about what we could do and how much it would cost. Knowing the parameters helped him write the script. François has an open mind, he's a smart guy, he listens, he understands things quickly, and he also has good production sense, he understands about limitations.

What was particularly challenging about this project?

Making a baby fly! We'd already created angels but never a flying baby. It was a great experience, one we shared with a young supervisor, Mathilde Tollec. The challenge was to make the baby realistic. The slightest error would bring the whole thing down, prevent the audience from suspending disbelief and believing in the story. We took our inspiration from actual flights of birds, or insects, when it came to making Ricky's little wings move.

Is it harder to make a baby fly than an adult?

Yes, because it requires additional security measures that hinder realistic, natural flight. The baby has to be harnessed. To offset the stiffness that creates, we focused on developing the speed of his movements. We did tests before the shoot and realized we'd need to accelerate his movement. Naturally he bumps into things, like a bird trapped in a room. We also tested various wing-flapping speeds to find out what worked best on screen.

How did you come up with the look for the wings?

François wanted wings that weren't white. Our job was basically to propose different variations and facilitate the technical side and make the wings credible so he could concentrate on his shoot. We did research on different types of wings, studied the different phases of their development, from stumps to full-grown wings. Then we drew them on a baby to get the right proportions. François was extremely precise in his choices. The basic design of the wings was determined before the shoot, but then we fine-tuned the colors, which vary throughout the growth process. And we adapted them to the baby's hair color. Up to the last minute that is allotted to us, I feel it's important to keep a critical eye on the work and keep correcting the image. Computer-generated 3D special effects have no inherent poetry, unlike any awkward drawing done by a 5-year-old. It's the time you spend working on and fine-tuning your digital image that will give it a soul. The layers you add are what make your effect interesting. You can't just whip it out, it's a long and fastidious craft.

How is it different working on an independent film like Ricky as opposed to a big action film?

I find independent filmmakers are more involved in the whole process of the film. American directors, who are more like technicians, often have only a partial view. François needed to understand the whole process so he could appropriate it and make his film. That leads to interesting exchanges - you discover another way of seeing things and expressing them. We'd already had some amazing experiences with Wong Kar-Wai and Eric Rohmer. I'd rather talk with independent filmmakers about cinema and the effects they hope to create than listen to directors who specialize in special effects spout jargon.

SELECT FILMOGRAPHY

RICKY by François Ozon
DANTE 01 by Marc Caro
BE KIND REWIND by Michel Gondry
SPEED RACER by Andy & Larry Wachowski
THE DARK KNIGHT by Christopher Nolan
BABYLON A.D. by Mathieu Kassovitz
SPIDER-MAN 3 by Sam Raimi
SILENT HILL by Christophe Gans
THE PRESTIGE by Christopher Nolan
ARTHUR AND THE MINIMOYS by Luc Besson
BATMAN BEGINS by Christopher Nolan
ANGEL-A by Luc Besson
REVOLVER by Guy Ritchie
THE THREE BURIALS OF MELQUIADES ESTRADA by Tommy Lee Jones
HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE by Mike Newell
2046 by Wong Kar Wai
ALEXANDER de Oliver Stone
MATRIX RELOADED by Andy & Larry Wachowski
MATRIX REVOLUTIONS by Andy & Larry Wachowski
PANIC ROOM by David Fincher
SIMONE by Andrew Niccol
THE LADY AND THE DUKE by Eric Rohmer
THE CELL by Tarsem Singh
FIGHT CLUB by David Fincher
BATMAN & ROBIN by Joel Schumacher
THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN by Jean-Pierre Jeunet et Marc Caro