



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
UN CERTAIN REGARD
OFFICIAL SELECTION 2025

METEORS

a film by Hubert Charuel
in collaboration with Claude Le Pape

DOMINO FILMS
PRESENTS



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France's rural wasteland. Three long-time friends, Tony has become the construction king, Mika and Daniel the kings of nothing. They have big dreams but little luck. Cornered after another blunder, they end up working for Tony at the nuclear dumping ground. So far, so bad...

Interview with Hubert Charuel and Claude Le Pape

It's been eight years since the release of *Petit Paysan*...

HUBERT: As soon as *Bloody Milk* was shown at the Critics' Week, the first question I was asked was: "So, what's your next project?" The idea of what would come next was always there, but it changed a lot over time. With Claude, I think we wanted to return to the world of our short films *Diagonale du vide* and *K-nada*. That world is the town of Saint-Dizier, where I grew up and had my first ambitions to make films. And we always wanted to talk about characters that few people talk about.

The time it took to write and make the film was really the time we needed to find a subject that turned our initial desire into a true necessity. A necessity for Claude and I because it's a topic that touches us deeply, and we both had personal reasons that made us feel compelled to tell it.

How did *Meteors* come to life?

CLAUDE: The film was always designed to be shot in Saint-Dizier and nowhere else. The project evolved a lot, but from the start, it was about a very strong friendship. For a long time, we had this idea of a disaster film, a meteor falling on the town, and after two years, we removed the meteor but kept everything else: the trio of characters, the nuclear waste, the drinking, the disappearance.

In the end, we came back to what Hubert wanted to tell from the beginning: a character trying to save another. Mika wants to save Daniel, that's it. It's a disaster movie too, but an intimate one, with the risk of total destruction—but internal.

We wanted to show friends helping each other, but in a bad way. Tony tries to help his two friends, but it goes wrong. Mika wants to help Daniel, but their duo is put to the test.

How did the casting process go?

HUBERT: The big challenge was to build a trio of friends who really seemed close — you had to believe in their bond, their shared history, and so on. The casting took a long time because it took a while to find each of the three, but once we saw them, it was immediately obvious — no hesitation. We thought a lot about the method, about which character to cast first to build the trio. We thought we'd look for a Mika and a Dan first, but Salif as Tony stood out right from the first screen tests...

Months later, we saw a film where Idir had two or three scenes (*Marguerite's Theorem* by Anna Novion), and we thought he was amazing. Claude and I really pushed for him to come up from Marseille, even though he was super busy, and when he finally came, we just said, "It's him." Finally, Paul, who hadn't been considered because he was younger than the thirty-something actors we were looking for. There was this moment of clarity, and it was settled in two days.

CLAUDE: We were very confident in each actor, but we didn't know if their chemistry would work. Would we believe they shared something in common? Idir is from Marseille, Salif is from La Courneuve, and Paul is from Montmartre... They didn't know each other. We did a read-through with the five of us, the whole script. And what they have in common is a deep sensitivity.

After that reading, we went straight into rehearsals, and we knew we could trust them completely — in what they would bring to the characters and their relationships. They became the heart of the film, and the film adapted to them — their age differences, accents, etc.

HUBERT: Not every group of actors can connect like that. They loved and supported each other way beyond what we hoped for. I feel really privileged to have witnessed it. That bond carried us through the entire making of the film.

In the film, the female characters all have “institutional” roles: addiction counselor, judge, lawyer... Why is that?

HUBERT: The starting point is pretty autobiographical, talking about the people I grew up with in that area. And that’s what we were back then: a group of guys. I didn’t have any close female friends, or they were girlfriends of my friends. It reflects a sociological truth of the region. When we were writing, we talked a lot about Benoît Coquard’s book *Ceux qui restent* (“Those Who Stay”), which talks about this particular region, where I grew up — places where boys hang out with boys, and women come into the picture through those male friendships. Even hobbies are very gendered — hunting, soccer, or, in my case, just being bored together in a car.

CLAUDE: Of course, we thought about the fact that the main characters are three men, and what that means. We even imagined changing the gender of one of them, but in our very heteronormative society, that totally changed their relationships. And there are few other characters around them; the film is really focused on the trio. The three stay three — no encounter changes them or is defining for them.

HUBERT: Basically, we wanted to show people who are alone in the world — no parents, no siblings, no partners... Their solitude is what unites them. The other roles around them are small but essential to the story. Some are played by women, but not all.

CLAUDE: On the question of gender, I think these aren’t typical “male” characters. I’m a woman, and I can totally relate to Daniel or Mika — they aren’t “marked” as men in a traditional sense.

HUBERT: About the smaller roles—they were all really important to us and casting them was just as obvious as for the main trio. Many of them are friends, crew members, or family. For example, Valentin (the cop here) is my cousin who’s been in all my films; my parents are in it too. Our best friend and assistant director Célie plays the other police officer, Claire Langmann, our line producer, plays the judge, and so on.

Working with non-professionals is really interesting because there’s a real exchange between them and the pro actors. It took on another level with crew members. For me, directing is also about choosing the crew that surrounds the actors. What’s key is to create a “safe place” for the actors. Having crew members act alongside the cast helped build a strong bond and mirrored the film’s core theme — helping, supporting, respecting vulnerabilities. When the line producer plays the judge, she’s nervous, she’s stepping out of her usual role, and the actors are stepping up in a different way too.

CLAUDE: Hubert pushed a lot to have *double cameras* for the scenes with non-professionals, so we wouldn’t miss anything happening in those moments (the courtroom, the police station, the lawyer’s office, the lake, etc.). That helped reinforce the “safe place” feeling—less cutting, more continuous action. There was a real joy in acting together in those scenes.

The main theme of the film seems to be addiction, obviously to alcohol...

CLAUDE: We thought a lot about the point of view: with whom, through whom do we see things? We didn't want to, we couldn't take Daniel's point of view. I don't know what it's like to live with this addiction. Neither does Hubert. But we do know what it's like to be beside it. Our point of view, and that of the audience, had to be Mika's: a witness who tries to help but can't, because deep down he doesn't understand.

We wanted to show the helplessness one can feel when faced with alcoholism, but also the complex face of the illness — lies and truths layered over each other, guilt, shame, denial. When Daniel says he's going to the addiction center, I think he genuinely believes it at that moment, but he also knows he won't go.

HUBERT: We both have loved ones affected by alcoholism. That's where the film comes from. It's like *Bloody Milk*: we start with something very personal and end up touching on something bigger.

Back when *Bloody Milk* was in development, everyone told us that the agricultural world wouldn't interest anyone in cinema, and yet, when we talked about the project, people kept telling us about their grandparents who were farmers, their uncles who had cows, or other farm stories.

When we start telling Daniel's story, people tell us about the loved ones they identify with the character. It creates intimacy with people we don't even know. Everyone can relate to this story because everyone knows a Daniel, even if ours is set in a specific environment and place — it's always someone close to someone who wishes they knew how to save them.

CLAUDE: We wanted to be as accurate as possible about addiction. Dan is dependent. Mika isn't. That's exactly why he's able to quit. It needed to be said. Overcoming addiction isn't just a matter of willpower. We didn't want the film to say, "where there's a will, there's a way." And not just for alcohol. That's simply not true.

HUBERT: Deep down, *Meteors* is also a story of dependence between Dan and Mika, in their fusion-like relationship. Why does Mika want so badly to save Daniel? Because he loves him, that's all. We wrote it that way, as a couple facing things together. It's a love story between two people who will have to part ways.

CLAUDE: Yes, to us, it's a love story. And even though loving isn't always helping, and Mika fails to keep Dan, deep down, he succeeds.

HUBERT: They freed each other, even if it had to happen through that realization.

CLAUDE: Tony and this duo are also in a relationship of interdependence: Mika and Dan rely on him constantly, and Tony needs to be relied on. And when you change a system like that, everything collapses.

The other theme of the film, which emerges in its second half, is nuclear waste management in Eastern France...

HUBERT: Yes, and that was there from the start: the depiction of nuclear waste dumps in Eastern France. The Haute-Marne region is completely economically dependent on nuclear waste.

There are two main aspects in *Meteors*: the people and the territory. We really wanted to talk about both stories, but at the



start of writing, we struggled to find the angle that would make it feel like one coherent story rather than two separate ones.

Just as I was about to give up on the project, a friend said to me: “you shouldn’t give up, there’s something powerful in this story about people poisoning themselves to survive.” That was a breakthrough. We had found the key to the whole story: people and a territory poisoning themselves to survive.

We shouldn’t forget that we, in the East, grew up with the Chernobyl incident. We always talk about Chernobyl, but we live in a nuclear dump without it even being a concern to us. You end up not questioning it anymore. It’s only since I left the region that this idea struck me as absurd.

That’s the social question the film raises: we bury radioactive waste in concrete, but we have no idea how long the concrete will hold. Hoping that what’s invisible doesn’t exist.

We found the set near Reims, in an old airbase from World War II. We built the dump set outdoors there. There are old underground bunkers used as shelters, and that’s where the final part of the film was shot, for Dan’s “underground” sequences. These concrete and metal tunnels matched what I wanted to portray: Dan sinking deeper and deeper, into narrower and narrower pipes. It also reinforced the film’s sci-fi dimension.

What were your visual influences?

HUBERT: The cinematographer, Jacques Girault, is a friend from La Fémis (a famous French cinema school) — we’ve known each other for 15 years — and he was the DoP for *Diagonale du vide*, my first short film, which was shot on 16mm in November. I wanted to recapture that type of image—the grain, the slightly pastel colors, the softness on faces.

CLAUDE: Jacques also shot my short film *La maison (pas très loin du Donegal)*, also with this powdery image that sometimes seems almost faded, or already a bit worn. He worked on that fragility, that sensitivity of the image.

HUBERT: Honestly, I never know how to answer the question about visual influences. I told Jacques that for the chase scene, I wanted something between *Drive* and *Operation Corned Beef!*

What we especially wanted was for the film to feel like a mix of genres—that was the gamble with *Bloody Milk*. We wanted to keep playing that way with *Meteors*: what genres could serve this story that has multiple narrative layers and shifts from one genre to another? That’s why it starts as a buddy movie comedy, then a social drama, then a thriller... But above all, *Meteors* is a melodrama. At least, a film that fully embraces tears. Claude thought a lot about *Dead Poets Society*, I thought about *Rain Man*, and for both of us *Terminator 2* — films that marked our childhoods, and that are also about separation.

James Gray is also one of our essential references because we love all his films, but without consciously borrowing from him in our work.

CLAUDE: We never really put it that way, and obviously without comparing *Meteors* to his films, it’s true that in the dimly lit interiors, the importance of night, the damaged characters, the space, the separations, there’s probably something of James Gray in there.



Born in 1985, **Hubert Charuel**, who comes from a farming background, grew up in the so-called «empty diagonal», not far from the town of Saint-Dizier. He graduated from la Fémis in film production in 2011. After directing several short films, he made his first feature film in 2016, *Bloody milk*. The film was selected for the 2017 Critics' Week at Cannes and went on to win three César Awards, earning both critical and popular acclaim. Following his documentary *Cows with no name*, his second fiction feature, *Meteors*, in collaboration with Claude Le Pape, is presented at the 2025 Cannes Film Festival in the Un Certain Regard section.



Claude Le Pape is a screenwriter. She has worked with Hubert Charuel since his first short film to *BLOODY MILK* (aka *Petit Paysan*) and *Meteors* today. She also co-wrote Thomas Cailley's *Love at first fight* (aka *Les Combattants*), the first two seasons of the TV show *Interns* by Thomas Lilti (aka *Hippocrate*), and directed two short films, *Cajou* and *La maison (pas très loin du Donegal)*.

Cast

PAUL KIRCHER
IDIR AZOUGLI
SALIF CISSÉ

Mika
Daniel
Tony

Crew

Screenplay **HUBERT CHARUEL & CLAUDE LE PAPE**
Direction **HUBERT CHARUEL** in collaboration with **CLAUDE LE PAPE**

Image **JACQUES GIRAULT**
Original music **MAXIME DENUÇ**
MATTHIEU GASNIER
1st assistant director **CÉLIE VALDENAIRE**
Editing **JULIE PICOULEAU**
Casting **ANTOINE CARRARD**
Sound **MARC-OLIVIER BRULLÉ**
Set design **THOMAS GRÉZAUD**
Costume designer **ELISA INGRASSIA**
Production manager **CLAIRE LANGMANN**
Post-production manager **CLARA VINCIENNE**
Production **STÉPHANIE BERMANN** et **ALEXIS DULGUERIAN**

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