

Eddy and De Films en Aiguille present



LE MANS 1955

A short film by Quentin Baillieux



S Y N O P S I S

The 24 Hours of Le Mans, 1955. 300,000 spectators are watching from the sidelines. It is 6:00 PM when Pierre Levegh's car ploughs into the spectator stands, scattering the crowd with his car engine's hot debris. It is a tragedy that will cost more than 80 lives. And yet, the race goes on. At Mercedes, a friend and co-pilot of Pierre Levegh's is ready to take the relay. His name is John Fitch.

“We are all flawed and creatures of our times. Is it fair to judge us by the unknown standards of the future? Some of the habits of our age will doubtless be considered barbaric by later generations”

Carl Sagan,
The demon haunted world.



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND





DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Le Mans 55 is a short film inspired by historical events. In 1955, during the 24 Hours of Le Mans, a sports car careers into the crowd and kills over 80 people. Yet the race continues until the next day.

This event shook the motorsports world. My film, which is based around a very competitive sport, focuses on a tragedy and not on action of the event. The intimacy of the narrative fascinates me more than the visual spectacle.

This drama has yet to be the subject of a film. It is not only part of French history, but also that of the world. Reaching beyond the limits of a heritage film, it will explore a particular event that unearthed universal emotions.

This film was inspired by a 1950s racing car exhibition I visited at the Louvre. I was struck by the beauty of the exhibited sports cars, especially a Jaguar which had competed in 1955 at Le Mans. I began researching the that event and two very contradictory photos appeared next to one another on my screen.

On one side, the image of a tragedy: people in a panic, a

blazing inferno behind them. Bodies were sprawled across the stadium. The photo beside it depicted delighted drivers celebrating their victory with champagne.

How could these two images be linked? How can we live a moment so joyful in parallel to one so tragic?

My desire to create this film was born from these questions – the need to find a link that can allow this juxtaposition of imagery to coexist. **The tendency of man to destroy itself, forgetting its humanity while being consumed by its pride, its passion and feelings is the subject on which I wanted to delve into.** It is the basis of my studies and my thoughts – and my desire to make this film.

The events are grim and the desire to find a guilty party or a meaning behind them can feel necessary. But history is always more complicated than that.

I am convinced that a film in which we would criticise and condemn men in moments of history would not be an serious contribution to remembrance.

If some of the drivers and the racing world were considered guilty of committing this tragedy, surely their mistake



GRAPHIC RESEARCH



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

does not make them bad men. Therefore, I strove to see things from the perspective of these so-called guilty men as a sort of devil's advocate. **I endeavour to explain with empathy how it is possible for the drivers to continue and finish the race despite the tragedy. I wish to restore their humanity and acknowledge the contradictions and the grey areas.**

I would like the viewers to be taken in by the same exhilaration as the drivers and their teams. They also should become caught in the fever of the motorsport world.

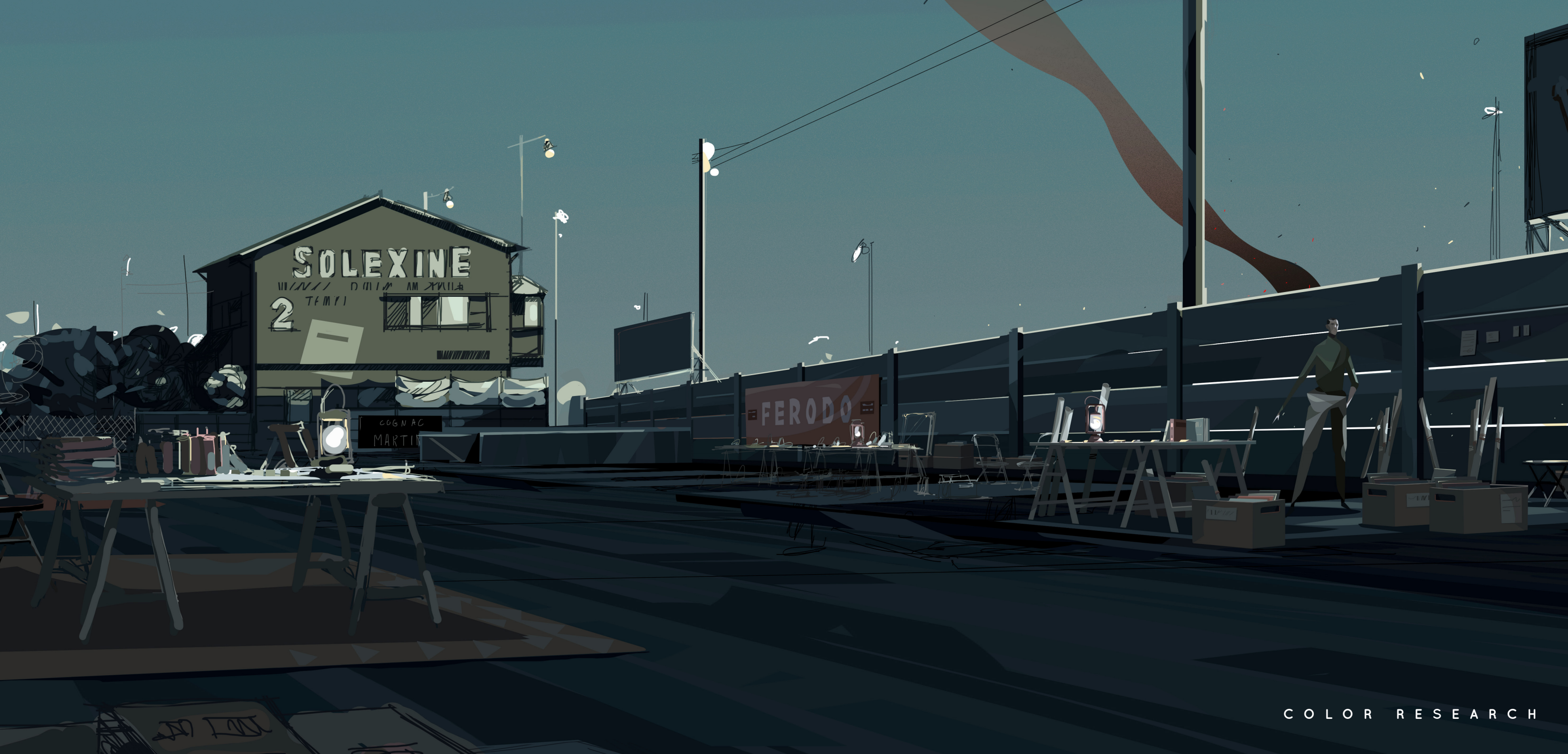
I believe that tragic stories, especially true ones, should be told with a large extent of nuances. Their role is to create a desire for reflection and reconsideration for the viewer regarding the film's story, but also beyond.

I wish to create a sentiment of positive melancholy with this project, that will give the spectator a desire to consider daily life events from a wider perspective and encourage a greater sense of empathy.



2 D GRAPHIC RESEARCH





T H E C H A R A C T E R S



THE MERCEDES TEAM

The Mercedes team domineers the race. They have built the most formidable sports cars and have selected only the top elite drivers. Mindful of the Second World War still being in recent memory, the German squad is entirely composed of Germans, English, French, American and Argentinians. The bond formed by these drivers symbolises a unity born from this decade's racing spirit.

Yet certain victory is ripped away from Mercedes. It finds itself at the heart of this tremendous tragedy: it is one of their cars that crashed into the arena.

The squad continues leading for some time after the crash before forfeiting the race.

JOHN FITCH



The American driver, John Fitch, is 38 year old at the time of the race and a decorated war hero. Although he is not one of the team's flagship drivers, his presence demands recognition and he intends to leave his mark at the legendary race.

Fitch is unfaced by hierarchy, and responds when challenged with smirks and a certain playful charm that is expected of an American war veteran. However, his cheekiness is eclipsed by his heartfelt affection towards all the members of his team; particularly Pierre Levegh to whom he feels close. Of all the team, he is the most capable to take the necessary emotional distance in order to grasp the contradictions of the situation they find themselves in.

His position as co-driver will render him a privileged witness of the tragedy. It is the car he shared with Levegh that has been demolished in the crash. Deprived of his role in the race's well-oiled machine, he becomes a true loose cannon. Free to explore and free to confront the severity of the tragedy .



ALFRED NEUBAUER

Alfred Neubauer is the Mercedes squad sport director. Every aspect of his stature commands respect and confirms his omnipotent authority. This charismatic and respected man has become a motorsport legend.

As the head of the Mercedes team, he expects complete and unquestioning dedication from his squad and rules his empire with a firm but fair hand.

He is a shrewd strategist and a competitive spirit is deeply engrained in his mind-set. The race comes before everything. He has almost blindly lived his entire life with a stopwatch in his hand. His belated realisation of the tragedy's implications causes the foundations of his life's to crumble. A man who appears unshakable has been shaken to the core.

PIERRE LEVEGH

The French driver of the German squad is not a young man when he he become a professional driver in 1955. At the age of fifty, he possibly no longer has the stamina and acuteness required to compete in such a high-demand contest, despite several triumphs in the past.

Eager to prove his worth to the Mercedes squad, he ignores his shortcomings on the fateful day. Concentrated, yet somewhat apprehensive, he is relieved to be able to rely on his teammate, John Fitch.

His tragic death brutally cut both his and his partner's ambitions short, as well as those of the whole team.





B I O G R A P H Y



QUENTIN BAILLIEUX - DIRECTOR

Quentin has been a resident director at EDDY since 2011, He join shortly after graduating from the prestigious Gobelins School of Animation. During his studies, he co-directed the 2007 Annecy Animation Festival opening title sequence, as well as his end-of-year film entitled “Passion Ski”.

In 2010, he co- founded the directing duo “Parallel” and directed the short film, “Lavomatic”, which was nominated at numerous animation festivals (The European Independant film festival /Très Courts, Forum des Image Paris /Les Nuits Photographiques Paris / RIFF Reykjavik 2011 / Cut Out Mexico / ...)

Since then, Quentin has directed a plethora of films as part of Parallel, from commercials (Mediapart, Nespresso, Lancel ...) to music videos (Taffy - Tokyo 2013), as well as the opening sequence for the feature film “Plan de Table” directed by Christelle Raynal.

His film entitled “Tribute to Stanley Kubrick”, an homage to “2001, A Space Odyssey”, was his contribution to a competition organised by the Cinémathèque Française.

His films scrutinise the tendency for mankind to auto-destroy, as well as mankind’s fragile balance between pride, passion and humanity.

P R O F I L E

EDDY PRODUCTION

Eddy is a production company founded by Jean-François Bourrel and Nicolas de Rosanbo. Built upon the former “Chez Eddy” studio and its 13 years experience in design and production, the house develops projects of emerging artists spotted for their strong and unique visual identities.

Over the years, the studio has acquired a renowned proficiency mostly thanks to diverse projects in 2D, 3D and VFX. Not only has it produced many advertising campaigns, it has also dealt with more ambitious projects and worked on feature films such as Silent Hill 2 and Splice.

In 2012, Eddy produced the short animation film DRIPPED directed by Léo Verrier, which won numerous international awards and was shortlisted at the Oscars in 2013. Eddy also produced live-action short films like OLGA directed by Maxime Bruneel selected in Angers, Clermont Ferrand, Busan amongst other festivals, and BENIDORM, a short film by Raphaëlle Tinland.

DE FILM EN AIGUILLE

Carine Ruszniewski and Carole Lambert founded De Films en Aiguille in 2006 with a desire to develop new talents. Through numerous collaborations, they developed an eclectic editorial policy. For nearly 8 years, they have been creating stories with their directors one film after another. It's this loyalty that has defined their editorial line so to speak. It reflects both their love for new genres and the loyalty to subjects that are dear to them. Each film brings an intention to the world – an insight that is comedic or dramatic, political or poetic.

They have produced over twenty short films that have been recognised at numerous festivals as well as multiple documentaries for both television and cinema.

De Films En Aiguille just released ANGEL FACE directed by Vanessa Filho, selected in Cannes Film Festival this year.



C O L O R R E S E A R C H

C R E D I T S

With the voices of:

John Fitch **Nathan Willcocks**
Alfred **Joe Sheridan**
Neubauer **Nicholas Mead**

Directed by **Quentin Baillieux**
Produced by **Nicolas de Rosanbo**
Carole Lambert
Screenplay **Julien Lilti**

Editing **Benjamin Massoubre**
Vincent Tricon
Sound **Xavier Dreyfuss**

Animation Studio **Brunch**
Head of animation **Axel Digoix**
3D supervisor **Jean-Charles Kerninon**

Previz **Les Androïds Associés**
Music **Ali Helnwein**

Produced by **Eddy et De Films en Aiguille**
in co-production with **Brunch Studio**, **Les Androids Associés** and **Windy**
production

With the participation of:
Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée - aide à la production avant
réalisation
Nouvelles technologies en production
The Region des Pays de la Loire
The Procirep and l'Angoa



T E C H N I C A L
I N F O R M A T I O N S

Language	English
Duration	15 minutes
Aspect ratio	2.35 :1
Frame rate	24 fps
Audio	5.1
Color / Black & White	Color
Animation techniques	3D
Software	Maya - Nuke Photoshop
Available on	DCP - Prores - H264
Country	France





C O N T A C T S

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