

TAKE FIVE PRÉSENTE

THE BELGIAN WAVE

UN FILM DE JÉRÔME VANDEWATTYNE



THE TRUTH IS BORING

KARIM BARRAS

KAREN DE PADUWA

DOMINIQUE RONGVAUX

SÉVERINE CAYRON VINCENT TAVIER OLIVIA CARRERE THIERRY JANSSEN MANUELA SERVAIS FREDDY BOZZO EDITH LE MERDY

PRODUCTEURS GREGORY ZALCMAN ALON KNOLL PRODUCTEURS ASSOCIÉS PHILIPPE LOGIE EUSEBIO LARREA IMAGE JEAN-FRANÇOIS AWAD MONTAGE AYRTON HEYMANS SON THIBAUT HEYMANS DANIEL BRUYLANDT ANTOINE WATTIER
MIXAGE DAVID GÉRAIN MUSIQUE YANNICK FRANCK DÉCORS JEAN-PIERRE FARGEAS COSTUMES JESSICA HARKAY ÉCRIT PAR JÉRÔME VANDEWATTYNE KAMAL MESSAOUDI JÉRÔME DI EGIDIO D'APRÈS UNE IDÉE ORIGINALE DE JÉRÔME
DI EGIDIO KAMAL MESSAOUDI COPRODUCTION VOO & BETV RTL BELUX AVEC L'AIDE DU CENTRE DU CINÉMA ET DE L'AUDIOVISUEL DE LA FÉDÉRATION WALLONIE-BRUXELLES ET DE LA LOTERIE NATIONALE AVEC LE SOUTIEN DU TAX
SHELTER DU GOUVERNEMENT FÉDÉRAL DE BELGIQUE AVEC LA PARTICIPATION DE LA RÉGION DE BRUXELLES-CAPITALE ET LE SOUTIEN DE LA SABAM

VOO

Be tv

RTL
Belgium

FÉDÉRATION
WALLONIE-BRUXELLES

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WIN PLUS QUE JOUER

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PRESS KIT



**“GIVE ME
A DREAM TO LIVE,
BECAUSE REALITY
IS KILLING ME,,**

JIM MORRISON

TAKE FIVE

THE BELGIAN WAVE

a film by
JÉRÔME VANDEWATTYNE

with

KARIM BARRAS • KAREN DE PADUWA • DOMINIQUE RONGVAUX

SHORT SYNOPSIS

In the early 90s, journalist Marc Vaerenbergh and his camerawoman disappeared under mysterious circumstances while investigating the Belgian Wave (a series of UFO sightings between 1989 and 1991). Thirty years later, Karen and Elzo discover Marc's diary, reopen the investigation and embark on a psychedelic road trip featuring exuberant witnesses from the era. Is the truth elsewhere?



BELGIQUE • 2023 • COLOR • FRENCH • ST EN • 90 MN
2:39 • 5.1 • 2K • DCP

LONG SYNOPSIS



On April 27, 2020, the Pentagon declassified three videos of «unidentified flying object», stating that it wanted to dispel any doubts about whether the footage was real or not. The videos are real.

This publication stirs up the ufology world and prompts Karen to delve back into the wave of UFO sightings that occurred in Belgium between 1989 and 1991. She had never really believed her father Jacques, a former television soundman, who had witnessed the phenomena while working with journalist Marc Vaerenbergh.

That night, while filming near Shape, the NATO military base in Belgium, a mysterious event is said to have triggered a severe epileptic seizure in her father, as well as the disappearance of Marc Vaerenbergh and their camerawoman, Jeanne Crahay.

To help with her investigation, Karen turns to Elzo Durt, a well-known graphic designer on the underground art scene and Marc Vaerenbergh's godson. Karen and Elzo embark on a psychedelic road trip to the crossroads of reality, with a gallery of witnesses to the era, each more exuberant and disturbing than the last. Our unlikely heroes then discover Marc Vaerenbergh's video diary, which gradually leads them to a sect brimming with dark secrets... and crucial information about the journalist's disappearance.

CAST

| & CREW

PRODUCTION

TAKE FIVE

A FILM BY

JÉRÔME VANDEWATTYNE

WITH

**KARIM BARRAS
KAREN DE PADUWA
DOMINIQUE RONGVAUX
SÉVERINE CAYRON
VINCENT TAVIER
OLIVIA CARRÈRE
THIERRY JANSSEN
MANUELA SERVAIS
FREDDY BOZZO**

WRITING BY

**JÉRÔME VANDEWATTYNE
JÉRÔME DI EGIDIO
KAMAL MESSAOUDI**

**BASED ON AN ORIGINAL
IDEA BY**

**JÉRÔME DI EGIDIO
KAMAL MESSAOUDI**

PRODUCERS

**GREGORY ZALCMAN
ALON KNOLL**

ASSOCIATED PRODUCERS

**PHILIPPE LOGIE
EUSEBIO LARREA**

DOP

JEAN-FRANÇOIS AWAD

EDITING

AYRTON HEYMANS

ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK

YANNICK FRANCK

SOUND

**THIBAUT HEYMANS
DANIEL BRUYLANDT
ANTOINE WATTIER
DAVID GERAIN**

SETTING

JEAN-PIERRE FARGEAS

COSTUME

JESSICA HARKAY



ABOUT THE BELGIAN WAVE

The Belgian UFO wave refers to a series of UFO sightings that took place in Belgium between 1989 and 1991. According to SOBEPS (Belgian Society for the Study of Space Phenomena) and the Belgian Air Force, most sightings described a triangular-shaped flying machine with 3 large headlights, each about a meter in diameter, on its underside, close to the corners, and a rotating orange light in the center, like a rotating beacon. Its wingspan was around 40 meters.

In all, more than 2,000 UFO sightings were recorded between November 1989 and July 1991, collected by SOBEPS. 650 of these sightings were investigated, and just over 500 remain unexplained to this day.

**“In all, more than
2,000 UFO sightings
were recorded between
November 1989 and July
1991,,**

The testimonies collected by amateur ufology associations (SOBEPS, CNEGU...) have not been investigated in depth. The Belgian Air Force is in possession of 12 testimonies from the gendarmerie and 2 direct testimonies from military personnel.

Following the sightings in November 1989, the air force authorized the national defense system to take off F-16s in the event of reports of abnormal activity. On three occasions, Belgian F-16s took off to intercept what witnesses reported as strange phenomena.

The Belgian government is the first and only government not to have denied the existence of UFOs.

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

Can you tell us about the film's starting point, and more specifically about the Belgian Wave?

The Belgian Wave is based on the premise that Belgium is the only country never to have denied the existence of UFOs, after observing some disturbing aerial phenomena between 1989 and 1991. Most governments with similar sightings tried to hush up the stories, probably for fear of showing other nations that the country's security was not infallible, and certainly for fear of being ridiculed in the media. This was the case in the USA until the recent declassification of Pentagon images in 2020, when they stopped hiding the existence of «unidentified flying objects», without addressing the extraterrestrial hypothesis but without ruling it out either.

It's an interesting starting point for our film: why do we take the Americans seriously but not our local authorities? The Belgian Wave is a huge source of inspiration for a story: there's certainly the study of UFOs, taking the broad spectrum from believers to the most skeptical, but it's above all what it tells of Belgium that's even more fascinating. The way in which the Belgian government has dealt with the phenomenon is unique in the field of ufology and in government in general. Showing Belgium, as endearing as it is messy, in the past as in the present, was a very stimulating playground, humoristically, politically and philosophically.



The film mixes archive footage with images you shot yourself. Is the film a documentary investigation into the Belgian Wave? A reconstruction of events?

The film places the events of the Belgian Wave in their historical context, which are sometimes subtly diverted to serve the story and become part of the fiction. A great deal of research went into the writing process, including study of the phenomenon, analysis of sources, interviews with witnesses of the time, and a more in-depth approach in the editing process, where the thread of the story developed naturally, refocusing

- ▶ on the quest of our characters. Our editor, Ayrton Heymans, helped us decide what was most relevant to show. Although the documentary aspect is present, the film goes beyond reconstitution by proposing a true cinematographic and sensory journey. This was an angle that I found captivating: learning with panache, avoiding the pitfall of a «school» documentary, with a cinematic proposition at its core, while remaining accessible.

“ The film goes beyond reconstitution by proposing a true cinematographic and sensory journey ”

Investigation is also very present, through Elzo Durt in the present and his godfather in the '90s. How did you meet Elzo and decide to make a film about him?

To delve into the archives is to delve into the history of Belgium. In my opinion, ufology cannot be dissociated from the world of techno, another cultural phenomenon that has left its mark on our country's history. Acid house, which gave rise to New Beat in our country (which itself was a huge global influence in electronic music), links music, psychedelic drugs, and pop culture, particularly with UFO imagery. The idea wasn't to retrace the history of New Beat (brilliantly summarized in *The Sound Of Belgium*), but to include a character linked to this scene in the story. The character of Elzo bridged the gap between these two eras (1990 to the present day). In fact, the character played by Karim Barras is a synthesis of Elzo Durt, a graphic designer and DJ from Brussels, and his painter brother, Silio. The idea was not so much to make a film about the Durt brothers as to draw inspiration from their personalities, steeped in techno and punk culture, to understand the hero's quest. The main character is in search of his past, mainly to mourn his godfather. This point of view also allowed for an interplay between reality and fiction, in a form of continuity with my first film, *Spit'n'Split*, which already played on this ambiguity.

While we were working on the cover of my band's VHS *From Space* album, the real Elzo Durt shared with me the story of his godfather, who had investigated the Belgian Wave and disappeared overnight at the dawn of the 90s. I thought it would be an original angle for the film, especially as Elzo's personality added a rock'n'roll touch, and I could project myself better into the story if he was the one leading the investigation. Dubious at first, Elzo finally got on board, and we did some video tests. Not being an actor, Elzo didn't feel comfortable in front of the

“ a kind of gonzo biography à la Hunter S. Thompson style ”

- ▶ camera, so I turned to actors to interpret his story, which turned into a kind of gonzo biography à la Hunter S. Thompson style.

The docu-drama angle allowed me to blur the lines and get to the heart of the matter, by putting the viewer in the shoes of an investigator. By getting caught

up in the game, they might want to look for information on all the leads suggested in the film. And it would be up to them to sort out the real from the fake, reminding us that, until now, no definitive truth has been found, leaving all doors open.



The driving force behind the film is the search for truth. How did you approach this aspect?

Delving into a subject like the Belgian Wave, and more specifically the theme of UFOs, the sociological impact on the population of the time and the urban neo-myth that ensued, allowed us to question «the truth». What exactly does that mean?

During my research, it seemed to me that human beings use the figure of the extraterrestrial to reassure themselves of their own existence. We dream of «superior beings» who would bring us knowledge and free us from our torments in the face of existential questions. In the end, it's very human to tell ourselves stories to soothe ourselves and gather around stories to feel less alone in this immensity. There was a philosophical and introspective quest there that resonated with me. I think that a certain kind of truth is to be found in the small details around us, and is very relative from one person to another. The end of the film tries to give the viewer a key rather than a solution, by showing our character in a shamanic initiation rite. This is not to make an apology for the drug (it's a whimsical character's point of view), but to link the quest for the universe to the quest for oneself, from the infinitely large to the infinitely small. This reflection is in line with the X-Files series, which asked more questions than it answered. ▶



I wanted to put into images Albert Einstein's maxim: «The more I learn, the more I realize I don't know», rephrased in the film by Karen, who speaks to herself: «The further I go, the less I know».

“ To link the quest for the universe to the quest for oneself,,

There's a fascination with the strange in a gallery of secondary characters. Are these people real? Are the hypotheses about the Belgian Wave true?

When I write characters, I'm always inspired by what I've seen or heard around me. To say that reality surpasses fiction is an understatement. Sometimes you even have to water it down because you think it's going to look «too big» on screen. The world is full of strange and fascinating characters, which I think is what makes our existence so poetic. Everyone follows their own logic according to their own path. All the characters Karen and Elzo meet throughout the film are a synthesis of the singular people the real Elzo and I have met. As for their reflections, they summarize various theories about the Belgian Wave that we gleaned from our research. A certain kind of freedom and unvarnished truth emerges, and there's something extremely touching about it. I wanted to put them in the film without judgment, and leave the viewer free to draw their own conclusions. What's the difference between an air force officer who can't scientifically explain a physical

- ▶ phenomenon - even thirty years later, despite technological advances - and someone who tells you they see it every day? The latter replied that you should «look at the sky instead of your feet».

Elzo Durt is very resistant to the theories of the Belgian Wave, yet he himself seems outside a certain reality. To what extent is his own life present in the film?

I think Elzo's character is especially resistant to condescension in the face of such a phenomenon. He can't stand the professorial tone that a character like Captain Quasar might use, even if what he's saying isn't without meaning. The paradox of Elzo's character is that he wants to find answers by leaving doors open, with a rejection of authority that can skew his judgment. He's obsessed with the truth, and forgets that some of the answers lie within himself. There's an almost



psychoanalytical approach to all this. His behavior, his addictions, his choices, are guided by wounds he hasn't healed. Sooner or later, he'll have to face himself. I wanted to recreate a fantasized image of Elzo on screen. I've only borrowed part of his personal history and lifestyle, and there was never any question of exposing him to the public.

The Belgian Wave is radical in its aesthetic, with sharp colors and singular sound work. What were your influences in making this film?

With these themes and a light production style, my ambition was to make a pure genre film. In an almost «post-modernist» way, the idea was to bring together my influences, ranging from exploitation films (sensational subject matter, low budget, quick start-up) in the spirit of Roger Corman productions, to the reflections of Aldous Huxley, specifically his essay on «The Doors of Perception» and his work between philosophy and science-fiction literature. Despite the investigation's



“My ambition was to make a pure genre film,,

focus on the past, I wanted a modern, stylized approach for the contemporary sequences, to make a radical break between the two eras. Curiously, I found that the contemporary aesthetic further blurred the lines between reality and fiction. The aim was also to avoid repeating myself with the cruder images of my first feature. We worked on the visuals with our director of photography Jean-François Awad, who sublimated the images I had in mind. We've been working together for years, and with each project we try to push our vision a little further with the means at hand. Jean-François is truly a quiet force. Nothing is ever impossible for him, he will always find solutions and even your wildest ideas will put a smile on his face. We agree in preparation on the direction to take, and then we speak very little to each other on the set, as if each knew what the other expected of him.



As far as sound is concerned, I called on Daniel Bruylandt, with whom I'd been dreaming of working for years after being blown away by his work on films by Hélène Cattet and Bruno Forzani. Daniel and I share the same approach to cinema and art in general. We want it to be a totally immersive, uncompromising experience. I didn't want the film to be limited to the screen, I wanted the other senses to be awakened. His work was sublimated by the mixing of David Gérain, who immediately understood our intentions and brought his sensitivity to bear. Without doubt, one of the most exhilarating stages of post-production.

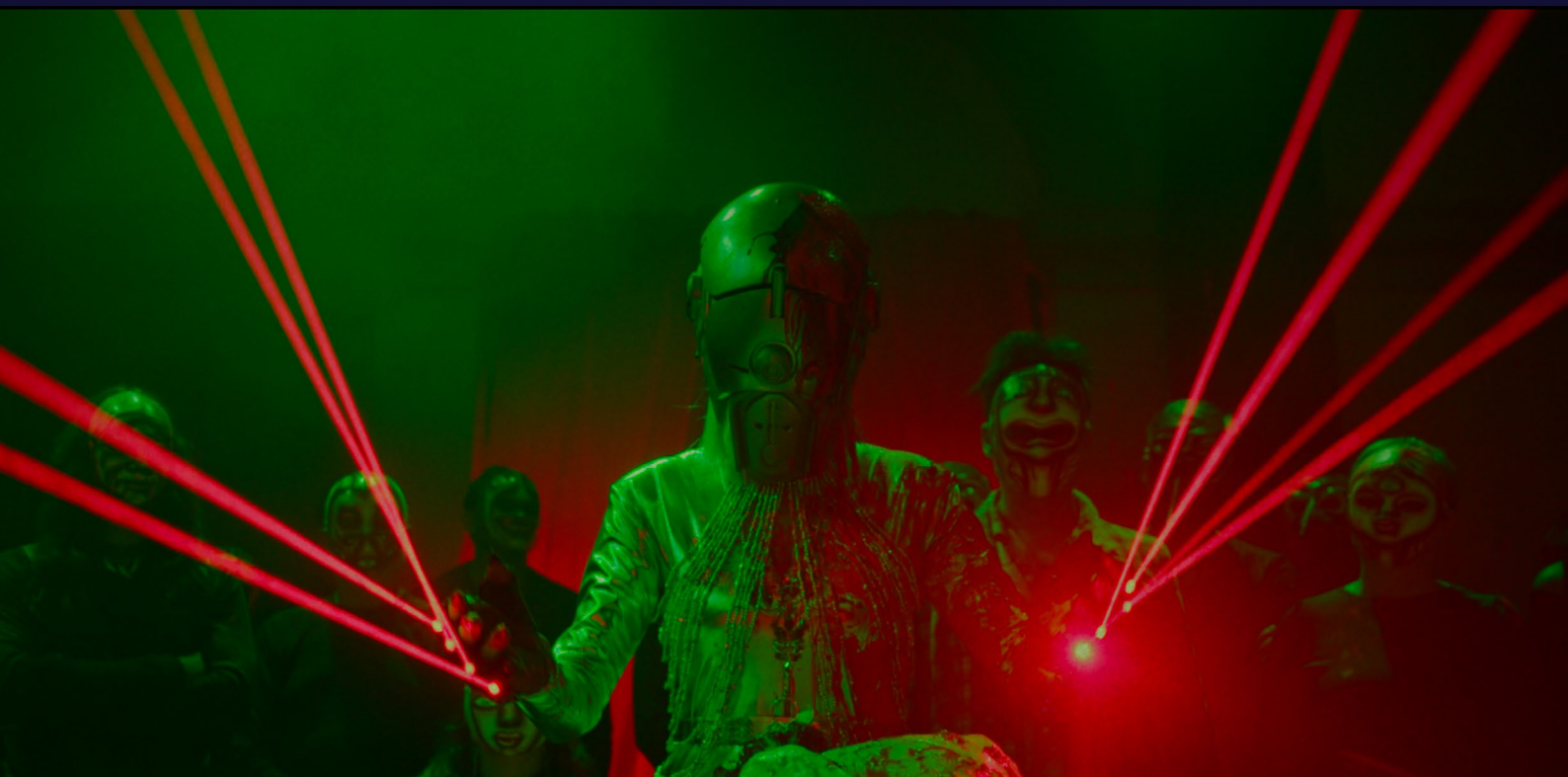


► *Finally, a word about the music, which plays a big part in the film's atmosphere and its retro yet modern feel?*

The soundtrack was entirely composed and performed by Yannick Franck under his stage name RAUM. Yannick comes from the underground electronic scene, whose reputation is well established in Berlin, yet which is not fully recognized in Belgium. I wanted industrial, organic music, far removed from the more classical film soundtracks that don't thrill me at all. But our collaboration goes beyond music. We talked a lot about the tone of the film, and he was invaluable to me during the visions at the editing stage, like a lighthouse constantly reminding me: «Don't forget to make your film.» It was this alchemy that gave birth to the magic. The idea was to feel the nostalgia of the 90s while adding a more modern touch to create a link between the two eras. Like Morricone, Yannick composes his music

in advance of the shoot, based on our discussions and his feelings after reading the script. This is a huge advantage for feeding the actors, both in preparation and on set. Then we adjust the tracks in the edit, ping-ponging several versions until the image and music mesh harmoniously.

“The idea was to feel the nostalgia of the 90s while adding a more modern touch to create a link between the two eras,,



FESTIVALS

SEPTEMBER 2023

- International Film Festival Oldenburg - Audacity Award

“Oldenburg’s audacity award, given to a film that pushes the boundaries of modern cinema.”

The Hollywood Reporter

- Slash Festival - Vienne

OCTOBER 2023

- Lausanne Underground Film & Music Festival - Opening film

JÉRÔME VANDEWATTYNE

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Belgium in 1989, Jérôme Vandewattyne began making his first feature film at the age of 25, spending over two years filming the tours of The Experimental Tropic Blues Band from Liège. *Spit'n'Split* (2017) was born of these reported images. Much more than a tour report, the film goes beyond appearances, with the original ambition of constructing a fiction within a documentary framework, a mythomaniacal account of rock that starts from a grimy everyday life to reach



psychedelic flights of fancy. The director takes the time and the gamble to turn his subjects into actors, taking pleasure in losing his audience, preventing them from discerning truth from falsehood, documentary from fiction, raw emotion from orchestrated emotion, in order to explore the very soul of those he films. But this work on ambiguity should not be seen as artistic sadism; it is more a dogma, a manufacturing process that aims to give fiction a raw, organic truth, because it is born of reality. In the same vein, he is completing his second feature in 2023, *The Belgian Wave* (produced by Take Five and supported by the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, RTL Belux, VOO & Be tv and Screen Brussels).

Influenced by 70s cinema, documentarians (*Punishment Park*, the work of Werner Herzog), gonzo journalism (Hunter S. Thompson), American satirical literature (Bret Easton Ellis) and psychedelia (Kenneth Anger), Jérôme Vandewattyne examines humanity through the prism of its strangest aspects. The freaks, the marginalized and the «mad» attract his camera in their ability to convey authenticity. This organic strangeness can also be found in the gory aesthetics of his early short films.

After studying communications at ISFSC with a major in audiovisual, journalism and advertising, he founded the music group VHS From Space. In addition to his own films, he was commissioned by television to produce two seasons of the web series *What The Fake?* RTBF and Be tv (Canal+ Belgique), for which he produces commercials, edits a large number of cinema trailers and regularly contributes to the editing of Fabrice du Welz's *Home Cinéma* program. He has also directed recent advertising campaigns for *The Voice Belgique*, *The Voice Kids*, Euro 2021, *Les Magritte du Cinéma*, *Tipik*, *La Première*, *Vivacité* and *Classic 21*.

FILMOGRAPHY

The Belgian Wave - 2023

(Feature)

Spit'n'split - 2017

(Feature)

(Magrittes nomination)

What the fake - 2014

(Web series)

Slutterball - 2012

(Short)

She's a slut - 2011

(Short)



LINKS

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DISTRIBUTION**

TAKE FIVE - Gregory Zalcman

Avenue du roi, 52

1060 Brussels

BELGIUM

+32 (0) 476 53 27 07

gregory@take-five.be

INTERNATIONAL SALES

REEL SUSPECTS

6, avenue Rachel

75018 - Paris

FRANCE

+ 33 1 58 51 42 95

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