

# FINAL SET

Directed by Quentin Reynaud

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## **SYNOPSIS**

Once described as a young professional tennis prodigy, Thomas never had the career in the game he had hoped for. At 37, he decides to return to the French Open at Rolland Garros, in spite of his declining physical fitness and shattered knee. Although his wife Eve and his mother Judith advise him to give up on his unlikely ambition, Thomas obsessively perseveres. He will have to face his own demons as well as the intense competitive qualifying rounds to reach the tournament and eventually face a young tennis genius who disturbingly reminds him of his younger self.

# INTERVIEW WITH ALEX LUTZ

## **How does Alex Lutz, a horse-riding enthusiast, end up in a film playing the part of a champion, in a sport he's never played before?**

The first time Quentin Reynaud told me his idea for a film about a tennis player was in 2015, on the set of Paris-Willouby. At the time though, the screenplay he'd been developing enthusiastically for several years was still a work in progress, and our discussion was fairly informal. After Paris-Willouby we each went our own way, but we didn't cut ties. One day when I was on my way to work in Marseille, I ran into him at the Gare de Lyon; the encounter was extremely fortuitous for me. I was still on a high from getting the César award for GUY, but I'd also had a slight setback when I found out that a film, I was really keen to do wouldn't be going ahead. Chance sometimes smiles to us, and not only did it put me and Quentin on the same train, it even put us in the same carriage. Along the journey, the conversation naturally turned to FINAL SET, and he told me he'd finally finished it. He asked me to read it with an open mind. I'm usually quite a slow reader, but I read through it in one sitting and it completely blew me away. I called Quentin and told him that if he wanted me, I was the man for Thomas. After we'd played a short game on a clay court he agreed, but he warned me that the role would need a lot of investment. At the time, I hadn't yet grasped just how much work it would entail.

## **Why were you so keen to do the film?**

It was simple, radical, yet deeply moving all at the same time. It's about a man playing out his "swan song", and the finite nature of living things is a subject I've always identified with. I'd already touched on this slightly in GUY. But Guy was an old man and Thomas is not yet forty, which I think makes it even more poignant. And the way he goes about his work also reminds me of the way I approach my own; his is about batting away tennis balls and mine is throwing out words, but it involves the same physical engagement. He "goes for it" on the court, and I'm not one to hold back when I'm on stage. My shows are very physical: my body suffers and gets worn out and damaged, but the extraordinary pleasure I get from it means I can't function any other way! Basically, I put in the same do-or-die effort on stage as Thomas does on the court. I also see Thomas as something of a fellow sufferer, the enormous difference being that the matches he plays bring in just enough for him to keep his head above water, whereas for me, the physical effort I put into over 200 performances every year, I get back a hundredfold from the audience.

## **The actor in you also shares Thomas's experience of loneliness.**

Any artist or sportsman who performs in front of an audience alone, in a place evocative of an arena, has a sense of vertigo when they first "go out there". So yes, absolutely, that's something I have in common with Thomas. We share lots of other things too, which are more "visible", in particular the concentration ritual where you take time to go into yourself before a performance, to project yourself, find the strength. The reason I was so struck with Thomas wasn't just about our similarities or the things we have in common though, it was also because of his singularity. Although he's fairly unremarkable when he's going about his everyday life, everything else about him is extraordinary. Quentin created such a unique character, in fact, that I think FINAL SET achieves universal appeal.

## **Why do you think that is?**

The more care you take over the subject you're dealing with and the more precise you are, the more universality you achieve. Films that trivialize things or just give an approximation of them rarely

captivate the audience. People need the truth if they're going to be moved, and the truth lies in the accuracy of what they're being told. It doesn't matter if certain details escape them, the emotion will come. It's like the encounters you have in life. You sometimes meet people who seem inaccessible because you don't understand their language or their customs, but if you take the trouble to find out about them, they often touch you deeply in spite of everything. I hope this will be the case for Thomas Joseph Edison. Quentin allows us time to get to know him, not only in the grandstanding, spectacular, technical and tragic way he pursues his career, but also in his ordinary, everyday life as a father, husband and son.

**This insight into the life of a tennis player 'off the court' is an important first in feature films. Was this aspect of FINAL SET partly why you were so keen to play Thomas?**

It's the thing that inspired me most at any rate, because it's Thomas who gives the film the truth I was just talking about. It helps you understand that behind any player who's slightly elusive in his behavior on court, there may be a father who takes care of his child, an instructor who trains kids, and a husband juggling contracts so he doesn't end up overdrawn at the end of the month. I had no idea what the daily life of a tennis professional entailed. I might have had an idea about certain things - the selfishness or apparent detachment that can conceal courage and determination in some players, for example, but I never suspected how vital it is for some of them to maintain their world ranking. The need to go up in the ranks, or at least to not go down, accentuates the build-up of suspense during the final match of the film. You understand that it's the survival of the player that's at stake.

The fact that it draws the strength of its finale from the sometimes-troubled story of the daily life of a tennis player gives FINAL SET terrific interest and puts it in a class of its own.

**How did you cope with the physical side of playing Thomas when you'd never held a tennis racquet in your life before?**

I trained four hours a day for four months - two hours of exercise and two hours of actual tennis. The aim was not to transform myself into "Mr. Universe", just to develop the build and energy typical of a champion. I didn't start from zero. Like I said, I'm a very active person, on stage and in life in general, and I do a lot of exercise, but in this case, I needed more flexibility in my movements, more tone and more speed. Under the advice of a coach, I forced myself to go on whacking tennis balls non-stop, and I missed a lot of them, a huge amount. I played very, very badly at first, then just badly. I'm still not a good player, but I did improve (laughs). It wasn't such a big deal that my playing was awkward in the tennis match and training sequences - the role just required me to put three balls in my pocket as naturally as possible, or bounce them on the ground, or pull off a credible serve. Basically, my work on court was mainly about choreography. If you look closely, I don't hit the ball much in the film and it's just as well - it would have been neither feasible nor convincing otherwise. To make things look believable on screen, I mainly worked on "mimesis" with my body double, and I swotted up on my gestures off the court. Quentin's wanted people to see how I hold myself, how I walk, carry my bag, put a grip on a racquet etc. and think "here's a guy who has 30 years of tennis under his belt".

**And in terms of psychology, how did you "get into" Thomas?**

Thomas is still a wounded child who's out to get revenge for his failures and wants just one thing: that they finally acknowledge it's up to him to decide when it's over. And for him, it's not over. In this

respect there's something of the artist about him too. You do this job with the ambition to succeed, of course, but above all to keep going. Even though you know you can't always be on the crest of the wave, the setbacks when you're losing or just stagnating are always hard to accept, especially as it's disappointing for the people who are close to you. Your choice of profession sometimes doesn't sit well with your family, but it rarely happens that they don't eventually come around, pushing you and supporting you, projecting their crazy hopes and dreams onto you. Then it's about not shattering the dreamlike construct. For example, I can perform in front of 3,000 people, but if I don't have the support of my friends and family, or if I feel I'm not making them proud, it makes me unhappy. I'm inconsolable, like I am when I realize, I've disappointed people in the profession that I admire or who have helped me get where I am. When they don't hold out their hand to me, the pain is beyond anything. Thomas lives with this kind of sorrow, worse probably because he feels he's carrying the burden of his mother's sacrifice, a mother who loved him so much and indulged and supported him. He disappointed her so much that she told him she wouldn't go and see him play any more if it was only to see him lose. It must be dreadful to hear your mother say a thing like that, and especially when, although it's a reasonable objection, it's still extremely unfair for the simple reason that it's Thomas who's doing the hard work and not some big superstar.

**Apart from acting, you also write and direct. Were you ever tempted to get involved in the screenplay or production of FINAL SET?**

When you have the lead role in a film, you're automatically invited to the discussion table. Quentin and I thought about how to give more weight to the character of the mother and how to make her relationship with her son clearer. But that's all. The screenplay was already there. The construct was solid, and the characters had both fragility and truth. There was nothing I wanted to add to or take away from it. It left me in a state of high emotion when I finished reading it, which surprised me because screenplays don't have the stylistic devices of novels, so they're generally quite dry and unemotional. FINAL SET was an exception to the rule. You could "see" what he was trying to say. I could picture how beautiful the images were and feel the rhythm of the pace. I left Quentin in charge and put my faith in him completely.

**What was it like filming at Roland Garros - the Holy Grail of tennis tournaments in France? Was it overwhelming?**

Any "first" - and this was a first for me - always causes a bit of inner turmoil, so yes, definitely. But ever since I read the screenplay, Roland Garros had assumed the part of a character in its own right, because it has such a presence in the minds of tennis fans. It had to be there. I'm still grateful to Bernard Giudicelli for getting the door open for us. I'm sure we wouldn't have played the same way on an ordinary clay court. No enactment would have given us the emotional authenticity.

We started filming with the final match scene, on court 14 I think, which was almost packed. It was the high point in the film, and we played it with freakish energy, it was absolutely incredible. And then afterwards, as the days went by, our energy flagged. It didn't feel so "good" being on court. It bothered us until we realized, we were actually recording the matches in descending order of importance. The further we went, the more the stakes diminished. This "order" no doubt played subconsciously on our minds. I now believe the idea to shoot the tournament matches in reverse order helped with the mounting tension in the film enormously. It was quite a gamble on Quentin's part, but he pulled it off.

**Just like he managed to create the suspense of a grand slam tournament final in a simple qualifying match.**

Why would he do things the hard way? Quentin was and still is a great tennis player. He's played dozens of matches and watched hundreds more. He knows the score. He knows why the audience get to love certain champions; he knows it's not essential for them to be famous, what counts above all is the emotion they wring out of you. In his painful determination to get back to the top, Thomas generates a lot of emotion in FINAL SET. When a guy like him comes onto the court for his last-chance match, of course we're all rooting for him. Quentin had the match sequence go on for twenty minutes, which might seem bold in a film lasting only an hour and forty minutes, but I'm sure the suspense would have been sustained if it had gone on even longer. Essentially, Quentin had faith in the sporting process. The sequence is proof of his love for tennis, which he has played so much of. I think it's marvellous.

**What were the most difficult scenes for you to shoot? What were the most physical and the most psychological?**

At first, I would have minor panic attacks during certain match scenes; I was suddenly afraid I wasn't up to the task. But Quentin soon discovered how to get past these setbacks; he told me that however many takes it needed, he would only keep the perfect ones, and even if there was only one, it would do! He also told me that the only thing that interested him was that I was convinced I was a good tennis player. That was reassuring for me. Strangely enough, it was the medical sequences that were the most painful and difficult for me, but that's probably because they mirrored my own experience so closely. I'm physically quite damaged. I've had knee surgery twice and I have something on one of the vertebrae in my lower back. All the scenes where Thomas analyses his own x-ray results, I've been there myself. I know the earth tremors they can cause inside you. The strength-training scene at the physiotherapist I found quite moving as well. It brought back to me the feeling of going through a physical battle every morning to get up: as soon as I opened my eyes, the pain level would be an 8. It wasn't too serious as it turned out, but it was still quite scary. Reliving those emotions meant I was better able to play the character. I just had to get the dosage right. (laughs)

**This is the first time you've worked with Kristin Scott-Thomas.**

When you're playing opposite a great actor, who just happens to have an international career, it's no time to be showing off! I was like a kid, in awe of her. She'd seen some of my shows, she knew my work and she congratulated me when I won the César for Guy. I couldn't get over it. There's something a bit English-sounding about Thomas' surname - Edison, so I thought she was the obvious one to play the part of the mother. Quentin really liked the idea. So, I called her and explained that although the character wasn't the leading role, it was still deep and magnificent. Kristin is a big star, but first and foremost she's an actor who is approachable and keen to try new things; she agreed to read the screenplay and meet Quentin. She said she'd play the part, and we were in raptures. Working with her has been such a great experience for me. Her capacity for creativity is phenomenal. She's incredibly photogenic and her professional standards are exceptional.

I also loved playing Ana Girardot's husband. She's an actor with enormous emotional power. She also knows how to portray fully on screen all the little things she does - things so insignificant that even her acting partner might not notice them. Ana's minimalism is massive (laughs). We enjoyed creating and building our little trajectory as a couple - which still has something of the adolescent about it; he will to continue our life together in the midst of all the tennis socks and racquets, supported by a federation

that is still our backbone. I hope to work with Ana again one day.

**Getting back to Thomas, we get the impression he's a unique character in your career; you decided to play him by "exposing" him, not hiding behind some acting technique or costume.**

Thomas was a defining role for me. He opened up wounds and made them raw again. To give his truth substance, he had to search deep inside himself. The journey was as demanding as it was exhilarating. The fact that I was able to see it through to the end is down to Quentin, who supported me unstintingly, putting his faith in me and tolerating me, and being as firm as a coach with a protégé. I can't thank him enough for allowing me to play Thomas and work with the partners I had. I'm so happy and proud for him. The film is exactly like the screenplay he wrote. He never strayed from the path when he was filming it. It's amazing. I think he's a great director.

**Who is FINAL SET aimed at in your opinion?**

Everyone. Despite the profession of the main character, FINAL SET is not a specialist film, it's about a man trying to do his job, pursue his dream, and trying to achieve it against all odds, with all the selfishness and isolation it can generate. Thomas has something of the Don Quixote about him. To get where he wants to go, he has to fight invisible but palpable enemies. He has guts, poetry, grandeur, and no shortage of pain. He's a magnificent figure of humanity and courage. Despite all the setbacks, he evokes enormous empathy.

# INTERVIEW WITH ANA GIRARDOT

## **How did you get into this project?**

It was a bit like a gift falling out of the sky. I'd wanted to work with Alex Lutz for a long time, and I believe it was mutual. I didn't know Quentin, but when he called to offer me the part of Alex's wife in his new film, I was over the moon. I lost no time reading the screenplay, and I called Quentin back as soon I put it down to tell him how excited I was. I thought the screenplay was amazing, with the slight reservation that I found the supporting role of a wife and caretaker a little too withdrawn, a little too passive. Quentin listened to me, and he understood. When I saw him - he came with Alex - everything just happened very simply. He took the notes I'd brought with me and promised to take them into account. I didn't have to go through casting. It was a done deal! (laughs)

## **Apart from giving you the chance to work with Alex, what did you like about the screenplay?**

The atmosphere of it. FINAL SET has something of the Anglo-American film style that I love so much, it combines precision, drama and comedy. There's no unnecessary chatter, it's all to the point - efficient without being dry; emotions find their own place in it. I'd also never seen a French film about what goes on behind the scenes in tennis. I love tennis. I discovered it three years ago when I went to Roland Garros. I know nothing about it before that, but I was captivated immediately. It's a sport that builds suspense, even if a match goes on for hours, it's never won. It only takes one ball to change everything. I became addicted to Roland Garros in particular, and tennis in general.

Apart from that, another aspect of FINAL SET that I liked a lot was the relationship between the couple - Alex's character and mine. Eve and Thomas have the same vocation. You can imagine that at some point in their careers they were probably a bit jealous of each other, maybe even a lot, and the feeling has never entirely gone away. Although Eve had to give up competing when she got pregnant and never went back to it, there's still a kind of uneasiness between Thomas and herself. You feel that although she does love her husband, although she respects his determination to hang on at all costs, her bitterness sometimes borders on resentment. I thought this aspect was finely observed, and to be honest universal. It's normal for a relationship between two people who work in the public eye to go downhill in the end, however much they love one another, because the spirit of competition can have such a poisonous effect. In this case Eve and Thomas are sportspeople, but I noticed similarities with other couples I know well who also work in the public eye - actors in particular.

## **How did you see Eve?**

I saw her as a champion grieving over the thing she's passionate about. She's sweet and loving; she's a fantastic mother and she's the kind of wife who listens to her husband. She understands what he's going through and what he puts up with, but like I said, she's also a young woman living with the pain of giving up competing, however noble the reason she had to quit. I loved giving Eve a personality. She's not a woman to stay in the background, she's a woman who takes an active part. She has a real place. Alex and I worked a lot on drawing out our couple. Starting out from the situation he's currently in, which is the story here, we worked backwards to construct a past for them. I hope people understand that the two of them have been through a lot, in spite of their adolescent fragility.

I didn't have to train to play Eve, like Alex did. She was once a tennis champion, but it's been three years since she held a racquet, and besides, she doesn't hold one at any point in the film! I just needed

to look like a former tennis player in order to play her, and to look credible in the photo of her in a Lacoste shirt. I've played a lot of sports and my shoulders are quite broad, so I just made my workouts a little more intense for the three months leading up to the shoot. But I didn't venture onto the court. I turned down Quentin's invitation to train with Alex and left him to work quietly in his own space. And I have to admit - I'm rubbish at tennis (laughs).

**This was the first time you've worked with Alex. Did you find your feet with him right away?**

Yes. Alex is an excellent partner. Even though he never stops, even though he's always totally immersed in his work, he takes the time to be courteous and considerate. We were filming while he was doing his show. He was on stage for two hours every night, and he also had to train two hours every day with his horses. That didn't stop him being on set at seven o'clock sharp every morning, always just as keen, flawless concentration and incredibly considerate of everyone. Knowing he was a writer and director, I wondered how he would be with Quentin, but he always stayed strictly within his remit as an actor. He was the perfect acting partner for me. He's open and he gives you every opportunity to express yourself. He really is how he acts: calm, warm and present. I never caught him taking a sneaky look at his phone. He's a person who lifts you up so you can do better.

**What impressed you the most about the set for FINAL SET?**

The studious serenity that reigned there. It was very pleasant working with Quentin. Not only are his dialogues chiseled, he gives you time to set them up. He gave us something that's increasingly rare on a set: time. He put his camera at our disposal, whereas the opposite is often the case. With Quentin's consideration, Alex's attentiveness and the kindness of the team, this shoot was a particularly good one. I enjoyed it like I never have before. I went home at night looking forward to the next day.

**Were any scenes particularly sensitive to shoot?**

The one where I argue with Alex and have to snatch the child quite roughly and tell him we're leaving. The look on the little boy's face broke my heart on every take we did. I wondered what impact the scene would have on him later.

I was also quite disconcerted by the scenes in the stands. We had to pretend we were watching a match, but there was no play going on. I'd never done that before. It was quite terrifying. (laughs)

**FINAL SET is the story of a champion who's prepared to sacrifice his health, his equanimity and his family life to get back to the top before he bows out. What feeling does that inspire in you?**

Respect. I think the story has style. I didn't know any Thomas, but the one Quentin created is so realistic. He doesn't cheat. That's why you find him so touching.

# INTERVIEW WITH KRISTIN THOMAS SCOTT

## **How did you get into this project?**

Very simply. A few years ago, some friends advised me to go and see Alex Lutz on stage, they said his comedy was compelling. Not being a fan of French humor, I was a bit reluctant, but I was completely enthralled when I came away. I thought Alex was brilliant: his imitations, his humor, his gestures... everything was perfect. A few years later, I turned on the TV and stumbled upon an episode of Catherine et Liliane. Catherine was holding a magazine with Christopher Walken on the cover, and I heard her say to Liliane, "Don't you think Christopher looks like Kristin Scott Thomas?".

I burst out laughing. At the time, I was in an advert for face cream where my forehead was very exposed. I thought Catherine's remark was a bit cheeky, but funny and quite accurate. I like that way of ribbing people, clever but not malicious. Sometime later, I went to see Guy and I thought Alex's performance very impressive. It wasn't until the César awards ceremony when he won best actor that I could finally congratulate him in person. When someone impresses you with their performance or their talent, you shouldn't hesitate to tell them. If a compliment is sincere, it will touch the heart of the person receiving it. When Alex got the screenplay for FINAL SET, he sent it to me. We exchanged a few texts, had dinner together and... I agreed to become his mother (laughs).

## **Did you know the director, Quentin Reynaud?**

Not at all, but when I met him, I found the same enthusiasm, intelligence and finesse in him that he put into his screenplay. When people are so similar to how they appear in their writing, it proves they're sincere. Quentin didn't really project himself into the character of Thomas, but he gave him his love of tennis, his strength of character and his greatness of soul. FINAL SET is based on true life. That gave me confidence.

## **Apart from the sincerity, what attracted you to the screenplay?**

I was touched by the fact he decided to focus on the end of the career for a man not yet 40 years old. It's a subject I find extremely moving, because 40 is a milestone that's a bit like an "ending" for female actors too; it's hard to get past it. You feel you're at the end of something, you're no longer at the age where you can play young leading ladies, but you haven't yet reached the age to play the mother. You're in between, in a vacuum, like someone's holding a knife to your throat. It's complicated. You have to be careful... FINAL SET is not quite like that, but I couldn't help making the connection between what Thomas was experiencing and what I experienced myself. I loved the way Thomas' relationship with his mother Judith was described too. She wants him to win, but at the same time she no longer believes in him. She feels responsible for the failure of his career, and yet she has invested everything in his talent so she's angry with him for disappointing her. Judith is a woman torn between anger, disillusionment and guilt. I have always been quite fascinated by the friends and family around great sportsmen. I often find their dedication a little suspect, borderline; they push for a future champion, but how far would they go? And how? What really motivates them? There's a fine line between encouragement and subjugation. From this point of view, the complex relationship between Thomas and Judith is described extremely well. I just tried to give Judith a little tenderness. It was a feeling that didn't really come out in the words, but I felt it was there, between the lines. Judith is not a cold

mother. Even though she was disappointed in her son and although he broke her heart, she never stopped loving him.

**Judith is a magnificent character as a mother.**

Yes, that's the word - magnificent. Judith is complex, mysterious, intense and in pain. She doesn't have a principal role in the film, but she's one of the cornerstones. She helps you to understand Thomas' behavior, his determination and his fixation with bowing out in style. I love creating secondary characters. They have five scenes together, and you have to make them exist, give them personality, right from the start. It's a gamble every time. Ever since *Four Weddings and a Funeral* I love attempting these personalities, I find it interesting.

**You have to stick closely to the dialogue, I imagine.**

Of course, it's essential. The shorter the role, the more chiseled and meaningful it has to be. The problem is, it's sometimes too dense, too demonstrative. It comes from good intentions on the part of the writer, but too much explanation kills the emotion. The actor no longer has any space to express their feelings. It's extremely sensitive when you write for cinema; the more talkative and personal the character, the harder it is to seize her and make her your own. That wasn't the case with my character Judith. She just needed a few touches to make her easier to portray. Quentin understands that. We worked on her together.

**Do you play tennis?**

I love watching tennis and I'd like to be able to play, but alas I don't. The last time I tried was about 20 years ago, when I tried to teach my daughter. When I picked up the racquet, the only thing the instructor could think of to say was that I was holding it "the old-fashioned way". It made me laugh, but it put me off learning for good (laughs). I was a little terrified at the idea of having to hold a racquet in the film, especially since I'm not competitive and I don't care about winning, apart from at cards. I took classes for about a month and to my surprise I enjoyed playing. That little bit of training made me want to play again, but I know I'm only at a low level. I'm still a bit embarrassed about it! (laughs)

**This was the first time you'd worked with Alex Lutz.**

His hard work impressed me. I wondered how he was going to manage because he'd never held a tennis racquet in his life. He trained like a madman! When you have a partner who's that talented, demanding and focused, it can only go well. Alex and I immediately hit it off, we were on the same wavelength. Alex is a very precise, attentive actor, he's a perfectionist. If he has to do ten takes, he'll do it, without complaining. He even wanted to do more than that sometimes, although none of us could see why. Alex is a bit like Thomas; he goes to extremes to get what he wants, no matter what it costs him. He has great integrity. He doesn't cheat. Neither does Quentin. This was his second film. He knew what he wanted, and he knew his subject perfectly. I love creators like Quentin and Alex, who have substance. They're easy to work with.

**How did you approach FINAL SET?**

Although it goes behind the scenes of the tennis world, *FINAL SET* is not really a film about professional tennis, for me. It's about a man on the threshold of success, a sportsman we can see is brave and

determined, but there's something lacking, something he needs to get him to the top of the podium. Thomas is like the Poulidor of the tennis world. I hope people will like him as much as they adored the French cyclist who always came second.

# INTERVIEW WITH QUENTIN REYNAUD

## **Where did you get the idea for FINAL SET?**

I've always played tennis. I was brought up with it. I signed up with the Primrose club in Bordeaux and by the age of 15 or 16 I'd reached a fairly good level. Then I injured my ankle and had to stop for several months. I managed to regain my ranking, but I decided to give up competing when I finished school. I continued to play, but as an amateur. There were some great hopes among my circle of friends, but tennis is such an unforgiving sport and many of them had their hopes dashed. Nonetheless, they battled on bravely on the court, and off the court they struggled to make a living out of the vocation they found impossible to give up. I convinced myself there was something about the behind-the-scenes world of professional tennis - the reality of it, the mindset, the self-denial and the sacrifices it involves. I first started writing the screenplay in 2011, telling myself I had all the time in the world to do it, there was no rush.

## **You're different from the majority of directors who are often guided by a sense of urgency.**

I have an unusual background; I'm also an architect. When I was a child, two activities were important to me: tennis and cinema. When I wasn't on the court, I was making films - actual feature films, with my cousins as the actors and using a small canon S-VHS camera. I edited them myself by copying them onto VHS tape. But when I passed my baccalaureate and decided to give up competing, the impenetrability of the film industry worried me a bit and I went into architecture instead. As a discipline that needs you to be both structured and artistically engaged, it was perfect for me. I got my degree in architecture and opened my own studio, but I was still playing tennis and writing screenplays - including FINAL SET .

## **Has your architectural practice helped you?**

Which one is dominant in me - the architect or the filmmaker? Which one provides for the other? I can't answer that. Architecture and film making are two sides of the same coin for me; they involve almost identical processes. They're both about giving form to an idea, or a story. The "construction sites" are not the same and the people involved are very different, but they both require teamwork, with all the advice, discussion and interaction that takes, and despite that, no matter how pertinent it might be, you have to maintain your vision of the project, otherwise it will collapse or go astray. I made a special effort to stay on course with FINAL SET.

## **The story of Thomas Joseph Edison is a true-life experience. Is it your own experience?**

Not really. Other than a passion for tennis, Thomas and I don't have much in common. His background is nothing like mine. I stopped competing before I got involved in the international circuits, so I didn't have to deal with the big disappointments or endure the suffering it takes to get back on top of the game.

In fact, the character of Thomas was inspired by several of my friends who never managed to reach the heights they expected, for various reasons. Like I said, sometimes it only takes one loss to ruin a career. Something breaks inside you, physically or mentally, and it's over. You lose your footing. It doesn't take much - the return of a recurring injury or losing your confidence which can happen without warning, just the feeling of being out of favor with the audience, or more tellingly, with a loved one. Seen from the outside, this relentless defeatism seems inexplicable.

**In FINAL SET, you attribute the utmost importance to Thomas' mother. Why is that?**

Monica Seles, André Agassi and Steffi Graf all confirm it in their memoirs: however talented you are, you don't just become a champion. There's often a parent behind it. A parent who guides you, takes care of, reassures you, spares no expense, travels hundreds of kilometers every year to get you to tennis matches, buys your outfits, your rackets and your balls, encourages you when you're feeling down, and of course congratulates you when you win. Because the decision to become a tennis player is being made earlier and earlier, the parents' dedication goes on for many years. When you're a child, how can you repay this kind of dedication? By trying not to disappoint them whenever possible, in other words, by winning! I remember how despondent I was as a child when I lost a match. I didn't know how to make up for it. Today when I remember those defeats that destroyed all their sacrifices, it still provokes profound emotion and a great sense of nostalgia in me.

Getting back to Judith, I made her a former good player who decided to coach children, including her own - Thomas. Did Thomas already have the talent, or did she train him? No one, not even Judith, can answer that question, and it comes up every time a future champion is born. We just know, obviously, that Judith pushed Thomas and that he disappointed her, but despite her disappointment she continued to love and encourage him, although she was more distant. In Thomas' determination to make a successful comeback, Judith is a major asset.

**Basically, who triggers Thomas's rage to return to the top? Is it Damien Thosso, the young player with whom he plays the final game in the film and whose sees listening to an interview at the beginning of the film?**

Without a doubt. Who else could have given him the ardor and the energy? Damien is the new tennis hope for France. He's announced as the new Noah, forty years later, and inevitably all eyes are on him. Twenty years ago, all eyes were on Thomas. There's a mirror effect there. For Thomas, Damien is like tangible proof of his past, and also the first visible milestone of his old age. The film begins with a meeting of the two men, and it's built on this duality. Because of this teenager who is the double of the boy he once was, the man is determined to confront his past, whatever the cost, to delay the inevitable - embarking on an intolerable future. Does Damien really exist? Or is he just a projection of Thomas, who wants to enter into one last battle against himself? There's an ambiguity there that I decided not to remove, because however real your opponent is, in the game of tennis you're always playing against yourself. This is the truth that comes out discreetly, visually, in the last match of the film, where Thomas and Damien take each other on wearing the same color outfit.

**This obsession with making a comeback while others retire, cutting himself off from reality, gives Thomas an air of mystery.**

I don't know about that, I'll let you be the judge. Either way, Thomas is neither likeable nor unpleasant. I just wanted him to be a character who's heading for a fall, but with style. I'm not even sure he'll stop competing after the preliminaries. He's so obsessed with succeeding and revenge that his self-obsession has become visceral, which doesn't mean he's not a good father, a good husband or a good son. He thinks he's doing his job, that everyone should just leave him alone, and if he gets hurt it's his own lookout.

**Why is the film set around the elimination matches?**

For the dramaturgy. The elimination rounds are usually watched by true connoisseurs as they involve gritty exchanges that are often tough and exciting, because they're battled out between players who

need to win from a financial point of view. There are often tears, pain and sometimes even blood on the court. A first qualifying round brings in roughly 7,000 euros, the first match of the actual competition around 45,000 euros. Players come from all over the world to take part. Winning these matches is some insurance, peace of mind for the year ahead. Losing is the opposite - the certainty that you'll have to go on struggling.

**Why did you end FINAL SET with a shot of a ball in mid-air?**

I've been asking myself that question for some time, and I don't have the answer. There were a thousand ways I could have ended the film - such as a chivalrous ending where Damien deliberately misses Thomas's ball to let him go through to the first round of the tournament. But that wouldn't have held up because it would have been blatant lack of respect for Thomas by Damien. When you're in the arena and the beast is wounded, you show respect for it by killing it. I opted for an open ending to the dream. You don't know if Thomas will win or not.

**Through Thomas you portray the day-to-day life of the average professional tennis player, which is a long way from the image we have.**

In tennis, you have to be in the top 300 in the world in order to earn a good living, and there's a big difference in income between the high ranking players, who earn tens of millions of euros per year and appear on the front pages of magazines, and those at the back of the pack who are just starting out. Beyond that it's impossible to earn a decent living, and that goes for the vast majority of players. They struggle. It's difficult to get into a tournament, and if you do manage to you often have to pay for the trip yourself. No expenses are paid or very little, grants are minimal and sponsors almost non-existent. Tennis is not like football, where the player ranked 400th in the world can still earn millions. You need phenomenal strength to persevere in this sport, it's magnificent but it's cruel. Unless you're a star, you can expect to suffer hundreds of small humiliations. Many players are lost to tennis every year. It's this dark reality that goes on behind the scenes that I wanted to put across. It's central to the film. I didn't make anything up in this respect. All the anecdotes are true.

**No film has ever been shot at Roland Garros before. How did you do it?**

We were lucky enough to catch the attention of the President of the French Tennis Federation, Bernard Giudicelli. He was aware that the project was a celebration of the ethics of tennis, a bit like *Black Swann* paid homage to the ethics of ballet.

We remained at this legendary place for four weeks, longer than the players do when they're competing in a tournament. It was an amazing experience, both technically and emotionally. Up till then Roland Garros had been an inaccessible dream for me, but for one month it became my home.

**In a film lasting one hour and forty minutes, you were brave enough to devote twenty FIVE minutes to the final match.**

I knew from the start that the film would end with this 7-minute sequence broadcasting the last game of the match. It was like inviting television into the cinema. It was from this sequence that I then developed the screenplay. Basically, I think I wanted to help people understand what goes on in the mind of a player who's playing at Roland Garros, what he's there for and how he got there.

The objective was to make a film that was involved, radical, and altogether quite experimental, but stayed with the viewers. I love it when cinema offers an experience. When it gives you a shove? When it questions you.

**Alex Lutz is an actor who had never held a tennis racquet before. Why did you give him the part of Thomas?**

It's a nice, long story. I'd spoken to Alex about FINAL SET when he was playing in Paris-Willouby, but without any particular aim in mind because the project was still in its early stages. Last year Alex and I happened to meet again on a train. I had the screenplay in my bag, and it was finished by that time. I give him a copy, explaining that I was looking for the right person. He read it out of curiosity I imagine, and emailed me straight away to say the character of Thomas had struck him. He wasn't the obvious choice at first glance because it was a younger character I had in mind.

We had a long discussion before deciding to collaborate on this film. After that, I soon realized they had a lot in common, especially in terms of the relationships they had with their parents, how they did their respective jobs in a physically-engaged way, and also the deep feeling of loneliness they shared. And of course, Thomas's story is quite similar to the story of Guy - which Alex wrote and played so well - a nostalgic end-of-life story. Each one shows how to approach the end of a career in his own way, with the slight difference that Guy is an octogenarian and Thomas is not yet 40.

I took Alex to a tennis court and told him I expected him to become a professional player, not so much in terms of playing the game itself - we had doubles for that - but in the posture he'd have to adopt, which would require him to train 30 hours a week. I warned him that I'd be filming him naked, without a mask, showing him as he really is.

Alex is an actor, a great cabaret actor. There's maybe a bit of the Buster Keaton in the way he moves his body and his face. This type of actor is becoming increasingly rare. On stage, he doesn't do minimalism. It doesn't matter if he's bleeding or sweating, he gives it his all. He worked like a madman on the part of Thomas. He worked hard; he was very dedicated. He learned how to hold a racquet, how to move, how to walk, how to catch the ball. In four months, he inhabited the role completely.

**What surprised you the most about him?**

His ability to listen. Alex is not someone who thinks he doesn't have to put in the work just because he's got a César. He questions himself a lot, he does research and he's a perfectionist. To turn himself into Thomas he put his faith in me completely, but not blind faith - we did have some slight disagreements, but we settled them without any friction. The relationship we had was intense, strong, serene and productive. On set, his generosity and attention to others gained him unanimous support.

**Why did you choose Kristin Scott Thomas to play Judith, Thomas' mother?**

Judith is one of the lead roles in the film. As the mother of the hero, she is basically the one behind his personality and his attitude. She was a great player herself and she's retained that aura. It's a complex role that's all the more difficult because it's relatively brief. We needed an exceptional actor to do it. It was Alex who thought of Kristin and contacted her. When she agreed, I was over the moon at first, then I felt a bit dizzy; when you're making your first solo film, how do you direct an international star who has such an amazing filmography? With Kristin the answer came quite quickly: with simplicity and precision. It took just 5 days for us to work each other out. She has several different tones, all of which

ring true because she's a great actor, so all you have to do is choose one. Kristin is like a Stradivarius. You have to trust her, just like she trusts you, she never watched a take on the monitor once. But she kept telling us she'd never had to wear such hideous clothes for a part! (laughs)

She sometimes keeps a certain distance typical of the British, but it conceals a great sense of humor. She's very funny. It's been a treat working with her. I think she's made an amazing contribution to the film.

### **What about Ana Girardot?**

I discovered her and fell in love with her in 2010, in Fabrice Gobert's *Lights Out*. But to be completely honest, when I started looking for someone who could ideally play Eve, Thomas' wife, I was thinking to use an unknown actor, so I'd say we met with mutual reservations! But she picked me!

Ana expresses both delicacy and composure. She goes straight for it, with an incredible accuracy and sense of play. When she asked me how I saw her role, I suggested she think about Gena Rowlands in *UNE FEMME SOUS INFLUENCE* Cassavetes' films in general. Other than that, there wasn't much to do to direct her. I think she really enjoyed the freedom. Ana brings Eve to life with all the complexity of a married woman who has given up her job to be a mother. Ana was a great discovery for me and I know why I'm going to offer her a part in another film.

### **What were the most difficult scenes to shoot?**

Emotionally, the ones between Thomas and his mother. Technically, the ones that were purely tennis. The last game in particular was a headache. Because it was shot in real time with body doubles, I had to script every point. The shoot was very rock and roll. There was someone in the stadium shouting the sequences to the doubles: "serve, backhand, return on the forehand, go up for the volley", etc. It went on for all 21 points of the game. Because of the inevitable glitches, we had to shoot the 21 points more than 7 times in a row. I needed Alex's reactions, so we replayed the whole match the next day, referring to the footage I edited the night before. I was there on the court with my computer, giving orders like an army captain. I was directing Alex, who had no option but to do what I told him because it had to fit in with what we'd already shot, and I didn't have time to explain. At one point in the slow-motion shots, you can see him grumbling. Not because he missed a ball, but because he has no perspective on what he's doing! (laughs)

### **Could you describe FINAL SET?**

It's quite hard because it touches on a number of genres. It's an art film aimed at everyone, an intimate film about the everyday life of a sportsman who plays a spectacular and popular sport. You could say it's a "sports drama", but I don't like pigeonholing. Where would you put *Parasite*, for example? Is it a thriller or a comedy? It doesn't really matter. It doesn't belong to me anymore.

# ALEX LUTZ

It was in 1994 that Alex Lutz took his first steps on stage. Pascale Spengler hires him in her troupe Les Foirades as an actor and assistant director. Until 2000, they toured together. In 1996, Alex created his company Le Coût de la Pomme, with which he has written several shows.

He discovers Paris, makes his first TV attendances and meets Sylvie Joly. He co-wrote and directed her last show LA CERISE SUR LE GATEAU at the Théâtre des Mathurins. In turn, she directed the first version of her one man show in 2008 at Point-Virgule and introduced him to Pierre Palmade, whose play he would direct LE COMIQUE (nomination for Molières in 2009) and ILS SE RE-AIMENT with Michèle Laroque.

In 2009 he co-wrote and directed the Audrey Lamy show and made his film debut in the film OSS 117: LOST IN RIO by Michel Hazanavicius in which he plays a hippie Nazi. He has a series of roles, notably in HOLLYWOOD, PORN IN THE HOOD, KNOCK, SPIROU & FANTASIO'S BIG ADVENTURES, HEAVY DUTY.

Since 2009, his One Man show, a tasty mix of stand up and theater, has evolved over the seasons. With Tom Dingler, as a director, Alex constantly creates new sketches, imagines new characters. From Point-Virgule to Châtelet, via Bobino, the Folies Bergère, Olympia and five seasons on tour, the public is always more numerous.

In 2013, Alex was elected "Comedian of the Year" by GQ magazine, receiving the Parisian star for "Best Comedy Show". The show was broadcasted live on Canal + in October 2015. Alex received the Molière de Humor award in 2016.

Since 2011, with Bruno Sanches, they have played Catherine and Liliane in Le Petit Journal on Canal +.

In 2015, he wrote, directed and performed his first film LE TALENT DE MES AMIS with Bruno Sanches, Tom Dingler, Audrey Lamy, Sylvie Testud and Jeanne Moreau. With his second feature film as director "GUY", released in cinemas in 2018, and for his performance in this film Alex Lutz received in 2019, the César for best actor.

In February 2018, Alex Lutz created his second show at the Olympia which he performed on the stage of the Folies Bergères for 33 exceptional dates from October to January 2019.

Among his upcoming cinema news, the film FINAL SET by Quentin Reynaud will be released in cinemas on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Alex has just finished shooting Etienne Comar's film, A L'OMBRE DE FILLES.

In regard to his stage performances, he resumes touring his show throughout France, and will be, for about twenty performances in December and January, on the supper of the Folies Bergère.

He will also be to find at the Rond point stage next March, alongside Julie Depardieu, in an adaptation of SNOW THERAPY, directed by Salomé Lelouch,

2020	<b>FINAL SET</b>	Quentin REYNAUD
2019	<b>HEAVY DUTY</b>	Bertrand BLIER
2018	<b>GUY</b>	Alex LUTZ
	<b>SPIROU &amp; FANTASIO'S BIG ADVENTURES</b>	Alexandre COFFRE
2017	<b>KNOCK</b>	Lorraine LEVY
2016	<b>ODD JOB</b>	Pascal CHAUMEIL
	<b>THE VISITORS: BASTILLE DAY</b>	Jean-Marie POIRE
	<b>MISS IMPOSSIBLE</b>	Emilie DELEUZE
2015	<b>PARIS-WILLOUBY</b>	Arthur DELAIRE & Quentin Reynaud
	<b>LE TALENTS DE MES AMIS</b>	Alex LUTZ
2014	<b>VERY BAD GIRLS</b>	Audrey DANA

2013	<b>PARIS OR PERISH</b>	Reem KHERICI
	<b>TURF</b>	Fabien ONTENIENTE
2012	<b>BOWLING</b>	Marie-Castille MENTION-SCHAAR
	<b>PORN IN THE HOOD</b>	Franck GASTAMBIDE
	<b>THE FRONTIER BOYS</b>	John GROOTERS
2011	<b>HOLLYWOOD</b>	Frédéric BERTHE & Pascal SERIEIS
	<b>LA CROISIERE</b>	Pascale POUZADOUX
2011	<b>MY PIECE OF THE PIE</b>	Cédric KLAPISCH
2010	<b>BACON ON THE SIDE</b>	Anne DEPETRINI
2009	<b>OSS 117: LOST IN RIO</b>	Michel HAZANAVICIUS
2008	<b>FEMALE AGENTS</b>	Jean-Paul SALOME

# ANA GIRARDOT

Ana Girardot is a French talented actress who started out her career by taking acting classes for two years in New York starting by the age of 18. Ana secured her first main role in LIGHTS OUT (Fabrice Gobert, 2010) where she was playing Alice a beautiful and mysterious student. The same year, she shared the screen with her mother for an episode of DIANE, CRIME FIGHTER.

In 2012, she appeared in COMEDIE RADIOSTARS (by Romain Levy) and MY WAY (by Florent Siri). She worked again with Fabrice Gobert for the series THE RETURNED, winner of the 2013 Crystal Globe of the Best Series. In 2013, she tried different genres like the social romance HIGH SOCIETY (Julie Lopes Curval) and the detective movie NEXT TIME I'LL AIM FOR THE HEART (Cédric Anger).

In 2016, she played with Gérard Depardieu and Benoît Poelvoorde in SAINT AMOUR (by Benoît Delépine and Gustave Kervern). She joined the casting of BACK TO BURGUNDY (Cédric Klapisch), in which she embodied Juliette and played alongside Francois Civil and Pio Marmaï. The same year, the actress replaced Sara Forestier at the drop of a hat in BONHOMME by Marion Vernoux.

The beautiful actress returns to working with Cédric Klapisch in 2019, where she embodied Mélanie and once again played alongside Francois Civil in the film SOMEONE SOMEWHERE.

In 2020, Ana Girardot will again be to discover in the cinemas in Quentin Reynaud's movie FINAL SET playing alongside Alex Lutz and Kristin Scott Thomas.

2020	<b>FINAL SET</b>	Quentin REYNAUD
2019	<b>ENTAGLED</b>	Milena LURIE
	<b>SOMEONE SOMEWHERE</b>	Cédric KLAPISCH
2018	<b>BONHOMME</b>	Marion VERNOUX
2017	<b>SUNBEAT</b>	Clara& Laura LAPERROUSAZ
	<b>BACK TO BURGUNDY</b>	Cédric KLAPISCH
	<b>KNOCK</b>	Lorraine LEVY
2016	<b>SAINT AMOUR</b>	Benoît DELEPINE, Gustave KERVERN
2015	<b>BEAU-PAPA</b>	Victor Saint MACARY
	<b>FOUJITA</b>	Kôhei OGURI
2014	<b>NEXT TIME I'LL AIM FOR THE HEART</b>	Cédric ANGER
	<b>PARADISE LOST</b>	Andrea DI STEFANO
	<b>A PERFECT MAN</b>	Yann GOZLAN
2013	<b>HIGH SOCIETY</b>	Julie Lopes CURVAL
2012	<b>AMITIES SINCERES</b>	Stephan ARCHINARD , François PREVOT-
	<b>MY WAY</b>	LEYGONIE
	<b>LES REVENANTS</b>	Florent SIRI
	<b>RADIOSTARS</b>	
2009	<b>LIGHTS OUT</b>	Fabrice GOBERT

# KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS

Dame Kristin Scott Thomas is the recipient of a BAFTA Award, four Evening Standard British Film Awards, two London Critics' Circle Film Awards, and a Screen Actors Guild Award for her film work, cementing her place in cinema history.

A bilingual actress equally at home playing French and English-language roles, she received Academy Award and Golden Globe Award nominations for her starring role opposite Ralph Fiennes in Anthony Minghella's Best Picture Academy Award-winning *THE ENGLISH PATIENT*.

With her fellow actors from Robert Altman's *GOSFORD PARK*, Kristin shared the Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture. The cast was also honoured with the Critics' Choice Movie Award for Best Acting Ensemble, and the movie was a Best Picture Academy Award nominee, winning the Oscar for Best Original Screenplay (Julian Fellowes).

Her breakout role was in another Best Picture Oscar-nominated classic comedy, *FOUR WEDDINGS AND A FUNERAL*, written by Richard Curtis and directed by Mike Newell, which brought her BAFTA and Evening Standard British Film Awards. Among her screen credits are Sam Taylor-Johnson's *NOWHERE BOY*, for which she was a BAFTA and BIFA (British Independent Film Award) nominee; Sydney Pollack's *RANDOM HEARTS*; *THE HORSE WHISPERER*, starring opposite director Robert Redford; Brian De Palma's *MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE*; Irwin Winkler's *LIFE AS A HOUSE*, opposite Kevin Kline; Philip and Belinda Haas' *ANGELS AND INSECTS*, for which Kristin won the Evening Standard British Film Award for Best Actress, and *Up at the Villa*; Richard Loncraine's *Richard III*; Roman Polanski's *BITTER MOON*; Guillaume Canet's hit *TELL NO ONE*; and Charles Sturridge's *A HANDFUL OF DUST*, for which she received her first Evening Standard British Film Award.

She received her fourth Evening Standard British Film Award for Best Actress for her performance in Catherine Corsini's *PARTIR [LEAVING]*, which also brought her a César Award (France's Oscars equivalent) nomination for Best Actress. She was previously a César nominee for Philippe CLAUDEL'S *IL Y A LONGTEMPS QUE JE T'AIME [I'VE LOVED YOU SO LONG]*, for which she was again a Golden Globe and BAFTA Award nominee.

Among Kristin's recent films are *THE INVISIBLE WOMAN*, starring with director Ralph Fiennes; Nicolas Winding Refn's *ONLY GOD FORGIVES*; François Ozon's *IN THE HOUSE*; and Israel Horovitz's *MY OLD LADY*, with Kevin Kline and Dame Maggie Smith. Kristin also appeared in Sally Potter's *THE PARTY*, alongside Timothy Spall, Patricia Clarkson and Cillian Murphy. Scott Thomas was also seen in Joe Wright's Academy Award nominated film *DARKEST HOUR*, where she starred alongside Lily James and Gary Oldman as 'Clementine Churchill', receiving a BAFTA Award nomination for her performance. She also appeared in Roar Uthaug's much anticipated reboot of *TOMB RAIDER* alongside Alicia Vikander. She is set to star in the sequel in 2021. Kristin also appeared in Ludovic Bernard's French comedy *AU BOUT DES DOIGTS*.

2020	<b>FINAL SET</b> <b>REBECCA</b>	Quentin REYNAUD Ben WHEATLEY
2019	<b>MILITARY WIVES</b> <b>ARMANI PRIVE – A VIEW BEYOND</b>	Peter CATTANEO Beppe TUFARULO
2018	<b>TOMB RAIDER</b> <b>IN YOUR HANDS</b>	Roar UTHAUG Ludovic BERNARD
2017	<b>DARKEST HOUR</b> <b>THE PARTY</b>	Joe WRIGHT Sally POTTER

# QUENTIN REYNAUD

Quentin Reynaud is a French screenplay writer, actor and director. He started his career back in 2010, where he wrote the screenplay for the short movie, acted and directed the film **COURSE EN SAC**. In 2011, he repeated the success by writing, playing and directing another short movie **TOMORROW THE END OF THE WORLD**. In 2015, Quentin wrote and directed the film **PARIS-WILLOUBY**, in which he also embodied the role of a young police officer playing alongside Alex Lutz.

This year (2020), Quentin wrote and directed the movie **FINAL SET** in which he invited Alex Lutz to play the main role alongside the talented actresses Ana Girardot and Kristin Scott Thomas.

## DIRECTED

2020	<b>FINAL SET</b>
2015	<b>PARIS-WILLOUBY</b>
2011	<b>TOMORROW THE END OF THE WORLD</b>
2010	<b>COURSE EN SAC</b>

## ACTED

2015	<b>PARIS-WILLOUBY</b>	Quentin REYNAUD
2011	<b>MOON CHILD</b>	Delphine GLEIZE
2011	<b>TOMORROW THE END OF THE WORLD</b>	Quentin REYNAUD
2010	<b>COURSE EN SAC</b>	Quentin REYNAUD

## WROTE

2020	<b>FINAL SET</b>
2015	<b>PARIS-WILLOUBY</b>
2011	<b>TOMORROW THE END OF THE WORLD</b>
2010	<b>COURSE EN SAC</b>