

Boy" – Ava Leigh "I Found Out" – The Pigeon Detectives; "Your Song" – Kate Winslet; "In the Morning" – The Coral; "Toothpaste Kisses" – The Maccabees; "Happy Birthday to You"; "Pull Shapes" – The Pipettes; "Great DJ" – The Ting Tings; "Sugar Mouse" – Oh, Arms!

**Choreographer**  
Jack Murphy

**Sound Mixers**  
Tim Inaser  
2nd Unit:  
Tom Barrow  
Sam Diamond

**Re-recording Mixers**  
Brendan Nicholson  
Nigel Bennett

**Supervising Sound Editor**  
Glen Freeman

**Stunt Co-ordinator**  
Rowley Irlam

## CAST

**Georgia Groome**  
George Nicholson  
**Alan Davies**  
Bob Nicholson  
**Karen Taylor**  
Connie Neelson  
**Aaron Johnson**  
Robbie  
**Steve Jones**  
Jem  
**Eleanor Tomlinson**  
Jas  
**Manjeevan Grewal**  
Elen  
**Georgia Henshaw**  
Rosie Barnes  
**Sean Bourke**  
Tom  
**Kimberley Nixon**  
Lindsay  
**Liam Hess**  
Peter Dyer  
**Tommy Bastow**  
Dave the Laugh  
**Eva Drew**  
Libby  
**Camilla McGarty**  
Pamela Green  
**Imogen Bain**  
headmistress  
**Ingrid Oliver**  
Miss Stamp  
**Emma Tierney**  
Natasha  
**Natasha Tierney**  
bummer twins  
**Matt Brinkler**  
Sven  
**Heather Wright**  
receptionist  
**Lizzie Roper**  
Body  
**Ray Shirley**  
woman with poodle  
**Jason Ramsay**  
Jem's boyfriend  
**James Flannigan**  
Charlie  
**Wricke**  
**Matt Harris**  
**Thomas Slaytor**  
band "Sift Dylans"  
**Daniel Dove**  
D.J. in night club  
**Benny**  
**Jimmy**  
Angus the cat

[uncredited]  
**Tamara-Lee Notcutt**  
salsa woman  
**Fatboy Slim**  
D...

**Dolby Digital/DTS/ SDDS**  
**Colour by**  
DeLuxe  
**[2.35:1]**

**Distributor**  
Paramount Pictures UK

**9,004 ft +15 frames**

German theatrical title:  
**Frontalkutschen**



Ice cold in Alex: Maria Bonnevie, Konstantin Lavronenko

# The Banishment

Russia (Republic) 2007

**Director: Andrey Zvyagintsev**  
**With Konstantin Lavronenko, Maria Bonnevie, Alexander Baluev**  
**Certificate 12A 156m 47s**

*The Banishment* is our Film of the Month and is reviewed on p48

## CREDITS

**Director**  
Andrey Zvyagintsev

**Producer**  
Dmitry Lesnevsky

**Screenplay**  
Oleg Negin

**Executive Producer**  
Andrey Zvyagintsev

Based on the story *The Laughing Mother* by William Somerset

**Director of Photography**  
Mikhail Krichman

**Editor**  
Anna Mass

**Art Director**  
Galina Ponomareva

**Music**  
Andrey Dergatchev  
Arvo Part

©Rent film

## Production Companies

Dmitry Lesnevsky presents a Rent film and International production A film by Andrey Zvyagintsev

**Executive Producer**  
Elena Logunova

**Production Manager**  
Alexander Zingun

**Screenplay with the collaboration of**  
Arjom Melkumyan

**Costume Designer**  
Anna Barthuly

**Make-up**  
Galina Ponomareva

**Soundtrack**  
"Kanon Pokonen" by Arvo Part – Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir "For Alina" by Arvo Part – (1) Alexei Lubimov; (2) Alexander

Maler "Magnificent Eve" 243-03 "Quia respexit humilitatem" by Johann Sebastian Bach "Jag vetom dig för rosa" "Om natten är så långa för gra" – Monica Zetterlund, Bill Evans

**Sound Editor**  
Andrey Dergatchev

## CAST

**Konstantin Lavronenko**  
Alex  
**Maria Bonnevie**  
Vera  
**Alexander Baluev**  
Mark  
**Dmitry Ulianov**  
Robert  
**Maxim Shibaev**  
Kir  
**Katya Kulkina**  
Eva  
**Alexey Vertkov**  
Max  
**Andrey Ponkratov**  
priest

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**  
**2.35:1 [JDC Scope]**  
**Subtitles**

**Distributor**  
Artificial Eye Film Company

**14,110 ft +7 frames**

Russian theatrical title:  
**Izgnanie**

# Ben X

Belgium/Netherlands/Romania 2007

**Director: Nic Balthazar**  
**With Greg Timmermans, Marijke Pinoy, Laura Verlinden**  
**Certificate 15 93m 10s**

The world may not have been waiting for a Christian allegory that incorporates elements of *Rain Man* and *Tron*, but in *Ben X* it finally has one. This Belgian drama is "inspired by true events" according to the opening credits – a trumped up way of saying that writer-director Nic Balthazar got the idea from reading about an autistic boy who committed suicide after being bullied. The film's teenage protagonist Ben has Asperger's syndrome, and is taunted at school while teachers and classmates look on ineffectually. He retreats into a turgid, medieval-style online game called *Archlord*, in which he is Ben X, coming to the rescue of the scantily clad Scarlite.

Quick fire editing, tilted camera angles and distorted close-ups convey Ben's fractured perspective, while gimmicky cutaways to the world of *Archlord* suggest an inability to distinguish between life and fantasy. Ben's story is revealed as an extended flashback, interrupted repeatedly by his parents and teachers commenting gravely to an off-screen interviewer about some unspecified tragedy that has occurred. While this provokes our interest slightly, it also scuppers the narrative flow and places another obstacle between the audience and the understandably introverted Ben. The character's interior monologue, which shades into uncharacteristic punning and wordplay when he is contemplating suicide, offers little illumination ("What's your motive? Locomotive!" Ben chirrups as he prepares to jump in front of a train). That said, Greg Timmermans does as well as any actor could with a part that demands little more than prolonged and noble suffering.

It's likely that Balthazar started out meaning to highlight hostile attitudes towards disability or provide enlightenment about people with

Asperger's ("Think of them as computers that are configured differently," a doctor advises). But good intentions are lost amid the film's sadistic bleakness, where one indignity after another is piled on the young hero. It's not enough that he has his trousers pulled down in class by his tormentors: footage of this incident is posted on the web and viewed by his mother, who proceeds, with implausible tactlessness, to watch it again in front of him. There's an equally bizarre scene in which Ben experiences temporary garrulousness and euphoria after being force fed ecstasy by the bullies. It's hard to see what function this otherwise superfluous episode serves if it isn't to promote the use of Class A drugs in treating the autistic.

This ranks as humdrum beside the contrivances that lead to a bizarre finale setting up Ben as a Christ figure, resurrection and all. Audiences who have stayed the course will be so baffled by the climax they may not notice the film has quietly disposed of the *Archlord* subplot that dominated its first half, discarding it like the hi-tech window dressing it transparently was.

◆◆ Ryan Gilbey

## CREDITS

**Directed by**  
Nic Balthazar

**Producers**  
Peter Houckaert  
Erwin Provoost

**Written by**  
Nic Balthazar

Based on the novel *Niets* was alles wat hij zier and the play *Niets* by Nic Balthazar

**Director of Photography**  
Lou Bergmans

**Editing**  
Philippe Reyvoet

**Art Director**  
Kurt Loyens

**Music**  
Pragge Khan

©MMGVN  
**Production Companies**  
MMGVN presents a co-production with BosBros Film & Productions, seen with the support of Flanders Audiovisu. Fund., Netherlands Filmfund., Belgian Tax Shelter for Film finance

Developed with the support of the MEDIA Programme of the European Community

With the support of ASAF.be, Kinopolis Group, Northern Manuport, S. Janscaard Boekhandel, B.A.D.mv, Besalec, Bull Partners, Media Tota Invest, Vintage Films

**Executive Producer**  
BosBros  
Kim Klase

**Co-producers**  
Bunny Bros  
Michèle de Rooij  
Sabine Veerendael  
Winnie Engelen

**Associate Producers**  
Guido Dekeyser  
Peter Lonies

**Production Manager**  
Johan van den Driessche

**Production Controller**  
Guido Dekeyser

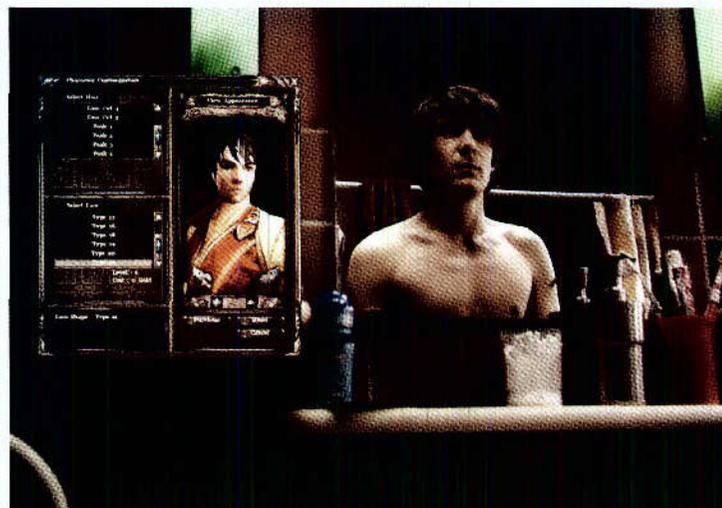
**Post-production Co-ordinator**  
Nathalie van Schelvergem

**Assistant Directors**  
1st: Eddy Stevyns  
2nd: Els Verhaeghe

**Script Supervisor**  
Ann van Aken

**Casting**  
Gunter Schmid

**Screenplay Advisers**  
Car Jans  
Rik D'Haet  
Bram Reijnders



Gameboy: Greg Timmermans

**2nd Unit Director of Photography**  
Anouk Maciers  
**Steadicam Operator**  
Jo Vermaerdeke  
**Key Grip**  
Kris Herhalsteen  
**Gaffer**  
Tommy van der Bomp  
**Visual Effects**  
Ace Digital House  
**Visual Effects Consultant**  
Annabelle Toukens  
**Set Decorator**  
Stewen Liegeois  
**Construction**  
Olivier Timmers  
Sébastien Lejon  
Bart Mennes  
**Costumes**  
Helen Heintjes  
**Make-up**  
Esther de Goey  
**Soundtrack Consultant**  
Guus Fuit  
**Soundtrack**  
"Glad I'm Not God", "Teacup My Hungry Soul" – Lords of Acid; "Fitzburgh Angel", "I Want You", "Templation", "Insanity" – Praga Khan; "Svefn-g-engler" – Sigur Rós; "Lonesome Zebra" – Arno; "Incluce Me Out" – eD.U.S.; "Sister Waterfall" – Liam Chan  
**Sound Design**  
Peter Flannan  
Wart Wainsteker  
**Sound Recordist**  
Coert Graveland  
**Stunt Co-ordinator**  
Olivier Bisback

**CAST**

**Greg Timmermans**  
Ben  
**Marijke Pinoy**  
Laura Verlienden  
Scarlitte  
**Pol Goossen**  
father  
**Titus de Voogdt**  
Bogaert  
**Maarten Claeysens**  
Desmet  
**Tania van der Sanden**  
Sabine  
**Johan Heldenbergh**  
religion teacher  
**Ron Cornet**  
headmaster  
**Peter de Graef**  
psychiatrist

**Jakob Beks**  
meta-work teacher  
**César de Schutter**  
Jonas  
**Gilles de Schryver**  
Copaale  
**Bavo Smets**  
Ben aged 6  
**Katrien Pierlet**  
kindergarten teacher  
**Rebecca Lenaerts**  
teacher  
**Michel Bauwens**  
cin. coach  
**Koen de Sutter**  
eye doctor  
**An van Gijsegem**  
Maaik  
**Johan Heldenbergh**  
religion teacher  
**Matthieu Sys**  
**Fabrice Chan-Chiang**  
**Charlotte Dhaenens**  
**Jonas Dumon**  
**Niels Thienpont**  
**Niels de Moor**  
**Simon Dewinne**  
**Ilya van Autreuve**  
**Maaik Segers**  
**Ruben Royaert**  
**Joelen Mertens**  
**Adriaan Blomme**  
**Kasper Vandenberghe**  
**Boris Vanseveren**  
classmates  
**Willem van Cauwenberghe**  
**Mark Soen**  
**Wim de Witte**  
**Luc van Autreuve**  
doctors  
**Tom van Bragt**  
Ben aged 12  
**Dominique van Malder**  
nurse  
**Luce Premer**  
old woman  
**Dirk van Dijk**  
Koert van Impe  
police officer  
**Wim de Vilder**  
mother  
**Wim Vandekeybus**  
horse man

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**  
**[1:85:1]**  
**Subtitles**

**Distributor**  
Momecium Pictures

**8,384 ft +5 frames**

**Blindsight**

**United Kingdom 2006**  
**Director: Lucy Walker**  
**Certificate: not submitted 104m**

Ostensibly another feelgood tale of young people overcoming adversity, Lucy Walker's second documentary *Blindsight* crystallises into a surprisingly penetrating sociological study offering intriguing insights into a hitherto closed culture. The film may view Tibet through western eyes, but it also accords its inhabitants a voice of their own.

The narrative follows the journey of six Tibetan students from the country's only school for the blind as they attempt to scale the Himalayas' second-highest peak, Lhakpa Ri, under the leadership of the first blind man to have reached Everest's summit, Erik Weihenmayer, and his entourage of seasoned climbers. The majority of the film's running time is, however, concerned with introducing us to the six teens, extraordinary perhaps only in their ordinariness, and their teacher Sabriye Tenberken, who came to Tibet after being told that her native Germany's peace corps would not accept blind people. Tenberken's work is made more arduous by the fact that the blind are regarded with hostility in Tibet, their disability taken as a sign of bad karma. Her foremost task is now convincing these children that they are not, as one student's mother puts it, "wasted", "incomplete", "blind idiots".

The film opens in darkness as indistinct voices swim over the soundtrack, connecting us briefly with the perceptual experience of the film's protagonists. These fleeting moments aside, *Blindsight* makes little attempt to capture the subjectivity of blindness through its form – unlike, say, Derek Jarman's *Blue* (1993) or Gary Tarr's *Black Sun* (2005). Quite the inverse, in fact: it opts for a rigorous objectivity that's both admirable and disquieting. Admirable, because it takes the Tibetan culture at face value, never judging these often self-loathing children, their resentful parents or the strangers who scream curses at them on the street, but treating them with compassion and respect. Disquieting, because it also fails to level opprobrium at the American climbers who seem determined to use the children as 'ambassadors' for the blind at the risk of their happiness, self-esteem and even, perhaps, their lives. As the expedition progresses, the divergence of opinion between the benevolent but perhaps over-protective teachers and the competitive sportsmen, determined that the kids will reach the summit come hell or high water, becomes an explosive ideological battle, but the film resolutely refuses to take sides, leaving a rather nasty taste in the mouth by the end.

The documentary treatment of a perilous mountain journey would seem to beg comparisons with Kevin Macdonald's *Touching the Void* (2003), but both formally and thematically this is an altogether different work, at



Where eagles dare: 'Blindsight'

the heart of which is 19-year-old Tashi, a Chinese orphan sold by his parents to beggars and forced to live on the streets, so poor he "didn't even have clothes with pockets". Intercut with footage of the expedition is Tashi's heartrending quest to find his parents, the outcome of which is bittersweet, to say the least: compared with the devotion of both Sabriye and Erik's parents (whom we meet in a series of talking heads), the shrugging welcome home that Tashi's father offers is heartrendingly bathetic. It seems the greatest lack in this child's life is love; yet his sheer optimism in the face of it brings even the most cruelly impatient of the Americans to tears. It would be a hardhearted viewer indeed who wasn't similarly moved by Walker's film. **◆ Catherine Wheatley**

**CREDITS**

**Directed by**  
Lucy Walker  
**Produced by**  
Sybil Roosen Orr  
**Director of Photography**  
Petr Orlhart  
**Editor**  
Sebastian Dohy  
**Music**  
Nirin Sawney  
  
©Roosen Entertainment  
**Production Company**  
A Robson Entertainment production  
**Executive Producer**  
Steven Hall  
**Co-executive Producer**  
Mary Martin

**Co-producers**  
Frank Weihenmayer  
Lid Weihenmayer  
**Line Producer**  
Tina Cooklin  
**Associate Producer**  
Fred Wang  
**Financial Controller**  
Mark Byrne  
**Post-production Co-ordinator**  
Natasha Marsh  
**Climbing Photography**  
Kath Partridge  
Michael Brown  
**Additional Photography**  
Mahyad Tausi  
Michael Miles  
Gavin Southers  
Vinco McConradie  
Lucy Walker

**■ SYNOPSIS** Tibet, 2004. German-born Sabriye Tenberken, who lost her sight at the age of 12, runs a school in Lhasa for blind children with her sighted boyfriend Paul Kronenberg. Among Tibetan Buddhists, the blind are ostracised as sinners, supposedly being punished for the misdeeds of past lives; Tenberken's school offers them their only chance for an education.

In 2001, Tenberken wrote to American Erik Weihenmayer, the first blind man to reach the summit of Everest, inviting him to give a talk to her students. Weihenmayer proposed that instead he would take some of them up Lhakpa Ri, the second-highest peak in the Himalayas.

In 2004 Weihenmayer arrives with a team of seasoned climbers and blind guides to lead six teens – girls Sonam Bhumtso and Kyila, and boys Dachueng, Tenzin, Gyenshen Tashi and Pasang – onto the expedition. The film introduces each of the six students in turn, detailing their upbringings and aspirations. Tashi emerges as a particularly poignant figure: sold by his father to Chinese beggars when he was ten, he was abused and eventually abandoned. Intercut with the film's main narrative is footage of him being reunited with his family, which causes some emotional conflict for him.

As the expedition progresses, concerns are raised as to whether Tashi will survive the risky journey, causing tension between the German teachers, for whom the goal is teamwork and self-affirmation, and the American expedition leaders, who regard anything less than total commitment as failure. With only 1,500 feet left to climb, Kyila becomes seriously ill, and after much debate the two girls and Tashi are sent back down the mountain. The remaining party reach the top.

A coda recounts the various success stories of the six students in the wake of the expedition.



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