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Abeltje

("Little Abel"; UK = "Abel, the Flying Liftboy")

(aka: "Abeltje en Het Mysterie van Quoquapepetl")

Netherlands : 1998 : dir. Ben Sombogaart : Bos Bros

: 105 min

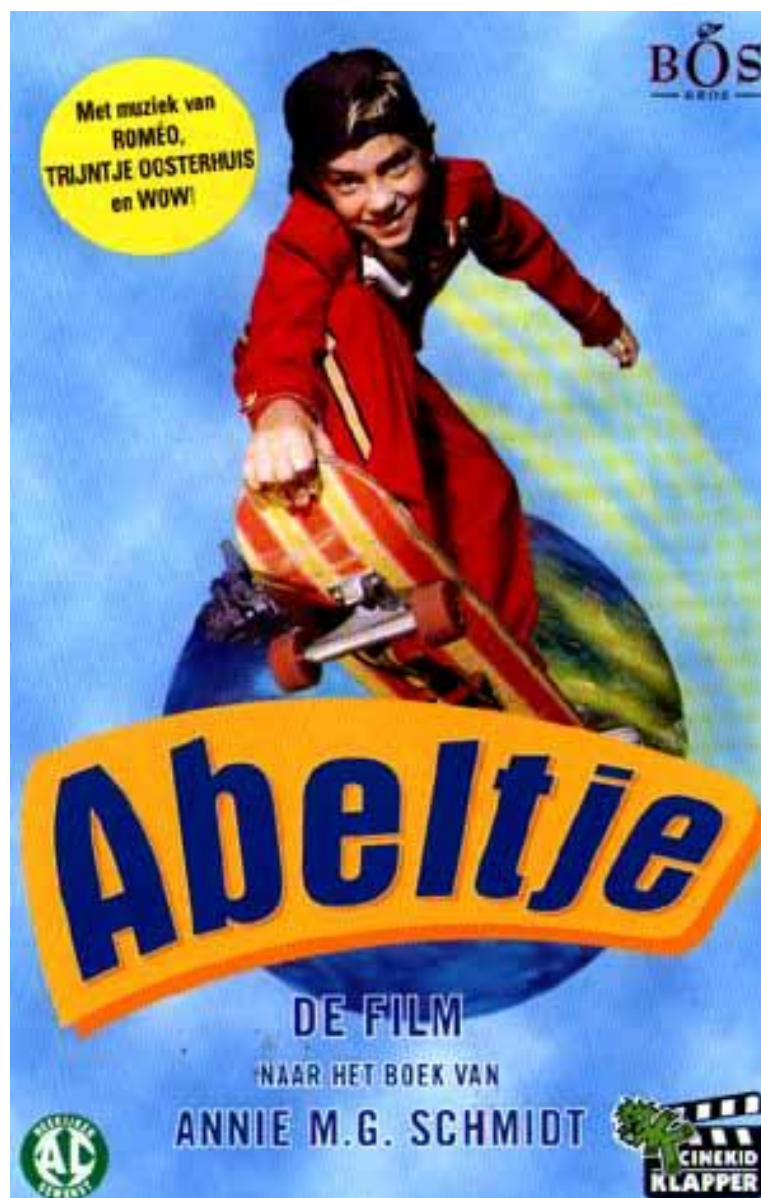
prod: Burny Bos : scr: Burny Bos : dir.ph.: Reiner van Brummelen

[Ricky van Gastel](#); [Soraya Smith](#)

Marisa van Eyle; Frits Lambrechts; Annet Malherbe; Victor Löw; Kees Hulst; Ben Ramakers;

Philip van Lidth de Jeude; Herman Koch; Michel van Douselaere; Cas Enklaar

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	≠	M	☺	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Source: CVMC website



*Sorry, but we have to deduct points for wearing the dumb baseball cap **THE WRONG WAY ROUND**..*

Source: Variety International Film Guide 2000

Variety International Film Guide 2000 review:

"In the spring of 1999, a minor miracle occurred in the Netherlands. The children's film **"ABEL, THE FLYING LIFTBOY"** ("Abeltje"), which cost \$5m to make, took the same amount at the box office, attracting 900,000 viewers. Ben Sombogaart's effects-heavy film thus exceeded the combined gross of Disney's **"MULAN"** and DreamWorks' **"THE PRINCE OF EGYPT"**. The video release and foreign sales can only increase the satisfaction of writer-producer Burny Bos.

This was exactly the kind of success the Netherlands film industry had been waiting for, since Dutch feature films regularly win awards at festivals but rarely recoup their costs. Mike van Diem won the 1998 Oscar for Best Foreign-Language film with **"CHARACTER"**, repeating the success of Marleen Gorris with **"ANTONIA'S LINE"** in 1996 and Fons Rademakers' with **"DE AANSLAG"** in 1987, a run of success unequalled by any other non-English speaking country in the same period, yet the bitter truth is that none of these films broke even. In fact, **"CHARACTER"** sold only 140,000 tickets on home turf.

Admittedly, the Dutch are not fanatical cinemagoers. In 1998, the 15.6 million

inhabitants bought 20 million tickets – the lowest per capita ratio in Europe. Recent years have seen a certain amount of growth, but the first half of 1999 showed a slight fall on the previous year...

A happier example is provided by the remarkable success of **"ABEL, THE FLYING LIFTBOY"**. Based on a well-known children's book from notorious Dutch writer Annie Schmidt, it is about a boy who hates school and takes a job as a lift boy. In the elevator he pushes the forbidden green button and immediately flies away, together with a colourful bunch of passengers, to adventures in New York and Latin America.

It is a striking spectacle with, by Dutch standards, great special effects, and its success gave a huge boost to the already lively Dutch children's film scene. Ineke Houtman (**"SCRATCHES ON THE TABLE"**) and Ger Poppelaaars (**"THE MISSING LINK"**) have also provided meritorious entertainment for the young in recent times, while new films by Martin Lagestee (**"THE RED SWAN"**) and Maria Peters (**"LITTLE CRUMB"**) are on the way."

CVMC video retail/rental website review:

“Abeltje (Rick van Gastel), roughly nine years old, gets a job as a bellhop and soon learns the elevator he is in charge of



has mysterious powers. Once it whisks him and three others, including a female



I lived in the Netherlands in the 1980s, and there weren't too many 9-year old hotel bellhops in evidence when I was there. The basic premise of this story is a bit bewildering. Source: CVMC website

peer (Soraya Smith), to New York City, our hero finds himself mistaken for a kidnapped boy. Abeltje then flies his elevator to South America to rescue the lad. Easy to follow; cute; lots of fun.

Rated NR: brief nudity; mild violence; brief/mild profanity; mild sexual themes.

Language: Dutch (also some English and Spanish) (with Dutch subtitles)

Categories: Action/Adventure, Boy Films, Little to Preteen, Comedy, Fantasy & Sci-Fi, First Love, Girl Films, Little to Preteen, Kidnapping

NOTE: This movie is in Dutch with NO ENGLISH SUBTITLES OR DUBBING. Not all the English and Spanish is subtitled; about a quarter of the dialogue is in English, another quarter in Spanish and the remainder in Dutch.”

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001"]

No further information currently available. “Abel the Flying Liftboy” does not sound a million miles from “**PETER EN DE VLEGEND AUTOBUS**” (“Peter and the Flying Bus”) 23 years earlier, although no doubt employing contemporary effects technology. Hopefully it is not another tedious instance of barnstorming adult players goofing around to amuse the little ones while an embarrassed child lead struggles to retain some dignity in the proceedings. I’m curious to know what plot device is used to account for a boy of Abeltje’s age working in a contemporary Dutch hotel, livery and all. If the tale were set in the 1920s or 30s, there would be nothing remarkable about it, but skateboards and black ghetto headgear weren’t exactly a striking feature of 1930s Holland.

Nothing else is known of Ricky van Gastel – who in the black and white still above bears a striking resemblance to Anton Glanzelius in “**MITT LIV SOM HUND**” (“My Life as a Dog”, 85) – nor of Soraya Smith.

The aesthetic of Dutch cinema is – like much of continental cinema – a tad parochial, which would account for poor international sales, but low box office returns across the country indicate that the public there, exposed to heavy doses of US and UK television, are not in sympathy with a purely domestic cinema, and this situation is simply aggravated when the cream of Dutch film actors and directors are constantly enticed away by Hollywood money.

Dutch children's cinema has (until very recently at least) been notably staid and conservative. That aside however, the country's strong progressive social instincts have (until very recently

at least) been reflected in one or two titles that could have been produced almost nowhere else in the world, such as "**VOOR EEN VERLOREN SOLDAAT**" (a brief wartime sexual fling between a young Dutch boy and a Canadian soldier) or "**HET DEBUUT**" (a secret love affair between a girl of 14 and an adult friend of the family). These are in no sense representative of Dutch cinema (see "**CISKE DE RAT**" or "**SCHATJES**" for more typical offerings), but they do reflect a – fast diminishing – climate of tolerance and openness worthy of admiration.

See subject index under **BIKES & SKATEBOARDS**, **BOY MEETS GIRL**, [FANTASY / FOLK TALES / FAIRY TALES](#), [FLIGHT](#), [KIDNAPPING](#), [SOUTH & CENTRAL AMERICA](#) and [WORKING BOYS / WORKING GIRLS](#).