

VIP Interview with **Alex Fouquet**, director of the Award Winning Commercial 'Gift a Feeling'

Alex Fouquet is the talented director, cinematographer, editor, and composer of the commercial *Gift a Feeling*. In this interview, we talk about the challenges behind a successful commercial and the "invisible" but essential work it entails. Enjoy!



Alex, what inspired you to pursue filmmaking, and when did you first realize you wanted to work in the entertainment industry?

To be honest, I've started to develop a passion for filmmaking since I'm a kid. And I cherish still to this day the experience of discovering a new genre of film, and the never-ending palette that mise-en-scene offers. I was a big Lego fan as well, and it seems like I still do the same thing sometimes, by building a camera rig or combining shots in the editing room. Curiosity is a big part of my work still to this day.

You are the director, cinematographer, color-editor and composer of the commercial Gift a Feeling. How was this experience for you?

Intense and profound! I was on a trip while writing this commercial for BOUQUET, and realized we would have to produce, shoot, compose, and edit the film within less than two months, if we wanted to release this piece for Valentine's Day. It was a big rush, but BOUQUET could release the film in time, and the audience reception went beyond our expectations. The film got more than 13 thousand views in less than a month. Still to this day, "Gift A Feeling" is winning multiple awards and selections in film festivals across the globe. It's been some time since I've directed a personal piece. So, I could apply some new cinematography and song composition skills. A very challenging and rewarding experience.

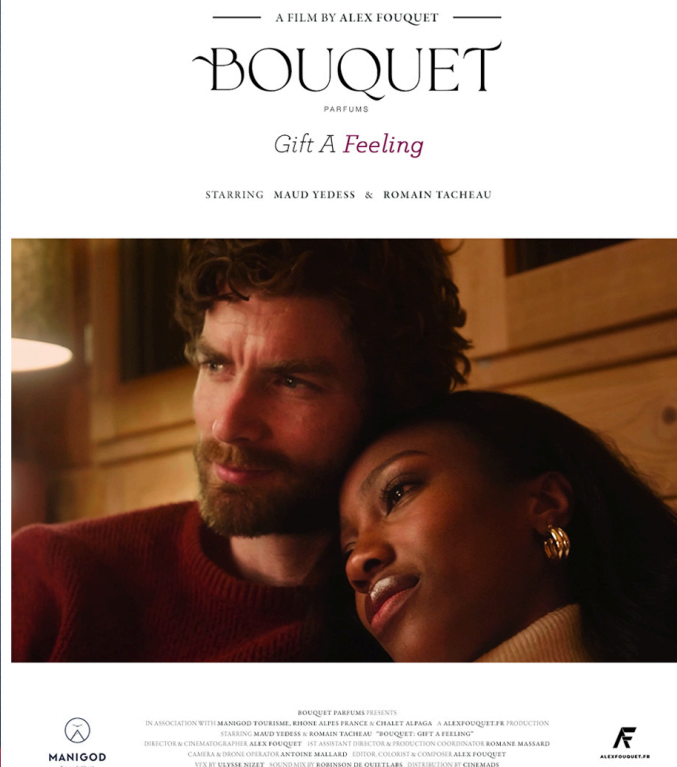
How did you choose the actors, and what was your approach to working with them on set?

It was important to us to cast people from different backgrounds. The idea was to show this story happens all over the world and could happen to anybody. We've decided to give as little background to the actors as possible. So, we could keep their scene of their first meeting as authentic as possible. Maud was a connaissance from New York from many years ago, and she is so beautiful. I've told her we should make a film together. We just had to wait for the right one. She embodied her character perfectly in "Gift A Feeling". And as life sometimes aligns perfectly, Romain, our first pick, joined the project and happened to be from Savoie where we've shot the film! The alchemy between the two models was so natural, that the day of shooting, I did not have to direct them intensely. Just a few intentions, and they were blooming on the screen.

Are there specific films, storytelling techniques, or visual styles that have influenced your approach to filmmaking?

As a video editor, I can say we are always missing shots in post-production to play with. So even we've shot many extra scenes that did not make it to the final cut, and that we shot the entire film within 2 days, our priority was to create as many beautiful shots in the shortest amount of time, so we could have many choices and different approaches to each scene. My background as a videographer for events in New York truly helped. But the main point of reference for this film, remained the BOUQUET Perfume Workshop experience. I remember the gift I made to my father for his visit in New York.

The idea of crafting a perfume for someone you love, and to immortalize a feeling in time, truly appealed to me as a writer and film director.



The director **Alex Fouquet** and the official poster of '**Gift a Feeling**' – www.alex fouquet.fr

What was the biggest challenge you faced when working on this project?

I think the biggest challenge and most time-consuming aspect of this film, was color-grading. We've shot during February 2024 in the French village of Manigod, close to the ski slopes. And for some reason, that year, there was no snow. For all the drone shots and scenes showing the houses in the village, we've had to mask all the house tiles and grass to add snow in the color-grade, and there were many shots where we wanted snow to connect the narrative. It was a very long process, but from what we heard, the trick worked very well.

You've worked on globally recognized brands such as Chanel, YSL, Versace, Off-White, Equinox, and Spotify. How much creative freedom do you have when working with such prestigious brands?

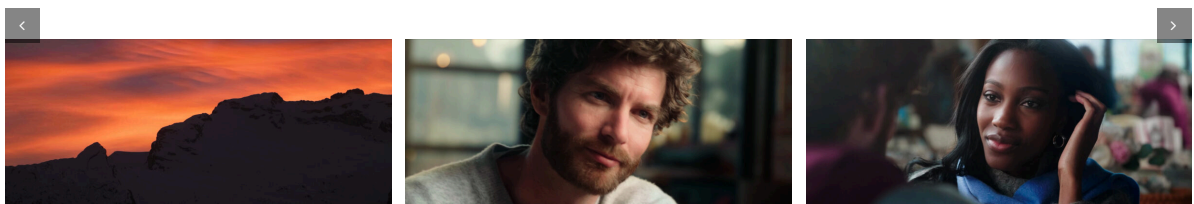
The beauty of this project "Gift A Feeling", was how much creative freedom we've had for the narrative. Nathan, the owner, was really open about the approach for this film. It is very rare I must say. Most branded content work require an agency, full team of creatives, and many internal back and forth to greenlit the project. How refreshing it was to make a project as inspiring and ambitious as "Gift A Feeling".

How important is the storyline in a commercial, and how important is it to tell a compelling story in a short format while also showcasing the product?

That's a great question! I believe the best work is made of emotion. The more simple and honest the emotion, the deeper your film can resonate with your audience. Have your product as a solution to an obstacle in your narrative, and you can get a full circle story that opens to many creative possibilities.

You live and work between Paris and New York City. How have your international experiences shaped your artistic vision?

There is an image of Art de Vivre attached to France that seems to inspire many countries in the world. It didn't take much time before I realize people associate my nationality with my artistic vision (lol). In the case of Gift A Feeling, I wanted to show a romance fashion film, set in a French landscape the international seems not to be aware of its existence. This blend of uncharted nature territory, and common conception of the French way of life, was a nice setting to portray this fragrance love story.



The commercial was filmed in the stunning French Alps. Why did you choose that location, and how do you think it enhances the narrative of the commercial?

We wanted to show the power of smell, and the strong impact it can have on memory. In a way, it's a reconnection to our senses and our groundings. Market, forest, mountains, or fire... this location was a playground of creative motifs. There is also something very delicate and fragile to nature. This immense yet intimate landscape was a wonderful metaphor to follow a story so delicate, yet universal.

What's the best piece of advice you've ever received? And what advice would you give to a young filmmaker?

Criticism is the most useful compliment you will receive. Because even if your audience does not agree with your artistic choices, they spend energy to express their point of view on work you've done. It is ultimately your decision to be open and listen for becoming a better artist, or to let your ego throw it all to trash.

Commercials can be little gems of filmmaking, and many renowned directors have taken on the challenge over the years—such as Spike Jonze's Kenzo, Martin Scorsese's Dolce & Gabbana, Sofia Coppola's Miss Dior, and Baz Luhrmann's Chanel No. 5. Was there a specific commercial that inspired you while working on Gift a Feeling?

I very much agree ! A big reference for this film was one of Bruno Aveillan's masterpiece: "Love (in) New-York" for Tiffany and Co. It still brings me to tears to this day. And I really love the feeling of grandeur, yet intimacy he brings in his visuals. His film was also a musical reference, as it features a delicate piano piece as well. For the calmer moments, I have got really inspired by the intimacy of Nils Frahm's piano songs. His playing focuses on pause, and intentional variations, that truly highlights the softer and important moments of the film.

When working on color editing and cinematography, how did you use colors to convey emotions? In what ways do you think colors enhance storytelling and the overall impact of visuals?

That's a great question as well. If you take a look at the scarf of Romain in the film, it's color burgundy. Whereas, originally, it was red! This was a technical decision made ahead in pre-production, because we were not sure if it would look good in post. In the end we have masked and colored each scarf, roses, and clothing, so it could feature the exact color palette of the brand. But changing that detail was very important in the story as well. We wanted both characters to have their distinguish color, so we could play and alternate their feeling of missing one another in the final cinematography. It's subtle, but it's those details that truly helps your film to feel more focused.

What's next for you? What current projects are you working on?

"Gift a Feeling" was a very rewarding come-back personal film for me. The entire making of this commercial along an amazing crew was an experience I'm truly grateful for. However, it taught me what are my favorite themes as a film director. And some key elements like intuition, search, and reconnection, are pillars for my writing and overall vision. Currently, I am writing some personal fine art films that would feature dance or painting.

But one thing is for sure: "Gift A Feeling" allowed me to see clearer in my vision as a film director, and I'm beyond grateful the film is winning awards and prizes internationally.



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