



DEATH

FOR



SALE



 **62** Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Panorama

tiff. toronto
international
film festival™
OFFICIAL SELECTION 2011

a film by **FAOUZI BENSÄÏDI**



SYNOPSIS

Tetouan, a Moroccan port city permanently under a low, heavy sky. Three friends, small time crooks, decide to rob the town's biggest jewelry store to escape from a hopeless future. Malik is out of a job and madly in love with Dounia, a prostitute at the La Passarella nightclub. He's in on the heist to rescue her and create a new life for them. Allal is the tough guy who can't understand how Malik has fallen for a whore. He needs cash so he can be a player in the local drug trade and move up from snatching purses. Soufiane is the youngest of the three, drifting out of school and looking for direction. After his world is turned upside down, he has his own reasons for wanting to rob the Christian jewelry storeowner. But when the plan falls apart, the three friends must face their own, separate destinies, alone.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Three losers, three small-time crooks, dreaming of a better life, of a new horizon of freedom, love, money, belief and belonging, will inevitably and tragically watch that horizon fade completely to black before them, starkly revealing the cowardice, treachery and pettiness of the human soul. They will come to realize, very late, that they don't have the strength to shoulder their dreams or the depth of the kind of personalities they dream of becoming. That they cannot emerge unscathed from the battle against the great powers of money, greed, destiny, blind love, the manipulation of faith...

Narrating the romantic and exceptional destiny of the ordinary people we come across daily on every street corner... people suffocated by a political, economic and religious system. A world that has already been transformed and where sudden, primal, gratuitous violence can break out at any moment and destroy everything in sight, even those who generate it and think they can control or contain it...

It's a film about the impossible desires that end up killing those who carry them, about trafficking and circulation of all sorts: of goods, of Men, of feelings... and of death when it's the only thing we have left to buy or sell. So of death as a business, as a belief, as cowardice but also as bravery...

A man and a woman are shown in profile, looking out a window. The man is in the foreground, wearing a dark jacket, and the woman is behind him, resting her head on his shoulder. They are looking out at a coastal town with white buildings and a mountain in the background under a hazy sky. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

IN CONVERSATION WITH FAOUZI BENSÂÏDI

The setting for DEATH FOR SALE is the small northern port city of Tetouan and its stunning sky, sea and cliffs. How did you decide that the story should take place there?

I had lived in Tetouan for a year at the age of three. My father had decided to go back there, it's the town where my family has its roots. The earliest memories I have are of traveling to Tetouan and the year of my childhood that was spent there. I would also return often during family vacations. Then once I was grown up, never again... In 2007 I went to live in Tangiers for a few months, already convinced that my next film would be set in that city. Tetouan is 50km away, so of course I decided to go back and visit. And there something started taking shape between the story I was writing, the atmosphere of the place and my characters. I started going there more and more often, writing the story in and for the city. An emotion, a nostalgia, some kind of melancholia rose up inside me during those winter visits in 2007. I made the film with those feelings, those moods and the state of mind brought on by this new encounter with the first place that was ever imprinted and stored in my memory by my retina.

You have portrayed a different part of Morocco in each one of your films - from the rural poverty of your first film A THOUSAND MONTHS to the big city Casablanca of WWW and the suffocating small town Tetouan of DEATH FOR SALE. Is your attention to local diversity intentional or has it just come about as each project evolved?

It's connected to each project and how they develop, change, and positively "contaminate" each other. But in general I film places in almost the same way that I film actors. They're always more than just a background or a canvas. I'm searching for that miraculous moment when something powerful happens between the actors, the situation, the emotions, the light and the space. Places have a soul, a memory, a history of happiness and misfortune that you can feel when you go through them. When you live them. You have to know how to listen to places, because they have a lot to say. The "contractual" obligation that a film always has to tell a story has impoverished the art of cinematography when in fact it can have the same force, if not one even greater, than photography or painting. Film can set its sight on a place or an element - a street, a tree, a sky, a mountain - and create something from it that inspires wonder.

The film plays with the idea and codes of a variety of established film genres including crime cinema, thriller, romance, and social realism - how do you relate to the concept of genre and use it in your storytelling?

I've always told stories that are outside of Aristotle's rules. Chaos is what interests me, whether in the realm of the intimate or of excess. Man and his worlds, the world and its Men. Realism and lyricism. Laughter and tears. Minimalism and exuberance. My films inevitably touch on many genres, and combine them without worrying about conventions or the way things are usually done. What I enjoy doing is taking those codes into a reality that has neither invented them nor been submitted to them. Inevitably genre then gets perverted and loses its balance. I hope and aim for my mix of genre elements to be coherent, and that the formal propositions will create a harmonious world. If this world can generate its own logic with everything pointing in one same direction and creating one mood, then the audience can accept and adhere to a proposition that comes together and has a meaning of its own.

At the center of the story are three friends driven by their different motivations - love for Malik, money and power for Allal and faith for Soufiane. How do you perceive the symbolic relationship between these characters and society?

I think that characters should have to answer only for themselves. That approach leaves a better chance of finding the truth inside them and making them credible. Though of course the truth of their existence is also the daily reality of an entire generation left to fend for themselves, having been neglected and abandoned. Every which way the systems that have held up our societies are shattering. Families have checked out, the state has submitted to the market, schools don't have the necessary means, politics are devoid of ideals. Extremism is the only answer left, because it is simple, Manichean, demagogic, and therefore easily convincing... what do you do when you're twenty years old and you want to live!!!

Your film also features two prominent female characters and touches on the aspirations and struggles of women in a patriarchal society.

In my films women aren't victims, or if they are it's in exactly the same way as men can be. It's only doing justice to their intelligence and their humanity not to depict them in the image of the permanent victims that the West likes to buy into. What's going on in our country is complex and contradictory. Women have suffered from a patriarchal society in which mothers themselves contributed to perpetuating tradition. But this has also given them fighting spirit, personality, strength, determination. Since nothing has ever been given to them they've had to fight for everything. They succeed much better in life than men who think they are owed everything naturally, that they don't have to make any efforts.





Take a look at the uprisings last spring in the Arab world, women were very involved with them when they were in their brightest phase, at the beginning... But then men brought the winter back as soon as they had the chance.

Morocco is often considered a more open society than its neighbours – how is the situation in your country different from its neighbours in the region?

Morocco's openness is real and it has been initiated for over 10 years now. I think that is what has allowed things to evolve more smoothly there than other places in the Arab world. The situation in our country wasn't like the one in Tunisia or Egypt in terms of individual liberties and human rights. It doesn't mean that everything is roses, but it should be noted that the protesters in Morocco were animated by a great awareness and civic spirit. The government did make a few mistakes, but on a scale that can't be compared with the other countries. Once again we're fortunate that our transition is happening gently and without violence. I have followed everything that happened throughout the "Arab Spring" because I want to understand it... All the contradictions of the Arab world have now been thrown into the spotlight. It's a world that's boiling, so the door remains open to any and all possibilities.

DEATH FOR SALE was shot before the "Arab Spring" - has your situation as an artist working in the Arab world changed as a result of recent events?

I think it's too early to see, analyse and understand what has changed, is changing or will change for me as a filmmaker. And the same goes for the citizens of the Arab world more generally. I hear about roundtables or conferences where filmmakers come and explain what has changed about directing since the Arab Spring. Can you imagine? It's just like the experts who went on television during the first few weeks and explained in a few sentences – interrupted by regular commercial breaks – what the Arab world is and how it's changing. I admire the speed of these people's reactions, except that during the first six months people explained to us that the conservative/Islamist movement didn't have the power that was being granted to it, that our societies were becoming more open. And now we're all witnessing this wave of Islamism... Understanding what's happening to us is going to require a little more time. But today's world is so used to a continuous information flow that there's no more time for thought. Taking one's time doesn't seem to have any more advocates. Everything has to be now, immediately. All I hope is that the complexity of the movies I shot before these events honestly translates the complexity of our societies.

CAST

Fehd Benchemsi
Fouad Labiad
Mouchcine Malzi
Iman Mechrafi
Nezha Rahil
Faouzi Bensaïdi



CREW

Written And Directed by
Producers

Produced By

Associate Producers

Director Of Photography
Production Design
Costumes
Editor
Sound

Music
With The Support Of

Project selected by

With The Support Of

Faouzi Bensaïdi
Sébastien Delloye
Souad Lamriki
Bénédicte Bellocq
Entre Chien et Loup,
Agora Film
Liaison Cinématographique
Diana Elbaum
Bettina Brokemper (Heimatfilm)
Marc-Andre Batigne
Itaf Benjelloun
Nezha Rahil
Danielle Anezin
Patrice Mendez
Gert Janssen
Luc Thomas
Richard Horowitz
The Centre Cinématographique Marocain
Sanad Abu Dhabi Film Festival Fund
World Cinema Fund
Visions Sud Est
L'Atelier - Cannes 2009
International Relations ARTE prize
The Belgian Federal Government Tax Shelter
Mormal Philippe Sprl
Lorto Sprl



Belgium, France, Morocco 2011 / 117 min / 1.85 / Dolby Digital / Arabic

FAOUZI BENSÄÏDI

39 years old, after having worked in theater as a director and an actor, he directed his first short film in 1997, “The Cliff”, which won 23 prizes in festivals in France and abroad. In 1999, he co-wrote the script for André Téchiné’s film, “Far”. In 2000, he directed two short films: “The Wall”, which won a prize at the Cannes Film Festival and “The Rain Line”, which won a prize the Venice Film Festival. In 2003, his first feature film « A Thousand Months », won two prizes in Cannes and was distributed in over a dozen countries. In 2006, his second feature « www-what a wonderful world ’ was selected for « Venice Days » in the Venice Film Festival and was distributed in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Norway, Germany, Denmark...and continues to go to festivals.

2011 DEATH FOR SALE -117 minutes - 35 mm scope color

2006 WWW.WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD - 99 minutes - 35 mm scope color

Grand Prize in the Montreal Film Festival – Special Jury Mention Tarifa Festival – Arlequin Prize for Best Screenplay 2005. Best Film and Best Director in the Alexandria Festival, Prize for Artistic Excellence Rome

2003 MILLE MOIS (A THOUSAND MONTHS) - 125 minutes - 35 mm scope color

15 prizes in several festivals including: Best Screenplay in Festival Premiers Plans in Angers 2002, Prize ‘ Premier Regard Award » and « Youth Award » - in Un Certain Regard Cannes Festival 2003, Best Director in the Beirut-Lebanon Festival, Grand Prize in the 14th Festival of Milan ...

2000 TRAJETS (THE RAIN LINE) - 25 minutes - 35 mm color
Special Jury Prize in the Mostra of Venice.

2000 LE MUR (THE WALL) - 10 minutes - 35 mm color

Gras Savoye Award in the Director’s Fortnight at Cannes, Second Special Mention Jury Award in Mediterranean Film Festival in Montpellier, Jury Prize in Damascus, Special Jury Mention in Capalbio, Special Jury Mention in Saint-Affrique, Jury Prize Plein Sud Festival in Cozes.

1998 LA FALAISE (THE CLIFF) - 18 minutes - 35 mm Black & White

Winner of 23 prizes among which are: Best Fiction Prize in Kiev, Best Short Film Award in Brest, Jury Prize in Dublin, Best Short Film Award in Freiberg, Best Short Film Award in Milan, Best Short Film Award in Tetouan, Best Short Film Award in Lleida, Best Short Film Award in New York.

ENTRE CHIEN ET LOUP

Entre Chien et Loup’s production policy focuses on high quality content. In both feature and documentary film, our production philosophy remains firmly committed to this principle, and it is thanks to this particular emphasis that we have succeeded, since our creation in 1989, in imposing ourselves on the European audiovisual market.

Maintaining and developing an ongoing access to distribution networks in the audiovisual sector involves a permanent and formidable challenge, particularly in a social environment where pre-digested image consumption has become standard. However Entre Chien et Loup remains faithful to its basic intention: making films that combine a committed style of direction, of authorship and of topic, a strong sense of cinematography, and the appropriate production that allows for their fullest ambition to be expressed.

Since 1995, Entre Chien et Loup has produced/co-produced films that have garnered international recognition and awards including THE DITCH by Wang Bing (2010), A SCREAMING MAN by Mahamat-Saleh Haroun (2010), RAPT by Lucas Belvaux (2009), RESTLESS by Amos Kollek (2008), IRINA PALM by Sam Garbarski (2007), LA RAISON DU PLUS FAIBLE by Lucas Belvaux (2006), DARATT by Mahamat-Saleh Haroun (2006), SINCE OTAR LEFT by Julie Bertucelli (2003), and UN COUPLE EPATANT-CAVALE APRES LA VIE by Lucas Belvaux (2002). Upcoming projects include THE CONGRESS by Ari Folman (WALTZ WITH BASHIR) and THE SUICIDAL SHOP by Patrice Leconte (THE GIRL ON THE BRIDGE).

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