

MARC DU PONTAVICE
PRESENTS



MATTHIAS SCHOENAERTS **REDA KATEB**

FRÈRES ENNEMIS

CLOSE ENEMIES

WITH **SOFIANE ZERMANI**, **ADEL BENCHERIF** AND **SABRINA OUAZANI**

A FILM BY **DAVID OELHOFFEN**



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#FrèresEnnemis

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SYNOPSIS

Born and raised in a suburb ridden by drug trafficking, Driss and Manuel were like brothers. As adults, they have gone down exactly the opposite path: Manuel chose to embrace this thug life, while Driss completely rejected it and became a cop.

When Manuel's biggest deal goes terribly wrong, the two men meet again and come to realize they both need each other to survive in their worlds. Between betrayals and resentments, and despite their hatred, they renew deep ties around the one thing they have left in common: their visceral commitment to the place of their childhood.



**INTERVIEW WITH
DAVID OELHOFFEN**

Where did the idea for *FRÈRES ENNEMIS* originate?

I have a lawyer friend who had quite important drug traffickers among her clients. I thought it would be interesting to meet them to try and understand how their lives were organized concretely. Most agreed to talk to me. It turned out the gap between how we usually fathom criminal life and what it's really like was huge. There are a lot of expectations, a lot of fear and little romanticism. It made me want to see this same reality from the "opposite side", within the police. The project was born. At that time, I was offered to co-write *L'AFFAIRE SKI*, a movie directed by Frédéric Tellier about Guy Georges, the first serial killer to ever be identified in France. This co-writing allowed me to broaden my knowledge about the institution. To understand what this profession meant. And to forge unexpected links. So I had quite a unique documentation from both sides of the fence of drug trafficking and I started to build a story on that theme.

Didn't setting the action in the suburbs – an area that's showed a lot in movies – seem like a pitfall to you?

What I wanted to do at first was to film the suburbs as they are and not shoot suburb fantasies. Just as I wanted to do it for police life and crime life. I didn't want to imitate things I had seen in other movies, to recycle images. This is a framework we established from the beginning with Marc du Pontavice, the producer. He does not particularly relish crime fiction – no more than I do. The only way to give life to our movie in this now hard-to-finance movie genre was to consistently ensure its uniqueness. During the writing process, with the help of Jeanne Aptekman – who was a co-scriptwriter on the movie – we then tried to bring these characters the same nuances and the same complexity as in any drama, whether they were suburbanites, drug traffickers or policemen. Private, political and family conflicts probably develop in different ways in underprivileged areas or in ghettos, but they have the same intensity everywhere. In each and every one of my movies, I try not to simplify them.

Did you have a model in mind?

Not a model, no. References and influences, yes! *FRÈRES ENNEMIS* is resolutely looking to grasp what's happening in France in 2018, with the inherent features it contains and with as little biases as possible. In terms of approach, I was inspired by Matteo Garrone's *GOMORRA*. It's a movie about the Italian reality that doesn't mimic a violence that would come from American movies. It brings a singular and sharp vision on a really specific and local reality. And it becomes universal thanks to that.

You build your movies around the pursuit of identity...

My first movie, *NOS RETROUVAILLES (IN YOUR WAKE,)* already dealt with this matter through the questioning of a young man who has to grow up in opposition to his father. In *LOIN DES HOMMES (FAR FROM MEN)*, the two characters have to resist community isolation. In *FRÈRES ENNEMIS*, the characters struggle with the group that is supposed to define them and give them their identities. The cop is confronting his own identity too. He rejected his North African and suburbanite origins. The thug is almost a twin character since he is someone who found his identity in the family that's not his own. I like to talk about this tension between personal freedom and the groups to which we belong: the family, love, social and political environments. A dysfunctional geographic area such as the ghetto can be a protection as well as an isolation. It is a refuge and a prison at the same time.





You're filming with Reda Kateb again. How did your relationship evolve since *FAR FROM MEN*? Was it obvious to cast him as the cop?

Yes, it was obvious indeed. Since *FAR FROM MEN*, we've been talking a lot. We've traveled quite a lot together for the movie. The script evolved in light of our conversations. I wrote it picturing him as Driss. His experience inspired me. I wanted to showcase the tension that preoccupies someone who wants to be seen through his qualities, but who's always reminded of his origins. If Reda managed to build his freedom, thousands of other young people don't. This tension between accepting to be labeled and the desire to get rid of that label is what Driss is going through. The only way for him to climb in the police hierarchy is to accept this label and to accept this promotion to the drug squad because it is the only place where his experience is valued. He knows the suburbs and the drug traffickers. This is sometimes what one is forced to do as an actor.

Which of Reda Kateb's acting skills do you like?

He has incredible embodiment skills. But he doesn't settle for his physical appeal. He is delicate, smart and open. So as to play he consistently shifts between intelligence and intuition. I often rely on his instincts to try to find what would be more accurate. It required to embody this policeman at odds with society who comes back to the ghetto and starts to investigate himself.

You put him in front of Matthias Schoenaerts, what spurred you to bring them face to face?

I was extremely lucky because they're an extraordinary duet of actors. To me, the characters are almost like twins. I see them as two sides of a same coin. Matthias has an amazing physical appeal. He radiates an incredible strength. He is very impressive physically, but he is absolutely not afraid to display delicateness. Manuel, the character he embodies is perfectly adapted to this violent life, he inspires respect and at the same time his identity is built on flaws we get to discover progressively. He grew up alone and found refuge with a Moroccan clan in which he perfectly fit while being completely apart from it. His doubts, his being naive are revealed to us. Matthias brings a physical confidence, a bestiality, and a highly sensitive personality.

The two actors however aren't filmed in the same manner. Manuel is at the center of a group which gives him an aura, when Driss is often alone, less radiant...

My bet was to film from within the group of drug traffickers so criminality could be experienced from the inside. We principally used short focal lenses with sequence-shots in order to give the feeling that one is in the middle of the action, inside the clan. Manuel inside, and Driss outside of this group. He made the choice to leave. He is quite isolated. As spectators, we quickly realize that is the price to pay for his choice.



How did you build this remote confrontation?

Driss and Manuel have developed a deep hostility towards one another, but when they meet again, they're touched by one another again and reminisce their former friendship. Driss learns that Manuel has always defended him when he left the ghetto and he realizes he has been keeping photographs from their shared adolescence. Manuel understands Driss is really trying to help him. The two characters are overwhelmed, taken back to an existential pursuit. There are two scenes I draw a parallel between: Driss's comeback to his parents' and Manuel's comeback to his ex-wife's (played by Gwendolyn Gourvennec). These are two moments that are symmetrically positioned in which the characters in search of their identity go back to the people they love.

Tell us about the character of Imrane played by Adel Benchérif, seen especially in *A PROPHET* by Jacques Audiard...

Adel Benchérif is a radiant actor, extremely incandescent. I saw him again in a short film, *LA FUGUE* by Jean-Bernard Martin and I was impressed by his warm and pleasant presence. Someone like him was needed to embody Imrane, Manuel's friend and partner. Imrane's death needed to be a shock to the spectator.

Your movie marks rapper Sofiane's first appearance on screen. What was appealing about him? Are you a fan of his music?

To be honest, my children listen to Fianso, not me. I only discovered his music afterwards. And I like his flow, his energy. Justine Léocadie, my casting director, introduced him to me. Then, I enjoyed his acting skills in a short film called *TERREMERE* by Aliou Sow. I really took him for his acting qualities, it seems to me it would be suicidal to hire somebody to make the most of his fame or buy a suburb guarantee. I found him extremely subtle in the way he performed, motivated, and I enjoyed his suggestions that often led me to modify the dialogues to adapt to the reality of the suburbs that he knows well. This was a chance to be able to rely on his personal story. I did the same with Adel. I relied a lot on them to change details and to avoid clichés too. This is how I work. I enjoy involving the actors. I support their freedom. It sometimes brings a dose of chaos, but I hate freezing things with rehearsals. I don't talk about films with them so their minds aren't polluted with other images. I like to surprise them as well.

You remained loyal to your director of photography, Guillaume Desffontaines. How does your relationship works?

Guillaume is an essential partner. *FRÈRES ENNEMIS* was so visually different from the previous movie, *FAR FROM MEN*, that it was a bet for us. The idea was to be inside a group. We opted for an over-the-shoulder camera. Guillaume managed to shoot with the small Alexa by setting Leica lenses that were being used for the first time in a movie. So, thanks to it, we had a tiny high-performance camera. We were able to shoot under cars, in very narrow places. At first glance, the image may seem raw, but it is all but naturalist. The frame is stylized and always tries to show the actors in the best light.

There is a certain lyrical tone as well in the directing...

Indeed, Guillaume and I wanted the images of the suburbs to express the fact that, for the people living there, it is also a cocoon, a protection. The suburbs are not only worrisome. They can be beautiful. Some perspectives from the roofs are hot stuff. And I understand one can identify to this place, to this gigantic tower serving as amplifier for the characters. One can like the ghetto, identify with it, find it beautiful and hate it at the same time. But Guillaume is not the only one whom I thought it was important to collaborate with.

Beyond Marc du Pontavice who already produced *FAR FROM MEN*, or Reda Kateb, it is also the case for production designer Stéphane Taillason, mixer Emmanuel Croset, sound engineer Martin Boissau, but also actors such as Nicolas Giraud or Yann Goven. They represent an invaluable artistic core to me.

Music has an important part in the movie. What were you looking for and why did you call on Superpoze's services?

I was looking for something that would accompany the character's emotional states. I didn't want music to suit the action or add tension to the film. After all, the violent scenes are devoid of music. The film editor Anne-Sophie Bion and I wanted to make the narrative work without music. I wanted a modern sound, electro, 2018. My friend and musical supervisor on the movie Eric Karnbauer made several suggestions. From the beginning, when we met with Gabriel Legeleux whose stage name is Superpoze, we got along on the part music should have in this movie. I like his melodic sounds and he quickly understood what suited me and he arranged a much darker music, more tormented than what he usually does.

What left a mark on you during the filming of *FRÈRES ENNEMIS*?

The first scene between Driss and Manuel happening in the basement of the building. This is the first confrontation between the two characters. They show a lot of hostility towards each other, but behind the camera, I felt a lot of emotion between the actors. What was happening between the two of them was really intense. When we shot this scene, I knew the movie was going to be special. That we would feel this tormented friendship. The chemistry worked. In chaos I could see a spark. It happens from time to time!



**INTERVIEW WITH
MATTHIAS SCHOENAERTS**



What did you like in this project?

There are several things: the universe, the actors and the director. **FRÈRES ENNEMIS** is a story that needed to be told quickly and that is suitable for genre films, like crime fiction.

How would you define your character, Manuel?

I try to do the opposite: not to define Manuel. I don't want to put the character in a box, but to put him outside the box. He is a living human being who is organic, who embodies contrasts. To define him is to limit him. David Oelhoffen brings complexity to this man that others often reduce to a cliché: the drug dealer or an insult such as "scum". Before being what he represents on a social level, this character is somebody who needs to give and receive love. The reality of his job has built his way of life, but it doesn't say anything about his personality. When one defines something, one is very close to being judgmental. My definition of Manuel is that he's the sweetest boy in the world.

We know very little about Manuel's past. Did you seek to reconstruct it?

Of course, I created my own story. But it is not the past that determines his present. He is a man of action. First and foremost, I worked with bits from the script: his former friendship with Driss (the one who became a cop), his bond with Imrane (his partner), and the relationship with the mother of his son. I liked that she still loves him but not to the point of supporting his way of life, that could endanger their son.

What did you change in yourself to become Manuel?

Inevitably, I adopted another verbal as well as body language. I looked for a certain musicality in the flow of words, in the rhythm, without exaggerating it either. I was involved in the costume choices. I tried to apply thorough characterizations, but it's part of the private process of an actor. I hope it isn't too obvious on the screen. If the methods I applied to play this role are visible, well it means I failed. I don't like it when the effort is seen, I want to stay accurate in what's real and credible. It's also scary because people sometimes mistake me for my characters!

Were you aware to be the two sides of a same coin with Driss' character played by Reda Kateb? Did it influence your performance?

Yes, this is the way David developed the movie. In a way, Driss and Manuel share the same destiny. Each on a side of the fence. One is a cop, the other a drug dealer. This is how sad this reality is. They couldn't break the vicious circle. Reda and I adopted a certain language, a certain way of being, connected to the environment our characters grew up in. Oddly enough, we ended up – without realizing it – creating roles conveying a sense of mimicry.





You two don't confront much, though. What memory of your collaboration do you keep in mind?

I loved it. Reda is a great actor, committed, who often get off the beaten tracks and makes tough choices about his performance. What he offers is very subtle and at the same time, he is so raw, almost violent.

Did you talk together about your roles?

Not much. In the movie our characters meet again after a long time. We didn't want to overanalyze or psychoanalyze their behaviors. It's useless. Bringing life to the moment is what matters. Conversations between actors are too mythologized.

What are David Oelhoffen qualities as a director?

He doesn't give too much directions and gives us a lot of freedom. Freedom is crucial during a creative process. He plays according to how the game unfolds. He reacts to the way we have of occupy the space. Always talking to his director of photography, Guillaume Desfontaines who did an incredible job. I loved working with him, he makes very thorough choices, his minimalist aesthetic is enhanced on screen.

Do you particularly appreciate genre films?

David Oelhoffen never got on our nerves with imperatives to stick to the genre. *FRERES ENNEMIS* is a crime movie of a special type. Of course, this is an action movie, but there are also a lot of scenes with strong and dramatic issues. This is awesome for the actors.

Your character is part of a tradition of crime movie heroes who fight to clear their names and avenge their honor, though. Were you aware you were summoning a very strong imagination?

It is part of a tradition in the world of gangsters and crooks. Honor, pride, the codex are vital elements of the genre. They push the hero to act in an absolute and radical way. My character is completely impassioned by this. Of course, I was aware this character has penetrated movies, in Scorsese's as well as in Melville's.

**INTERVIEW WITH
REDA KATEB**



How would you define your character, Driss?

Driss is a police captain in the drug squad. He's good at doing his job and he loves what he does. He's from a working-class area, from a ghetto. As soon as he became an adult, he wanted to escape this environment. Becoming a policeman is part of this flight and it has isolated him a lot. Far from his family and childhood friends, he seems to have found balance at the beginning of the movie. He lives with his 14 year-old daughter. The death of his childhood friend Imrane, who had to become his "uncle" (his nark), is going to change everything. It's going to violently confront him to everything he'd tried to escape, but to his demons as well, his gray areas, his guilt. Especially when he reunites with Manuel. Finally, Driss' course throughout the movie is that of someone who comes home.

David Oelhoffen revealed he wrote the part thinking of you, taking inspiration from you. Did you know? Did it change anything in the way you approached the character?

David had told me he had written the part thinking of me. He didn't tell me precisely to what extent he was linking me to Driss, and I didn't look to go too deep on that matter. David and I know each other well, we're friends. We've been seeking to make another movie together since *FAR FROM MEN*.

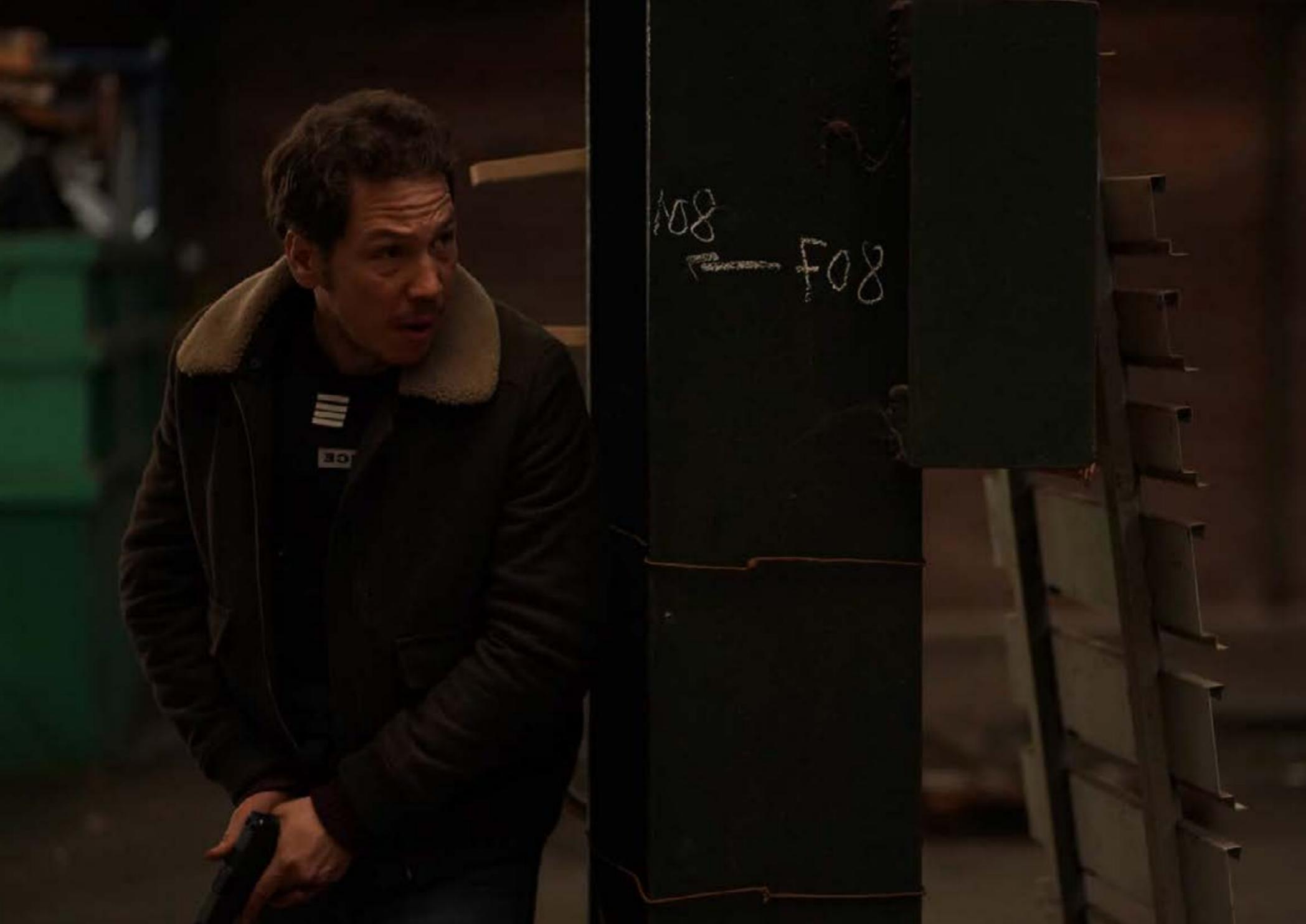
There is nonetheless a parallel between the part you had in FAR FROM MEN and this one. These are men who became strangers to their own community... Do you agree? Do you see any other similarities?

Similarities? It wasn't obvious to me when I read the script. They're two men who can't go back into their communities. But the character of Mohamed in *FAR FROM MEN* resigned himself to a self-sacrifice in order to save his relatives. He experiences his sacrifice mystically, as the noblest deed he could achieve. As for Driss, he chose to thrive outside of the community. He knew he would pay the price for it but did not imagine it would lead him to become corrupt. He chose the Police because of a republican ideal and because of his personal ambition, not suspecting this path would directly confront him to his peers in the worst kind of way, his childhood friends' deaths.

However, the movie doesn't give too much elements about the past of your character, did you try to fill them in?

Yes, we talked a lot with David ahead of the shooting. We asked ourselves a lot of questions about the script and discussed every scene together. There's a scene we've shot accounting for Driss' past that is not in the final cut. Driss explained he had enrolled in the army to run away from the ghetto. Then, he became a policeman to escape from the army. I ended up telling him: "As I came from a ghetto, I was offered the drug squad. I knew that without it I would never get to climb the ladder. I accepted."





David Oelhoffen shatters the myth of the flamboyant policeman, showing how this man is stuck between his hierarchy and the suburbs where he was born. What do you think of it?

I think David Oelhoffen shatters clichés in every domain. For cops as for gangsters, we're far from the outlandish caricatures we're used to seeing. That's also the reason why I accepted this part and why I like working with David.

There is a really powerful scene when the character comes back to his parents who disowned him... How did you experience it?

This scene alone crystallizes this character's tragedy. Driss tries once more to come back to his father and is facing a wall. His mother remains loving and affectionate, but she's incredibly sad to be forced to hide her love for her son.

This is a powerful scene, plain and free of grand gestures. When he speaks of the wallpaper of his parents' flat he used to abhor so much saying he misses it so much these days, he is of course talking about something else... After this scene, the character of Driss implodes. This tension will irrigate the whole movie. This is also the only moment Driss can be heard speaking in Arabic.

FRÈRES ENNEMIS is your comeback to genre movies. Did you miss the adrenaline associated to crime films?

Really? I didn't see this movie as my comeback to genre movies, but after all why not... I didn't miss the adrenaline because it's something I secrete every time I shoot. But this is true it's the first time I play a cop in a movie. What I like in this film is that it is some sort of family tragedy disguised in a crime movie. Because the director is more interested in human concerns, in what happens inside the characters than in the progress of an investigation. Deep issues are addressed in a tense thriller in which the spectator is holding his breath. This is what I like.

Did you practice and ask the drug squad questions?

Yes, I had the opportunity, way ahead of the filming, to meet policemen who let me ask them a lot of questions. They were generous in the way they shed light on the reality of their job. We've spent some time together on their workplace and these meetings were invaluable. At some point, I almost got a chance to do some actual work with them, but the hierarchy unfortunately refused. I've also spent some time with a gunsmith who taught me how to handle my weapon. The goal was to apprehend the gun as a daily tool for work and to master the little rituals, like putting the weapon in the safe each time the policeman comes home.

Which of David Oelhoffen's qualities do you like?

I met David a few years ago during the casting of his first movie, *NOS RETROUVAILLES (IN YOUR WAKE)*, as I auditioned for a boxer part. I had been visiting the boxing gyms in my neighborhood for a while, but I still lacked credibility upon a ring. He didn't hire me. After this first missed opportunity, we really met during the filming of *LOIN DES HOMMES (FAR FROM MEN)*. I admire his attentiveness, his ability to constantly question things by making his stories cross swords with the actors' spirits and the film crew. David has this quality because there is always a pressing need that pushes him to adapt stories for the screen. He is devoid of mannerism and has no wish to play film director. He actually has something to say.

We also share a few obsessions visible throughout the two movies we've made together. Among them, the authentic human being's relationship to the roles he's asked to play in life. We ask ourselves about the identity attributed to people or the functions we take on in society and throughout History. I remember a lengthy discussion we had during the movie preparation when we were wondering how the fate of a same class of talented children gathered on a picture played out. Why some blossom and some others break their noses? I still haven't got an answer... at least not just one.

A word about your partner, Matthias Schoenaerts, with whom you have crucial confrontations. What memory do you keep of your meeting and your collaboration?

Matthias has been an awesome colleague and co-star on this movie. We didn't know each other before the shooting. We had just come across each other with Jacques Audiard during film promotion for *DE ROUILLE ET D'OS (RUST AND BONE)*. I have always thought of him as a remarkable actor and I've been keeping an eye on his career for all these years. I'm impressed with how swiftly he gets into a part and by the intense presence he has. When David told me he was offering him Manuel's part, I found the project even more thrilling. He gives a lot on the set and works for the movie first and foremost, and not for his own name.

I think we have things in common in how we work on set. We like to prepare for a role, set the characters' backgrounds and traits. Then to let something happen at each take, we like to go in some sort of trance and leave the scene unfold always in a different way. We identified with each other through this and had a lot of fun.





SOFIANE ZERMANI

In this movie, the rapper starts out on the wide screen. This is actually not his first time in front of the camera since he acted in Aliou Sow's short film, *TERREMERE*, which David Oelhoffen saw. The musician had already had offers, but none had made him want to take the plunge until now: "I couldn't miss an opportunity to work with such actors and a director whose last film, *FAR FROM MEN*, I loved", he said. "What motivated me is that I don't play a rapper. I really had to put myself in the character's shoes. But that guy, I know him. It's my environment. At the same time, when your album is entitled *Affranchis (Goodfellas)*, you can't refuse to be in a crime movie sometimes reminiscent of Scorsese's."

Of the experience he will remember "the kindness of the team" and "the attentiveness of the director."

ABOUT SUPERPOZE

The movie's original soundtrack - SUPERPOZE

Gabriel Legeleux was born in Caen where he studied percussions at the conservatory and History at university. After his first EPs between 2012 and 2014, he released – through his own label Combien Mille Records – his first album, *Opening*, in April 2015. Followed by a tour that led him to France, Europe, Asia and America. He also produced and co-arranged DJ Pone's first album, mixed several tracks on Nekfeu and Lomepal's first albums and composed the soundtrack for the documentary *A Voix Haute* broadcast on France 2 in November 2016. Superpoze also composed the music for and acted in Hunter, writer and scenographer Marc Lainé's most recent play in 2017-2018.

DISCOGRAPHY

Albums

2017 - **For We The Living**

2015 - **Opening**

EP

2017 - **Azur** (Single)

2016 - **Gleam / Shelter**

2013 - **Jaguar**

2013 - **Pavane**

2012 - **From the Cold**

2010 - **The Iceland Sound**

EP collaborations

2014 - **Untitled – Superpoze & Stwo**

2014 - **A Part of You – Kuage**





CAST

MATTHIAS SCHOENAERTS	Manuel
REDA KATEB	Driss
ADEL BENCHERIF	Imrane
FIANSO (SOFIANE ZERMANI)	Fouad
NICOLAS GIRAUD	Remi
SABRINA OUAZANI	Mounia
GWENDOLYN GOURVENEK	Manon
MARC BARBÉ	Marc
ASTRID WHETTALL	Drug squad leader
YANN GOVEN	Fernandez
OMAR SALIM	Nouri
AHMED BENAÏSSA	Raji

FILM CREW

Directed by	DAVID OELHOFFEN
Written by	DAVID OELHOFFEN
Adaptation and dialogues	DAVID OELHOFFEN AND JEANNE APTEKMAN
Producer	MARC DU PONTAVICE
Associate producer	MARGAUX BALSAN
Director of photography	GUILLAUME DEFFONTAINES
Editing	ANNE-SOPHIE BION
Casting director	JUSTINE LEOCADIE
Production designer	STÉPHANE TAILLASSON
Costumes	ANNE-SOPHIE GLEDHILL
Music	SUPERPOZE
Sound	MARTIN BOISSAU, JULIEN ROIG AND EMMANUEL CROSET



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