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Farewell Gary



Les FILMS A4
presents



Farewell Gary

A film by Nassim Amaouche

With Jean-Pierre Bacri, Dominique Reymond, Yasmine Belmadi

French release: July 22nd 2009

75 minutes

Format 1.85 / SR-DTS Digital

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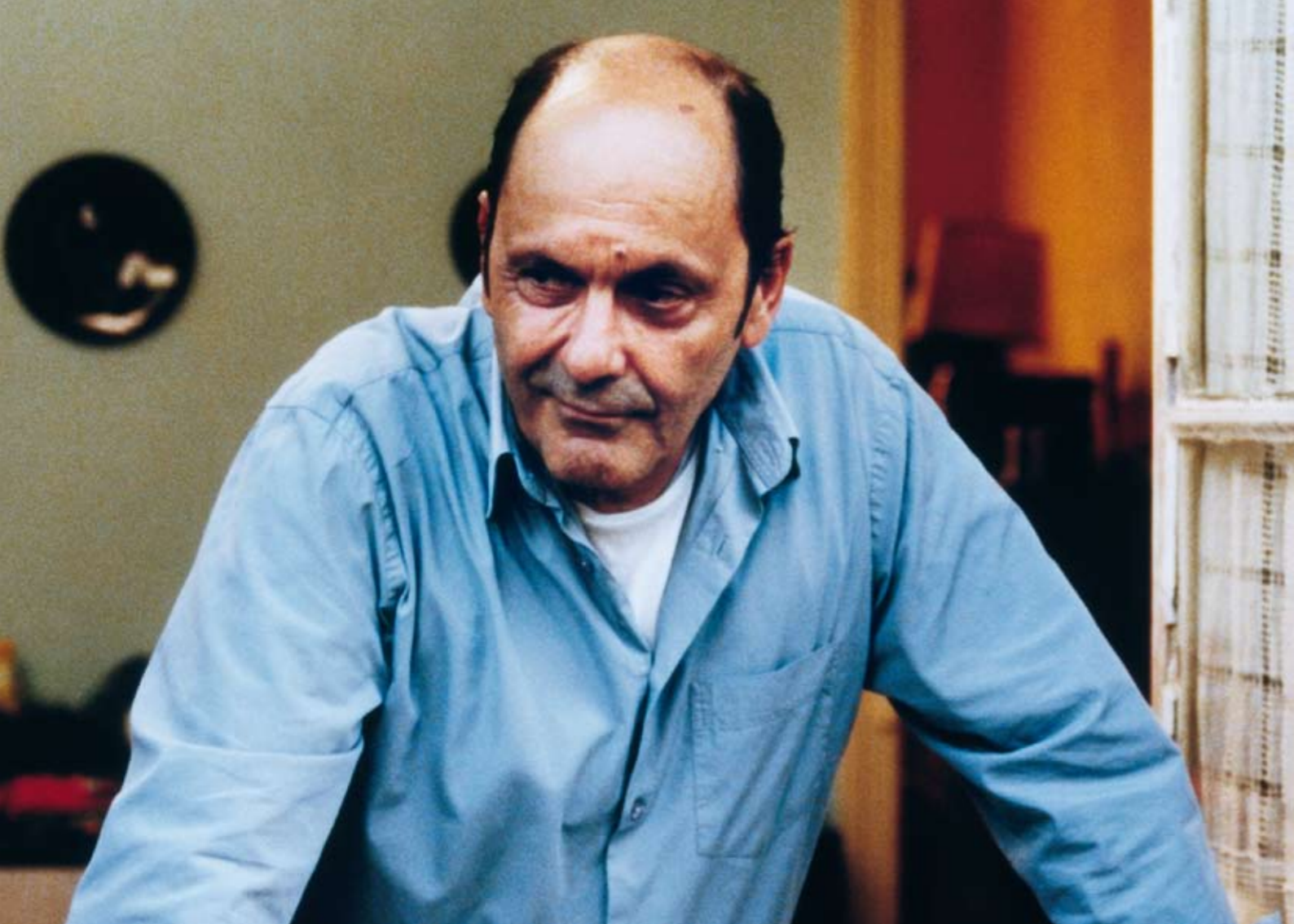
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Synopsis

In the middle of nowhere, a workers' housing project that was cleared of its population some years ago.

However, some inhabitants decided to stay, more through choice than necessity, because this is where they were born and where they grew up.

Among them are Francis, the conscientious worker who continues to maintain the machine on which he worked his whole life; Samir, his son, who has returned to the neighborhood after a long absence; and Maria, their neighbor, who lives with her son José who likes to believe Gary Cooper is his dad.

So he waits for him every day in an alleyway in this desolate landscape with the feel of an abandoned western set.



Interview with Nassim Amaouche

For the most part, *FAREWELL GARY* takes place in an amazing and totally authentic workers' housing project. How did you find it?

FAREWELL GARY is about the end of a chapter of working class history and the start of another. It's about a transformation. The film set had to have this double feel but without overshadowing the subject. To put it simply, I was looking for a cinematographic location.

The producers and I knew that it wasn't going to be the easiest of locations to scout and they allowed me to start well in advance. I looked for a long time and finally found the Blanche du Teil estate in the Ardèche, a working class neighborhood constructed by the Lafarge group at the beginning of the century which was home to as many as 1,200 inhabitants at one point and to just four today. It carries all the stigma of a bygone era as it is still inhabited. The main street, which you'd swear came straight out of a western, was the clincher. I had to rewrite almost nothing, and barely had to adapt the script. We had to shoot there, and nowhere else.

The location contributes to the atmosphere of poetic realism in FAREWELL GARY...

Certainly, that housing project imposed a mood. It allowed me to move between a kind of documentary realism and the fictional escapism that I was determine to have. To me, poetry is a capacity to seize the very essence of reality and to draw that towards abstraction.

I wanted to make a film with a direct connection to social reality, without depriving myself of anything formal, and without necessarily moving towards absolute naturalism because my characters are working class characters.

I understand the 'moral' reticence of certain directors who don't want to beautify poverty, but why deny yourself the right to show those who live in that world in a beautiful light? The proletariat also has a right to cameras, tracking shots and 35mm.

To me, ethical filmmaking is the quest for a certain truth, and truth is not necessarily verisimilitude.





There is a certain tenderness that emanates from FAREWELL GARY...

To me, tenderness is not a taboo - I fully embrace it. In movies as in real life, we have a tendency to consider it somewhat soft or even mawkish.

I think the tenderness you feel in this film doesn't stop you from grasping the real harshness of the subject.

The last shot of the film, for example, I find hugely violent because it expresses something arbitrary, cold and unrelenting.

But what I would be most proud of is having told a story that appears nice and sweet but one where, during the end credits, the audience feels the candy had an acid aftertaste. I hope that ambiguity will come across in my film.

That ambiguity is definitely there, well before the end credits. For example, in once scene you show a trades union premises in which one room has become a mosque, thus putting different values and beliefs on the same level.

The fact that in certain working class neighborhoods people are more sensitive to religion than to Karl Marx is an objective reality. I did my best to remain descriptive, to not impose any judgment. Personally, I don't believe religious belief helps us to live together better, and yet I become more optimistic when I meet people with strong beliefs in something rather than in nothing at all. The transformation of these premises into a mosque expresses both a certain sadness (or fear even), and possible comfort in the face of change - energy, something life-affirming.





Yet in *FAREWELL GARY*, you show a young generation that is almost passive, accepting of the problems in the world. For example, when they are playing a video game about the Iraq war...

That scene was purely inspired by reality. I once lived in Belleville and because I didn't have an Internet connection at home, I used to go to a cyber café where loads of kids from all kinds of ethnic backgrounds - including many immigrants from North Africa - would play these war games that simulated the US war in Iraq. Some chose to play the part of the American army, others preferred to be on the side of the 'terrorists'.

I ended up asking them what guided their choice. They told me it was about the different weapons they could have - some of them preferred the scope-mounted rifles and tanks of the American army and others the grenades and knives of the Iraqis. I found that depressing. I think I'd have almost preferred it if they'd made ideological choices. Once again that preference for belief rather than for cynicism...

In contrast to that, Samir is the only character who makes a clear choice that he takes on board.

To me, he clearly represents an idea of freedom. He refuses a programmed life, a life of a slave. He's looking for his own personal path. Although I like all the characters in the film, I'm particularly attached to him.

Another of FAREWELL GARY's attachments to reality is that facility to show a family with members who have different ethnic origins, without ever stigmatizing them.

That came about very naturally. Without making any comparison to my film, the first time I saw that was possible in cinema was with SHADOWS by Cassavetes. Initially, I logically sought to get my bearings in the family he filmed where there are blacks and people of mixed race until I no longer cared about it, as it didn't matter. They

are what they are. I thought that was a great idea and that reinforced my idea that one shouldn't spend too much time being concerned with the ethnic origins of the characters in FAREWELL GARY. Especially as the family in the movie corresponds to the France in which I grew up. Despite everything, I still felt obliged to provide a tiny justification: When Francis talks to Samir and Icham's mother, we understand it is a mixed marriage. I was afraid that without that explanation, the film would engender inappropriate questioning.

Aside from Samir, there's another character who stands out in this family: José.

I was inspired by a tradition from North African stories where the character of the fool is important. Generally, it turns out that this 'fool' is either the only sensible person in the tale, or they are purely symbolic. José, who is constantly waiting for the return of his father whom he believes to be Gary Cooper, comes straight out of that.

Cooper remains the pure incarnation of the hero needed by America after the stock market crash of 1929: He's manly and powerful. The triumphant myth of the capitalist dream - only a fool could believe he'd return...

This cowboy brings a little mythology to the film. Were you particularly attached to the Hollywood legend, Gary Cooper?

No, not specially, but I had a huge fondness for the whole western genre.





In *FAREWELL GARY*, the two female characters, Maria and Nejma, seem more certain and sure of themselves than the other characters...

That was deliberate. As women, they know discrimination better than the others. I had the feeling that this would lead them to be more prepared for life's struggles than the men. I like the idea that they are the only characters who aren't resigned, and who are really clear about their situation.

Moreover, they don't live in the past, as do all the other characters. But I didn't intellectualize their roles all that much - I think, more simply, I just enjoyed portraying them this way on the screen.

Interviews by Alex Masson
Translated by Anna McQueen

Nassim Amaouche

In 2003, Nassim Amaouche made his first short film, DE L'AUTRE CÔTÉ. The film was selected for many festivals including Semaine de la Critique in Cannes, Locarno, Venice (parallel program) and Clermont-Ferrand. It won the Discovery Prize from the Syndicat Français de la Critique de Cinéma, the Special Jury Prize at the Henri Langlois Festival in Poitiers, the Best Work Prize at the Tangiers Festival and the CNC Quality Prize. In 2005, Amaouche made QUELQUES MIETTES POUR LES OISEAUX, a documentary shot on the Jordan-Iraq border. The film was selected for the Venice Mostra, the Locarno Film Festival and the Festival du Réel at Beaubourg among others, and won many prizes including the Press Prize at the Clermont-Ferrand Festival.

The actors

Filmographies sélectives

JEAN-PIERRE BACRI

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2008 | LET IT RAIN
by Agnès Jaoui |
| 2006 | SELON CHARLIE
by Nicole Garcia |
| 2004 | LOOK AT ME
by Agnès Jaoui |
| 2003 | FEELINGS
by Noémie Lvovsky |
| 2002 | A HOUSEKEEPER
by Claude Berri |
| | ASTERIX & OBELIX MEET CLEOPATRA
by Alain Chabat |
| 2000 | THE TASTE OF OTHERS
by Agnès Jaoui |
| 1999 | KENNEDY AND I
by Sam Karmann |

DOMINIQUE REYMOND

- | | |
|------|---|
| 2008 | THE JOY OF SINGING by Ilan Duran Cohen
LES MURS PORTEURS by Cyril Gelblat
THE NEW PROTOCOL by Thomas Vincent
SUMMER HOURS by Olivier Assayas |
| 2007 | ONCE UPON A TOMORROW by Sandrine Veysset
TOWARDS ZERO by Pascal Thomas
DEMENTED by Laurent Achard |
| 2005 | HELL by Danis Tanovic |
| 2004 | MY MOTHER by Christophe Honoré
NE FAIS PAS ÇA by Luc Bondy
TOMORROW WE MOVE by Chantal Akerman |

YASMINE BELMADI

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2008 | GUILTY by Laëtitia Masson |
| 2006 | BEUR BLANC ROUGE by Mahmoud Zemmouri |
| 2004 | WILD SIDE by Sébastien Lifshitz
GRANDE ÉCOLE de Robert Salis |
| 2003 | WHO KILLED BAMBI? by Gilles Marchand
ONLY GIRLS by Pierre Jolivet |
| 2001 | PEOPLE IN SWIMSUITS AREN'T (NECESSARILY)
SHALLOW by Eric Assous |
| 2000 | A MAJOR INCONVENIENCE by Bernard Stora |

Cast

Francis	Jean-Pierre BACRI
Maria	Dominique REYMOND
Samir	Yasmine BELMADI
Icham	Mhamed AREZKI
Nejma	Sabrina OUAZANI
José	Alexandre BONNIN
Abdel	Hab-Eddine SEBIANE
Abdel and Nejma's father	Mohamed MAHMOUD
Azzedine	Azzedine BOUABBA
Francis' neighbor	Bernard BLANCAN
Lab assistant	Frédéric HULNÉ
The new neighbor	Abdelhafid METALSI
Oud player	Samir JOUBRAN
Supermarket man	Riad BERHAIL
Angel	Mariam KONÉ

Crew

Written and directed by
First assistant director
Photography
Sound

Editing
Set design
Casting
Production manager
Scripte

Music
Producers

Head of post-production

A coproduction by

With the participation of
With the participation of

With the participation of

In association with

Nassim AMAOUCHE
Carlos DA FONSECA PARSOTAM
Samuel COLLARDEY
Dana FARZANEHPOUR
Vincent MAUDUIT
Bruno TARRIERE
Julien LACHERAY
Dan BEVAN
Brigitte MOIDON
Julien BOULEY
Virginie PRIN

LE TRIO JOUBRAN

Jean-Philippe ANDRACA
Christian BÉRARD
Léa SADOUL

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