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IMAGES
FESTIVAL

OVERKILL AWARD 2014

LOUBIA HAMRA

UN FILM DE NARIMANE MARI

IMAGE NASSER MEDJKANE

MUSIQUE ZOMBIE ZOMBIE

AFFICHE FRÉDÉRIK BOIS



BLOODY BEANS

77' • DCP Couleur • 1.85 • 5.1

PRODUCTION

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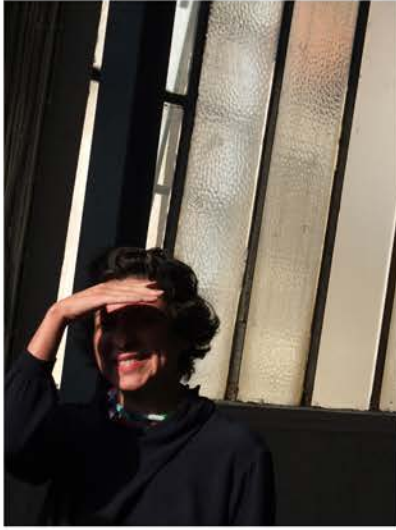
SYNOPSIS

17 kids, relentless, insatiable of gestures and screams, set everything on fire. Grand heroes of an unwritten war; while the French Army fires at the OAS, the children loot the French Army: oil, chocolate, semolina, sugar, and even a war prisoner condemned to eat beans. But the war catches up with the beautiful adventure and the beans are marred in blood.

Through the transgressive and powerful imagination of children, the movie tells the end of French Algeria

INTERVIEW

with Narimane Mari by Antoine Thirion



How did you find the kids for *Loubia Hamra (Bloody Beans)*?

In the street, in the sea, I did not choose them, I asked the kids in the neighborhood where the film was shot - between Bab el Oued and Bologhine (two populous neighborhoods of Algiers) - who wanted to play? Also, so that there would be no social differences among them, they all come from the same place. I said: who wants to come can come. It was out of the question to make a selection. It just happened. They were forty to start, which was worrisome in terms of management, but also very exciting. The script was written for eight kids and the most motivated remained.

What did the rehearsals involve? It involved making the film, its history, our own, so that it becomes shared, even though we did not know one another. The film is a rope that is extended to all those who wanted to be there and each one hangs on to it with who they are, what they know and what they like to do. Rehearsals helped pull this rope in the direction of the film's subject, with group strength, but with a huge amount of individuality as well. I think that is what makes the film's strength. In concrete terms, it is first the memory of the kids that had to be put to work, then the meaning and theoretical understanding of acting, which is more difficult to acquire than the physical approach to the subject which they reached effortlessly. Each child played the same character in turn, and distribution was a group decision. They mutually accepted each other, collectively and democratically. I worked with them scene by scene, without giving them visibility into the entire film. During rehearsals and filming, I reminded them of the purpose of the scene and how they could react. These were not strict instructions but incentives to be that were incidentally inspired by their own reactions. Since I did not want to use video feedback during shooting, rehearsals were made with Nasser. It was for him a pretty brutal environment. It's something to be constantly with eighteen kids to whom I gave complete freedom. The essential thing was for him to find a place in their acting, because acting should not be interrupted. This said we had to find some distance because I do not want us to be children before this movie; we are not kids, so we looked at the images together each evening to refine this distance, to render the *mise-en-scène* visible. Throughout this work, the kids became very good actors, impossible to manipulate and hard to impress.

So you did not give them History lessons. No, instead I asked them what they knew. And since colonization and the war of independence they've had to integrate other sufferings in Algeria. With this film, I wanted to raise peaks of awareness in them and in us, but not put myself in a debate, even if the film is clearly political. I left History live through this dimension, that of facts, very simple ones, real or not, that did not matter, just memories that might be reported by neighbors or family members.

When you write the script, what is your idea? When I write, Algeria will live its fiftieth anniversary of the War of Independence. On this occasion, all the stories come out, chaotically, painfully, formally. I told myself that the only thing that seemed right to say under these circumstances is that Algeria is a free country. The best tribute we can pay to independence is to show an independent country, free kids, because Algeria gave itself the means to be free, in a film itself free of any narrative style, I took advantage of it. I wanted Algerians to see their children that way, as an energetic and peaceful reminder of the independence they have conquered. The final scene is a moment of fraternization, where we give time to time, where we enjoy the present without worrying about the past and the future, as in the euphoria that lingers the day after a great celebration.

INTERVIEW suite

The scenario works from specific ideas such as food or pig, hunger or flatulence that the eating of beans causes. French colonization of Algeria starts precisely from a conflict about food, a loan of wheat Algeria made to France. **A debt that France is yet to honor** I focused more on everyday things and the symbolism attached to them. Through that, I also wanted to transform the notion of heroism. One is always a hero for political and ideological reasons. In a context of war, you want to live and it is survival that makes you another being. You are dominated, humiliated, you do not exist, and starvation is one of the essential weapons of this domination, an essential fact of war. The hero is one who defeats power, whatever that power is. As for the pig, the word OAS alone is scary, I wanted it to be an ogre, but ultimately it was a pig, for lack of finding an ogre, which represents power over women, the power of the colonist, the power of the dictator, hierarchical power. More generally, the presence of colonists had to be felt without never really showing them, they are always present at the edge of the frame.

Why did you choose the character of the conscript? Many have suffered, did not know where they were going nor what they had to do, I wanted to say it. The conscript I show is lost and absent from this war. He is still a kid, like the other kids and he merges with them with desire and pleasure and even agrees to be their prisoner. Like the food they steal, he becomes their war booty. At the time of the Evian Agreements, French soldiers were leaving Algeria, but the OAS (lit. Organization of the Secret Army – A French paramilitary dissident organization) did not want to budge; they felt at home. The French army sent planes to spray the streets with bullets, targeting Algerians but also their own people, the French. This is what happens at the end of the film. Bernard dies under fire from his own country.

One can see Loubia Hamra (Bloody Beans) as an adventure of light, from morning sun to curfew, from the flashing of fireflies to dawn. What did you use as lights? A small LED and flashlights - I did not want to burden myself with equipment. At our first meeting, Nasser Medjkane told me: "I'm not the Head Cameraman (Director of Photography)," and that suited me fine. Lighting must remain functional; light should only be used when one needs to see. This should be as simple as a torch that we light on to find an object in the dark. It is said that light must have a direction justified by the place where it originates; we must assign to it a clear meaning or we run the risk to take it for a simple accident. These issues did not concern me in the least. The only questions that I asked myself were those of visibility and childhood. Loubia Hamra (Bloody Beans) is carried by this childhood dimension, the kids lack of restraint, their liberty and the evidence of their inscription in the world.

Do you foresee that this childhood dimension would also become a mise-en-scène principle? Even though I did not want to be into childhood to make this film and place the mise-en-scène within the responsibility it carries through not only its subject but also film, I played with making it as easily, as spontaneously, and as lightly as childhood allows us to be. Also, after reading the script (to which the film has been very faithful) the French Head Cameraman I had thought of originally gave me a list of equipment that seemed necessary to him and that was far too important for the conditions under which the filming was to take place. It is impossible to bring the weight of film machinery on a popular beach or in the streets of Algiers. We should rather constantly trust others and the ingenuity of the moment. We can afford any deviation from the classical language of cinema, as long as we protect what is alive, the instant, and do not reconstruct reality. This only became an aesthetic and plastic choice after the fact.

The cemetery sequence is very surprising because it brings in another space-time, more fantastical.

This is Bologhine's cemetery, a Christian and Jewish cemetery. Originally children had to cross the city and go through a military base but I no longer wanted to show soldiers, and, given the choice, ghosts are much less frightening and even funny. Children enter this foreign environment, where the relationship to religion is opposite theirs. While there is no iconography in Islam, here it is everywhere: statues, crosses, portraits, representations sometimes frightening but magical at the same time. Even in this alien environment that might seem hostile to them, children reclaim worlds as their own, surpass, and transcend them. They always play, even with imagery to which they are not entitled. The kids laughed when they saw photos and faces so old, big mustaches and hairdos, but for me it was also, at that time, the only way to approach the colonists without fear or without arousing their hostility. The kids even come to compare their own condition to that of the colonists, such as when one of the girls sees a ghost enter his vault and says that her house is bigger than his. And it's true. A way to signify that inequality continues even in death.

ENTRETIEN end

We come to consider these kids as spirits, deities, or these fireflies that George Didi-Huberman speaks of, peoples without powers condemned to wander in the dark but that continue to emit light signals and to resist.

This goes back to what you say about the peaks of consciousness that your film seeks to provoke.

Yes, from the opening scene, with the kids bathing, we can see in them certain attributes of a very pagan deity. For them, bathing time is also that of their consciousness of the possibility of death. In these moments, fear brings a sense of power and excess that can transcend everything. There was the desire to be in the body and in the only environment where the body is closest to that freedom, its extreme sensuality. With the sea comes fear, but also grace, abandonment, acceptance and courage.

Did you foresee that the film would have such an immersion effect? I do not particularly try to shake the audience, but I wanted to get into the subject through substance and it was such that I could not do without. If I had tried to render things more concrete and accessible, the film would not exist. The starting scene is quite long as it makes a sort of pact with the audience, it asks the audience to surrender to the vitality of the kids, and to find its own. I wanted an approach that would not be intellectualizing but rich in exploration, a form of perception which does not go through consciousness but through the senses, pleasure. With film, you have to let yourself be caught up in a form of enjoyment that, for many, belongs to childhood, regardless of the subjects covered.

A number of effects evoke a childlike imagination of the 1970s and 80s: the monster filmed in low angle shots as seen in Japanese superhero telefilms, reverb effects, zooms, all the way to Zombie Zombie's music. That is true, but these effects are mainly the result of very pragmatic choices. I had to adopt a childlike perspective on the scenes to be filmed. For the low angle shot of the pig, it occurred to me when wondering how Michel Haas, who is rather short, could dominate and impress the kids, with incidentally no success. As for reverb, my actor's voice, who is actually the boomer, did not carry. I put myself in the kids' place, who do not know French and who are frightened by the monstrous authority of the officer. In my eyes they perceived sounds at the threshold of significance, nerve-racking reverb is ideal. I did not work with references even though I love this time period, I think that acting takes a particularly large part, courage in the stubbornness to act, and a willingness to be truthful.

Zombie Zombie is an astonishing choice for the soundtrack, unrelated to the historical and geographical context of the film. But their music rings true. It evokes less references than proximity with childish imagination and spectral film. How did they get on this project? Zombie Zombie's music is the bloody flow of images. It is sharp, dull, full of strange noises, internal or surging, harmonious or troubled by disorderly noises that allow for a reading of the movie beyond its visual narrative. We find ourselves in the depths, the entrails of childhood and in what still shakes us up when we let ourselves be taken by what's alive: profusion. With this dimension, even if my film is written as such, it is definitely not psychology and reason that prevail and dominate. This film can be experienced with the body and it is Zombie Zombie that made this total immersion possible. Otherwise, I called them, showed them the pictures, they liked it and spontaneously began composing. They are very good.

Where does the poem at the end of Loubia Hamra come from? It's by Antonin Artaud. I did not want to end the film with the air raid episode, with the death of the conscript. When I shot this scene and knew that the end was near, I could not bear the thought of finishing the film in death. I then sought to find who had written best on freedom, and among the freest, those who paid for it with their own person, I thought of Artaud. I found a very long poem of his penned in 1926, speaking of small silver fish, which, for me, represented perfectly the film's kids and the meaning they convey. And then there is the fact that they say it in French, a language they do not master. Kateb Yacine, a famed Algerian author, said that French is "our war booty." Hearing these French words in the kids' mouths means that French is theirs. Then, they leave themselves be transported by water, cancelling history and its terrible end. They are alive.



NARIMANE MARI

was born in Algiers in 1969 and she comes to Paris in 1986. She began her activity in 1990 with two consulting agencies in communication Devarrieux Villaret and Nogood industry, of which she is a co-founder.

She worked on the creation of culture extra for Libération, France Soir and on various projects of magazines for Canal + and France Télévision.

At the same time, she has contributed to the development of contemporary art Galleries and has initiated a collection of photographic books. In 2001, she produced her first cinema film, *L'arpenteur*, which won the Jean Vigo award.

In 2006, she founded, in Paris CENTRALE ELECTRIQUE with two partners in order to produce engaged documentaries and fictions of authors.

In 2010, she founded in Algiers, ALLERS RETOURS FILMS at the same editorial line.

In 2007, she directed her first film prologue, a medium film about the artist Michel Haas.

Loubia Hamra is her first feature film of fiction.

She is preparing her second feature, *The Madmen's fort*, an enchanted opera happening in the desert in 1860.

INTERVIEW

with ZOMBIE ZOMBIE, Cosmic Neman & Etienne Jaumet by Antoine Thirion



How did you meet Narimane Mari?

Cosmic Neman It was at our second album's release party, Rituals of a New World, at the Boule Noire concert hall. Narimane really liked the energy of our music on stage and she contacted us afterwards. We come from very different worlds, but in the way we work we do have something in common. She was not afraid to let us free to do whatever we wanted, even though we did not know each other at all, and it must not be easy to let other people take ownership of your images.

Étienne Jaumet She gave us carte blanche. She provided us with a provisional editing of her film and asked what inspired us. She suggested a few places where to put the music, but especially insisted on giving us the freedom to intervene wherever we pleased. It was very pleasant, very inspiring for us.

CN The first version we saw had no subtitles and ran two hours long. We were very sensitive to the beauty of the images. I think that's what convinced us, the night scenes using lamps, the water, the waves, and the shadows, all that left a mark on us. And of course the aggressive sounds of kids' games. One must agree to enter into their games and let go. This play of contrasts between our music and the film's sounds was interesting.

EJ Yes. And then ideas came about at specific times. Narimane was always enthusiastic; she rejected just a few ideas and instead offered us guidelines.

How would you describe the resemblance between your working methods?

EJ Narimane has a carnal relation with the world she films, and we also have a very physical relationship with our instruments. This is where we are of the same mind. The fact that we intervened well in advance helped build a real dialogue with the image. It was not like: here we have a five-minute piece that would fit in well. We look for the encounter, not collage.

Had you previously been asked to do soundtracks?

CN It was the first time. And indeed, I think what interested us was to score the soundtrack to a film that is not at all related to the world of horror cinema to which we are often linked to because we're called Zombie Zombie and did an extended play of songs by John Carpenter (Zombie Zombie Plays John Carpenter). It would have been cool, but a bit obvious. We were more excited to work on a film like this one, which does not directly evoke our music.

EJ For her as well as for us, it involved confronting one's own universe to another, starting not necessarily from musical collusion but rather from something in the order of intention.

Can you talk about how you built the music?

EJ For example, in the last scene on the beach, one of the kids sings a melody whose notes inspired us with a mood. From there, we threw ourselves into it. Then everything went very quickly, intuitively.

CN We tried each time to work and improvise from the film's images. It is always the way we operate, we do not write the music.

EJ There was constant back and forth between the images and the music, based more on intuition than reason. We used a modular synth, played a sort of clinking when they were resting, and used small wooden bells. These are ideas that come naturally. And we then spent time thinking of how to articulate the scenes, to lay musical breathing moments when the kids parley, moments where you have to calm things down.

INTERVIEW ZOMBIE ZOMBIE suite

We can say that it is the music that gives time to the images. And when it is deployed as in the staircase scene, the kids seem to enter a different temporality; we no longer take them as mere Algerian kids today but perhaps as gods or ghosts.

EJ That's true. And music becomes a kind of character.

Before the staircase sequence, when children get together at night in the sea, we hear a kind of oscillation. Narimane said she was very interested in how music can accentuate the boundaries or conversely expand space.

EJ This is a key moment, symbolically and in the film's action. It is the passage to adulthood, the time when they leave childhood and their aquatic games to confront danger at the risk of dying. They have a moment of community and communion with the elements. We thought of the calm before the storm, of the introspection that precedes danger, a moment both serious and relaxing. It's a distinctive tension.

CN We use analog synthesizers that produce a sound with a certain spatial scale, where each sound is an oscillation. It works very well at that moment, feeling these frequencies that go up and down...

EJ Then of course, climbing the stairs reminded us of a military march, mechanical, where everyone is aligned, in a row, it immediately spoke to us, given the influence of repetitive music on our own music.

The music builds slowly and regularly returns as a leitmotif, as in Carpenter's. There is at the same time, in both music and film, an exploratory dimension, a geographical one, which is more reminiscent of Herzog.

CN We really love Herzog. His films have been carrying us for a long time.

EJ Narimane had foreseen this exploratory dimension at the concert, this is what interested her.

You are often linked to a certain period in the history of cinema, 1970s and 1980s, what do you like in contemporary cinema?

EJ Video introduced something new that did not bring it closer to telefilm but to new aesthetic experiences while freeing it partly from technical heaviness. I really like Quentin Dupieux's movies, or those of Nicolas Winding Refn. New technologies allow for an increase in spontaneity. I deplore that music is often sloppy on feature films. Even great directors merely put fashionable pieces or very banal music, romantic violins.

CN Music in bulk.

EJ There is yet much to do. Music is always the poor cousin of cinema. For once we are given this opportunity, we are thrilled. Very few directors take this kind of risk.

How long did the recording take?

CN The recording took a week, we then made many adjustments.

EJ Because of changes in editing, variations in the length of scenes.

CN That's what took the longest time as foundation music was made fairly quickly. Then I:Cube mixed the CD. But Narimane was so used to the mix we made we preferred to use that one for the soundtrack, and used I:Cube's, which is necessarily more club, more electro, for the CD. The rhythm is stronger; there are more deep notes... There is a pretty big difference between our mixing and his. He had not seen the film; he made the mixing solely on the basis of sound, without thinking of the images and in his musical style. It is quite interesting to design the mixing according to the medium used.

EJ It only applies to the mixing, because the length of the pieces is the same.

The music continues for a long time on the word "End."

CN I find that great.

EJ In general people put music in so that people do not get bored during the film's credits. Here it's the opposite. The credits are used as support for the music. We did not expect it, we are delighted! At first you ask yourself, is there a problem and then finally you get into it, I love it. She could not give us a more fitting tribute.

INTERVIEW ZOMBIE ZOMBIE end

Will you play the songs from this soundtrack on stage?

EJ Of course, we have already begun to do it. The last song, for example, has already been experienced with eleven musicians.

CN This is the song we played to open the concert at La Villette Sonique Music Festival.

EJ It was magical. Narimane did not know before hand, she was happy. These are pieces that go into our repertoire; we will make them our own. We really enjoyed it. For us, this soundtrack is like a new unexpected CD. Initially we did not know what place was the music going to take up in the film, it could have been just small one-minute pieces, but it happened that there are several five-minute long pieces, it's very rare.

What are your impressions of the March 13th concert?

Zombie Zombie played live during the screening of the film for the opening of FAME at the Gaité Lyrique Music Center in Paris.

EJ It was a strong moment. It took us a lot of work trying to replicate what we had recorded for the film. In addition there is little chance that the opportunity presents itself to try the same experience again, we couldn't fail.. I would classify the result as neither a concert nor a projection, but a quite unique in-between.

CN This is not an easy exercise, which ultimately goes against the way we work. We usually give a lot of freedom in the way the songs are played during live concerts, and here we had a very specific context to respect in terms of length of musical passages. We had to begin and end pieces at specific times, but we tried to keep a degree of freedom in these moments, within a limited time, that's where the difficulty lies. I think the music in this film is unexpectedly one with the images, and it was interesting to really and physically be as one with the images while being on stage while the film played. We were part of the context. It was a very intense sensation and actually exceptional. It is rare to see a movie where the music is played live, except at the time of silent film when a pianist playing solo accompanied the images. It should happen more often, there was a special atmosphere in the room, more alive than if people were just there to only watch the film.

2013

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Prix RenaudVictor GRAND PRIX

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2014

Images Festival Toronto OVERKILL AWARD

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ACTUALY

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INTERNATIONAL REALEASE / Marsh / avril 2015

ALGERIA / FRANCE / SWITZERLAND / SPAIN / GERMANY

ALGERIE 2013

DIRECTOR and SCREENWRITER Narimane Mari

IMAGE Nasser Medjkane

SOUNDTRACK Zombie Zombie

Cosmic Neman & Etienne Jaumet, **mixed** by I-CUBE

EDITING Caroline Detournay, Anita Roth, Narimane Mari

Olivier Boischoit **SPECIAL EFFECTS & POST-PRODUCTION**

Pierre Sudre **GRADING**

Benjamin Laurent **EDITING et SOUND MIX**

PRODUCTION ALLERS RETOURS FILMS ALGER

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