LE HAVRE
a film by
Aki Kaurismäki
IN PARIS
- 5, rue du Chevalier de St-George - 75008 Paris - France
Tel : +33 (0)1 42 96 0 1 0 1 - www.pyramidefilms.com
IN CANNES - Riviera Stand F6
distribution@pyramidefilms.com
programmation@pyramidefilms.com
F R E N C H  D I S T R I B U T I O N
Pyramide Distribution

Sputnik Oy
Museokatu 1 3 A
00 100 Helsinki
Finland
Tel : +358 9 6877 100
Fax : +358 9 6877 10 10
sputnik@sputnik.fi
Pyramide Productions
5 rue du Chevalier de Saint George
75 008 Paris
France
Tel : +33 (0)1 40 20 1 3 60
Fax : +33 (0)1 42 96 05 90
production@pyramidefilms.com
www.pyramide-productions.com
Pandora Film
Balthasarstrasse 79
50670 Koeln
Germany
Tel : +49 22 1 973 320
Fax : +49 22 1 973 329
info@pandorafilm.com
www.pandorafilm.com
The Match Factory GmbH
Balthasarstrasse 79-8 1
50670 Koeln
Germany
Tel : +49 22 1 539 709 - 0
Fax : +49 22 1 539 709 10
info@matchfactory.de
www.the-match-factory.com
in Cannes
Résidence “La Bagatelle”
4ème étage
25 La Croisette
Tel : +33 (0)4 93 99 66 98
Fax : +33 (0)4 93 99 68 33
Tal  46
8033 1  Muenchen
Germany
Tel : +49 89 38 38 67-0
Fax : +49 89 38 38 67 1 1
info@werner-pr.de
in Cannes
Christiane Leithardt
Cell : +49 1 79 104 80 64
Wolfgang W. Werner Public Relations
Jaana Puskala,
Tel : +358 50 593 2068
Jenni Domingo,
Tel :  +358 40 84 1 2849
Galatée films
19 , avenue de Messine - 75008 Paris
France
Cell Paris and Cannes : +33 6 62 4 1 06 16
eva.simonet@wanadoo.fr
Kanavakatu 1 2
00 160 Helsinki
Finland
Tel : +358 9 6220 300
Fax :+358 9 6220 3050
ses@ses.fi
www.ses.fi
The March Factory GmbH
INTERNATIONAL SALES
Finnish Film Foundation
www.finnishfilmfoundation.com

RUNNING TIME : 1H33
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SPUTNIK, PYRAMIDE PRODUCTIONS AND PANDORA FILM PRESENT
Marcel Marx, a former author and a well-known Bohemian, has retreated into a voluntary exile in the port city of Le Havre, where he feels he has reached a closer rapport with the people serving them in the occupation of the honourable, but not too profitable, of a shoe-shiner. He has buried his dreams of a literary breakthrough and lives happily within the triangle of his favourite bar, his work, and his wife Arletty, when fate suddenly throws in his path an underage immigrant refugee from the darkest Africa.

As Arletty at the same time gets seriously ill and is bedridden, Marcel once more has to rise against the cold wall of human indifference with his only weapon of innate optimism and the unwavering solidarity of the people of his quartier, but against him stands the whole blind machinery of the Western constitutionally governed state, this time represented by the dragnet of the police, moment by moment drawing closer around the refugee boy.

It’s time for Marcel to polish his shoes and reveal his teeth.
The European cinema has not much addressed the continuously worsening financial, political, and above all, moral crisis that has lead to the ever-unsolved question of refugees; refugees trying to find their way into the EU from abroad, and their irregular, often substandard treatment.

I have no answer to this problem, but I still wanted to deal with the matter in this anyhow unrealistic film.
Interview with Aki Kaurismäki
by Christine Masson
Where did the idea for LE HAVRE come from? Is it coming from the more and more terrible situation of people escaping from their home countries? Or did you simply want to make another film in France? The idea I had for some years, but I didn’t know where to shoot it. Basically the story could happen almost in any European country, except maybe Vatican, or then especially there. Most logical places would of course have been Greece, Italy and Spain because they carry the heaviest pressure caused by the problem (to say it mildly). Anyhow I drove through the whole seafront from Genoa to Holland and found what I wanted from the City of blues and soul and rock’n roll, Le Havre.

In France our motto is “Liberté, égalité, fraternité“. It seems the one you kept is Fraternité, brotherhood? The other two were always too optimistic. But fraternité you can find anywhere, even in France!

This “brotherhood“ between the people of the fishermen’s quartier in Le Havre save the young boy, but it does not exist anymore in real life, does it?

I certainly hope it does, otherwise we are already living in that ant society, which Ingmar Bergman often mentioned coming next.

I have got the feeling that more violent the situation becomes in the world, the more you keep faith in mankind. Have you turned desperately optimistic? I have always preferred the version of the fairy tale, where Little Red Riding Hood eats the wolf and not opposite, but in real life I prefer wolves to the pale men of Wall Street.

Have you met immigrants to write your story? No, but in other occasions, of course.

To symbolize this immigration you have chosen a young boy from Africa. Is youth the icon of hope? There are no symbols in my films, but in general I trust youngsters more than people like me. Which isn’t too much, yet. At least I trust Blondin Miguel, the actor of the boy, without limits.

With this film you widened your family of actors. Jean-Pierre Darroussin for example. However we have the feeling, that he has always been a part of the family.

Of course he has been around, but I haven’t let him act before, just clean the studio in the evenings etc.

Is it a challenge to direct French actors? Just a privilege.

As with LA VIE DE BOHÈME you seem to look for eternal and unchanging post-war France of the 50’s. Are you nostalgic for this period? I’m just a bit slow. Modern architecture hurts my eyes. But 70’s start to look stylish already...here and there. Luckily there is always yesterday.
Same with your cinematographic references, Bresson, Becker, Melville, Tati, René Clair, Marcel Carné? Each of them seem to be a little bit in your film.

I certainly hope so, because I didn’t bring anything myself… I studied some films of Marcel Carné, but couldn’t steel much without jumping from semi-realistic fairy tale to a serious melodrama.

From the French culture you have also picked up a singer, Little Bob, who acts in this movie. Is he for you a real musical reference?

Le Havre is the Memphis, Tennessee of France and Little Bob a.k.a. Roberto Piazza is the Elvis of this Kingdom as long as Johnny Hallyday stays in Paris and even then it would be a nice fight.

Did you make the film you had in mind with LE HAVRE?

More or less, I hope…
FILMOGRAPHY of Aki Kaurismäki

Writer, director, editor and producer.
Born 4.4.1957

films as director:

1981  SAIMAA GESTURE (co-dir with Mika Kaurismäki)
1982  CRIME AND PUNISHMENT
1985  CALAMARI UNION
1986  SHADOWS IN PARADISE
       ROCKY VI (short)
1987  HAMLET GOES BUSINESS
       THRU THE WIRE (short)
       RICH LITTLE BITCH (short)
1988  ARIEL
1989  L.A. WOMAN (short)
1989  Lенинградские ковбои в Америке
1990  DIRTY HANDS (TV film)
1990  THE MATCH FACTORY GIRL
1991  I HIRED A CONTRACT KILLER
1992  LA VIE DE BOHEME
       THOSE WERE THE DAYS (short)
1992  THESE BOOTS (short)
1993  TOTAL BALALAÎKA SHOW - HELSINKI CONCERT (doc.)
       TAKE CARE OF YOUR SCARF, TATJANA
       Lенинградские ковбои встречают Мозеса
1996  DRIFTING CLOUDS
1997  JUHA
1999  DOGS HAVE NO HELL (short)
2002  THE MAN WITHOUT A PAST
2004  BICO (short)
2006  LIGHTS IN THE DUSK
2007  THE FOUNDRY (short)
2011  LE HAVRE
CAST

Marcel Marx ANDRÉ WILMS
Arletty KATI OUTINEN
Monet JEAN-PIERRE DARROUSIN
Idrissa BLONDIN MIGUEL
Claire ELINA SALO
Yvette EVELYNE DIDI
Chang QUOC-DUNG NGUYEN
Laika LAIKA
Grocer FRANÇOIS MONNIÉ
Little Bob ROBERTO PIAZZA
Doctor Becker PIERRE ÉTAIX
Denouncer JEAN-PIERRE LÉAUD
Kati Outinen is Arletty

Jean-Pierre Darroussin is Monet
Blondin Miguel is

Idrissa

Laïka

a canine actress of 5th generation.