



IT'S NOT CINEMA, IT'S WORSE

# SO HELP ME GOD



OFFICIAL SELECTION  
FESTIVAL DE SAN SEBASTIÁN  
2017

A FILM BY  
**JEAN LIBON**  
AND  
**YVES HINANT**



# SO HELP ME GOD

## CREDITS

### MAIN CAST

THE JUDGE.....Anne Gruwez  
THE COPS.....David Derumier  
.....Serge Graide  
.....Marc Slavic  
.....Eddy Wilmet

### MAIN CREW

DIRECTORS.....Jean Libon & Yves Hinant  
CAMERAMAN.....Didier Hill-Derive  
SOUND ENGINEER.....Yves Goossens-Barra  
EDITOR.....Françoise Tourmen  
SOUND EDITOR.....David Gillain  
COLOR GRADING.....Peter Bernaers  
PRODUCER.....Bertrand Faivre (Le Bureau)  
COPRODUCER.....Patrick & Stéphane Quinet (Artemis Productions)  
.....France 3 Cinéma  
.....RTBF, Voo & BeTV, Shelter Prod

ORIGINAL TITLE : Ni Juge, Ni Soumise  
France, Belgium | 2017 | 99 mins | 25 fps | 5.1 | Scope | French w/ English Subtitles

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## SYNOPSIS

The extraordinary, offbeat judge Anne Gruwez takes us behind the scenes of real life criminal investigations. For three years the satirical team behind the cult TV series "Strip-Tease" captured what no one had dared film before. Unapologetic and politically incorrect. You won't believe your eyes.

It's not cinema, it's worse!



Judge  
Anne Gruwez



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DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

Is it documentary or is it fiction?

Is it fine or is it swine?

"So Help Me God" isn't cinema... It's worse!



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## DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

For twenty-five years, without commentary, interviews, or concessions "Strip-Tease" has undressed France and Belgium. The programme, broadcast on France 3 and RTBF, marked the history of television and always provoked reactions and debate.

Though one could see it as simple factual television, that would be to forget that the grammar of its episodes - while certainly based on the unfolding of reality - is also borrowed from cinema. So it is not surprising that directors now known for their talent in film (Joachim Lafosse, Benoit Mariage, etc.) are also graduates of the "Strip-Tease" school.

Indeed, in every film, long or short, a story is told; characters change, confronting themselves or a conflict; the story gets away from them, surprises us, allows us to discover a milieu and its people, tells us something about the way the world is, and - above all - denounces, without artifice, society as it is.

Now considered a "cult" programme, the show still seems to serve as a resistance to highly formatted television. It continues deciphering society, as feature films have always done through fictional screenplays.

"Strip-Tease" was born in the 1980s from the Italian sketch-style social comedies. Popular cinema that didn't respect much and for which everything was grist for the mill: church, politics, family, bourgeoisie, male-female relationships, sex, etc. Any and every topic was up for grabs.



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## DIRECTORS' STATEMENT



Our composition is a comedy in its own way, thanks to sequences mixing dark humour, absurdity, the bitterness of situations, sometimes even a bit of vulgarity, poetry, and despair, all of it anchored in our time. The goal is to shock deeply or to provoke laughter by sticking our finger right where it hurts. It is also about presenting contemporary tragicomic situations.

We script the real, by tracking daily life, flushing out characters and anecdotes in every social, cultural, and professional situation.

The grammar of these stories has more than once been borrowed by fiction. A "Strip-Tease" touch is often added to feature films. So, while remaining faithful to ourselves, why shouldn't we try our hand at a "Strip-Tease"-style "Strip-Tease" feature?

Without changing course in relation to the themes we've examined for years, we had to choose one of them that would be capable of nourishing a long story. What more exciting than a detective story? Not only do they sharpen our macabre curiosity about the human soul, but it is often in the story of crime that we can see the society in which we flounder through a magnifying glass.

In a detective story, the intrigue is most often a pretext that leads us to describe the turpitudes of the human soul. In a detective story, we are willing to follow any lead, as long as the universe that is described touches us, concerns us, and questions us.

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## DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

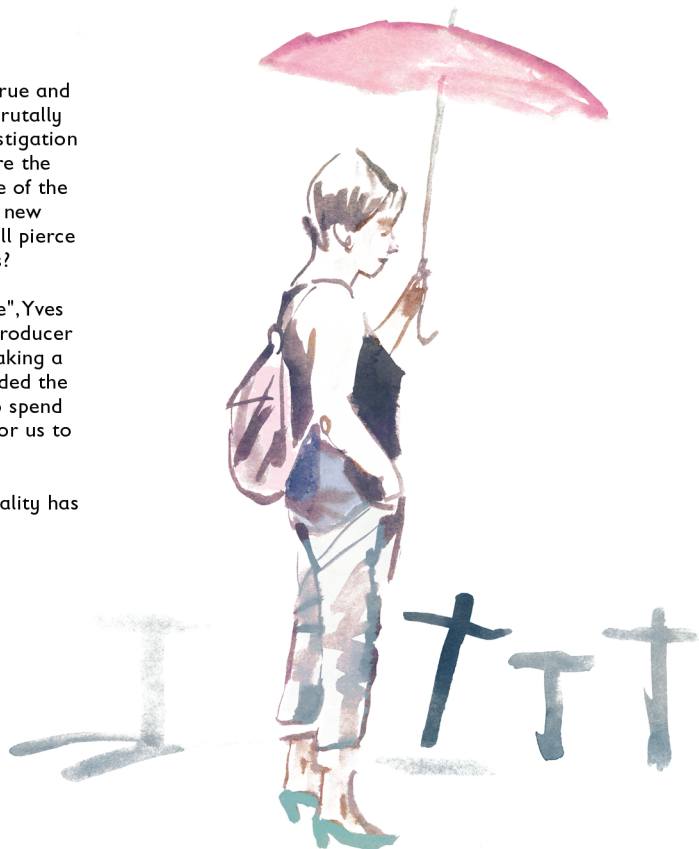
In this film, the central theme is the resolution of a cold case, a true and unresolved story more than twenty years old: two prostitutes, brutally murdered in posh neighbourhoods in central Brussels. As the investigation is jumpstarted, the reputation of our judge is central. Where are the condoms found in the victims' garbage stored? What has become of the four lead suspects from the time? What will be found through new investigative methods and the progresses in criminology? Who will pierce the mystery of the condom with six different DNA profiles?

Jean Libon's experience after twenty-five years with "Strip-Tease", Yves Hinant's knowledge of judicial arcana, and the expertise of our producer led us to work in the long term. Time is a luxury today when making a film, and the three years to make ours, were a necessity. We needed the time to write, and to get to know the milieu in depth. We had to spend time with the characters, the time for situations to change, and for us to be there at the right time.

Over time, in our funny, cruel, and darkly humorous film noir, a reality has emerged that need never envy fiction.

We went for it, the whole hog...

**Jean Libon, Yves Hinant**



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## PRODUCER'S STATEMENT



It is always very delicate for the nature of a work to change. Novels are not always elevated by their cinematic or theatrical adaptations; television magazine programs do not always convert harmoniously to feature-length works, films of shows or plays often struggle to communicate the emotions of live performance after the fact...

When Jean Libon, one of the two founders of "Strip-Tease", and Yves Hinant, one of its recurring directors, met with me to ask me to produce the "first feature-length Strip-Tease for the cinema", first I was flattered, then excited, then quite quickly, concerned...

In "Strip-Tease", reality leads the dance. Nothing is written beforehand. We can of course choose the milieu we're going to try to undress, but that's about it... The time it will take, the intensity of the consent or resistance we will encounter, and the "nakedness" we will end up with remain just so many unknowns that make any planning, any preliminary scripting difficult.

In addition, let us recall here the specifications that, over the course of twenty-five years, produced the "Strip-Tease" style:

- No prior writing
- No commentary
- No interviews
- No on-screen text over the image
- No additional music
- Written agreement from all people filmed
- No blurred faces
- No children
- A short poem at the end
- "Combo Belge" over the end credits.

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## PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

From its very creation, "Strip-Tease" invented a Dogma much stricter than Lars Von Trier's.

We recognised very quickly the necessity of instilling the approach with some cinema principles:

- A milieu that by nature induces suspense, and from which conflict is not absent
- The possibility of assembling a "cast"
- The idea of betting on reality to bring the narrative to us, while having in the background a common theme that inscribes the story in time.

It was Judge Anne Gruwez - to whom an episode of "Strip-Tease" had been dedicated ("Madame Judge") - who came imperiously to mind for Jean and Yves in terms of cast. Then some police officers and clerks whose schedules we managed to align with that of our judge. And finally, access to a certain number of closed cases, from which we extirpated the one that seemed most promising to us.

And the rest was a matter of a certain number of benevolent complicities that appear in our credits, and of time.

During the three years in which we filmed "So Help Me God" it forced us to be patient, but it also made it possible for us to x-ray the rising anxiety and the increasing disparities in our time and our society, which make us want to laugh as much as they arouse our dread.

**Bertrand Faivre**



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DIRECTORS' BIO

## JEAN LIBON



Jean Libon was born in 1946 in Antheit in Belgium. He graduated from the Arts and Diffusion Institute (I.A.D. -Brussels) in the "image" section in 1970, he then worked until 1976 on the documentary series "Faits Divers". From 1977 to 1985, he became image reporter for the documentary magazine "A Suivre". He then traveled the world and received numerous prizes including one for "Faut pas plonger" (in which he follows, along with Marco Lamensch, a drug addict couple for 18 months) and "Les Russes attaquent à l'aube" (which follows day to day a Belgium station in Germany). In 1985, he creates with Marco Lamensch a documentary series "Strip-Tease", which will be broadcasted for nearly 20 years on France 3 and on the RTBF.

## YVES HINANT



Yves Hinant was born in 1968 in Liège. Graduated in journalism from the Université Libre de Bruxelles, he was a sports journalist at the RTBF for two years. He then joined the "Strip-Tease" team in 1984, which is a documentary series produced and directed by Jean Libon and Marco Lamensch. He directed around thirty films and many documentaries for the programme "Tout ça ne nous rendra pas le Congo".



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Production companies LE BUREAU (Paris) and THE BUREAU (London) were set up in 2000 by producer Bertrand Faivre. His producing partners are Gabrielle Dumon in France and Tristan Goligher in the UK.

Over the last 15 years, they have gained recognition for the distinctive talents they've nurtured and retained, as well as for the excellence shown to their partners in the management of both companies. Especially director-driven, their producing credits include more than 25 international feature films by multi-award winning directors as well as promising newcomers. Since 2009, both companies have broadened their activities to international sales through THE BUREAU SALES.

[www.thebureaufilms.com](http://www.thebureaufilms.com)







**Original Title: “Ni Juge, Ni Soumise”**

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