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SÉLECTION OFFICIELLE 2013

BASTARDS

WILD BUNCH & ALCATRAZ FILMS present

CHIARA MASTROIANNI

VINCENT LINDON



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BASTARDS

A film by **CLAIRE DENIS**

Original Music **TINDERSTICKS**

With **JULIE BATAILLE MICHEL SUBOR LOLA CRÉTON ALEX DESCAS**

France - Running time: 1h40 - Image: 1.85 - Sound: 5.1

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SYNOPSIS

Supertanker captain Marco Silvestri is called back urgently to Paris. His sister Sandra is desperate - her husband has committed suicide, the family business has gone under, her daughter is spiralling downwards. Sandra holds powerful businessman Edouard Laporte responsible. Marco moves into the building where Laporte has installed his mistress and her son. But he hasn't planned for Sandra's secrets, which muddy the waters...

A CONVERSATION WITH CLAIRE DENIS

What were the origins of “*Bastards*” (“*Les Salauds*”)?

It's always difficult for me to explain how old ideas and new events crystallize. In fact, in this case, it was me who crystallized entirely. I was at a point in my life, a rather hollow, empty moment during which I let time pass on certain projects, long-term projects as we say when they're unclear, projects in which I alone believed. Vincent Maraval, who probably realized this, offered a hand to force me to move. Vincent Lindon calls him the shaman. In my case, it's certainly true. So, one day in spring 2012, I thought of the French title of a magnificent Kurosawa film, *Les Salauds dorment en paix* (“*The Bad Sleep Well*”). This title gave me new heart and the desire to fight. That was my starting point: a strong, dependable man like Toshiro Mifune who, in those noir movies of Kurosawa's, is both hero and victim - in any case the plaything of forces he neither controls nor understands. Vincent Lindon agreed to be this character.

How did you work from this unexpected starting point?

I began with Jean-Pol Fargeau, the co-writer of most of my films, and after a week we'd found a starting point for something we liked a lot: the story of a man, as strong as they come, who can be relied on and who, because of his sense of duty, will be hurled, swept up by elements he couldn't even have imagined. Between the lines came the idea of revenge, an ultimately impotent fury. From the start, this character, this Marco, had to be a sailor. The Navy is rather particular, for me; it's a good way to be a man. He's someone with ideals. It's also a profession. He makes a living, can support a family, but from afar, without having to put up with the constraints of the everyday. He is far away.

How did Vincent Maraval react?

Vincent Maraval liked the synopsis, as did Vincent Lindon. We had to move quickly if we wanted to shoot in the summer. Everything went exactly contrary to my usual habits. For me, the writing of a script is a time of wandering, hesitation, undoing and redoing. So Jean-Pol and I looked for a new method, to abandon my slowness. I thought that if each scene was presented as a block, and if after each block we'd jump one step in the narrative, it could help me to move faster and also, in fact, to improve. No transitional scenes. The film would be a succession of leaps.

What happened next?

Maraval thought we ought to present our project to the CNC (French Cinema Government body granting advances on earnings before film production) right away, because it was one more way to hurry the film along, not forgetting that this could only work if screenplay and budget were of a piece. And we obtained the *avance sur recettes*, in late May 2012. All of a sudden, what had started almost as a game became very real. The two Vincents, Maraval and Lindon, had jump-started a motor that didn't yet exist. Maraval also introduced me to Laurence Clerc and Olivier Théry Lapiney of Alcatraz Films who took the production in hand. Then he said: "*You have to shoot without delay, starting in the summer.*" That wasn't the way I normally work either...

Wasn't "35 Shots of Rum" shot in similar conditions?

No, because even if that film was shot quickly and on a small budget, and with a relationship of trust and a slight challenge from the producer Bruno Pesery, it was a film I had carried within me for a long time. It was the story of my grandfather and my mother, a story I knew intimately, and that I came across again in one of Ozu's films. In a sense I was over-prepared for "*35 Shots of Rum*", whereas "*Bastards*" was a leap into the unknown.

Is the finished film very different from the screenplay?

Not at all. The screenplay didn't contain descriptions or comments; it stuck to the facts. And those are precisely the facts in the completed film, except for two scenes I abandoned for lack of time. The speed with which we moved from writing to shooting has a lot to do with it. When several months go by between the writing and the directing, it's inevitable that you evolve more: I have doubts about everything.

When the time to shoot arrives, what do you know about the film you're about to make?

I know that the solid will become fragile, that Marco will be manipulated and tossed about by the others. I also know the right place will have to be found for another character that could have stayed in the shadows or not appeared at all: the young woman, his niece. In the film, all seems normal, everyone has a family, children are collected from school, they are given afternoon snacks - even the divorced couple manages to handle their relationship pretty well. But there's the young woman. She's from another state of the world.

Meaning?

She comes from another character who has always been with me: Temple, the female character in William Faulkner's *Sanctuary*. When I was myself an adolescent, that book transformed me. I wasn't frightened at all, on the contrary, the last chapter between father and daughter in the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris gave me a rush, and a certainty that girls must deal with their sexual misfortunes by themselves. Temple takes out her compact and looks at herself.

Is Faulkner an important reference for you?

Usually, young people are told: "*You have your whole life ahead of you.*" In Faulkner, "your whole life" isn't much, it's not going to be happy and it probably won't last long. Faced with this, there are crossroads and decisions that allow no turning back. Decisions carried by desire, by self-affirmation, that might well lead to suffering and death, but in the asserting of who you are.

Is there something of you in this story?

I don't know. Probably, but not directly. That doesn't interest me much. On the contrary, for me cinema allows empathy, sharing the pain of others, not talking about my own. That would be something else, a confession, a testimony. It's because someone else suffers that it becomes a tragedy that might make you want to fight.

Did the image of this young girl, completely naked but for a pair of high heel shoes, walking in a street at night come to you early on?

Yes, immediately. I'd read two news items: some garbage collectors had found a young girl naked near some dustbins, not dead but drugged; in the other story, a young woman was running in the streets totally naked, a police patrol picked her up. But what's important, as much as her nudity, as much as the blood, as much as a city at night, is the fact that she isn't motionless. She isn't running either. She is walking. She is standing and moving forward, to where, no one can say. I was afraid to suggest Lola Créton for the part. She showed me how strong she was, capable of facing this. With a sort of guilt-free presence, maintaining control of her body, which means Sara, her character, is not conceived as a victim.

Even though she is very young Lola Créton already has a 'cinema past'.

Of course. I discovered her thanks to the films of Mia Hansen-Løve and Olivier Assayas. In the same way, Jeanne Disson and Elise Caron "come" from "*Holy Motors*". These subterranean connections, the affective links between films, are important to me. Then there's Laurent Grevill to whom I owe a great deal. He agreed to take on the role of Jacques, the father, showing such trust in me. I certainly didn't want to expose Lola to a stranger. A brilliant actor was needed, one who was also aware of the magnitude of this tragedy - a Faulknerian man, in fact.

You were reunited with a lot of people you're used to working with, in front of the camera and behind: Agnès Godard (DP), Michel Subor, Alex Descas, Grégoire Colin...

Yes, of course, I need that. I trust them, they're family to me. It's different again with Alex (Descas), who is not only a cinema comrade. He embodies the Good Man. The good man in this film is the one who knows, or guesses. Sometimes I feel I'm seeing the film through him, I need him to be in harmony with it. But it was also very good to meet Annette Dutertre the editor and Michel Barthélémy the set designer.

Among the 'newcomers', there's also Chiara Mastroianni...

We were both on the jury at the Deauville Film Festival the previous year. Without really having had any deep conversations, we felt a strong complicity, an accord. One evening Chiara saw me flying off the handle, I mean with no holding back, I felt that she had seized hold of me and I let go. We wanted to go back together, so we shared a car to Paris, and on the way she decided to buy her son a bicycle, which we put in the trunk. We were lucky to spend this time together, with no calculation, no consequences for us. But even today she intimidates me, her beauty, her brutal humour, her melancholy. It's not easy to reach the secret zones Chiara hides under her "I can take anything" mask. She doesn't allow herself to be loved easily; I mean to say she doesn't let herself be loved passively.

Julie Bataille who plays Sandra, Marco's sister, is another newcomer for you.

I saw her in a crime series on television and her face, her voice, stuck in my mind. Long flash. This meeting took a long time to happen. She is beautiful, Latin, brunette, a Picasso model... She even looks like a little bull. She was afraid of this role, I told her: "*So there are two of us.*" Sandra is also me, it's my place in the film. The blinded, the pretend-blind, the frightened. All the women in the film are brunettes, Mediterranean.

How did you present her role to Chiara Mastroianni?

As a young woman who lacks self-confidence, who finds certainty only in material comforts for her child. She accepts to be seen as a semi-courtesan, as if she had forgotten about her life, a kept woman, a whore, yes, maybe but who has a child and can't renounce her life. The scene I didn't shoot was a moment from her past.

You were also reunited with Vincent Lindon, ten years after “Vendredi soir”.

Vincent and I know each other, we share this slightly confused feeling of being friends, of trusting each other enough to work together, we don't have to agree all the time but take into account that the opinion of one can sometimes change that of the other. Vincent is a generator, a kind of power plant for the film. When the current dips, he gives it a boost. It's true we have remained connected since “Vendredi soir”: such an intimate film, subtle if I dare say it, connects you with each other or else there's been no film at all. Vincent was Sir Lancelot: it was he who calmed down Valérie Lemercier, who was often worried about the sex scenes. It was he who, trapped in the car with us at night beneath the winter rain, would make us forget our fears, our doubts. This kind of complicity takes root. A film is a fleeting moment in terms of friendship but for highly-strung, sensitive types, it leaves its mark on the subconscious.

Was he as enthusiastic about this new film?

Vincent, enthusiastic? That's an understatement. He goes into the film like a scout. He pierces the darkness. He throws himself into the scene, physically, mentally. Before we shoot he analyses everything, goes back to check again, then launches himself, like on a bobsleigh track. Ship's captain suits him so well, it emanates from him, the only master on board after God.

“Bastards” is the first film you have shot digitally. Is it a big change for you?

The combos and the monitors on set make me nervous. They give me a feeling of something gaping wide, as if the scene was open to all. And mostly the feeling that it's being judged too soon. You need to have these tools when you shoot digitally and that discouraged me. But then I said, it's fantastic to learn everything all over again. What I'd like best is that it wouldn't have to imitate celluloid in order to earn its stripes. “Leviathan” is exhilarating.

Was the choice of digital due to budget constraints?

Not only. I'm aware we're all going to have to get into it anyway, so I thought, let's just go. I saw on the shoot of “Holy Motors” the amount of room this camera, the Red Epic, takes up on set - not physical space but the psychological place it occupies, which is linked to the need for the technicians who handle it to intervene. At first I had a hard time finding my feet, as did Agnès Godard, our way of constructing the image little by little. But we managed.

All the more so since you have chosen to film what is more or less the most dangerous in digital: skin, close-ups of faces, shadow and very low light.

It is very hard to film in the shade digitally. The equipment always tends to add light. Faces are also a challenge when you're shooting with a camera like the Epic, it's very noisy when it is not filming, it breaks the actor's concentration when you get near him; and it's very strange when it goes silent at the moment of "Camera! Action!" The presence of the machine is a lot more intrusive. Digital cameras also change the effect of the lenses, as I knew them. But I learned.

The shots of the end are strange: there are two different types of image material.

Some are shot through a mirror, and others not. There also are two axes: vertical, seen from above, very brightly lit, and horizontal, seen from below.

You collaborated again with Stuart Staples and other members of Tindersticks, who have written the music for all your films since "*Nenette and Boni*", over fifteen years ago.

Stuart had read the screenplay, which I believe upset him a little. It took him time to find his bearings and start composing. I told him the film began in the rain, and suggested echoing this with dissonant electronic music. I had in mind Tangerine Dream's music for Michael Mann's "*Thief*". He composed one song, which led him to another, "*Put your love in me*", by the 70s English group Hot Chocolate, which he re-arranged. Then we worked together as we're accustomed to: I go and see him in his studio in Creuse, he comes to Paris to make me listen, we talk. But there's less music than usual, it's good.

CAST

Marco	Vincent LINDON
Raphaëlle	Chiara MASTROIANNI
Sandra	Julie BATAILLE
Edouard Laporte	Michel SUBOR
Justine	Lola CRÉTON
The Doctor	Alex DESCAS
Xavier	Grégoire COLIN
Elysée	Florence LOIRET-CAILLE
Guy	Christophe MIOSSEC
The Banker	Hélène FILLIERES
The Lawyer	Eric DUPONT-MORETTI
The Foreign Shipowner	Sharunas BARTAS
The Police Inspector	Nicole DOGUE
The Nurse	Claire TRAN
The Babysitter	Elise LHOMEAU
Little Joseph	Yann Antoine BIZETTE
Audrey	Jeanne DISSON
Jacques	Laurent GREVILL

CREW

Director	Claire DENIS
Screenplay	Jean-Pol FARGEAU and Claire DENIS
D.P	Agnès GODARD
Sound	Martin BOISSAU
Production Designer	Michel BARTHELEMY
Editor	Annette DUTERTRE
Sound Mixer	Christophe VINGTRINIER
Sound Editor	Christophe WINDING
Direct Sound Editor	Sandie BOMPAR
Digital Imaging Technician & Grader	Marc BOUCROT
Assistant Directors	Pierre SENELAS Christelle LAHAYE
Continuity	Michèle ANDREUCCI
Costume Designer	Judy SHREWSBURY
Make-up	Amélie BOUILLY
Casting	Nicolas LUBLIN
Grip	François TILLE
Electrician	Jean-Pierre BARONSKY
Production Manager	Karine D'HONT
Location Manager	Fabrice BOUSBA
Post-production Manager	Antoine RABATE
Production	ALCATRAZ FILMS Olivier THERY LAPINEY Laurence CLERC WILD BUNCH Vincent MARAVAL Brahim CHIOUA

Coproducers	ARTE FRANCE CINEMA PANDORA PRODUKTION Christoph FREIDEL Claudia STEFFEN
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