Locarno Film Festival
Concorso internazionale

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Toronto International Film Festival 2019

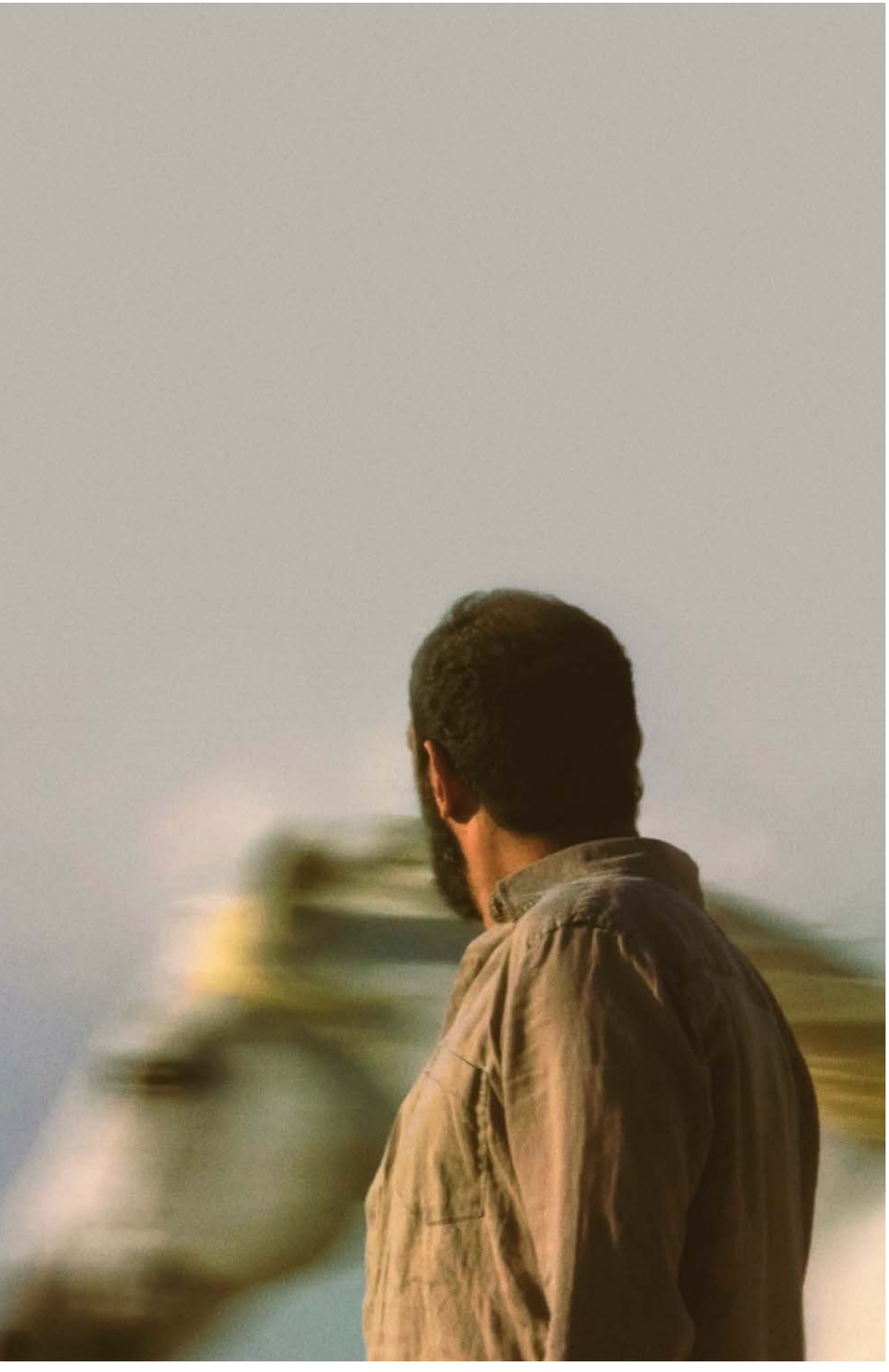
SARRAZINK PRODUCTIONS,
ARTE FRANCE CINÉMA AND POTEMKINE FILMS PRESENT

RAMZY BEDIA

TERMINAL SUD

(SOUTH TERMINAL)

A FILM BY
RABAH AMEUR-ZAIMECHE



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SYNOPSIS

In a country spiraling into insecurity and armed conflict, a hospital doctor tries to do his duty against all odds, until the day his destiny changes forever...

INTERVIEW WITH
RABAH AMEUR-ZAÏMECHE

Where did this film originate?
It comes from way back, most likely from my sense of powerlessness during Algeria's dark years. I was a student in Paris, when a lot of guys of my generation were sacrificed, caught up in a bloody, internecine war after the suspension of the electoral process in 1992. That shook me up.

Did you go there at the time?
No, I was too scared. Scared of being picked up and sent straight to an army barracks. I really didn't want to do military service in Algeria—it lasts two long years. I was neither pro-army, nor for the armed fundamentalists. I only went back after I had been officially exempted, maybe fifteen years later. So, I was able to revisit the village where I was born and shoot *Bled Number One*, my second film, there in 2005.

The story dates back over twenty years now...
Yes, but it was there in me. What happened back then in Algeria presaged other catastrophes that have taken place since then, particularly around the shores of the Mediterranean. The dark decade in Algeria triggered a number of similar crises, particularly in Arab countries where the population was sick of being subjugated, ignored and looked down upon. And nothing excludes the possibility of it happening elsewhere, including here in France where some fundamental rights, such as the right to protest, are being questioned, and where a permanent state of emergency has been instituted. The rule of law can crumble, and that is what interests me. How it slips away. There comes a time when the distinction between soldiers, police officers, terrorists and gangsters is blurred. They all have guns, weapons of war, and they all adopt the appearance of the other groups at times. The result is chaos bristling with assault rifles, and innumerable innocent victims who, most often, don't even know who made victims of them.

When the film opens, the situation has already seriously degenerated. The characters seem incredulous and unable to react to it. They try to maintain the facade of "normalcy."
At first, the violence and disruptions are far away, mostly rumors and horror stories. People resist its encroachment, try to keep going. The doctor, however, is perfectly placed to observe people's painful responses, physically and mentally, to the anxiety engendered by the state of affairs, which nobody knows how to deal with. He gauges the heartbreak, takes the measure of the reign of the absurd and omnipresence of terror, glimpses the cost of the bloodshed, buries his dead and, despite it all, tries to cure and heal.

That dimension is primarily covered in its emotional aspect, as much through what the audience feels as through the plot. And even though the story is full of twists and turns, the film is driven to a large extent on the emotions that the scenes provoke.
The film is primarily structured around situations and physical entities, rather than a message, which allows us to forge freer and more moving connections. All my movies come out of this mindset, but this one goes even further. For example, in the scene where they bury the assassinated journalist, fundamentally nothing is at stake in terms of the story—there is no new information or conflict. It is important on another level, and particularly in terms of a material and emotional relationship to the world. It aims to convey the strong bond that all these very different men have with the earth. Even the character of the doctor takes on another dimension at that point. He has a different physical presence.

Immediately afterward comes the funeral wake, featuring songs that one might not expect to hear.
The songs are lullabies from Sweden. It's an important choice with regard to pointing up an overall vision of what is at stake in the film. The songs from another part of the world broaden the perspective. And then, Slimane Dazi sings *I Believe I Still Hear* from Bizet's *Pearl Fishers* with bravura yet with a kind of timidity tinged with grief.

At the same time, there are very clear markers of Algeria and France.
Yes, the film was built on a constant back-and-forth between specific situations in space and also time. That drives it along and broadens perspectives. It is definitely set somewhere near the Mediterranean, in a French-speaking country. That immediately triggers echoes of the past—more or less hazy representations where colonial cruelty, massacres and the exactions of the war of independence collide with more recent horrors from the 90s.

How do you go about writing the script of a film like this?
Several scenes from *Bled Number One*, such as the fake roadblock, were left unmade because the memory of the violence was too fresh and painful. Later, I started writing a story about a doctor who is under pressure and depressed, in a country wracked with violence. I merged the two stories together by drawing my inspiration from the reports of international humanitarian agencies, such as Amnesty International or Algeria Watch.
Our location-scouting trips were important, since the locations add detail to situations. It took me a long time to find the kitchen of the doctor's apartment, with the long, deep view. The urban landscape does not define the period, but there is life, cars, people... While hardly spectacular on screen, that location was decisive in defining the way of framing and telling the story. Every time I found one of the principal locations—the apartment, hospital, market in the inner cities of Nîmes, prison, Charlie's shack at the end—the story changed and gained in scope. In the script, we had a road-movie ending, through the desert, but when we wound up in the Camargue, I turned it into a departure for the open sea.

Did you write the script with the intention of shooting in Algeria?
I was tempted to shoot in Algeria again, but the film's subject matter transcends and overtakes the Algerian context. I felt it was more interesting to play on the "dual nationality," if I can call it that, and beyond. There are some obviously French points of reference, some obviously Algerian points of reference, and other, general indications. There's something of the American western in this film. In the end, it's set in Francalgerica.

The locations are both very real and very evocative, bringing to mind the notions of heterotopia and heterochronia, developed by Michel Foucault.
Indeed. It's not a poetic utopia, as shown in *Les Chants de Mandrin*, but rather an alternative territory and temporality: contemporary signs and historical signs are deliberately combined. We never know precisely where—here maybe, somewhere else maybe—or when the action takes place—yesterday, today or tomorrow. Neither are we sure of the exact political situation in this nameless, unidentified country. Civil war? Uprising? Counter-revolution? But we get a clear sense of the stifling and highly deleterious atmosphere.

Did you decide early on that Ramzy would play the lead?
For some time now, Ramzy Bedia has been seeking out new experiences and new ways to apply his talent. Almost as soon as we finished writing, he had the script. He read it and immediately accepted the part. For the first time, I was not acting in one of my own films. That calmed me down and allowed me to be more accessible, with greater energy to adapt the project to circumstances that arise on a shoot.

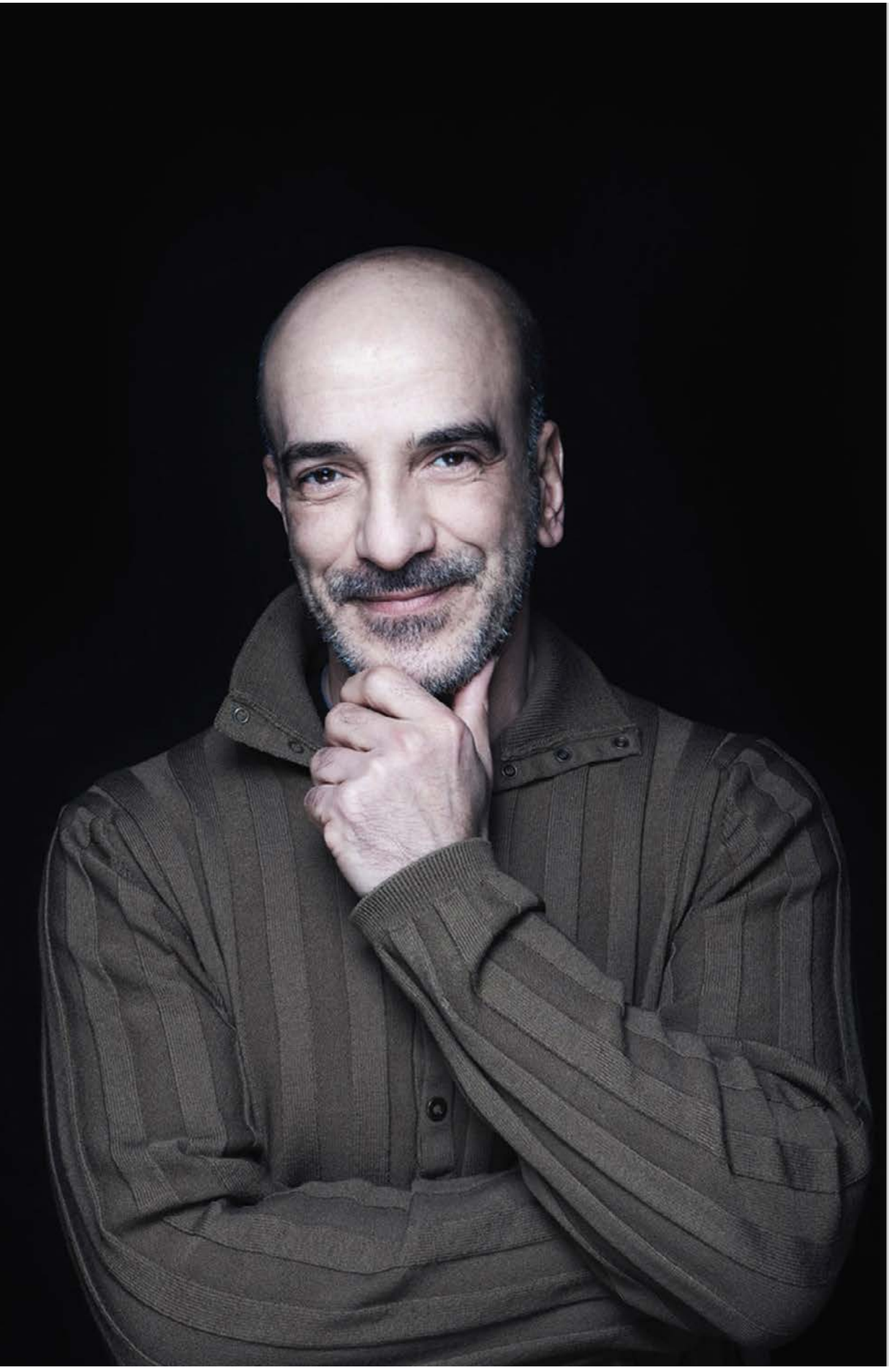
Did you give him precise indications about the character and how to play him?
Barely. However, he worked on the doctor's physical presence, his stature. We began by shooting the doctor's entrances and exits—moments that may seem superfluous to the action, when he enters a building or comes out, climbs the stairs or opens a door. They don't look it but they are important components of the whole film.

At times, the characters speak in Arabic, such as when the doctor's wife meets another woman at the market.
The scene is not subtitled because what the other woman says (she apologizes for not being able to make it to the funeral) is less important than the fact that audience hears and is receptive to the sounds of Arabic.

The torture scenes are quite grueling. Was it important for you to film the violence?
But you don't see it! It's always off-camera, as in all my films. In the torture scene, you hear crackling and screams, a hand approaching a lever, marks on the doctor's face from heavy blows. That's all. What we do see, however, are the scenes of humiliation, which is another form of extreme violence. That scene is crucial. Ramzy and Régis Laroche, who plays the military torturer, gave it all they had. It was like a duel between actors as well as a face-off between their characters. Régis played Pontius Pilate in *Histoire de Judas*, and I was convinced that he would once more step up for us. The dialogue is very tightly written, and delivered. It was not only a moment of great tension and gravity but also of relief. This was the crux of the film, and by the end of the day we knew we had what we were looking for.

You team up once more with a lot of people you have already worked with, on both sides of the camera. Did you shoot a lot more than what appears in the final cut?
Not really, but some scenes did not make it, of course. You try things out, feel your way, look for solutions, and it doesn't work out as planned every time. It's a necessary stage in the discovery of new ideas and alternatives. Basically, the film decides. My job is to be attentive to what the film accepts, demands or rejects. For us, a film is like a wild animal, running free, like the horses we filmed in the Camargue. You have to give the film its head.

INTERVIEW BY JEAN-MICHEL FRODON



RABAH AMEUR-ZAÏMECHE

Born in 1966 in Algeria, Rabah Ameur-Zaïmeche arrived in France in 1968, and grew up in a housing project in Montfermeil, on the outskirts of Paris. After studying the humanities, he founded Sarrazink Productions in 1999, since when he has produced and directed six feature films.

FILMOGRAPHY

2019 ***Terminal Sud***
In competition, Locarno Festival

2015 ***Histoire de Judas***
Ecumenical Jury Prize, Forum, Berlin Festival
Toronto International Film Festival

2012 ***Les chants de Mandrin***
In competition, Locarno Festival 2011
Jean Vigo Prize

2008 ***Dernier maquis***
Directors' Fortnight, Cannes Festival
Special Jury Prize, Dubai Festival

2006 ***Bled number one***
Youth Prize, Un Certain Regard, Cannes Festival

2002 ***Wesh wesh, qu'est-ce qui se passe ?***
Louis Delluc Prize for a first feature, Léo Sheer Prize at Belfort,
Wolfgang Stautde Prizen, New Cinema Forum at Berlin

CAST

Doctor	Ramzy BEDIA
Hazia	Amel BRAHIM-DJELLOUL
Moh	Slimane DAZI
Bus Driver	Salim AMEUR-ZAIMECHE
Chief Editor	Nabil DJEDOUANI
Journalists	Nacira GUENIF
	Marie LOUSTALOT
	Grégoire PONTECAILLE
	Zahia RAHMANI
Mrs. Ziali	Nadja HAREK
Nurse	Xavier MUSSEL
Mr. Benoussa	Christian MILIA-DARMEZIN
Gang Leader	Djemel BAREK
Hospital Administrator	Jacques NOLOT
Torturer	Régis LAROCHE
Charlie	Charles MOLLON

CREW

Written, produced and directed by	Rabah AMEUR-ZAIMECHE
Production Manager	Sarah SOBOL
Coproduction	ARTE FRANCE CINEMA
	Olivier PERE, Rémi BURAH
Music	« Lille Lasse », KRAJA
Cinematography	Irina LUBTCHANSKY
	Camille CLEMENT
Sound Recordists	Bruno AUZET, François MEYNOT
Costumes	Julia FOUROUX
Production Designer	Tony DELATTRE
Film Editor	Grégoire PONTECAILLE
Sound Editor, Re-recording Mixer	Nikolas JAVELLE
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