



PAIVA FILMS, MARS FILMS AND STUDIOCANAL
PRESENT

KHEIRON

**CATHERINE
DENEUVE**

**ANDRÉ
DUSSOLLIER**

Bad Seeds

A FILM BY **KHEIRON**

RUNNING TIME: 1 HOUR 40 MINS.

IN CINEMAS NOVEMBER 21

**DISTRIBUTION
MARS FILMS**

66, RUE DE MIROMESNIL
75008 PARIS, FRANCE
TEL.: +33 (0)1 56 43 67 20
CONTACT@MARSFILMS.COM

Photos, videos and press kit can be downloaded from www.marsfilms.com

**PRESS
DAISY SPINAU & IKRAM AYATA
HAPPY DAYZ**

2, RUE MEISSONIER
75017 PARIS, FRANCE
DAISYSPINAU@GMAIL.COM
IKRAMAYATA@GMAIL.COM

SYNOPSIS

Waël, a former street-kid, lives in the Paris suburbs and survives thanks to small scams he runs with Monique, a pensioner who is clearly very fond of him. His life changes when Monique persuades her friend Victor to offer him a volunteer job at a center he runs for young people who have dropped out of the school system. Little by little, Waël finds himself in charge of a group of six teenagers who have been expelled from school for truancy or insolence, or even for carrying a weapon. This explosive encounter between a group of “bad seeds” produces what can only be called a miracle.



INTERVIEW WITH KHEIRON



WHAT'S THE BACKGROUND TO THIS PROJECT?

I know that, sadly, not getting your second movie right happens a lot. You had years to come up with your first feature, reworking it, perfecting it, and audiences discover your brand of movie-making without any particular expectations. So, how do you surprise them the second time around, now that they know who you are? The mistake would have been to try and stick to the same formula. Instead, I decided to take the same ingredients but to use them in another recipe, something completely different.

I used my personal experiences as a starting point and I decided to tackle a subject that I feel very strongly about: education. I especially wanted to

tackle themes that are important to me, such as redemption, communication and the opportunity we have in France to welcome people who have come from far away and who enrich our culture.

IS THERE AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COMPONENT, LIKE THERE WAS IN YOUR FIRST MOVIE?

I believe that the “true story” tag has to be earned. Nothing annoys me more than seeing “inspired by a true story” when it’s not justified, because it’s a claim that creates empathy with viewers. Everything in my first feature was true. I could have

gone with “inspired by a true story” for this movie, but there’s a lot of my imagination in it too, so I don’t feel it’s a label the movie has earned. What I did essentially was use material I’m familiar with. The six kids in the movie are authentic characters; I’ve either dealt with them myself as a teacher, colleagues have told me about them, or they reflect the teenage experiences of people I know.

IS THE WRITING PROCESS PAINFUL OR FUN?

I think that my writing is my greatest strength. I wrote my first feature in three months, this one in two-and-a-half months, and my third, written while we were editing *Bad Seeds*, took me two months. I don’t write successive versions of the script. I let a project develop in my head for as long as it takes, until I’ve got all the main twists and an ending, and then once I’ve got the structure clear in my head I can write it out pretty quickly. My creative time is devoted to writing the movie. In fact, most of the directorial ideas are already written into the screenplay. For instance, I wanted to avoid clichés when shooting the opening massacre scene. That’s why in the script it says that we would shoot from ground-level and the only drop of blood visible would appear on a white sheet, that there would be no sound effects, the only audio a children’s nursery rhyme. All the music was chosen before shooting began, as were all the directorial ideas I wanted to use. First and foremost, I’m a writer who films what he has imagined.

HOW DID YOU GET THE IDEA OF LOCATING THE ACTION IN TWO PERIODS OF TIME?

I set out to really confuse viewers, and there are deliberately no visual or audio links between the two periods. If we projected sections of scenes from the past and scenes from the present separately, we could easily think we were looking at two separate movies. We’re not in the same country

or the same period, the language and actors are not the same, and the light's different. I wanted to unsettle viewers by showing them two stories that progressively interlock, creating ramifications that give the characters greater depth. I love movies with a happy ending, but I also like the process of getting there to be tough. And France is not, happily for us, a country at war, which is why I came up with the idea of adding a story taking place somewhere else.

YOUR MOVIE SEEMS VERY MUCH CONCERNED WITH THE VALUES OF SOLIDARITY, TRANSMISSION AND REDEMPTION.

It's not something I set out to do deliberately, but I realize that, quite instinctively, I touched on these essential values in the movie. In truth, my starting point was Victor Hugo's words: "There are no weeds, and no worthless men. There are only bad farmers." We are not born delinquent, we become delinquent. But Hugo's "farmers" are not only the parents: once the nine-month period of pregnancy is over, children belong to the world. In my mind, "farmers" refer to society as a whole.

TELL ME A BIT ABOUT HOW YOU CAME UP WITH THE THREE MAIN CHARACTERS.

The very first scene I wrote was the one with Monique and Waël's stolen handbag scam. Mainly, I wanted to have something believable before I started writing their dialogue. Once I finished writing that sequence the relationship between the two characters was clear: the older woman breaks the law to protect the younger man, even though she realizes that she isn't really helping him. Next I started to think about their backstories. Where's Monique from? How did she meet Waël?

Then I looked at the relationship between Monique and Victor: where did they meet? During their work as activists and supporting causes. All it needed was a swift exchange between them for it to be clear that, long ago, they met as part of a humanitarian action. As for Victor, I used my own father as inspiration.

AND WHAT ABOUT THE TEENAGERS?

I wanted to create a group that was well-balanced and realistic. The fact is that, as soon as you see a group of kids from the suburbs in a movie, they're either stuck inside some form of grim reality, or they're stupid. I wanted young people you could identify with, people with failings as well as real

intelligence, because that's what the overwhelming majority of young people I've known are really like! Youngsters like super-gifted Nadia, who is out of step with the rest of the class, I've known people like her. The Shana character is inspired by a true story. Young Jimmy, from a traveler community and illiterate, is also real: history is passed down orally in traveler culture. Ludo, who has had a few run-ins with the police and finds himself mixed up in something where he's out of his depth, is inspired by a situation that one of my colleagues faced. The character of Karim is there to highlight the problem that can exist between different local gangs. That's something I've got first-hand experience of. When I lived in Pierrefitte, there were two neighborhoods - the North and the South - that hated each other. Back then - I was 24 at the time - the local mayor ordered a night-time curfew and we ran a mediation



process asking young people why they were getting so worked up about postcodes. This is something that's still an issue today.

THE NARRATIVE SEEMS LIKE A FAIRYTALE AT TIMES.

My favorite movies – Forrest Gump, Intouchables, Love Actually and Starbuck – share two features: they are all dramas, and they all have something of the fable about them. I love that simple way of telling complex stories, folding a small story into a larger one. Fairytales are actually a way of teaching children lessons, so you have to simplify your message. Ultimately, what really pleases me is

the idea that as many people as possible recognize themselves in my stories: the fairytale element lends my story a degree of universality.

HOW DID YOU CONVINCe CATHERINE DENEUVE AND ANDRÉ DUSSOLLIER, TWO TOWERING FIGURES OF FRENCH CINEMA, TO COME ONBOARD WITH THE PROJECT?

Even though I didn't know their filmographies that well, they were both my first choices. It made me laugh to imagine Catherine Deneuve in the role; I thought about how she's often cast as an uptight

bourgeois character, and I wanted to get her a little bit dirty. Quite a few people have actually told me that they've never seen her in a role like it. What happens is that once I've finished the writing the screenplay I reread it, putting myself in the role of each character and asking myself how I would react if somebody offered me such and such a part. And if I feel there's something missing, I'll rewrite it. So of course I asked myself the same questions about Monique and Victor, and I didn't have to talk Catherine or André into accepting: they both said yes as soon as they read the script.

HOW DID YOU DIRECT THEM?

I only allowed myself to act like a fan for the ten seconds after I heard that they had accepted. For those few moments I was crazy with excitement! But after that I didn't allow myself to act like a fan, because I can't be a fan and a good director. I organize read-throughs with the cast and I tweak the script to suit their diction and rhythms of speech. But I never let them change any of the jokes that I feel work well! (laughs) Once we're shooting, I give actors enough space to surprise me, and if what they bring makes the script better then I'll accept it, otherwise we stick to what I've written. I needed to be able to correct Catherine and André, something I wouldn't have been able to do if I'd remained awestruck with admiration.

DID YOU ALWAYS INTEND PLAYING THE LEAD?

I wrote it for myself. For two or three months after my first feature was released, I was offered parts as a migrant, then supporting roles, and then nothing! With *Nous Trois ou Rien*, I focused so much on the character of my mother, who is a driving force, that I felt like indulging myself and getting closer to what I do on stage. I wanted to have a go at playing a commanding character. So I wrote myself



exactly the part I wanted to play. In France, when an actor also directs there's a tendency to forget that they can also act, so if I don't appear in my own movies you won't be seeing me on screen very often! (laughs)

HOW DID YOU CAST THE SIX TEENAGERS?

We called in Adelaïde Mauvernay as casting director. The first thing I said was that I wanted real kids from real life, I didn't want actors. We started thinking we'd try casting in the streets, but that actually takes too long, it's too complicated to set up and not very practical because the kids' roles are very demanding for non-actors. So then we contacted theatre groups and agents representing young actors, and I reckon we saw around a hundred kids for each role. We then gave them some lines to get them into character and gradually whittled our potential candidates down to around ten. I then chose two kids for each role and we did group tests to find the best combinations and the right alchemy between them. Choosing the young actors was a real joy.

DID YOU DO A LOT OF WORK WITH THEM BEFORE FILMING STARTED?

We did rehearse, but I preferred to focus on building up a rapport: we went to see shows, to the movies, we played table tennis, we had meals together. Everything goes faster with kids. You immediately become their mother, their father, their big brother. From a technical point of view, I wanted them to know their lines by heart because there are lots of subtleties in their individual characters. I felt that knowing their lines perfectly was the first step towards being able to direct them. And if we were able to get such finely-judged performances, it's because we'd created real cohesion in the group and we'd spent time beforehand working on lines.



As it turns out, they gave me everything they had, they were very disciplined and, if they keep their feet on the ground, I think they could go far.

DID YOU FIND IT DIFFICULT TO DIRECT THE YOUNG BOY WHO PLAYS WAËL AS A CHILD?

I gave him directions using words a child would use. To make sure he had the right mindset, I didn't say "two guys want to kill you" but "the guys are after your cake and you're scared they're going to steal it from you." He had a habit of getting carried away during warm-ups, so I counted on him calming down this tendency during shooting. He's very good at drama and emotion, and when he had to show

sadness, I'd say, "be sad", then very gently, "don't be sad anymore", and we'd get to the point where it was just right. None of his gestures have anything to do with the situations in the film, but that's the magic of the movies!

YOU ASSEMBLED A TEAM OF AMAZING ACTORS FOR THE SUPPORTING ROLES.

I wanted a try-out for the role of Franck. Alban Lenoir is the only one who agreed to go through the stress of an audition, and I was really moved. Apart from that, he's a wonderful actor, always fully committed and extraordinarily charismatic.



Leila Boumedjane, who plays Sarah, is appearing on screen for the first time in this movie. I'm very proud of having built up a love story between her and my character in only three scenes. I love her sensitivity and her knife-edge acting.

As for Médine and Fianso, who are two rappers, I liked the idea of not having them play cops or thugs, of taking them back thirty years and having them speak Arabic.

Then there's Ingrid Donnadiou, who plays the young Monique, she's just amazing. She's got a really unusual gift for empathy and skillful acting.

WHERE DID YOU SHOOT THE MOVIE?

The Paris scenes were shot in a secondary school in Montreuil. I chose that particular school because it's mostly in grey concrete with striking green vegetation. I wanted the school to be grey and closed off from the world and for Waël and the children to escape thanks to their jokes and activities, to their experiences in this enclosed space. And the touches of green are there as a reminder of that escape, the weeds growing through the layer of concrete.

All the scenes from the past were filmed in Morocco in real-life settings so they would be as authentic as possible. For the sequence where the guys are

running after little Waël, there had been a raid by the local police two days earlier when they arrested all the delinquents, because it's a dangerous neighborhood.

WHAT FILMING CHOICES DID YOU MAKE?

For the purely comedic scenes, I used a pretty standard shot with a reverse-shot approach as it's more abrupt, and therefore makes it easier to get laughs. But for the rest, I tried to add a little bit more to my direction, using a few long takes, creating a bit of lens flare and shooting from ground level. For the scene where Shana confesses to Waël, I shot the whole thing from behind her, as if to spare her feeling from the audience's eyes on her during this painful moment. I also chose to use music and the soundtrack to conceptualize certain scenes.

TELL ME A BIT ABOUT THE MUSICAL CHOICES.

I worked on the soundtrack with Simon, my producer and business partner. Between the writing phase and final editing, we were sending each other three or four YouTube videos a day, and I gave him the sound identity I wanted. We wanted tracks in Arabic because it's an underrepresented language in world cinema. For *Bad Seeds*, we had 80% of the music sorted out before shooting started, and we played the tracks on set, which got everyone in the mood. I like to take a track people don't know and make it part of their daily life, then they'll keep listening to it even after the movie.

CAST

WEL
MONIQUE
VICTOR
SHANA
FABRICE
KARIM
LUDO
NADIA
JIMMY
SARAH
FRANCK
WEL (CHILD)
DJALLIL
USAMAH
MONIQUE (YOUNG)

KHEIRON
CATHERINE DENEUVE
ANDRÉ DUSSOLLIER
LOUISON BLIVET
ADIL DEHBI
HAKOU BENOSMANE
YOUSOUF WAGUE
OUASSIMA ZROUKI
JOSEPH JOVANOVIC
LEILA BOUMEDJANE
ALBAN LENOIR
AYMEN WARDANE
MÉDINE
FIANSO
INGRID DONNADIEU

CREW

DIRECTOR
SCREENPLAY AND DIALOGUES
CINEMATOGRAPHY
1ST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
EDITOR
CHILDREN'S CASTING
SOUND

SETS
COSTUMES
PRODUCTION MANAGER
POST-PRODUCTION MANAGER
A COPRODUCTION

FRENCH CINEMA DISTRIBUTION
INTERNATIONAL SALES
WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE
AND
PRODUCED BY

KHEIRON
KHEIRON
JEAN-PAUL AGOSTINI
GABRIEL LEVY
ANNY DANCHÉ
ADÉLAÏDE MAUVERNAY
FRÉDÉRIC DE RAVIGNAN
ALEXANDRE FLEURANT
FABIEN DEVILLERS
STANISLAS REYDELLET
KAREN MULLER-SERREAU
NICOLAS ROYER
ANA ANTUNES
PAÏVA FILMS
MARS FILMS
STUDIOCANAL
M6 FILMS
CENTAURE
UMEDIA
MARS FILMS
STUDIOCANAL
CANAL+
CINÉ +
M6
W9
MANON 8
UFUND
BELGIAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TAX SHELTER
TAX SHELTER INVESTORS
SIMON ISTOLAINEN