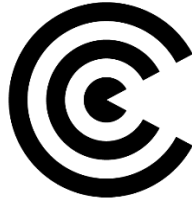


SUMMER SCARS

Les Films du Poisson AND The Jokers Films
present



61^e SEMAINE
DE LA CRITIQUE
CANNES 2022

SIMON BAUR

RAYMOND BAUR

MAÏRA VILLENA

SUMMER SCARS

A FILM BY SIMON RIETH

FRENCH RELEASE: AUGUST 24TH 2022

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SUMMER SCARS

SYNOPSIS

Brothers Tony and Noé pass the long, sweltering summer days playing games of chance and death... until the accident that will change their lives forever. Ten years later, now young adults and back in Royan, they cross paths with Cassandra, their childhood love. But even after all this time, the brothers are still hiding a secret...



France – 1h44 – 2.35 – 5.1

SUMMER SCARS

INTERVIEW WITH SIMON RIETH

By Emmanuelle Spadacenta

What made you want to tell the story of SUMMER SCARS?

The idea for a film often comes from places. In this case, Royan. My grandmother had a house there, where I spent every summer vacation with my younger brother, Hugo. I wanted to make a film about a very powerful fraternal love. Then there are personal images of childhood, adolescence, situations we have known there. I can't write anything if I can't project it visually, I think of everything in terms of *mise en scene* and images.

Youth and death are themes that run through SUMMER SCARS and your shorts films (FEU MES FRERES, SAINT JEAN and LOVELESS). Are they personal to you, or is it that you find them cinematographically interesting?

I've always filmed young people. It's the transition from adolescence to adulthood and the fragilities that can arise from it that touch me, having lived them myself, and because I rubbed shoulders with and observed many young people while being a supervisor in a high school for a few years. It's not so much death that interests me, rather the fact that by becoming adult, we are forced to leave childhood, but that it remains in us in the form of memories. What I try to develop in my films is how these memories can become monstrous. They are often related to death. That's what preoccupies me most. What matters to me is not so much the grief itself as the manner in which you have to grow up with it. Life and death are intimately connected, and in my opinion when you film life, you also film death.

In these films devoted to teenagers, adults are almost non-existent...

I wouldn't know how to talk about them or show them, maybe because I don't feel that I have yet lived this adult life, or a parent's life. In SUMMER SCARS, the few adult characters are represented through the eyes of children, or slightly shifted through the eyes of the teens. But I do everything I can to avoid making any sort of psychological or psychologizing cinema that would show how the parents' actions shape the personality of their children.

With their shared themes and a very pronounced style, are your short films FEU MES FRERES et SAINT JEAN prototypes of SUMMER SCARS?

When I arrived in Paris aged 16, some friends and I managed to raise money from universities to make my first medium-length film GONE BROTHERS. I wrote it for my brother, who had stayed in Montpellier where we grew up, I wanted to make a film about a group of friends in Southern France, almost a documentary, reflecting what I had experienced and filled with memories. I wanted my characters to become heroes, to make my brother a kind of mythical figure, to mix fantastic and naturalism. Then after some self-produced shorts, I made LOVELESS, on a small budget. I was able to push the fantastic further and experiment with new modes of storytelling. SUMMER SCARS takes after GONE BROTHERS and LOVELESS. It's almost a documentary about my youth and at the same a film that allows me to elevate my characters and place them at the heart of a tragedy, thanks to the fantastic – which intervenes in the naturalism without being a subject itself.

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How would you describe your film and your cinema?

With SUMMER SCARS, I tried to make a tragedy, in quite a classic way, really. The idea was to start with an almost primal story of two brothers: at the beginning I was inspired at the beginning by Racine's *Britannicus*. The story had to work even without the idea of power. What matters to me is the way in which the fantastic brings emotion, *mise en scene* and cinema – justifying and explaining everything doesn't interest me. Power comes to support what the human relationship already conveys. Genre comes naturally when I think up my different projects, but that doesn't mean I'd call them genre films, it's just my way of telling stories.

You often film nature in very wide shots, which is a great source of tension.

You have to interrogate the relationship to characters and emotions. We tend to think one needs a close-up to capture the emotion of an actor, and that makes no sense to me. For me, what's important is how the scene unfolds. For example, for the first scene on the cliff, it was a challenge to film the most shocking moment of the film a hundred meters from the action, in one single shot. In SUMMER SCARS we see a lot of violence, but it's ritualized – it shouldn't be purely graphic. Distance is important, because it strengthens the sense of the film. The wide shots convey the staging and the sacralization of these deaths, these ceremonies. When the story gets out of control, when the ritual no longer works, then I use close ups and the scenes are more 'cut up'. Another important moment in the film is the hanging. From the writing onwards, I envisaged doing it in one single shot, from a distance, in order to show the setting up of the execution. That's also what guided us when we were scouting for locations, because I absolutely wanted a house configured in a very particular way to set up the sequence. So, in the film, this shot establishes a pact with the viewers, they can no longer doubt, they have seen the ceremony in real time with their own eyes.

There seems to be in SUMMER SCARS and in your shorts a fascination with bodies. When you write your characters, do you also imagine their physique?

Working with bodies really interests me. Slender bodies, like sculptures, drawings. It's connected to desire, inherent in adolescence. There's a pleasure in filming flesh, for sure. In SUMMER SCARS, the physical relationship between the two brothers can be strange. When Alicia Cadot, the casting director, found Simon and Raymond Baur, the leads, it was obvious to me: they are high-level athletes, Kung Fu champions, their whole lives have been devoted to this martial art. There's an obvious communion between these two bodies. Moreover, there are rituals associated with this full-contact martial art. They fight according to highly practised choreographies, and one must put the other to death. When we met, one of them told me "I've spent my life killing my brother." Without knowing that this was the exact principle of the film!

I adjusted the story for them, I deepened this relationship with combat, this alchemy between the bodies. I had the impression that Simon, who plays Tony, was more grounded, he has an earthy gait. Whereas Raymond, who plays Noé, was always levitating, as if drawn to the sky. I played on these two ways of moving, these two bodies. Sometimes everything just aligns.

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The dynamic between Tony and Noé evolves throughout the film. How did you write this relationship of domination?

When I wrote, I wanted the older brother to be tough, to have the upper hand over his younger brother, because of the trauma he had experienced. There was something so sad in the film that we could forgive his attitude, while his younger brother suffered the terrible consequences. There's a trick in the casting of Simon and Raymond: the older brother plays the younger and vice versa. It broke their dynamic and shifted something out of step. Later, during the editing, we modified this one-sided relationship and were able to foreground the fact that their problem was the love between them. In this way it became less of an abusive relationship.

The fact that your cast is mixed-race is never the issue in the film...

I had no physical criteria for my actors. I only wanted to meet people and feel something. Raymond and Simon's mother is from Laos. It so happens that Maïra, who plays Cassandre, has a Peruvian father. It's true the cast is made up of young mixed-race and diverse actors. But it was out of the question to link this to any social consideration. They are young people as they are in life. They are here because they're the best. In addition, Simon, who plays Tony, has had alopecia since he was 12. I didn't want his condition to become a focus. It's mentioned in the film, but there's nothing psychological to see here. I didn't write a character with alopecia. Just as I didn't write the character of Cassandre with a special upper lip. But Maïra was born with a cleft lip, she underwent many operations in her early childhood and while she was growing. It's been her life journey. On screen, there's no explanation. She is magnificent as she is.

SUMMER SCARS contains elements of cruelty, but the film is bathed in sunshine. What challenges did you face when shooting this story in such a light?

Marine Atlan, the DP, and I decided from the beginning to make a very bright, very colourful film. I wanted a dense but generous, flaring image. The radiance was the sun, which would embody the heat of the film. During the shoot and postproduction, we pushed the sliders to the max. We didn't want to be afraid of getting the brightest image possible. What's interesting is that cruelty can sneak into everything: it is sometimes even more frightening when it does so on a beach, or in a forest in mid-summer while the birds are singing. In this summer chronicle that is SUMMER SCARS, there's something rotten inside but the characters are always guided by the light. The entire film was conceived in relation to the sun, it determined our work plan from start to finish.

They are many sequence-shots in SUMMER SCARS – as in your shorts. Can you talk about what it is you like about them?

The sequence-shot is part of my work. First, for its relation to time, which interests me; also with regard to the direction of actors. I have the actors rehearse a lot, since they are street-cast non-professionals who have never acted in front of a camera. With Raymond, Simon and Maïra, we rehearsed for seven months. I made them play scenes I re-adapted as we went along so they would be closer to their personalities. All this work from the initial stages allows me, on set, to establish a space for freedom once the actors are in place and the props set up. This free ground only goes if you've worked a lot beforehand and if you all have the same film in mind. In this case, my actors can feel free and enjoy themselves. The sequence-shot then feels natural to stage characters evolving, to bear witness to

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moments in life. That's what makes me want to make films. The découpage stage comes early on since I write with shots in mind. I produce a very precise document with all the shots I want, and I rework it later with Marine. Then we go to the locations, with doubles, and photograph all the shots in the film, with the right lens. We end up with a new document that becomes, for me, the new screenplay.

Music and sound design contribute hugely to the dramatic intensity of the film. Do you work with a composer?

When I write, and even during the development, I make playlists with tracks I think work for such and such a scene. I don't play music myself, but since my first films I have cobbled together sounds to obtain certain kinds of atmospheres I like. For SUMMER SCARS I had a lot of specific tracks for each sequence. I didn't want to bring in a composer because I didn't think he or she could find the atmosphere I had found in the tracks I like. From my shorts, I use pieces by Suicidewave, a Russian musician I love, who I discovered by chance on Soundcloud. His world describes mine. When they're mixed, it generates something very strong. He makes extremely dark music, witch house, with lots of bass. I like that it's this music that guides my characters, while they themselves listen to something entirely different. Guilhem Domerq, the sound editor and engineer with whom I've always worked, and I reworked a lot the atmospheres we captured during the shoot and used a synthesizer to create the layers that inhabit SUMMER SCARS. For me the sound editing stage is an essential stage in creating the identity of a film and we always try a ton of different things.

Would you say that all your work converges to offer the audience a multi-sensory experience?

With sound you can make the viewer feel something physically. Certain frequencies pass through the body, you can feel them even in your heart. That's why we worked a lot with the bass for SUMMER SCARS... The contrast between a scene with powerful bass and a five minute silence, with practically no sound at all, fascinates me. What the viewer feels is not always comfortable, but it is an experience of cinema. The same with the image: to go from darkest night to the most blinding light. The cut, the rupture in time... I always try to find a way to bring things alive on a physical level.

On SUMMER SCARS did you reassemble the same team that worked on your shorts?

Yes, I mostly worked with people who accompanied me on my previous films, who have become close friends over the years. My producer, Inès Daien Dasi, was already with me for my shorts and SUMMER SCARS is her first feature film, just like me. Some people who had never been heads of department before became just that on this film. The idea is to form a cinema family and to move forward together. For me, trust is the most important thing. The average age of the team is therefore pretty young, under 30. We didn't necessarily take the most experienced people but those who would invest the most in the project. A film like this one cannot be made any other way.

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SIMON RIETH

BIOGRAPHY

Simon Rieth was born in Paris on September 24th 1995 and grew up in Montpellier. At the age of only 26, he has already directed 6 short films including *Saint Jean* (2017) and *Diminishing Shine* (2018), which have been selected and awarded prizes in numerous festivals including BFI Future Film Festival, Beijing International Film Festival, MECAL Barcelona International Short and Animation Film Festival, and FIFIB. His first feature, *Summer Scars*, produced by Les Films du Poissons, will have its world premiere as the only French film in competition in Cannes Critics' Week, 2022.

Rieth is also signed with Partizan Productions as an advertising and music video director.

FILMOGRAPHY

2019

Marave Challenge (SMAC Productions / 10') Sales:

Shortcuts

- Auch Short Film Festival 2020
- Lyon Young Film Festival 2020
- La Pépinière Festival 2020
- Les Nuits Med 2020
- Mecal - International Short Film Festival of Barcelona 2020
- Smells Like Teen Spirit Festival 2019
- FIFIB 2019

Loveless (SMAC Productions / 25')

Broadcast OCS

- Rencontres Cinéma de Gindou 2019
- Festival 7ème Lune 2020
- Vagrant Film Festival 2020
- Luleå International Film Festival 2020 –
- Bastalavista International Genre Festival

2018

Saint Jean (Everybody On Deck / 10')

Broadcast on France 3

- Grand prix Espoir - Festival du Film Court de Troyes
- Jury Special Mention and Press Prize - Côté Court
- Jury Prize - Poitiers Film Festival: Compétition So French!
- Angers Festival Premiers Plans: Focus ADAMI
- Semaine du cinéma de Sciences Po
- FIFIB: Official Competition
- Quartier libre: Projections en avant-séances dans les cinémas de Seine-St-Denis
- Déjà demain: Best Contemporary Short Film, L'Agence du court métrage
- 2019 Cannes' Festival Market - Festival Ciné Class 2019

Diminishing Shine (Petit Chaos / 06'58)

- BFI Future 2020
- Beijing International Film Festival 2020
- Mecal - Barcelona International Short and Animation Film Festival 2019
- Cortex International Short Film Festival 2019
- Festival 7ème Lune 2019
- FIFIB: Compétition Contrebandes 2019
- Ciné-Court des Inrocks 2019
- Encounters Film Festival 2019

2017

Mother There Are Your Sons (SMAC Productions / 13'04)

- Special Jury Mention - IFF Message2Man: Experimental Official Competition
- FIFIB: Competition Contrebandes
- Festival 7ème Lune: National Competition
- Rencontres d'Art de Feÿ
- Festival des cinémas différents de Paris

2016

Gone Brothers (Silkface Production / 46'38)

- La Cabina International Medium-Length Film Festival, Valencia: Official Competition
- Festival Côté Court: Fiction Official Competition

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CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Raymond Baur was born in 1999 in Lagny-sur-Marne. After practicing Kung fu at high level (three times French Champion, World and European Championships) he joined the agency Scouting Model in 2019 and pursued his modelling career (Balmain, Paco Rabanne...) at the same time as his athletic career. In 2020, he was spotted on Instagram and cast in one of the lead roles in SUMMER SCARS, Simon Rieth's feature debut, which will be released in 2022.

Simon Baur was born in 2002 in Lagny-sur-Marne. After practicing Kung fu at high level (three times French Champion, World and European Championships) he joined the agency Scouting Model in 2019 and pursued modelling (Pull & Bear, Vetements...) at the same time as his athletic career. In 2020 he was spotted on Instagram and cast in one of the lead roles in SUMMER SCARS, Simon Rieth's feature debut, which will be released in 2022.

Maira Villena, born in 1998 in Paris to a Belgian mother and a Peruvian father, studies art at La Cambre. Maira developed her plastic arts practice around her dual culture and self-portraiture. Intimately linked, these two subjects deal with a quest for self and the construction of an identity of her own, even more so since Maira was born with a facial malformation that she is learning to overcome through the self-portraits she creates with pain and pride. In 2020, she was spotted on Instagram and cast in one of the lead roles in SUMMER SCARS, Simon Rieth's feature debut, which will be released in 2022. She is represented by Let It Go model management.

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CAST

Noé **RAYMOND BAUR**
Tony **SIMON BAUR**
Cassandre **MAÏRA VILLENA**
Tony as a child **GREGORY LU**
Noé as a child **BENJAMIN LU**

CREW

Director **SIMON RIETH**

Production **LES FILMS DU POISSON**

Producer **INES DAÏËN DASI**

Co- Production **SPADE**
SMAC PRODUCTIONS

Screenplay **SIMON RIETH**
LÉA RICHE

Coproducers **MANUEL CHICHE**
VIOLAINE BARBAROUX

DP **MARINE ATLAN**

Editor **GUILLAUME LILLO**

Costume Designer **CHARLOTTE RICHARD**

French Distributor **THE JOKERS**

International Sales **WILD BUNCH INTERNATIONAL**