

JD PROD & BLACK DYNAMITE
present

RABID DOGS

A film by Eric Hannezo
starring Lambert Wilson, Guillaume Gouix, Virginie Ledoyen,
Franck Gastambide, François Arnaud, Laurent Lucas

RUNNING TIME: 100 min / French
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SYNOPSIS

A bank job goes wrong.

Four armed robbers take refuge in a shopping centre - shots are fired, panic ensues.

Surrounded, the criminals shoot a man and take a woman hostage. Cornered, they hijack a car. At the wheel - a father on his way to hospital with his sick child. Out of control, on the run, their escape turns into a merciless manhunt. For these rabid dogs, there is no turning back.

INTERVIEW WITH ERIC HANNEZO - Director

Before you started working as a director you were a journalist and a producer: could you tell us about your career path?

How long have you got (laughs)? I've always been a film freak. I grew up in a family for whom entering a darkened room meant much more than entertainment - it was a major event. These were ritual outings. My first cinematic memory is *Pinocchio*, which was preceded by trailers for *King Kong*. That left a very big impression on me. I was utterly fascinated. When I was five I saw *Once Upon a Time in the West* with my parents, in a cinema where they still had intermissions. It hit me full on, even if clearly I couldn't understand all of it. But I do remember a really crazy spectacle.

One thing led to another and the seventh art became my passion. When I first got a VCR I recorded every film that was shown on Canal+, and I considered it my duty to watch them all. I was bulimic. There was no logic to it, apart from wanting to develop my film culture. That's how I spent my teenage years; let's not over analyze it. I realized I was addicted.

After finishing high school I asked myself what I was going to do with my life (laughs). I was a bit lost, and I needed money. I studied communications at college because one of the modules was film. After my Masters I was still uncertain about what I wanted to do. I was passionate about cinema but didn't know anyone in the business. It seemed completely out of reach, like a fantastic dream. Then journalism struck me as an obvious path: I loved to read, and to write, and was fascinated by the image.

In 1993 I had the opportunity to join the sports department of France 2 as a trainee; I'd initially applied to work on "Society and Culture", but went ahead anyway and ended up staying for 6 years. I loved it. Basically I worked on news programs. It was the heyday of *Stade 2*. Occasionally I appeared as a presenter but quickly realized I didn't enjoy being on camera. I loved directing: it was my way of making cinema. Sport allows you a great freedom in terms of presentation - you can have a lot of fun playing with different narrative styles.

I resigned in 2000 as I felt my path towards cinema growing clearer. I wanted to move into feature films but television got me again. I joined Jean-Luc Delarue's team at Réservoir Prod. I wanted to throw myself in the deep end and see if I was able to direct 52 or 90-minute documentaries for an international market. It was marvelous: I spent time in LA shooting reports on athletics. I put a lot into learning about production - you could say that's when I lost my virginity. To my surprise, TF1 called me in 2003 to offer me - me, the son of public service (laughs) - a job producing sports. I accepted because it was such a major challenge. I stayed until 2010, working on live broadcasts: *Auto Moto*, *Téléfoot*, football world cups...

And during all those years you never forgot about cinema?

Never. I wrote from time to time, all alone, telling no-one. Then I met one of my partners, Guillaume Lacroix, who quite liked what I had written. A producer bought my screenplay but I wasn't ready yet... Nonetheless it was encouraging. It wasn't until 2010 that I felt it was time to take the leap. After leaving TF1 I set up the production company Black Dynamite with

two friends: Guillaume Lacroix and Vincent Labrune (President of Olympic de Marseille football team). It was the best way to remain free and be able to take risks. We had a simple logic: to continue working in television as close to culture as possible (producing segments of *Grand Journal* and related programs) and to make films... By chance we became friends with Marc Dujardin and his brother Jean. Jean had an idea: *The Players*. And we just went for it! Making an anthology film for adults was quite an experience for a first-timer! Next we produced a documentary, *Mademoiselle C*, about Carine Roitfeld. We also helped with the financing of *9-Month Stretch*... And finally there was *Rabid Dogs*, our original project at the time we created the company.

How did it come about?

Black Dynamite also produced *La quotidienne du cinema* for TPS Star. That's how I met the journalist Yannick Dahan, whom I adore since he's also an avid reader of the magazine *Mad Movies*. I really have a lot of time for everything he's done, particularly his first film, *The Horde*, which I found daring, generous and straight from the heart. Quite naturally I asked him to work on the writing of *Rabid Dogs*. His friend Benjamin Rataud made a strong contribution. We saw each other regularly and it worked out well.

When did you come across Mario Bava's *Rabid Dogs*, which your film reinterprets?

I'm a real fan of genre cinema but for some reason I'd never seen this movie from 1974. Censorship had kept it invisible for a long time. I was desperate to see it! So I scoured every specialty store. There were a lot more back then. Shared passions forged a special bond between customer and seller. I finally got a hold of it about fifteen years ago. It was an American version re-titled *Kidnapped*... a terrible copy with English subtitles... And it wasn't bad at all. The film wormed its way inside my head.

Did you have any difficulty in obtaining the rights?

No, not at all. We got them through a certain Alfredo Leone. The idea was to make a free adaptation, knowing that the original version was ultra-violent, not to say deviant. When Yannick, Benjamin and I had finished the screenplay, we ran into a problem. My partners wanted me to direct the film, which wasn't what we had set out to do. They really wanted me to go for it and fulfill my dream. I asked for some time to think it over and, encouraged by the majority, took up the challenge. I started working on the script again since I thought it wasn't personal enough. I went back to zero, which isn't to take anything away from the incredible structural work begun by my co-writers.

***Rabid Dogs* is the story of three armed robbers who take a woman and a father, along with his sick daughter, as hostages. What was your inspiration when you reworked the script?**

Some years ago a very good friend of mine came to see me. He turned up in tears, saying he'd just done a 'go fast' - a drastic step that was meant to feed his family. He saw his life unwind. He was convinced he was going to die. It brought back some crazy stuff I had been involved with. It really hurts to be up against a wall. At times like these we all have pretty strange

thoughts. I wanted my robbers to be trapped in a position of impotence. Apart from Laurent Lucas, who is the archetypal criminal gang boss, the other characters are more nuanced. They are three guys caught up in something that's beyond them. At first they wear masks. But once they remove them, they become completely vulnerable and incapable of behaving like real bad guys. I drew inspiration from people I know to portray them. I didn't want a hysterical film where the guys commit robbery after robbery and shoot non-stop. I grew up in the *banlieue* and have spent a lot of time talking to guys from the hood... really lovely guys, who I saw growing up in and out of prison. They desperately tried to find work. I helped a few of them write their CVs but they seemed completely powerless. There was no before, no after. Only the present moment and this skewed perception of reality.

Does this mean you empathize with your bad guys?

Yes. I'm not saying I defend them but I do understand them. For me, representing this was one of the main challenges of the movie. They commit reprehensible acts but I didn't want them to be perceived as real bastards. I had to show their human side. It would have never worked with your classic villains. Look, I want to be crystal clear: I'm not defending their behavior. The film still has some kind of morality.

Why did you cast Guillaume Gouix, Franck Gastambide and François Arnaud as the armed robbers?

I wanted actors who could portray thugs out of their depth. I had to find faces with a real human quality, marking a break with the genre and capable of showing something new... a bit like *The Outsiders* by Francis Ford Coppola. Guillaume Gouix was an obvious choice. He was the first one I sent the script to. There's something very animal-like about him, with his piercing eyes and imposing physique. I loved him in *The Returned*, *Jimmy Rivière*... Franck Gastambide is a whole world unto himself. We had worked in TV together. There's something really appealing about his face. I was interested to see him cast against type. These two actors don't have a genre film culture, so it was great fun to throw them into that world. Finally, François Arnaud, a real encounter. I'd noticed him in a few Quebecois films that I really liked. I very much admire his work. We had great fun building his character, this handsome psychopath who behaves like a kid while believing he is invincible.

And why Virginie Ledoyen as one of the hostages?

Because I have always been very impressed by her. She has a lovely natural beauty. She is free, chooses her films according to whatever moves her, without asking herself thousands of questions. We see her in so many different types of films. I was moved when I met her, and when she said yes. I can't tell you what a responsibility it was! (Laughs) Besides, she loves genre films and - the cherry on the cake - had seen the original Bava movie. I was stunned!

Lambert Wilson plays a father driving his sick daughter to hospital who finds himself in the robbers' path. What do you like about him?

Frankly I didn't believe he'd accept the role. I've always loved him. He has natural class. He is *the* actor! I didn't know he was into genre films. I was looking for an actor capable of

playing an ordinary man confronted by an extraordinary situation. Also I was on the lookout for a face, and his is fascinating. I was delighted to have him on board.

Weren't you worried about finding yourself in front of this *beau monde* for your debut feature?

The first day, I thanked the heavens that I had worked on big sporting events in the past, where I was used to directing 150 people or more. I've been in tricky situations, with so much pressure to deal with and so many questions that needed answers... these experiences were formative. I've always told myself that in life they are no rules, only adventures.

What made you decide to shoot in Canada?

I didn't want the film to be set in a recognizable reality. I set out to recreate a more neutral world that the audience would not be able to identify. Some will recognize Quebec, some won't. But you should know that at the beginning, we were going to shoot in France. Alas, there were so many artistic constraints: the representation of cops, the chases, the kind of cars we would have to use... From a financial point of view, we were able to speed things up by shooting in Canada. I immediately liked it. I loved Montreal, this kind of *no man's land* that mixes up different styles of architecture in a chaotic yet harmonious way. The advantage was that I could make use of natural locations, these magnificent vast spaces... and I had an unbelievable crew at my disposal.

So you worked on the principle that it all takes place in a fictitious city?

Yes... for me *Rabid Dogs* is a kind of cruel modern fairytale, with characters who get thrown into extraordinary events. That was my starting point, to go towards an almost abstract world where I was working with figures. The idea was to have a first vertical part with the city as open-air prison. Little by little the reference points pop out and a horizontal part takes over, starting with the gas station. This is very probably my formal homage to Westerns. The third part takes root in the night, the symbol of a general implosion with red and yellow as dominant sensory factors.

The narration is closely timed, the screenplay taking place over a period of 12 hours... what difficulties did this cause?

It was an absolute shambles for a first film! (laughs) In an ideal world you would shoot in chronological order. But here we went about it in absolutely the most chaotic fashion. It means you have to be extremely vigilant at all times, to communicate constantly, to remind the actors of the schedule endlessly, to deal with weather problems... We had rain, a lot of rain (laughs)!

Isn't it also a challenge to begin a directing career with a road movie?

I didn't realize. The crew was a huge help, they thought I was totally nuts and told me: "Eric, do you realize that you have managed to gather every possible pressure you could? You have five actors to direct at the same time and you could think of nothing better than sticking them

in a car?" At first, I didn't realize the difficulties inherent in the car sequences. It's tough because you don't want repetition. I cut like mad to try and achieve an efficient and classic result on screen. I had to give up some of my fantasies of original shots. The shoot lasted 32 days. I worked a huge amount from the onset, almost in a manic way. The film was storyboarded from A to Z... In the end I discovered that constraints could be beneficial.

It looks like an American movie. Was that conscious?

No, to be honest, there was nothing conscious about it. The only film I showed to the actors, particularly Franck and Guillaume, was William Friedkin's *Sorcerer*. I thought it would be interesting for them to see it.

How did you work with your DP?

It was crucial to find the right person. When Kamal Derkaoui told me he came from the Russian school and had been raised on Tarkovsky, I felt pretty comfortable. He had worked on *The Tall Man* by Pascal Laugier among others... I wanted someone with experience, not a kid firing in all directions. I asked him to watch Pakula's *Klute*. It's good to start with something extreme. I wanted the light to be very much there, for us to go to the extremes. Kamal's work on the film is excellent.

A big part of the film is set during the Festival of the Bear. Does it really exist?

You know, I love *what the fuck!* moments in movies... the moment where everything goes off the rails. In mine, it's the Festival of the Bear. So yes, it's very risky and dangerous but it feels so good. To send the actors off into this, I can guarantee you it was harrowing (laughs). At first my co-writers wanted to throw the characters into the middle of a religious sort of scene. But I felt I'd already seen this... gangster films with religious processions. I wasn't comfortable with it. It was while we were location scouting in the Pyrenees - when we were still wanted to make the movie in France - that I heard about the Festival of the Bear. This tradition stems from a legend where a village woman was kidnapped by a bear. But who is the real monster here? The bloodthirsty hunters or the lonely, hunted beast? People have told me this is all about my love of horror movies. Others even mention *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*; I find it staggering - and very flattering. But there was absolutely zero calculation on my part.

INTERVIEW WITH LAMBERT WILSON - THE FATHER

What made you want to add your name to the cast of *Rabid Dogs*?

I was struck by the progression of the script, and its enthralling denouement. I called my agent right away - this doesn't happen to me very often - to tell him "I want to do it!" It was instant. I don't usually get involved in genre films. Which is a good thing in itself. I have to admit my character really appealed to me, as well as this incredible *huis clos* into which he is sucked.

Who exactly is your character?

We don't know what he does for a living: he could be a joiner, a cabinetmaker or a banker... He is a regimented family man, a thinking man, who likes to be in control. He's a rather fearful John Doe, who is on his way to hospital with his sick daughter, and who is unfortunately stopped by the events that befall him. It was a difficult role to play because some sort of 'virile' responses kick in. Because we want him to do something, to act, to go crazy with rage... And then there's a constant sense of mystery. We never stop asking: "But who is this guy?"

It's quite a challenge for an actor to be 'in reserve'...

When you cannot use language you have to re-centre your work and accentuate your gaze. It wasn't easy being stuck in a car more than half of the time. And in the same spot as well! Moreover, Eric Hannezo had to film from the point of view of each actor. It was tedious for everyone, particularly for me as I was at the wheel. My scope of possibilities was very limited. All I could do was turn my head to the right, look in the rear-view mirror...that was it! At one stage I really did wonder if I was going to be able to make it though the whole shoot with such reduced means of expression. The exterior scenes provided a very welcome balance.

Were you won over by the blend of genres?

In the script, the treatment of genre was more classic. It really was a B-movie adaptation - the breathless, feverish descent of a small group of people into hell. It was difficult to appreciate the style simply by reading. I was surprised by the very strong aesthetic choices when I discovered the film, which creates an interesting distance from reality. There are moments when you almost step out of time, when you are experiencing a sort of suspended trip... I hadn't imagined any of this because I was tied to the harrowing, sweaty reality of the situation. The end product is a very different film, less realist, more radical... and risky in its choices as well: the sound design, the narration, the editing... Eric Hannezo isn't afraid to go deep into his characters... He succeeds in showing the outside world in an abstract fashion, all the way to the Festival of the Bear, where you topple into the irrational. In brief I would say that we start from a realistic situation - a basic action movie premise - and end in complete fantasy.

The violence in the film is never gratuitous. Was that important to you?

Of course! I have a problem with the aestheticizing of violence in cinema. Here you are faced with characters who are devastated at the thought of using weapons. Self-judgement is constant here because, bottom line, they don't want to kill anyone. That holds no fascination for them. All they wanted was to rob a bank, end of story. The movie could have been called: *It Shouldn't Have Happened Like This*. (Laughs)

Was it fun shooting in French in such an Anglo-Saxon environment?

I was worried about that, the ultra-American decor, the sprawling metropolis and vast landscapes... but in the end we don't care. And the film becomes more international, less 'French'... It's lucky the atmosphere was great on set, or the shoot could have ended up being very pressured. Instead it was good-natured. My experience was that of a pleasant meeting of people of different generations, from very different schools of acting. It was harmonious, with no ego problems. We were reassured by a director who knew what he was doing. He knew his subject inside out, having prepared it for years. You would never have guessed it was his first film. He was always there, a real ship's captain, calm and resolute in his choices. How can anyone not give his best in such conditions?

INTERVIEW WITH GUILLAUME GOUIX - SABRI

You were the first member of the cast to receive the screenplay. What was your reaction?

I knew Eric Hannezo a little, I'd run into him a few times on "Le débarquement" (live CANAL+ TV programme). He sent me the script without telling me which character he had in mind for me to play. I was totally enthusiastic after I read it, and very happy to have been sucked into such a story, one that causes the audience to hold its breath from beginning to end. It's high tension all the way. So I called him and asked if I could play Sabri... which was by luck, the part he was planning to give me.

What did you like about the character?

Beyond the character itself, which required a lot of emotional nuances, I loved the idea of being part of such an original film. The criminals' actions move entirely beyond their will. In a way, they are a bunch of kids stuck in a situation that overwhelms them. They only set out to rob a bank with guns they have probably never used before... and here they are caught up in a descent into hell that they are incapable of handling. I was happy to be given the chance to play this.

How would you describe Sabri?

Sabri is the only one who knows the plan of the robbery. He becomes number one in the gang once the boss is out of the equation. I see him as someone who tries to keep a straight line. Throughout the film he tries to stick to his objective, which is to bring back the stolen money safe and sound. But he doesn't manage to hold the situation together at all. He's lugging around three hostages and two colleagues he doesn't know that well. It's a constant struggle for him to exercise authority. My ambition was not to fall into the cliché of the bad-tempered guy, or the guy who adjusts his jacket getting out of a car. The danger was to resort to acting the hackneyed violent thug. That's why we emphasized the human aspect of the trio. I played this role as if I was a teenager.

Do you empathise with him?

Yes... as I do all the characters I choose to play on screen. I think we can find him endearing despite his violent. That said I don't feel full of love for anyone who can shoot another point blank. The infantile aspect of these three crooks makes you feel a bit of sympathy for them. That's why the story works. You almost want them to succeed... What I don't get is his violence, and that had to be expressed... In real life I'm hardly the aggressive type. I had to get into it, the physical violence, the furious outbursts. It's asto to explore this cold, savage rage.

Let's go back to the word you used earlier - original. How do think *Rabid Dogs* breaks new ground in the genre film?

One example: throughout the narrative the deaths are counted. I don't like the banality of violence in action movies... dozens of dead bodies, often without it making any sense. Whenever anyone dies in *Rabid Dogs*, it happens quickly. We don't beat around the bush, and there's no desire to glorify it.

Can you tell us about the action scenes? The first one is beautifully executed...

Eric Hannezo plays with the codes of American cinema very deftly. It was great to find myself in this kind of scene. I was like a kid. There's something atavistic about playing with cars and guns. It's fun, as long as you avoid just showing off.

Was there an instant alchemy between Franck Gastambide, François Arnaud and you?

They're very cool. François is a character and a real discovery. I knew Franck a little and we got closer before the shoot. We became very close; we have the same sense of humour. The film is so tense that we needed to let go in between takes. We made up stupid games and joked a lot, which allowed us to keep a certain distance.

Much of the film takes place inside cars. Wasn't it claustrophobic?

It's one more challenge! I love constraints! That's what makes our work so interesting. Without that you're just content to do what you already know how to do. Here, we had to find something else inside us. When you spend 4 weeks sitting inside a car, your body language is restricted. That said, the film works through this: this feeling of confinement, the noose tightening.

Would you say this is your first excursion into genre film?

This is a genre film, no doubt, a contemporary B movie. At times I felt I was in a teen horror movie, given the age of the characters, the sets, the highways, the gas stations... The result is quite surprising in many ways: it's even atypical in its form, and lyrical too.

How was Eric Hannezo on set?

Eric doesn't do compromise. He delivered a generous, uncompromising film. Directors like him who create their own worlds are what interest me. It went really well. He is precise about everything: where the actors should be, the aesthetics... There's a real rigour; nothing goes over the top. Everything's tight; it doesn't go off in every direction. Eric really listens to his cast and his crew. He succeeds in making the characters' flaws visible. I hope he will make more films soon. He's a guy who never lets go of anything.

A word about Canada where the film was shot...

It was glorious! The total fantasy of a road movie...every day on set, we were living our dream. I grew up with films that glorified these kinds of spaces: America the Great, the endless highways, the gas stations, the lakes, the fir trees, the beautiful colours... What a fantastic playground!

INTERVIEW WITH VIRGINIE LEDOYEN - THE WOMAN

Eric Hannezo is a big fan of yours. How did he convince you to act in *Rabid Dogs*?

Frankly, I didn't take too much convincing (laughs). I was very impressed by his determination and personality. I also loved the idea that someone in France would want to remake a Mario Bava movie. It's a lovely way to start a project. Mario Bava isn't an obscure director but he is not very well known by the general public. His works interest me for several reasons.

You are the only cast member to have seen the original *Rabid Dogs* (1974) before reading this script. How did you come across it?

It was about ten years ago. The character of the woman wasn't really interesting; it was of secondary importance. She was just a hostage, who didn't interact with any of the other characters. I think this screenplay is a very intelligent re-working of the original. It develops the part of the woman considerably.

Who is the hostage you play?

We don't really know... just that she is on her honeymoon and that her life is overturned when she comes into contact with these robbers. She doesn't let fear, or the terrifying situation in which she finds herself a prisoner overwhelm her. She's strong, a fighter with a real survival instinct. She takes care of the kid, rejects the aggressive advances of one of the bad guys... I'd say all the characters are difficult to describe because we know nothing of their lives, or their pasts... This doesn't stop them from being very distinct. The point is to discover how each will find the strength to resist to the extreme... Their ability to live through what is happening to them is fascinating.

You are gagged for the first half the film - was that frustrating?

On the contrary, the challenge was thrilling. I liked the fact that I didn't have a thousand things to say. The script didn't lend itself to an excess of dialogue. I find the film accurate in its issues and portrayal of these five characters forced into such close proximity.

You spend a lot of time locked inside a car with four men. Did that become tiring?

(Laughs) It was funny. I had a lot of fun. They are great actors, and each unique. No one has the same acting style as the others. The fact I was gagged allowed me to become an audience for their performance, words and gestures... I have rarely been filmed at such close quarters. Being confined in a car made us go deep into our characters. They are always in the same spot - it's a metaphoric model of a family. A routine develops... it creates competition, physical stress, and embarrassment, because we were so close physically. All this was essential.

What can you say about the Canadian landscapes that provide the backdrop?

They contrast powerfully with the characters' confinement. This immensity, these lakes, the high-rise buildings that act as counterbalance... The landscapes are in complete accord with the film's story.

Can you talk to us about Eric Hannezo?

He's very calm and knows where he wants to go. Despite the anxiety that goes with making your feature debut, he was in complete control. He was adaptable without ever straying from his own rules. His ideas for particular shots were precise and supported by numerous storyboards. He didn't ignore anyone and listened all the ideas that were suggested to him.

Are you a fan of genre films?

Yes, I am. But you mustn't reduce genre to its simplest form. I believe it is a great tool for a true analysis of the world, of people, of humanity... I like horror, crime, thriller films... In *Rabid Dogs*, Eric Hannezo played with all the tropes and made something that was truly his own. He surfs between atmospheres. His film is pure, radical and absolutely his.

INTERVIEW WITH FRANCK GASTAMBIDE - MANU

How did you find yourself a part of this project?

I think it was Marc Dujardin who suggested me for the part of Manu to Eric, after he saw me in a *Débarquement* sketch on Canal+.

How would you describe your character?

Manu is probably the most sensitive of all the characters. His evolution as the story unfolds is one of the most striking. Certain hardships in his life have led him into this nightmare, for which he is not cut out.

Would you say this is the first time you have been cast against type?

Yes this is my first absolutely against-type role. In comedies like *Les Gazelles* or *I Kissed a Girl*, I've had the chance to play characters very different to the one I created in *Porn in the Hood*, but here I am in *Rabid Dogs*, in the middle of a *film noir*, a strong film, a pure genre film. How lucky for me! And that's not to mention my on-screen partners, from whom I was able to learn so much on this crazy adventure.

What difficulties did you have with this change in direction?

Days of reading, preparation and hours of discussions with the director allowed me to understand who Manu was - his path, his story - and reduced potential difficulties. I composed the character under Eric's supervision, adopting a particular mode of speech and a face that gives nothing away.

Can you talk a little about the atmosphere on-set?

What struck me most was the feeling we were making an American film. The sets, the cars, the crew, the references and the director's inspirations, the atmosphere, it was all quite magical. Every day we were working with a consummately professional crew who treated us to anecdotes of huge American productions. For someone like me who has only been involved in light comedies so far, playing a criminal in such a powerful film, learning fight choreography and how to fire a gun - is quite simply a kid's dream.

Eric Hannezo said he was happy to lead you into genre films. How did go about helping you get into his world?

Eric didn't ask me to do any tests. He gave me the screenplay to read and asked me what I understood about Manu's character. He spent a lot of time talking to me about Manu, before the first read-throughs. With him and under his supervision I tried to create the Manu he had in mind.

What will you keep from this experience?

Firstly, the feeling of having made a piece of genuine cinema, but mostly the special relationship I have developed with my on-screen partners, particularly Lambert, Guillaume

and Virginie, great and wildly talented actors all whose careers command the greatest respect. I was overawed at the thought of acting opposite them, and I learned so much. Even now, when I see their names next to mine on the poster, it's magical.

INTERVIEW WITH FRANÇOIS ARNAUD - VINCENT

How did you join the project?

They sent me the script and then there was a casting. In fact I filmed myself on my phone, from my apartment in New York. I remember that, reading the screenplay, I couldn't believe Vincent hadn't been cast already. He is such a strong character.

I was told that Eric wanted to meet me after he'd watched the test. We talked on Skype and he just said with a big smile: "So... are you in?"

How would you describe your character?

Unpredictable. He's a big kid - just impulses, instinct and hormones. He doesn't filter his thoughts, says whatever is going through his head, and does whatever he wants. It's very liberating to play a character like that. And looking at him like this stopped me from judging him: it's not my place.

Your character is aggressive, constantly all over Virginie Ledoyen's character. How did you two get along?

Virginie loves genre cinema. I think she really wants to become a part of this type of iconography, so she is prepared to do what it takes. If I at the beginning I was a bit afraid of hurting her, shaking her too violently or smearing too much saliva on her face, she made it clear that I should just go for it. I can't remember if we had a code for when we should stop, but the boundaries were clear, allowing our acting to be as free as possible. I think that Vincent really believes he is forging a relationship with the woman - that she likes him and that they are both playing the same game. That's how I approached the part, like a 'romance'. I know it might seem even more strange and violent, but it was the only way to avoid 'playing the psycho'. Even if that's at least part of what he is.

As the only Quebecois on set, did you suffer any hazing from the rest of the cast?

I spent much of my childhood and adolescence in France, in Brittany and in the South. So even if I'm not a "young Parisian actor", I understand the codes and feel just as much at home in France as in Quebec, or the US, where I've lived for a long time.

It's true that I come from a different school, closer to the Anglo-Saxon method. I need more preparation, concentration. The atmosphere on set was good. It would be easy for the whole thing to go awry, with five actor's egos inside a car. A sense of humour is essential. Unlike my character, I'm a fairly peaceable person who likes to think things through.

What difficulties did you find in playing the part?

It is always a challenge for me to play someone who loves to be centre stage. Of course I'm an actor, and this is partly because I want to be looked at. But it is more about the desire to be understood rather than to be 'seen', or to be the constant centre of attention. And that is exactly what Vincent is about. He always has something to say or do, someone to wind up. So I had to push myself. Eric always wanted the character to have a 'James Dean' dimension,

more introverted, troubled. There was constant struggle between this internal aspect and Vincent's desire to externalise any emotion, to let it all out - and always in an extreme way. I am familiar with this rage, which I felt when I was younger and which I have learned to control. Or perhaps it has just calmed down with age. This feeling of venom in your veins. Well, I'm better now (laughs)!

Is there anything regressive about playing in a pure genre movie?

Not at all. On the contrary, playing with genre codes allows you a certain freedom. Besides, Eric's draws inspirations from a vast range; there was nothing restrictive. One moment you're in classic suspense territory, the next it's almost Tarantino. I know that genre movies tend to be preferred by directors rather than actors. But in the film there were plenty of genius moments to play.

Can you talk about the atmosphere during the shoot?

We shot a lot at night, in the cold, in a very small space. It was charming (laughs)! Seriously, it was very cool. I believe that being in this state of exhaustion, or simply in the middle of the night, brings something to the film. You question yourself less, you throw yourself into it. The location and the fog - which wasn't movie fog - also helped.

What will you keep from this experience?

The pleasure of helping a director realise his vision. A desire for French cinema. Most of all, the wish to continue working with people who are as passionate about cinema as Eric.

CAST

LAMBERT WILSON
VIRGINIE LEDOYEN
GUILLAUME GOUIX
FRANCK GASTAMBIDE
FRANCOIS ARNAUD
LAURENT LUCAS

The Father
The Woman
Sabri
Manu
Vincent
The Boss

CREW

Directed by
Screenplay

Producers

Executive Producers
Co-producers (France)

Co-producers (Canada)

Casting

D.P.
Artistic and technical advisors

Production Designer
Editor
Costume Designer
Make-up
Original Music

Logistics

ERIC HANNEZO
BENJAMIN RATAUD
YANNICK DAHAN
ERIC HANNEZO
MARC DUJARDIN
ERIC HANNEZO
GUILLAUME LACROIX
VINCENT LABRUNE
MARC VADE
ETIENNE MALLET
JULIEN DERIS
DAVID GAUQUIE
FRANCK ELBASE
NICOLAS LESAGE
RENAUD LE VAN KIM
JULIEN SEUL
MATTHIAS RUBIN
ERIC JUHERIAN
CLAUDE LEGER
SYLVAIN PROULX
DANIEL POISSON
PIERRE PAGEAU
KAMAL DERKAOUI
MICHAËL VIGER
TOM KAN
JEAN-ANDRE CARRIERE
ARTHUR TARNOWSKI
ODETTE GADOURY
KATHY KELSO
LAURENT EYQUEM
ROB (additional tracks)
DIDIER COMMUNAUX
BENOÎT MATHIEU