

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

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FILM FESTIVAL 2023

SRAB FILMS PRESENTS

LES INDÉSIRABLES **(BÂTIMENT 5)**

A FILM BY LADJ LY

Screenplay by LADJ LY and GIORDANO GEDERLINI

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SYNOPSIS

Haby, a young woman deeply involved in the life of her community, discovers the redevelopment plan for her neighborhood. Led behind closed doors by Pierre Forges, a young doctor thrust into the role of mayor, the plan calls for the demolition of the block where Haby grew up. Together with the inhabitants of the building, she embarks on a fierce battle to prevent the destruction of Block 5...

INTERVIEW WITH LADJ LY

***Les Indésirables* clearly alludes to real situations like those in Montfermeil or Clichy-Sous-Bois, yet you have set the film in the imaginary town of Montvilliers. Was it out of a desire for universality?**

I'm from Montfermeil, I grew up there and I was nourished by the stories of the people who live there which inevitably saturate my films but, in this case, I wanted to broaden the framework. What happens in the neighborhoods of Montfermeil happens in many other cities, in France and elsewhere.

I thought an imaginary city would allow everyone to relate to it. The same goes for the choice of an ensemble film, which explores stories within a story, from the journey of the mayor to those of a community activist, the deputy mayor... All linked by an observation on politics. *Les Indésirables* leaves no doubt that it is time to rethink things. The activist Haby symbolises this, looking for leads, for new ways of doing things. Through her I wanted to evoke this new generation from these neighborhoods that is beginning to show an interest in politics, rather than the generation that still holds power but no longer understands anything about our world.

This broadening of framework also involves a different mise en scene to *Les Misérables*. In *Les Indésirables* you don't film urban spaces in the same fashion...

The form has changed because even though the two films take place in the same environment, the subjects are different. In *Les Misérables* it was the issue of police behaviour and more particularly of the BAC (Serious Crimes Bureau). *Les Indésirables* is set in the same territory but addresses different issues, including that of social housing. Thus, I based my mise-en-scene on something more architectural-based, symbolically and literally: the opening aerial shot is a real entry card, it acts as a map of the city to set the social and urban contexts in which this story is about to unfold. If this film's French title is *Bâtiment 5* (*Block 5*) it's precisely because it's the name of the building I grew up in. I myself saw the urban redevelopment plan, one of the biggest in France, being implemented, and how the population of these neighborhoods were its victims and suffered from it. The forcible expropriation of the residents, the purchase of their apartments at ridiculously low prices shown in this film is a reality that has left a deep impression on me. We have to define things as they are, it was a massive scam. To get back to the mise-en-scene, I think I'll always remain the self-taught director, still carrying a trace of Kourtrajmé and its resourceful way of making films, with little money. *Les Misérables* somehow allowed me to "professionalise" myself. Larger financial resources on *Les Indésirables* allowed me to do less handheld, guerrilla-style filming. Moreover, since this film is more political, to reinforce this statement by integrating it into the form in the way we filmed the spaces, the stairwells of buildings or the corridors of the town hall, because we had to feel what they were saying about the times and the balance of power depicted.

Another notable change is the place of women, much more present in *Les Indésirables*, to the point of pairing up the characters: Haby and Blaz, the mayor and his wife or his female deputy, even the Syrian immigrant family, a father and his daughter. Why this choice?

I received a lot of criticism for not having more female characters in *Les Misérables*. However, we never wanted it to be an essentially male subject, or that the relationship with the police should remain “a story about guys”! Even so, the greater role played by women in *Les Indésirables* was not all that conscious, it is simply because that’s how it is in reality. They exist, they are strong, and they fight. The image we have of women in these neighborhoods, living hidden, is a cliché. On the contrary, they are very present and active on the front line, especially in their involvement with community associations.

One character among the myriad that make up *Les Indésirables* remains apart: Roger, the deputy mayor. He embodies the line between necessary compromises and corruption much more than the others.

He is undoubtedly the most symptomatic character of our political world. Roger has been around for a long time, knows everyone and has done it all, be it ethical or not, to find his place at City Hall.

But even though he has got his hands dirty, he’s still been screwed.... he should have become mayor instead of Pierre. His was one of the most interesting characters to write, with all the ambiguities and contradictions that make him someone fundamentally amoral while remaining human. There are a lot of Rogers in suburban towns, people who give a lot for their city, probably with good intentions at the beginning, before sometimes becoming an element of the system. I wanted this character to be a reminder that, whatever these individuals’ initial intentions, in the end it’s all diluted by politics and its arrangements.

Opposite him, you have Haby, this community activist, and Blaz. While he allows himself to be overwhelmed by anger, she states that the solution clearly cannot be in this fury. Where do you stand yourself between the two of them?

It’s complicated. Particularly when this situation that has lasted for forty years isn’t changing. But what should you do? Give up? I don’t think so. But neither do I want to overburden Blaz. He represents the weariness and then the madness, sometimes in the psychiatric sense of the word, that can take hold of people who, despite an education, find themselves overwhelmed by idleness and then despair, and end up spinning out of control.

***Les Indésirables* has a lot of characters. How did you build the cast, made of actors with whom you have already worked, like Alexis Manenti and Steve Tientcheu and newcomers like Anta Diaw?**

I like to work both with seasoned actors who have experience, and with others who don't yet have the same experience, but who bring a mixture of innocence and sincerity. And beyond the lead actors I want to remain true to life: 80% of the minor roles or extras are people from Montfermeil. I had already worked with Alexis and Steve and thought it was interesting to have them play totally different roles. I spotted Anta during the casting of *The Young Imam*, the Kim Chapiron film I co-produced. She only had a small part, but I thought she was incredible.

Between the time you embarked on *Les Indésirables* and its release, the climate of mistrust towards institutions has intensified. To the point that, as in a scene from your film, mayors were violently attacked. What do you make of this?

Without revealing too much about this scene, the parallel between fiction and reality is disturbing, when you see something nearly identical on the news. Clearly, it raises questions in my mind but above all it confirms to me that there is indeed a huge problem in the relationship with these institutions, that something has broken.

Originally, *Les Indésirables* was announced as the second part of a triptych that began with *Les Misérables*, dedicated to Claude Dilain (Mayor of Clichy-sous-Bois from 1995 to 2011). In the end there is indeed a mayoral character, but it seems to have been drawn from several officials...

The starting point of *Les Indésirables* was indeed Claude Dilain. I knew him and found his story interesting to tell but as time went by and I started writing, the project switched to something else. Especially when a documentary about his story was released in the meantime. A fiction about him would have been redundant. So, the script went off in another direction, but I did keep a mayoral character and the backdrop of social housing, that was one of Dilain's battles. But above all, I made this mayor a man of the Right.

This is above all a mayor who is a pawn on the political chessboard, elected despite of himself, at the request of his party...

For me, a mayor is supposed to be an elected official chosen by his electorate to listen to them. Is this still the case today? Less and less so, when the notion of city maintenance is now reduced to the upkeep of the town centres, to the detriment of neglected outlying neighborhoods.

Pierre is not a politician by training, nor is he in his place in his mayor's chair but finds himself having to manage a town and its problems. This is a situation that we have seen in several suburban cities where inexperienced people have been propelled or parachuted into the role of mayor by the will of their political party. I just made the observation via this character who is a little naive. As for instrumentalization, I'm not making anything up: the case of Jean-Louis Borloo, who was commissioned by Macron to create a new suburban plan with great media attention only to throw it in the trash is a telling example.

However, this mayor will end up asserting his own convictions. For example, by welcoming a Syrian family, during a scene where you address the issue of “selective immigration.”

This is a thorny question because it raises the issue of solidarity according to the social category to which you belong. The scene where Blaz’s father picks up everyone waiting for a bus that doesn’t arrive, shows what exists among the less secure population, but the scene you’re talking about raises the problem of selective immigration. We saw it with the Syrian conflict, we see it today with the Ukraine, there is a form of selection on the part of elected officials, even desired by the right-wing political class.

Listening to you, one might conclude that you’re pessimistic as regards politics?

With Haby, I tried to inject a glimmer of hope into *Les Indésirables*. For sure, I portray disillusioned characters, who no longer believe in it, but she does represent a possible key to opening up by deciding to get involved and even run in the municipal elections. There’s nothing to say that she’ll get elected, but at least, the initiative has been taken.

LADJ LY BIOGRAPHY

Ladj Ly, originally from Montfermeil (Seine-Saint-Denis) began his career as a member of the Kourtrajmé collective, founded in 1995 by his childhood friends Kim Chapiron and Romain Gavras. He began his career in cinema as an actor, then as director with his first short film **Montfermeil les Bosquets** in 1997. In parallel, he made making-offs. In 2004, he co-directed the documentary **28 Millimeters** with photographer JR, who displays large format portraits on the walls of Clichy, Montfermeil and Paris.

In 2016 he directed “Marakani” in Mali, a promotional clip for Max Havelaar’s international solidarity NGO. After the 2005 riots triggered by the deaths of Zyed Benna and Bouna Traoré, two teenagers killed in an electric substation in Clichy-sous-Bois, Ladj Ly decided to film his neighborhood for a year and make a documentary, **365 Days in Clichy-Montfermeil**.

He pursued his work as documentary maker, producing **365 Days in Mali** in 2014 , a recounting of a region in full turmoil where militias and Tuaregs are preparing for war.

In 2017, he directed the short film, **Les Misérables**, nominated at the 2018 César Awards and awarded at Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival. The same year, he co-directed the documentary **À Voix haute** with Stéphane de Freitas, also nominated at the César Awards.

In 2019, he presented his first feature film, **Les Misérables**, selected in competition at Cannes Film Festival. The film was awarded the Jury Prize, won 4 César Awards (Audience Award, Best Film, Most Promising Actor, and Best Editing).

Ladj Ly returns with his second feature, **Les Indésirables**, premiering at the Toronto International Film Festival 2023.

LADJ LY FILMOGRAPHY

2023 LES INDÉSIRABLES

THE YOUNG IMAM by Kim Chapirpon

co-written with Kim Chapiron, Ramzi Ben Sliman and Dominique Baumard

ATHENA by Romain Gavras

co-written with Romain Gavras and Elias Belkeddar

2019 LES MISÉRABLES

Jury Prize Cannes Film Festival 2019

4 César Awards 2020 : Audience Award, Best Film, Most Promising Actor, Best Editing

2017 LES MISÉRABLES (Short)

Nominated César Awards 2018

A VOIX HAUTE (Documentary)

Co-directed with Stéphane de Freitas

CHRONIQUES DE CLICHY-MONTFERMEIL (Documentary)

Co-directed with JR

2015 CLIQUE TV (Television)

Series of documentaries directed for Clique TV

MR BRAINWASH (Documentary web series for ARTE)

2013 365 DAYS IN MALI (Documentary)

Co-directed with Saïd Belkhibia

2010 MALI SUR LA TRACE DES OTAGES FRANÇAIS (Television Reportage)

2008 DES MAUX POUR LE DIRE (Television Reportage)

2007 365 DAYS IN CLICHY MONTFERMEIL (Documentary)

1997 MONTFERMEIL LES BOSQUETS (Short)

With Kourtrajmé collective.

CAST

Haby **Anta Diaw**
Pierre Forges **Alexis Manenti**
Blaz **Aristote Luyindula**
Roger Roche **Steve Tientcheu**
Nathalie Forges **Aurélia Petit**
Agnès Millas **Jeanne Balibar**

CREW

Directed by **Ladj Ly**
Screenplay **Ladj Ly, Giordano Gederlini**
DP **Julien Poupard, AFC**
Editor **Flora Volpelière**
Original Music **Pink Noise**
Sound **Gautier Isern, Matthieu Autin,
Guillaume D'Ham, Marco Casanova**
Casting **Dez Epane and Léa Moszkowicz**
1st Assistant Director **Arthur Guerrand**
Continuity **Jeanne Fontaine-Sarda**
Production Designer **Karim Lagati**
Costume Designer **Noémie Veissier**
Makeup **Yumiko Oka**
Line Producer **Laurène Ladoge**
Production Manager **Jérôme Briand and Yuki Kuroda**

Production **Srab Films**

Produced by **Toufik Ayadi and Christophe Barral**

Coproduced with **Lyly Films, France 2 Cinéma,
Panache Productions and
La Compagnie Cinématographique**

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Movie Tax Invest**

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Banque Postale Image 16, Cineaxe 4, SG
Image 22, SG Image 21, Sofitvcine 10**

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and Indéfilms Initiative 10**

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