



SSIFF

OFFICIAL SELECTION

TAX ME IF YOU CAN

A FILM BY YANNICK KERGOAT

LE BUREAU and WILD BUNCH present



TAX ME IF YOU CAN

A FILM BY YANNICK KERGOAT

Written by Yannick Kergoat and Denis Robert

FRENCH RELEASE : DECEMBER 7th 2022 -WILD BUNCH DISTRIBUTION

France – Running time: 1h54 – Format: Flat 1.85 – Color – Sound: 5.1

Photos and press kit can be downloaded from:
www.wildbunch.biz/movie/tax-me-if-you-can/

International Sales

The Bureau Sales
thebureaufilms.com/sales
sales@lebureaufilms.com / festivals@lebureaufilms.com

Wild Bunch International
www.wildbunch.biz

International Press

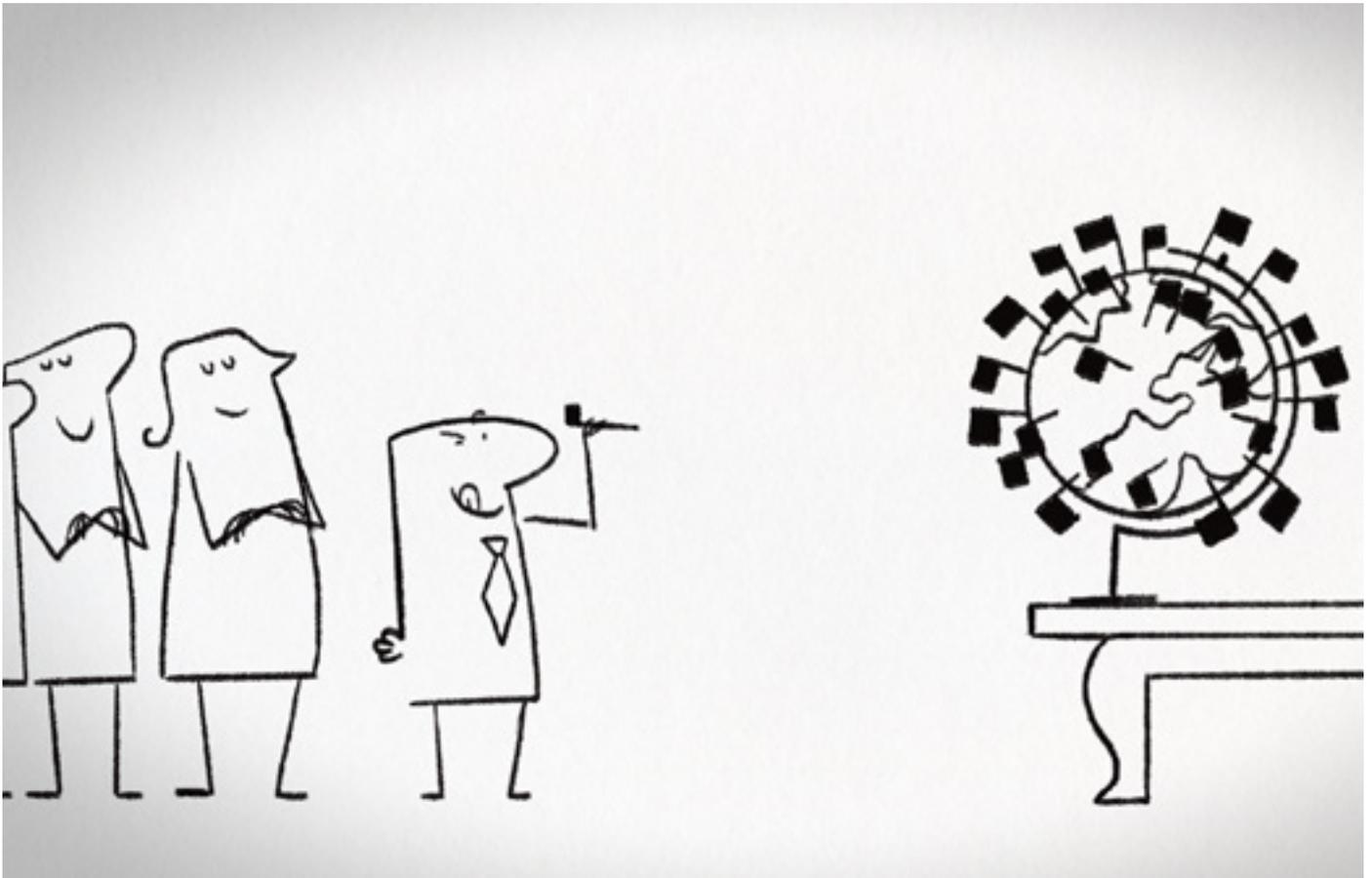
Brigitta Portier
brigitportier@alibicommunications.be
+32 477 98 25 84

SYNOPSIS

WELCOME TO THE ENCHANTED WORLD OF CAPITAL FLIGHT.

The key to amassing a huge fortune? Find accomplices, know how to hide, and take advantage of every loophole in the system. The rest of us, mere mortals, can only bask in the joys of austerity politics in an ever-more inegalitarian world... How far will they go, these predators who steal from our national economies? How complicit are our politicians? And how do we stop them?

A funny, shocking and true in-depth investigation - a unique and hopeful cinematic call for change.



AN INTERVIEW WITH YANNICK KERGOAT



What motivated the project of *Tax Me If You Can*? The accumulation of cases of tax evasion or a desire to educate?

The idea came to three of us: producer Bertrand Faivre, Denis Robert and me. During our discussions, the subject of tax evasion came to the fore very quickly. This is an issue that concerns us all and is central to today's world, especially when it comes to dealing with social and economic injustices. We wanted to make something in the same spirit as *The New Watchdogs*: it was important to approach this eminently political subject with a certain freedom of tone, and above all, with humour.

The aim was to show how tax evasion has been an essential mechanism of neo-liberal globalisation since the early 2000s. Its role is systematically minimalised in the official discourse, which speaks of tax evasion as a marginal phenomenon, while it has been one of the tools of the growing dominance of multinationals and major fortunes over the economy for forty years – with huge repercussions on our daily lives, as well as of course, incredible increases in wealth for some and constant impoverishment for others.

A subject like tax evasion would more usually be addressed by a television documentary. Why was it important that *Tax Me If You Can* was destined for the cinema?

Since you embarked on this project, tax evasion has already been widely documented in the press or by investigative broadcasts, without any real political or judicial progress being made. How can cinema make a difference?

From the start it was obvious that *Tax Me If You Can* would be a film. We wanted the total editorial freedom that neither a private nor a public television channel could have guaranteed us. I don't think a film can revolutionise the world. It would be a much better place today if it could! (laughs). But I do think that on such a fundamental subject, we have to pull out all the stops. We need press articles, books, television programs, but also films. A film doesn't speak to the same audience and doesn't use the same language; the act of going to the cinema is completely different from that of drinking from the TV faucet, let alone the 24 hours all-news networks. In addition, we are convinced that the cinema is a powerful public space in the face of the dominant media. And it's part of our project to accompany the film in theatres by organising screenings followed by debates, by going everywhere where an exchange with the public is possible. We hope that *Tax Me If You Can* will be a tool that will be seized by associations, political movements, every part of the social movement for change.

The other difference between a documentary made for television and for the cinema is the construction of a narrative. How did you develop the one in *Tax Me If You Can*?

It was quite difficult. I have been working in film for over thirty years and I'm convinced it requires a particular style of writing. So, these questions of the construction of the narrative, the rhythm, and the part that emotion plays, are central if you want to keep the audience watching to the end. Clearly, this is a major concern when you're making a film about tax evasion!

Another challenge when you make a film like this is that the story isn't complete, but constantly evolving. Sometimes you feel as if you're running behind reality. Every new scandal, every new OECD decision, every new political statement on these issues could potentially disrupt the film's narrative. But in the end this constraint was beneficial, since it forced us to refocus on the essential mechanisms of tax evasion and on the invariables of political responsibilities. In addition, it must be said that the string of new scandals, if it speaks to the permanence of the problem, can have a slightly soporific effect. On the other hand – and this is what *Tax Me If You Can* tries to demonstrate relentlessly – this phenomenon grows worse every year: stakeholders are increasingly trained in tax evasion, it affects ever more economic sectors, and an ever-increasing number of countries want to be part of "the club". This reality is one of the underlying themes of the film.

You talk about "characters". In this case, there are many. A narrative requires you to focus on some in particular. How did you choose the characters for *Tax Me If You Can*?

It's what I call 'the exercise of evidence'. A film doesn't allow you multiple examples: you have to find "characters" or situations that "speak" for all the others.

With a subject like this, we know that we will initially have the interest of an audience that has a good knowledge of it or feels concerned by it. But the challenge is to interest viewers beyond this first circle – because tax evasion concerns each of us and our ability to live together. It's necessary to find a language that doesn't bore those who are already informed, without excluding those who are not. So, the sorting of the "characters" is not without difficulty: it happened that we wanted to mention certain people, or certain events, but couldn't find appropriate archival material.

Our "characters" – and certain ideal figures, like Patrick Balkany – were chosen and placed in the film as concrete examples of one of the mechanisms explored. Those who know the case won't learn anything but will, I hope, be amused, while others will understand a bit better what's at stake through these "practical case studies".

This idea of pre-knowledge goes hand in hand with the often ironic tone of *Tax Me If You Can*. It clearly states that you are not fooled by the system that has been put in place...

It's a tone that suits me and is also a way of being in collusion with the audience. The idea isn't to give a lesson to students by telling absolute truths in a professorial tone. *Tax Me If You Can* is more a game of complicity; including with the speakers, by leaving them a real space to express themselves. It's also a film that exists to fight back. And in this fight, irony and mockery are also weapons.

***Tax Me If You Can* mocks the political class via scathing commentary and incriminating archival images. But its representatives are barely present among the speakers interviewed. Was this a choice? Or did you try to involve politicians and were refused?**

I have three answers.

One: our concern was to give a voice to those who are fighting in this territory: NGOs, economists, magistrates, academics. They have very little presence in the mainstream media, so it was important to let them speak.

Two: politicians have platforms everywhere and constantly. We only have 1h 50 of film: I didn't really want to share it with them.

Three: who doesn't know their propensity for waffling on? Mobilising a crew and dedicating half a day of work to hear Bruno Le Maire (French Minister of Economy and Finance) repeat what he has been saying everywhere for five years doesn't interest me. This isn't a rejection of the political class, but it is a practical reality and I have to bear with it – or rather in this case, without it! There's only one politician in *Tax Me If You Can*: Pascal Saint-Amand, the director of the OECD's Centre for Tax Policy and Administration, a central player in international reform attempts since 2009. I believe he is sincere; above all, he is a diplomat who remains subject to the will and policy of major countries, particularly the US. We had a 90-minute interview with him, of which only 30 seconds remain at the beginning of the film...

This disillusioned view was already present in *The New Watchdogs*, a documentary that interrogated the links between the media and the political classes. To what extent is *Tax Me If You Can* an extension of this previous film, given the ever-growing relationship between multinationals and the government?

Both films focus on certain mechanisms of domination for the benefit of an oligarchy. Multiple examples show that conglomerates and the wealthy families who now own the mass media practise tax evasion. The connection is deliberately made between *Tax Me If You Can* and *The New Watchdogs*, through many nods to the media treatment of the question: who is given a voice, and how?

I edited a sequence that analysed the comparative treatment of social fraud and tax fraud in the mainstream media. It was quite staggering. Unfortunately, the film was too long, and we had to cut it. I can assure you that we're not naïve about the reception of the film in the newsrooms of the mainstream media (laughs). It's very likely that they will talk about it as little as possible, or only to challenge this or that detail, criticise this or that figure, maintain that all this is ancient history, that reforms are underway, that in France fiscal justice has been restored... I say this without forgetting that there are many journalists in these newsrooms who are fighting to try and produce quality information. But it is obvious that here we rely much more on the independent media and associations – and the desire of the public to seize the debate.

To conclude, you mentioned earlier plans to tax large companies. These last months, a bill carried by the Biden administration could be the beginning of a tipping point. If the ironic tone of *Tax Me If You Can* seems pessimistic, are you also pessimistic about what happens next?

It's hard to say. I'm both pessimistic and optimistic. The new US administration has decided to revive an already old project that Donald Trump had buried. This is clearly a step in the right direction, but a very small one. The risk being that this will create an international norm that could pull down countries with higher tax rates. This isn't mentioned in *Tax Me If You Can* so as not to drown the film in figures – it would quickly become abstract or tedious – but there are studies that ensure that, already, the consolidated profits declared by the multinationals do not correspond to the added balance sheets of their subsidiaries. In other words, there are profits that disappear, and therefore tax mechanisms to escape this law already in place even before it is introduced. Moreover, these new measures come in the context of the Covid crisis, not very far, economically speaking, from the financial crisis of 2008 – which has mainly given rise to publicity stunts around fiscal policy. Is there a real international desire behind it to rethink taxation, its role, its distribution?

Beyond the effects of announcements intended to calm public opinion, in France, at the European level or more broadly across the developed world, there is the feeling that reforming taxes and fighting tax evasion to prevent the impoverishment of states, the accelerated deterioration of public services and the explosion of inequalities, is still not on the agenda of our leaders. On the contrary, the dynamics are still in favour of lowering direct taxation for businesses and for the wealthiest citizens, and an increase in indirect taxes and deterioration of public services for the average person.

This is a short-sighted ideology from which no one will emerge unscathed.



CREDITS

Director
Writers
Assistant Director
Director of Photography
Sound
Editor
Assistant Editor
Sound editing
Sound Mix
Colour Grading
Original Score
Researcher
Animation
Production Assistant
Line Producer
Producers
French Distribution
International Sales
Production

With the support of

In partnership with

With the support of

YANNICK KERGOAT
YANNICK KERGOAT and **DENIS ROBERT**
CLEMENT BENOÎT
MAXIME SABIN
CLÉMENT TIJOU
MICHAËL PHELIPPEAU
MATTHIEU GROSMARE
VALÈRE RAIGNEAU, THÉO SERROR
LAURE ARTO
ALEXANDRE SADOWSKY
ÉRIC NEVEUX
CÉCILE NIDERMAN
JORIS CLERTÉ (DONCVOILÀ PRODUCTIONS)
AMBRE GUILLOU
GABRIELLE JUHEL
BERTRAND FAIVRE and **VINCENT MARAVAL**
WILD BUNCH DISTRIBUTION
THE BUREAU SALES and **WILD BUNCH INTERNATIONAL**
LE BUREAU
and **WILD BUNCH**
CREATIVE EUROPE
MEDIA PROGRAMME OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
PROCIREP-ANGOA
LA RÉGION ÎLE DE FRANCE
and **LA RÉGION GRAND EST**
LE CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINÉMA
ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMÉE
KISSKISSBANKBANK and **4 645 kissbankers**

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF

(in order of appearance)

PASCAL SAINT-AMANS

GABRIEL ZUCMAN

YVES BERTOSSA

ERIC VERNIER

JOHN CHRISTENSEN

EVA JOLY

ANTOINE DELTOUR

DANIEL BERTOSSA

MARGARET HODGE

MARGRETHE VESTAGER

ALAIN DENEALT

VINCENT DREZET

FILMOGRAPHY - YANNICK KERGOAT

AS DIRECTOR

- 2020 **L'ENVERS DU SIÈCLE**, 2x52' (Arte), by Yannick Kergoat
- 2011 **THE NEW WATCHDOGS** by Yannick Kergoat and Gilles Balbastre

AS EDITOR (SELECTED)

- 2017 **ENDANGERED SPECIES** by Gilles Bourdos
- 2014 **TWO MEN IN TOWN**, by Rachid Bouchareb
- 2012 **CAPITAL** by Costa-Gavras
- 2009 **EDEN IS WEST** by Costa-Gavras
- 2006 **DAYS OF GLORY** by Rachid Bouchareb
- 2005 **THE AX** by Costa-Gavras
- 2003 **NOT FOR, OR AGAINST (QUITE THE CONTRARY)** by Cédric Klapisch
- 2002 **AMEN.** by Costa-Gavras
- 2000 **HARRY, HE'S HERE TO HELP** by Dominik Moll
- 1998 **THE DREAMLIFE OF ANGELS** d'Erick Zonca
- 1997 **ASSASSIN(S)** by Mathieu Kassovitz

TAX ME IF YOU CAN

A FILM BY YANNICK KERGOAT

BARCLAY

GrandEst
Orange GrandEst

EMMA
DocFrance

PROIREP

Co-financing by
the French Government, the Region of
Lorraine and the European Union



wild bunch