



KWASSA FILMS & LES FILMS DE L'AUTRE COUGAR PRESENT

**KARIM LEKLOU**

**ISSAKA SAWADOGO**

**JAROD COUSYNS**

# TIME OUT

a film by **EVE DUCHEMIN**

Runtime : 118 mn

2023 – Belgium/France – 2.39 – 5.1

**INTERNATIONAL SALES**

**PYRAMIDE**

32 rue de l'Echiquier

+33 1 42 96 01 01

[sales@pyramidefilms.com](mailto:sales@pyramidefilms.com)

STILLS AND PRESSKIT DOWNLOADABLE AT [WWW.PYRAMIDEFILMS.COM](http://WWW.PYRAMIDEFILMS.COM)



## **SYNOPSIS**

For the first time in a long time, three inmates are granted a weekend leave.  
48 hours to settle down.  
48 hours to reconnect with their loved ones.  
48 hours to try to make up for lost time.

# INTERVIEW WITH ÈVE DUCHEMIN

## How did you become a film director?

I left Paris and moved to Belgium when I was eighteen. I knew nothing about the world around me, I was into roller-skating and back slang. Once I got there, I soon witnessed huge social conflicts, I saw factories being shut down, mines closing, picket lines. Seeing such struggles with my own eyes was a striking experience, and it made me want to film these people who were fighting for better working conditions. Unbeknownst to me, I was taking a crash course in social and political studies with a camera in my hand. Then I studied at the INSAS, a film school in Brussels, in the cinematography department. I have spent the next fifteen years or so directing documentaries. I especially love filming people and their contradictions, and drawing their portraits. Talking to them from behind the camera, and filming them in a really personal, intuitive and physical way.

I am particularly moved by mavericks and social outcasts. The kind of people who are overlooked, or not even looked at at all. Making a documentary allows me to take the time to study them and to discover their ambivalences; this way, the audience can relate to them, share a moment in their lives, or at least experience it. I am confident that the beauty I find in the people I film will show on screen. I especially want to capture the complexity in people, at a time when we tend to put them in boxes and to forget that we are all multifaceted beings.

## What made you want to make a fiction feature film?

I have always known in my heart that one day, I would take a look at prisons... I met Marie LaFont by chance at a party. When I learnt that she was the warden of a huge men's prison, it made me want to go and film there. Marie opened the doors of this correctional facility for me, a place where one can gauge the pulse of our society. With her help, I was able to make two documentary films – one on the managing side, and one on the prisoners' side.

I shadowed this female warden in a men's prison, but I felt that I had reached the limits of my medium. It was really hard for me to show the cracks in this woman who was subjected to the contradictory injunctions of the prison administration. And many prison guards working there, whose jobs are unsecure, refused to be filmed. For the first time, I found it really frustrating to be constrained by reality, when it felt necessary to show that everyone - staff and inmates alike - has a hard time within the extremely violent environment of the prison system.

Spending so much time with prisoners opened my eyes to the complexity of life behind bars. Prisons are distressing places filled with people with heartbreaking life stories; many of them are poor or sick, and many are kids from underprivileged

areas. It is shocking, because you realise that society had no idea what to do with them, so they ended up in this city-state, outside of our world. The great Italian author Goliarda Sapienza, whom I admire very much, once said: "*You can only really know a country when you have seen its asylums, its hospitals and its prisons.*" It might sound like a manifesto, but it seems self-evident to me now.

We all have seen films or documentaries about prisons, but only a few really show the impact of being locked away from society for a long time. Or the effects of being released after all these years. One day, a young inmate I knew really well failed to return from his furlough. I couldn't help wondering what a twenty-year-old might think after spending four years in prison when he is granted two days of freedom, while he still has time to serve. It must be both an intense and a cruel experience. But I couldn't imagine filming a convict during his only two days of freedom. Would it be right to film him as he hugged his mother? What could my camera capture about his sexuality, which had been restrained for so long? Ethically, the situation was simply too intimate and physical to be depicted in a documentary. But it was interesting nevertheless – how will constrained bodies behave when thrown back into society for forty-eight hours?

In order to capture the deep and meaningful aspects of this situation, without holding back or antagonizing the persons I wanted to film, I needed to allow myself to write a fiction film. Obviously, the point wasn't to make a lecture on prison life or rehabilitation, but rather to question and film these bodies that are thrown into real life for a furlough, knowing that the prisoners are to go back to their cells the next day. I did not want to make a typical "prison film" nor a crime film with twists and turns, but rather to focus on the outside, to keep the jail off-camera, and sketch out an intimate family drama, subject to the inescapable passing of time.

## Your characters remind us of the men you filmed in your documentaries *Ceux qui bougent* and *Avant que les murs tombent*, in which your protagonist is also named Colin. How did you create the characters of Hamousin, Bonnard and Colin for this film?

I have spent five years writing this film, with my mind all wrapped up in the stories of the people I had met. I came out with these three male characters with very different ages and backgrounds, who are neither mobsters nor terrorists or monsters. They are just men. They are guilty, yet just like us, they have a life, a family, a past. I thought to myself: just let them go and see where that leads them.



It should be noted that getting into a prison is a whole process – there is a new door every sixty feet or so, opening at the discretion of a guard. It is a very oppressive place. It was really exciting to show people getting out for a change. It thrilled me to film them as they open the very last door and find themselves outside, in the open air.

My characters keep the prison inside them, and they have to carry this burden that affects the perception other people have of them. The film asks the questions: when can this burden be lifted for good? When are former inmates done paying their debt to society? When can they return to human society? I wanted to look closely at the dire repercussions of imprisonment on bodies and minds. Our perception of these men had to evolve as the story unfolded. I wanted them to be considered as human beings eventually, and not only as convicts.

I thought again about this young man, the one I mentioned earlier, who had been granted a furlough but had failed to return, only to be arrested again... in front of his home. This is what inspired the character of Colin, a boy who would rather stay with his mom and risk a longer sentence than go back to prison.

Hamousin was inspired by a man of the same name whom I filmed in *Ceux qui bougent*. I knew nothing about him, except that he kept saying that his children needed him and that he had to leave soon to be with them. I kept wondering: what does it mean to take care of one's children when one has spent twenty-five years in jail? Like an automated ghost set to the prison's schedule, Hamousin followed a precise routine every day, so I wondered how he would manage outside. As for Bonnard, I remembered a boy I had met at a disciplinary hearing. He had come back to the jailhouse too late because he needed some medication. I imagined a character who had to get back to the prison in the middle of the night to ask for a prescription. Indeed, sometimes inmates feel safer inside their jail, after spending so much time there.

It only seemed relevant to draw attention to the negative effects of prison on the young, the fragile or the elderly, by weaving together three different storylines, without writing a manifesto. These three characters are facing the same traumas that have set in insidiously.

### **Have you considered making them cross paths?**

No, because they lead such different lives that having them meet would have made no sense. I also wanted the narrative to be secondary to the feeling of reality. Their meeting would have brought too much fiction into the equation, and it would have led the film down a wrong path.

**You carefully keep us in the dark as to the causes of your characters' imprisonment, only giving out a few clues along the way. You also make it perfectly clear that we are not there to judge them...**

It echoes my own experience as a documentary filmmaker working in prisons. Back then, I didn't want to know why the inmates had ended up behind bars; I was rather interested in how they were coping. In *Time out*, I like to think that the audience is invited to imagine stories, to come up with their own theories on the characters. As André Malraux once wrote: "*To pass judgement is obviously not to understand, because if you understood, then you couldn't judge.*" Therefore, in *Time out*, the point is not to pass judgement on the characters, but rather to watch them get back to society, and back to their families, which have been torn apart by their imprisonment.

Similarly, I preferred not to name Bonnard's condition, because there are two possibilities: either this man suffers from a real mental illness, or we are simply not equipped to deal with a person who is overwhelmed by an excess of vital energy. In the bar, we can see that he wants to share his love for life with his son. He has so much *joie de vivre* that he fails to see his own limits. It is what I find most compelling about filming people: I want to show their radiant, beautiful and lively side, despite their wounds and excesses. This way, I can bring their struggle, their fight with life to the fore.

### **In spite of all the suffering, love prevails in these families...**

When you are incarcerated, you leave a pile of ruins behind you. When they get out, these prisoners are faced with all the things they haven't had time to fix. I thought it was a beautiful thing as far as storytelling goes. There had to be love between Colin's mother and her son so that we could feel that what they are going through is actually terrible. There had to be signs of a faded love between Hamousin and his ex-wife so that we could appreciate the cost of his actions.

I was moved by what an inmate said in my film *Ceux qui bougent*: "*You wouldn't believe how fast you can end up in jail!*" *Time out* is not a film about prison, it is about the men who have to put up with it, to carry it inside, and who cannot help but bring it to their families, which are already crushed by the situation. That whole circle is what I wanted to film. How can you live with yourself after all this? Can you love yourself regardless of what happened? Finding one's place back in society is a quest in itself, and this is what the film is all about.

### **The film, with its narrative device, its title and the days written across the screen, makes us realise that this short furlough is like a suspension of time itself. You build a tension throughout the film. How did you do it?**

In prison, there is no escaping this particular perception of time. It is unstable. For instance, when you know that you are to be released, seconds feel like months. When I wrote the film, I could feel it, by following the characters and getting inside their skins. Because even outside, they were still haunted by the prison. Sometimes, I felt that everything was happening so fast, that it would be time to go back soon, or, on the contrary, that time was dilating.

I wanted my characters to be able to take their time at some point, for instance to express themselves, which Hamousin finds exhausting. My characters are on an emotional rollercoaster, and in order for the audience to feel it, I needed to allow myself a few long sequences, like the one between Colin and the girl in the hotel room.

As for the "*Saturday*" and "*Sunday*" inserts, they remind us that time is running out like sand in an hourglass. Colin, for instance, spends the whole week-end avoiding his mother. But when he realises that he actually longs to see her, he has to make the most of what little time he has left.

### **You edited the film with Joachim Thôme, who has worked on most of your film. How did you both work on the fluidity of your narrative?**

Joachim has been my brother in arms for almost twenty years. In fact, we worked as if we were making a documentary. We both love a good cut, he knows the kind of living matter I like to collect and I completely trust his musical sense. We agreed on the moments of emotion or truth we wanted to focus on in each scene, and Joachim started sewing. I really conceived *Time out* as a score, as a fugue. There is the one who keeps quiet, the one who shouts, the one who opens up, the one who withdraws, all of them taking over in turn through editing.

We cut a third of the dailies, since we wanted to go straight to the point. As a consequence, a few secondary stories are only briefly mentioned, yet they are part of a greater jigsaw puzzle with which the audience can engage, just like with the characters' past. I like it when, as a spectator, I feel that I am invited to think, to perceive, to feel and to relate to what I am seeing, or to continue the film in my head.

Our other concern, as far as editing went, was to find the right balance between the stories of the three characters, to have them complete each other without ever being redundant, and eventually become one. As always with Joachim, we rewrote the film together, with two minds and four hands. I feel really fortunate to work with him.

### **Just like in your documentaries, your camera stays close to bodies, revealing skin textures, or the sound of your characters' breathing...**

I like to have the audience engage with the characters almost physically, yet not in a voyeuristic way. You have to find the right balance, the right distance. In real life, when you are moved by someone, you naturally make close-ups by focusing on details. I wanted to share what I find touching about the characters: the way they breathe when they cannot answer a question, their gestures. I like to stay close to the people I film. We used focal lengths quite similar to the human eye, so that the characters would be perceived as equals. They are not lab rats meant to be observed from afar as they fight; we are all in this together. The idea was to make their acquaintance, not to agree with them. I handed over the camera so that I could be as close to the actors as possible, and I really enjoyed working with



cinematographer Colin Lévêque, who is very sensitive and easy to talk to. Colin replaced me and danced with all the characters I had invited to my ball. I think that together, we found the right cinematic language, a mix of my love for hand-held shooting that stems from my experience as a documentary filmmaker, and his taste for a certain fiction style.

### **How did you decide on the colorimetry of the film?**

We had a discreet colour palette for each character, to help the audience identify them more easily when we went from one storyline to the next. It influenced the choice of settings and costumes. At the Bonnard family, we used red and brown shades; at Hamousin's, we used blue and ochre tones; and at Colin's, everything is more flashy. It provided a more coherent visual style and more beautiful and stylish aesthetics.

But since I have worked as a documentary director for a long time, I am not obsessed with perfect technique. On the contrary, I like to experience fragility, excess, or generosity in images that strive to see and understand. I want to let light disruptions take part in the permanent fireworks on screen, which mirror the vicissitudes of life. Colin and I played with all of these elements.

### **How did you design the sound of your film?**

For me, the biggest torture in a prison is the noise: the overcrowding, the countless doors opening or closing loudly, the alarms... The buildings are not soundproof and sounds reverberate, which is exhausting. Not to mention the ceaseless shouting of inmates who yell at each other from one cell to the next, in what is called the "flying visit room". My characters are immersed in all that noise all day, and suddenly they found themselves outside. At the beginning of the film, I wanted the audience to experience the contrast between sounds inside and outside of the prison. These concrete sounds are also indicative of the passing of time during those two days. I wanted to push them to the fore, so I took away all the non-diegetic music in the film. My characters do not have time to go through sequences with some background music! They have no time for daydreaming or self-reflection. They only have time to make amends to those they have left behind.

### **How did you choose the actors?**

When I was writing the script, I discovered Issaka Sawadogo in a film by Nicolas Provost. I knew at once that he would be perfect for Hamousin, and I kept writing the character with him in mind. This man inspires silence and has an impressive aura. His magnetism inspired me to write more material for him.

After seeing Karim Leklou in *The World Is Yours* and *Heat Wave*, I knew he was an actor embedded in reality. Although he is a seasoned actor, he still has the kind of documentary-like instability I search for when I film someone. We met for a coffee, and it felt like I had known him forever. I knew right away what the character of

Bonnard could become thanks to him - a kind of joyful ogre.

As for Colin, I was searching for someone who was familiar with street culture and the underground economy, and who was still quite young. Colin has to lay down his weapons eventually in front of his mother and become a little boy again. We met Jarod Cousyns through an open casting call. He was a rapper and I liked that, because musical sensibility and stage experience are really helpful for acting. Like many others in the film, Jarod had never acted before, but he knew intuitively how to play a character.

### **How did you direct the actors?**

I organised family dinners just like in the film with professional actors - including Johan Leysen, who plays Bonnard's father - and non-professional actors, like Blanka Ryslinkova, who plays his mother. The aim was to help them forge bonds and create habits that would show on screen. This fusion between professional and non-professional actors was wonderful, because they shared their skills on set and in real life, mixing technique and letting-go. They elevated their games to new heights. We rehearsed tricky scenes with emotional twists, so that we could find the truth all together, even if it sometimes meant I had to rewrite lines to help them get in character.

During the shooting, I often chose to let the actors live and interact freely on screen. As a result, scenes often began or ended differently than on paper, but I enjoyed mistreating the script on which I had worked so hard for five years!

As for Hamousin, I set up a meeting with Babetida Sadjo, who plays his ex-wife. They spent a long time inventing their love story, and I made them dance and dance again. There needed to be some kind of fire between their bodies, because Hamousin could not express himself with words.

Jarod's acting was incredibly authentic, I just had to set a few boundaries for him. We spent quite a long time rehearsing the sequences in bed with the young girl, who is played by Ethelle González Lardued. This scene required a lot of trust between them, and between the actors and myself, because Colin goes through all kinds of emotions. Besides, it ends with a lesson on sexuality, so it was a challenge for us to make it both intense and beautiful.

### **Your film is dedicated to Belgian producer Bernard De Dessus les Moustier...**

Bernard was our production manager, and he died suddenly not long before the shooting. We were all devastated. He was a wonderful man. Preparing the film – casting, location scouting, rehearsals – is half of the work. This preparation allowed us to really live in the moment once on set. Making this film was a beautiful experience; I knew nothing about fiction or how to direct a set at the start, so I owe him a lot. Together, we used to say that preparing the film was like preparing a great meal with lovingly selected guests. *Time out* has indeed been a real feast.



## EVE DUCHEMIN

While learning the craft of image at INSAS (Belgium) in the 2000s, Ève Duchemin found, camera in hand, her cinematographic language. She quickly directed documentary portraits (and handled their photography). She traveled around Wallonia and filmed the old miners from the Borinage region, the passion for pigeons and the disappearance of factories (*Ghislain et Liliane, couple avec pigeons*, 2005, *Mémoire d'Envol*, 2007 and *Le Zoo, L'Usine et la Prison*, 2006). She then outlined the portrait of an increasingly precarious youth in *Avant que les murs tombent* (2009) and *Adulthood* (2012 - awarded at Brive, Nyon, Poitiers and Clermont Ferrand in particular). In 2009, she shot a fiction short film in 16mm, *Sac de Nœuds*, which received the Beaumarchais prize and the Le court qui en dit long prize. While preparing the documentary film *Into Battle* (Magritte for Best Documentary 2016), Ève Duchemin discovered, from the prisoners with whom she did a workshop, the theme of her first fiction feature film: *Time out*.





## **CAST**

Bonnard  
**KARIM LEKLOU**

Hamousin  
**ISSAKA SAWADOGO**

Colin  
**JAROD COUSYNS**

Bonnard's father  
**JOHAN LEYSEN**

Bonnard's mother  
**BLANKA RYSLINKOVA**

Colin's mother  
**HASSIBA HALABI**

Eva  
**MAJA AJMIA ZELLAMA**

Sabrina  
**ETHELLE GONZALÈZ LARDUED**

Edith  
**BABETIDA SADJO**

Lucille  
**MARTHA CANGA ANTONIO**

# CREW

Filmmaking **EVE DUCHEMIN**

Script **EVE DUCHEMIN**

Production **ANNABELLA NEZRI  
& ANNABELLE BOUZOM**

Music **LE MOTEL (FABIEN LECLERCQ)**

Image **COLIN LÉVÊQUE – S.B.C.**

Set Design **LUC NOËL, PERRINE RULENS**

Costumes **MAGDALENA LABUZ, KEVIN JAMOTTE**

Editing **JOACHIM THÔME**

Sound **CÉLINE BODSON, XAVIER DUJARDIN,  
FRANÇOIS DUMONT, ALINE GAVROY**

Casting **MICHAËL BIER, MARIE MC COURT**

Assistant Director **HÉLÈNE KARENZO**

With the support of

**LA FÉDÉRATION WALLONIE-BRUXELLES,  
CNC, LA RTBF, PROXIMUS, VOO-BE TV,  
EURIMAGES, SCREEN BRUSSELS,  
TAX SHELTER VIA BELGA FILMS FOND,  
LA RÉGION ÎLE DE FRANCE,  
LA RÉGION BASSE NORMANDIE,  
LA SOFICA CINÉMAGE,  
LA FONDATION BEAUMARCHAIS, LA SACD  
ET CREATIVE EUROPE-PROGRAMME MEDIA**

French Distribution

**PYRAMIDE**

International Sales

**PYRAMIDE INTERNATIONAL**



