

LES FILMS VELVET présente



JEAN
MICHELANGELI

MARIE-PIERRE
NOUVEAU

HENRI-NOËL
TABARY

DÉLIA
SEPULCRE-NATIVI

CÉDRIC
APPIETTO

A VIOLENT LIFE

A FILM BY
THIERRY DE PERETTI

PYRAMIDE
INTERNATIONAL



SEMAINE
DE LA CRITIQUE
CANNES 2017

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SYNOPSIS

Despite the death threat hanging on his head, Stéphane decides to return to Corsica to attend the funeral of his best friend and comrade in arms, Christophe, murdered the day before. It's an opportunity for Stéphane to reminisce about the events that led him, a cultured petty bourgeois from Bastia, to move from small crime onto political radicalization and the underground movement.

I was born and raised in Corsica, and I still spend half my time there. I still have strong ties with the island. My family, some of my friends and many of my loved ones live there.

I've always found it extremely difficult to explain to my friends, to the people I met or to my work acquaintances in Paris or elsewhere, where I was coming from, and not only from a geographical point of view.

I didn't grow up in an archaic or out-of-time place, but rather, like many people of my generation, I did so listening to the Smiths and watching Philip Kaufman's *The Right Stuff*, Wes Craven's *A Nightmare on Elm Street* or Maurice Pialat's *Police*. The same things at the same time.

Yet, my childhood and teenage years were marked by a climate of political violence and utter confusion.

Corsican people of my generation have all witnessed or experienced first-hand, at various levels, violence and murders, revenge attacks and ambushes, decimated families. We've all had friends who have chosen dangerous paths, met the wrong people or, brutally and unfairly, lost their lives.

I've tried my best to give an accurate account of those two states, those two worlds that get tangled and mixed up... One world where society is affected, as any other place, by events and confusion. And another, almost an infra-world, both troublesome and dark, where society is plagued by issues of blood, madness and territory.

I'm interested in that period of time when dozens of young Corsicans were brutally killed, often for obscure reasons, even though they seemed to have taken the shady roads of political radicalism and/or crime. Filming that recent period means tackling issues like the origin of violence, and wondering about those which are affecting the island today. The film may not partake in a historical perspective, yet it deals with history and politics, it deals with France.

The film is a tribute to all those young people who got lost or murdered. But it is also the promise of a dialogue between a forgotten, lost and slaughtered generation, and another, fully alive and exhilarated, that personifies its predecessors on screen.

Thierry de Peretti



INTERVIEW WITH THIERRY DE PERETTI, DIRECTOR

After *Apaches* in 2013, you're coming back to Corsica with a new political topic based on a true story. How are the two films connected?

The narrative and political stakes are different this time. *Apaches* explored immediate contemporaneity. Restricted to the far south of the island in the summer, and through a portrait of some of its youth, that film showed how social issues undermined and poisoned people's imagination and relationships. Even though *A Violent Life* also originates in real events, it explores a more mental and historical territory. It deals with elements from the past that haunt the present. *A Violent Life* is an epic tale about the history of a generation.

How did you come up with your main character? How did you build the screenplay around him?

Stéphane is loosely based on the atypical, meteorite-like and tragic journey of Nicolas Montigny, a young nationalist activist who was murdered in Bastia in 2001. We were the same age. I didn't know him personally, but we had mutual friends.

The film is a combination of my own memories and those of many people from my generation in Corsica, but it is also the result of a long and continuous research. It mixes - in a fragmented and anarchic fashion - rumours, urban legends and altered memories with the contemporary History of Corsica.

I'm looking for stories that allow me to reach the heart of Corsican society, and that are profound enough to capture some of the contemporaneity of this island, some of its beauty. And I'm not talking about landscapes, obviously.

Through the character of Stéphane, I had access to some circles in the island community, and it threw me back to a time of utter political confusion and uncommon violence, which is still an open wound in our collective memory. I also felt that the film could act as a magnifying glass... that anybody could be moved or could identify with that story about commitment, and the betrayal of that commitment.



How did you compose the cast? It seems that the casting process took some time... Did you recruit actors on site again?

Julie Allione took care of the casting and it took her a whole year. There were many parts to cast, and we needed to achieve narrative consistency. Beyond the issues of authenticity, which I don't understand, we looked for actors - whether professional or not - who were capable of getting to grips with their characters, subtext included, which means that they had to grasp the complexity and intensity of the stakes and be ready to speak up.

Did you have specific goals or needs as far as directing was concerned?

I wanted to tell a story in just a few shots. With cinematographer Claire Mathon, we were looking for an encompassing yet inconspicuous look. We needed to embrace the different stages, the different states of the character, to make the audience feel how much the stakes shift as the story moves forward.

I wanted the film to be physical but definitely not shaky, so that viewers could sense the length of each movement in the film. So that the full scope of the violence and absurdity could be perceived.

Do you think that it is appropriate to draw a parallel between your story and the current radicalisation of some of the French youth?

I don't think so. And personally, it wasn't my concern.

What I'm looking for is a form of storytelling that dutifully embraces the issues of community and memory. My reference in that respect is Leonardo Sciascia.

At some point in the film, the character of François compares the dramatic evolution of Corsica with that of Sicily. But he makes clear that both islands have much different traditions and social structures. I share his viewpoint: you need to be really specific if you want to compare or draw ties between different circumstances and times, otherwise you just add to the confusion. Histories are irreducible and non-interchangeable. What matters to me is to remain at an ultra-local level.

If the film brings to mind mechanisms which are similar to those that draw young people to jihad today, it's almost a coincidence, but I get it. If the film resonates with contemporary thematic and other territories than Corsica, that's a good thing. But overplaying the comparison would only deny what the film stands for, in all its complexity and mystery.

What do you think about your film being selected for the Critics' Week?

That will be my second film showed at Cannes. I come back with a film which has Corsica as a main character, but also as a physical and inner landscape. I come back with a troupe of young and new actors. It's a very personal film. Each year the Critics' Week showcases the latest endeavours in today's cinema. Being part of that this year means a lot to me.



**August 21st,
1975**

To denounce the seizing of 90% of agricultural land in favour of repatriates from Algeria, a dozen armed members of the Corsican Regionalist Action (ARC) occupied the wine cellar of a pied noir (a French citizen born in a North African colony) winemaker in the eastern plain, near Aléria.

The French Minister of the Interior reacted by sending 2000 riot police officers and gendarmes with armoured vehicles and ordered an attack. Two gendarmes were killed. The crushing of the movement was particularly violent. Riots broke out in Bastia.

This event marked the start of the radicalisation of nationalist movements. A few months later, in the night from 4th to 5th of May 1976, the National Liberation Front of Corsica (FLNC) was founded. The group demanded the acknowledgement of the Corsican people and advocated self-determination through armed struggle.

1982

The FLNC was responsible for 800 attacks within a year. The group announced the launch of a “revolutionary tax”.

1983

The FLNC was officially dissolved and became an underground movement.

1990

The Joxe project, proposing the new status of “regional authority” to Corsica, was adopted. The FLNC split in two branches, the FLNC Usual Channel and the more radical FLNC Historic Channel. It marked the beginning of a “fratricidal war”.

1995

The fighting between the two branches of the movement got fiercer, causing many assassinations.

**February
6th, 1998**

Prefect Érnigac was assassinated. Bernard Bonnet was appointed Prefect of Corsica by Minister of the Interior Jean-Pierre Chevènement. Prefect Bonnet led a really repressive policy which accentuated the Corsicans’ resentment toward the French government, and eventually strengthened nationalism.

**Night from
25th to 26th of
May 1999**

Founding of Armata Corsa, a dissident nationalist armed group that notably denounced the connection between the nationalist movement and organised crime. The group claimed responsibility for various actions, including bombings and assassinations in Corsica and in metropolitan France. Presumed leaders were Jean-Michel Rossi and François Santoni.

August 1999

Meeting of the Fiumorbu Nationalist Committee, gathering almost all the nationalist organisations. Armata Corsa leaders were conspicuous by their absence.

**September
1999**

Prime Minister Lionel Jospin opened a dialogue with all the political groups of the island called “the Matignon process”. It aimed at increasing the powers of Corsica’s regional authority. Armata Corsa sharply criticized the process. The group denounced the government’s attempt to “buy civil tranquillity”, and the mostly financial or even mafia-related interests of the elected representatives in Corsica, especially the nationalist ones.

August 2000

Jean-Michel Rossi was assassinated.

**Summer -
September
1999**

François Santoni and many members of Armata Corsa were murdered. The group was decimated in only a few months’ time. The murders are said to have been committed by an organised crime group, responsible for many violent deeds, including bank robberies and murders. Members of Armata Corsa, as well as several informed observers, considered that such extermination could not have happened without the consent, if not the involvement, of some nationalist movement and the government.

Since 2002

The political situation seems to calm down (and the FLNC entered “without prior notice and with no doubt a demilitarization process and a progressive way out of clandestinity”) but Corsica is victim of a serious social and identity crisis, such as other regions and European countries.

THIERRY DE PERETTI

Stage and film director as well as actor, Thierry de Peretti was born in Ajaccio, Corsica.

In theater, he's the winner of La Villa Médicis Hors-les-Murs Prize and has received in 2001 the Prix de la Révélation Théâtrale du Syndicat National de la Critique for *Return to the desert* by Bernard-Marie Koltès. He has recently directed *The bitter tears of Petra Von Kant* by R.W. Fassbinder at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre.

He has acted in films such as *Le Silence* by Orso Miret, *Yves Saint-Laurent* by Bertrand Bonello and *Those who love me can take the train* by Patrice Chéreau.

In cinema, after two shorts, *Le Jour de ma mort* and *Sleepwalkers*, he directed *Apaches* which was selected in Cannes 2013 Directors' Fortnight. *A Violent Life* is his second feature film.



CLAIRE MATHON, PHOTOGRAPHY

- 2016 **STAY VERTICAL** by Alain Guiraudie
- 2015 **THE SWEET ESCAPE** by Bruno Podalydès
MY KING by Maiwenn
- 2014 **STRANGER BY THE LAKE** by Alain Guiraudie

MARION MONNIER, EDITING

- 2016 **PERSONAL SHOPPER** by Olivier Assayas
THINGS TO COME by Mia Hansen-Løve
- 2015 **SILS MARIA** by Olivier Assayas
- 2010 **CARLOS** by Olivier Assayas

TOMA BAQUÉNI, SET

- 2017 **ISMAEL'S GHOSTS** by Arnaud Desplechin
- 2016 **POLINA** by Angelin Preljocaj and Valérie Müller-Preljocaj
STAY VERTICAL by Alain Guiraudie
- 2015 **MY GOLDEN DAYS** by Arnaud Desplechin

STÉPHANE THIÉBAUT, SOUND

- 2017 **ISMAEL'S GHOSTS** by Arnaud Desplechin
BARBARA by Mathieu Amalric
- 2015 **STANDING TALL** by Emmanuelle Bercot

CAST

Jean Michelangeli	Stéphane
Henri-Noël Tabary	Christophe
Cédric Appietto	Michel
Marie-Pierre Nouveau	Jeanne
Délia Sepulcre-Nativi	Raphaëlle
Dominique Colombani	François
Paul Garatte	Marc-Antoine
Jean-Étienne Brat	Micka
Anaïs Lechiara	Vanessa
Paul Rognoni	Mr. Patrice Giudicelli

CREW

Directed by	Thierry de Peretti
Script	Thierry de Peretti and Guillaume Bréaud
Casting	Julie Allione
Photography	Claire Mathon (A.F.C)
Editing	Marion Monnier
Artistic direction	Manon Lutanie
Set	Toma Baquéni
Costums	Rachèle Raoult
Sound	Martin Boissau Thomas Robert Stéphane Thiébaud Victor Praud
1st AD	Barbara Canale
Continuity manager	Clémentine Schaeffer
Production director	Thibault Mattei
Postproduction coordinator	Pierre-Louis Garnon
Line producer	LES FILMS VELVET Frédéric Jouve & Marie Lecoq
Co-production	STANLEY WHITE Jean-Etienne Brat & Delphine Léoni ARTE FRANCE CINÉMA Olivier Père & Rémi Burah
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With the participation of	ARTE FRANCE, CANAL +, OCS
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World sales	PYRAMIDE INTERNATIONAL