

BARNEY PRODUCTION & MONT FLEURI PRODUCTION
present

ANAS EL BAZ
KATE COLEBROOK

RETURN TO BOLLENE

A FILM BY
SAÏD HAMICH





SYNOPSIS

Nassim, in his early thirties, lives in Abu Dhabi with his American fiancée, Elisabeth. After several years of absence, he returns with her to Bollène, a town in the South of France where he grew up. But Nassim must face his past: a dead city now governed by the far right party, a complex relationship with his family, and a father, he no longer speaks to.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

RETURN TO BOLLENE worked its way into my mind when my mother told me that my family was to leave Bollène and the Beau Site estate where I grew up. It was the only place in France where she had ever lived. To me it was good news, because I have always had a real aversion to Bollène and Beau Site: the South, racism, the right-wing populist and nationalist political parties winning 60% of the vote at the local elections, Moroccan self-ghettoization, with most adults never speaking a word of French, unemployment, lack of social cohesion, drugs, farm worker fathers,

stay-at-home mothers and kids at a loose end.

Yet the "good news" made me feel gloomy, because I knew that I would never set foot in Bollène again, and I could not come to terms with it. This city is my identity. First it made me, and then I shaped my personality in contradiction to it. I had to keep a record of it somehow, the memory of a feeling. This outlook on Bollène and my family, who still lives there, shows a different side of France, an insightful if squalid reality that helps understanding

the identity crisis of the young people of North-African descent of my generation.

I chose a personal and familial approach to these topics, in order to accurately portray our relationship to our environment. I wanted to explore an individual's relationship with his estranged family. Although I used autobiographical elements, I chose fiction to address further the intimate and social issues developed in the film. The idea wasn't just to draw the portrait of a family and a city.

Early on, it occurred to me that I should focus on the point of view of the social defector, who increasingly experiences a complex mixture of hatred and longing for his native environment, the further away he goes from it. Thus the classic form of the "return to" was the obvious choice.

Once I had really thought things through and I was sure that I wanted to make the film, even though I am originally a producer and regardless of the autobiographical

nature of the project, then sequences just came tumbling out, and the writing process was fast, stimulating and violent.

The first persons who read the script advised me to read Didier Eribon's *RETURN TO REIMS*, Edouard Louis' *THE END OF EDDY* and Annie Ernaux's books. Beyond their mere literary qualities, these accounts gave me tremendous strength to see through the whole process.

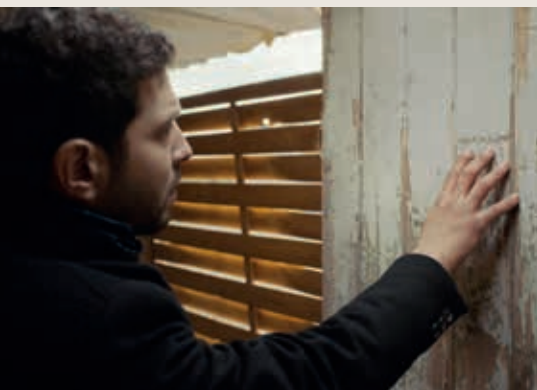
In *Notes of a Native Son*, James Baldwin wrote that: "One of the reasons people cling to hate so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, that they will be forced to deal with pain."

The film is an attempt to depict that pain through the last remnants of hatred and the possible glimmer of forgiveness and solace.

The film may be tough, yet I want it to be human and poetic; in its moments of sadness, I want it to make us better.

Saïd Hamich





CAST

Anas El Baz
Kate Colebrook
Saïd Benchnafa
Bénédicte-Lala Ernout

CREW

A film by Saïd Hamich
Script Saïd Hamich
Image Adrien Lecouturier
Editing Xavier Sirven
Music Pauline Rambeau de Baralon
Production Barney Production
Mont Fleuri Production



Original language: French, Arabic, English | France | Morocco 67min | DCP | 1.85 | Color