

AGAT FILMS & CIE AND ENTRE CHIEN ET LOUP
PRESENT



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
OFFICIAL SELECTION
COMPETITION

ÉRIC CARAVACA NATACHA RÉGNIER LUCAS BELVAUX

THE RIGHT OF THE WEAKEST

A FILM BY
LUCAS BELVAUX





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A FILM BY
LUCAS BELVAUX

with
ERIC CARAVACA, LUCAS BELVAUX, NATACHA REGNIER,
PATRICK DESCAMPS, CLAUDE SEMAL

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SYNOPSIS

So they can buy a moped for their friend Patrick's wife, three men take up arms to go get money from where it can be found.

Dreaming that something is still possible to overcome their desperate situation, they attempt a hold-up...

INTERVIEW WITH LUCAS BELVAUX



Is the film inspired by a true story?

Yes and no. I participated in a debate in a movie theater in Liège, in a neighborhood full of high-rise blocks (there are five buildings on one side and four on the other). Just opposite is the building we see in the film, which looks like a totem pole. It was the setting of a drama that is well known in Belgium. Finding himself surrounded by the police, a man decided to throw his loot to the crowd. Notes flew all over the place. People grabbed them and left. Some were caught. But of course the police couldn't get back all the money that was stolen. So some people got, not rich... but they took some of the spoils. Then the guy was killed. This ending interested me visually because the whole neighborhood is very cinogenic. However, the characters, as criminals – we're talking organized crime – interested me less, particularly their motivations. So I kept the setting, the neighborhood, a few of their methods (hostage-taking and hold-up) and I mixed them with another project I had, that I wanted to shoot in Marseilles, which was also the story of people who suddenly decide to do a hold-up. With the two screenplay projects, I came up with that story.

The main idea is to talk about people who are known as “society's rejects” in a world of unemployment and recession?

I'm acknowledging it. I'm scared we'll move toward the violence we see in these types of dramas. I get the impression that society is sticking by people less, that suddenly, the foundations of democracy are disappearing in the name of other, weird values. We're moving closer to a “Work it out yourself!” ethic, where people are supposed to take themselves in hand without being given the tools to do so, or get organized. I fear we're heading for a society that tolerates, not really tolerates, but accepts a world where its most fragile members have to take care of themselves. Little by little, people on the skids, who don't know what to do, will no longer believe in democracy. They'll give up on the idea of political demands, of joint action, in favor of a parallel, underground economy. Not necessarily hold-ups but deals, embezzlement and things that fall off the back of a truck!

What's behind your commitment? Have you ever been a political militant?

I've never been involved in politics. But this is probably my most personal film because I talk about people that I haven't known exactly (I don't know guys who've done robberies) but I remember one of my grandfathers and my grandmother... My grandfather was a steelworker like all his brothers and brothers-in-law. The family had been steelworkers back to the 1920's. I thought a lot about them and what they had been through, what they told me, their working conditions and their idea that if things were so hard for them, with all their struggles, at least it would be easier for generations to come. They fought hard and found themselves unemployed because they went on strike... Nobody would give them work in their town because they had gone on strike on May 1st! They found themselves traveling 3 hours to work in France every morning and 3 hours back at night, on top of 10 hours of work. They didn't sleep. They left on bicycles, took the train and finished on foot. It lasted two or three years. They were made an example of, to undermine any new resistance. They had terrible lives and yet, they knew the following year would be better and the year after would be better again and their children wouldn't have to live like that. And that's exactly what happened. But now, people can't say that anymore. They can only say, "I work like a dog. I'm forced to do overtime, etc. but I'll be fired in two or three years anyway when the shareholders suddenly decide it's better to move to Rumania." If people don't respond politically or through trade unions, I'm scared it will all go off the rails. A society will develop where we have people who can protect themselves on one side and the jungle on the other.



The Right of the Weak follows on directly from the Trilogy. Is the character of the reformed armed robber a reference to the one in Cavale?

They share a sense of solitude and they are both armed. And I play both roles. But the other one was determined and unchanging. He struggled, he went to prison, he escaped, he resumed the struggle and he'll never stop. However, this one has decided to give it up, that it's not leading anywhere... that it's no longer for him. We don't know why he stops but he doesn't want that kind of life anymore. He's sick of the violence. He really wants to fit back into society.

So what is the "right of the weakest"?

It is the right to get back up, stand tall and shout that you exist.

Is the film noir a good vehicle for talking about that? There are classic codes, in the strong sense, that allow you to describe someone acting out their desires, for example.

Yes. The film noir has the advantage of appealing to everyone. There is suspense, action and plot. It is a mix of entertainment and show... and it can serve the depiction of the darkest, most troubling and most fragile side of characters. It's a deceptive genre. The message is grafted onto the action.

Of course, the film looks at the question of fantasy or dreams – nothing grandiose, just the simple, banal dream of being able to afford a moped... Then there is the dream of heroic action.

It is not so much the dream of buying a moped but the realization that you can't even afford a moped. The moped reveals that you can't even dream anymore. In the end, the dream they still have is the lottery... It's pretty depressing.

So once the action begins, with the idea of committing a robbery, they are in a dream phase. Then they have to actually do it. They go through with it but with the fear...

It's my moralistic side. I don't want to encourage crime. I can understand it... but I don't think it's a solution. Marc, the character I play, is the first to warn them off. He does not

push them into it. In the hold-up there is the exaltation of a dream becoming possible. They fantasize about the hold-up like they fantasize about a lottery ticket. It is exactly the same mechanism. Before this shot, there is a whole scene in which they have fun with the weapons. They become toys and they are like kids, acting out a Western or a detective story. They put on masks, roll around on the floor but none of them knows how a gun works. And when the person who knows puts the bullets in the pistol, cocks it and puts it on the table, the object becomes something concrete, something you use to kill someone.

Your intervention is deciding that it will turn out for the worse. Do cinema and fiction not allow a happy ending here?

No, that was the difficult stage in the screenplay. At that point in time, I could have still decided to make them win the lottery (!) or go off in another direction... But I don't know, it was against my nature, against the initial project in any case. And the world is too tough. With things off to that kind of start, I don't see where the happy end could come from. It would have taken some fancy footwork...

So the reformed armed robber, who sets the hold-up and the film noir in motion, could not be saved?

What happens is both because of him... and despite him. It is against his will. His very presence, his past, make them want to do it. His background gives them the idea and maybe not the courage but the audacity to go ahead with it. If he did it, then it must be possible. He didn't want to do it anymore. He does it against his will.

Does your film also speak about the lack of courage, or how they can get their courage back? They find a form of courage... Crossing the line makes them feel alive again.

That's how they see it. It is a question of dignity: "Let's rise up! We don't do anything anymore. We haven't amounted to anything, at least let's save ourselves individually." But it remains an individual act and not a brilliant one at that. It is not a political undertaking. They are not trying to change the world. It is for themselves, even though the money they take is the fruit of their labor because it is their own factory that they rob. Somewhere along the line, they are "repossessing". They consider it as theirs.

How do you direct? There is no affectation. The shots are framed simply. It is a direct sort of filmmaking, close to what we like best in great American cinema, meaning it believes in its story on a basic level.

Because I do believe in the story. I frame shots to get as close as I can to the story. I do not frame a shot for esthetic reasons. I do it to say something precise and to define a space in which the characters move, interacting with each other. In general, I try to say one thing per shot. One shot, one thing, one meaning. I avoid double, triple or quadruple meanings.

Do you say to yourself that the form of your film needs to be appropriate? That if you tell the story of people who feel they have lost their dignity, you have to avoid filming them in a way that makes them look ridiculous?

Yes, they can be flippant, naïve and make mistakes like everyone else but I won't laugh at them. We can laugh with them but not at them. It's anecdotal but for a long while, I wondered if filming in scope was too luxurious for the story... Then I said to myself, "Why wouldn't they deserve it?" They have the right to scope. For the sets, it was the same thing. We never look down on what the people we're talking about have. Their dignity is also in their interiors. Even if they are not rich, their homes are clean and well looked after. The film is set in Liege and the people who live in the neighborhood where we shot the film are sociologically like the characters. So there is nothing tawdry or kitsch. Everything is realistic but at the same time, we try not to get too caught up in the tablemats.

It is also important that the jobs people do are credible...

We shot in a beer bottling factory and a dry cleaners and the production lines did not stop because we were filming. Nothing was interrupted. We entered the production line and were dependant on it. If there was a breakdown, we stopped filming for half an hour. There are people in hotels in Belgium that slept in sheets ironed by Natacha Régnier!

Another important point to make the film credible was the robbery... Apparently there are codes that have to be respected... What are they?

I don't know how other people work but I try to imagine how I would do it. I also read a lot of newspapers, novels and accounts... You prepare for a robbery like a film: you scout for locations and do rehearsals. You prepare a film in preparing for the worst. You try to imagine: if I did a robbery, what would the difficulties be? What if someone did this or that? I try to imagine what the waiting and the fear can be like...

There is a touch of irony in the films as far as the characters go. You film the bosses as if they were Mafia gangsters...

It's true. But it is also very specific to the film. They are scrap metal merchants who work at a very high level! They dismantle factories on sites covering several hectares where there are hundreds of thousands of tones of steel. While we were shooting, steel prices shot up so high that every railway car rusting in a corner was sent off to the foundry, including where we were shooting. Everything is taken, even the rails of abandoned railway tracks... In the North, there was a gang that stole sewerage covers at night...

The other specificity of the trade is that everything is negotiated in cash! Presumably not only steel is being recycled.

One last question on the cast. It is surprising because, besides Eric Caravaca and Natacha Régnier, we don't know most of them. And of course yourself, since you gave yourself a role...

I enjoyed acting in the Trilogy! Now I write myself roles that I'm not offered. Otherwise, it's true. Besides Eric and Natacha and a guest appearance by Gilbert Melki, there are a lot of Belgian actors who are unknown in France.

They are all extravagant actors. Patrick Descamps, who plays the guy in the wheelchair, played the role of Jaquillat in the Trilogy. He does a lot of theater acting and directing as well as running a theater. He's a fantastic actor. So is Claude Semal, who plays Robert. He too also works mostly in theater. He writes a lot: plays, songs, books as well as chronicles in the press.

The old card player is called Théo Hébrans. He's an actor who only does plays in the Wallon dialect. He has acted in nearly 900 of them and keeps playing one a week.

Eric Caravaca looked like a buddy I had in mind when I wrote the role and there was a physical resemblance that I liked. As for Natacha, Régnier, who is also Belgian, I met her on the set of a film by Chantal Akerman that we both acted in. I admired her work and the conscious, very subtle light-heartedness and craziness she can have. Both have a wide range and they're also pleasant to have around on a set. It is important to me to have a good atmosphere on a set, with people who are happy to be there and nice to their co-workers.

Interview by Marc Voinchet.

Lucas BELVAUX

Lucas Belvaux wrote and directed:

- 1992 **PARFOIS TROP D'AMOUR**
- 1996 **POUR RIRE !**
- 2000 **MERE DE TOXICO** (tv)
- 2001 Trilogy: **UN COUPLE EPATANT – CAVALE – APRES LA VIE**
(An Amazing Couple – On the Run – After Life)
- 2003 **NATURE CONTRE NATURE** (tv) **(Nature Versus Nature)**
- 2005 **LA RAISON DU PLUS FAIBLE** **(The Right of the Weakest)**

He has acted in the films **ALLONS Z'ENFANTS** by Yves Boisset, **LA MORT DE MARIO RICCI (THE DEATH OF MARIO RICCI)** by Claude Goretta, **POULET AU VINAIGRE (COP AU VIN)** by Claude Chabrol, **HURLEVENT (WUTHERING HEIGHTS)** by Jacques Rivette, **DÉSORDRE (DISORDER)** by Olivier Assayas, **MADAME BOVARY** by Claude Chabrol, **GRAND BONHEUR (GREAT HAPPINESS)** and **ON APPELLE ÇA... LE PRINTEMPS (THEY CALL THIS... SPRING)** by Hervé Le Roux, **DEMAIN ON DÉMÉNAGE (TOMORROW WE MOVE)** by Chantal Akerman, **JOYEUX NOËL (MERRY CHRISTMAS)** by Christian Carion and in **UN COUPLE ÉPATANT – CAVALE – APRÈS LA VIE (AN AMAZING COUPLE – ON THE RUN – AFTER LIFE)**



Eric CARAVACA / PATRICK



In 2005, Eric Caravaca directed **LE PASSAGER (THE PASSENGER)**, his first feature film.

We have seen him in the films **UN SAMEDI SUR LA TERRE (A SATURDAY ON EARTH)** by Diane Bertrand, **LA VIE NE ME FAIT PAS PEUR (LIFE DOESN'T SCARE ME)** by Noémie Lvovsky, **C'EST QUOI LA VIE? (WHAT'S LIFE?)** by François Dupeyron, **SANS PLOMB (UNLEADED)** by Muriel Téodori, **LA PARENTHÈSE ENCHANTÉE (ENCHANTED INTERLUDE)** by Michel Spinosa, **LA CHAMBRE DES OFFICIERS (OFFICER'S WARD)** by François Dupeyron, **NOVO** by Jean-Pierre Limosin, **SON FRÈRE (HIS BROTHER)** by Patrice Chéreau, **ELLE EST DES NÔTRES (FOR SHE'S A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW)** by Siegrid Alnoy, **CETTE FEMME LÀ (THAT WOMAN)** by Guillaume Nicloux, **INGUELEZI** by François Dupeyron, **LE PASSAGER (THE PASSENGER)** by Eric Caravaca, **LA RAISON DU PLUS FAIBLE (THE RIGHT OF THE WEAKEST)** by Lucas Belvaux, **LES AMBITIEUX** by Catherine Corsini, **J'ATTENDS QUELQU'UN** by Jérôme Bonnell and others...

Natacha REGNIER / CAROLE



We have seen her in the films **ENCORE (MORE)** by Pascal Bonitzer, **LA VIE RÊVÉE DES ANGES (THE DREAMLIFE OF ANGELS)** by Eric Zonca, **LES AMANTS CRIMINELS (CRIMINAL LOVERS)** by François Ozon, **TOUT VA BIEN, ON S'EN VA (EVERYTHING'S FINE, WE'RE LEAVING)** by Claude Mouriéras, **COMMENT J'AI TUÉ MON PÈRE (MY FATHER AND I)** by Anne Fontaine, **VERT PARADIS** by Emmanuel Bourdieu, **NE FAIS PAS ÇA!** by Luc Bondy, **DEMAIN ON DÉMÉNAGE (TOMORROW WE MOVE)** by Chantal Akerman, **TROUBLE** by Harry Cleven, **LE SILENCE** by Orso Miret, **LE PONT DES ARTS** by Eugène Green, **CARMEN** by Jean-Pierre Limosin, **LA RAISON DU PLUS FAIBLE (THE RIGHT OF THE WEAKEST)** by Lucas Belvaux, **LES AMITIÉS MALÉFIQUES** by Emmanuel Bourdieu and others...

Patrick DESCAMPS / JEAN PIERRE

Patrick Descamps is an actor, director and manager of the Théâtre de l'Ancre in Charleroi (Belgium).

Since 1977, he has acted in many plays, both classical and modern (Genet, Brecht, Molière, Fassbinder, Tchekov, Koltès, Ibsen, Sartre, Thomas Bernhard, Duras, Yasmina Reza, Strindberg, etc.) working for directors such as Beno Besson, Philippe Sireuil, Michel Kacenenbogen, Marc Liebens, Frédéric Dussenne, Lukas Hemleb, etc.

He has directed, among others, the following plays:

MOLIÈRE MALGRÉ LUI based on **LA CABALE DES DÉVOTS** by Mikhaïl Boulgakov, **VITA AND VIRGINIA** by Eileen Atkins, **PARLE** by Niklas Radström, **TWELFTH NIGHT** by William Shakespeare, **CHAMBRES** by Philippe Minyana...

Patrick Descamps works regularly for television (TV films by Patrick De Wolf, Alain Tasma, José Pinheiro, Lucas Belvaux, etc.) and on the big screen. He played the character Jaquillat in **RUN AWAY** and **AFTER LIFE** in Lucas Belvaux's Trilogy, and was seen in the films **LA MÉMOIRE DU TUEUR** by Eric Van Looy, **TROUBLE** by Harry Cleven, **ITINÉRAIRES** by Christophe Otzenberger, **LA TRAHISON** by Philippe Faucon, **LA RAISON DU PLUS FAIBLE (THE RIGHT OF THE WEAKEST)** by Lucas Belvaux, **NUE PROPRIÉTÉ** by Joachim Lafosse, etc.



Claude SEMAL / ROBERT

Claude Semal is an actor, singer and songwriter.

He is also the founder of the "Théâtre Le Café", a small theater in Brussels and the author of two books: **TEXTES ET CHANSONS DU PAYS PETIT** and **LA BELGIQUE DE MERCKX À MARX, POUR EN FINIR AVEC.**

He also teaches singing and songwriting and since 1999, he has written a political chronicle in the Belgian-French paper, **IMAGINE.**

Claude Semal has written around a hundred songs and compositions and has released several albums (**LES CONVOYEURS ATTENDENT, SEMAL/LOOS, MUSIC-HALL, A NOS AMOURS, SEMAL EN FANFARE, LES CHAUSSETTES CÉLIBATAIRES**, etc.). He is mostly known for his musicals, including: **ODES À MA DOUCHE, MUSIC-HALL, MES PLUS GRANDS SUCCÈS D'ESTIME, MA PLUS GRANDE TOURNÉE MONDIALE (EXCEPTIONNELLEMENT DANS CETTE VILLE), L'ÉTÉ INDIEN, L'AUTRE MILOU, RUE DE LA GAITÉ** etc.) and cabaret-theater shows such as **DIX FAÇONS DE (NE PAS) S'EMMERDER AU THÉÂTRE, LE CIMETIÈRE DES BELGES** et **ŒDIPE A LA FERME.**

He works regularly for the theater (in the role of Mackie in **THREEPENNY OPERA** by Brecht, **VILLAGE IN FLAMES** by Fassbinder, **SPLENDOR AND DEATH OF JOAQUIN MURIETA** by Pablo Neruda and many original works). In recent years, he has also worked for television and cinema.

On television, he has been seen in films by Jacques Renard, Claudio Papienza, Marco Pico, Alain Tasma, etc. and on the big screen, in **CAMPING COSMOS** and **LA JOUISSANCE DES HYSTÉRIQUES (THE SEXUAL LIFE OF THE BELGIANS)** by Jan Bucquoy and **LA RAISON DU PLUS FAIBLE (THE RIGHT OF THE WEAKEST)** by Lucas Belvaux.



Gilbert MELKI / THE SCRAP METAL MERCHANT

On the big screen, he has been seen in **MÉDITERRANÉE** by Philippe Béranger, **LA VÉRITÉ SI JE MENS! (WOULD I LIE TO YOU?)** by Thomas Gilou, **GRÈVE-PARTY** by Fabien Onteniente, **LA PATINOIRE (THE ICE RINK)** by Jean-Philippe Toussaint, **VÉNUS BEAUTÉ (INSTITUT) (VENUS BEAUTY INSTITUTE)** by Tonie Marshall, **LES MORSURES DE L'AUBE (LOVE BITES)** by Antoine De Caunes, **LA VÉRITÉ SI JE MENS 2 (WOULD I LIE TO YOU 2)** by Thomas Gilou, **REINES D'UN JOUR (A HELL OF A DAY)** by Marion Vernoux, **AU PLUS PRÈS DU PARADIS (NEAREST TO HEAVEN)** by Tonie Marshall, **UN COUPLE ÉPATANT – CAVALE – APRÈS LA VIE (AN AMAZING COUPLE - RUN AWAY – AFTER LIFE)** Trilogy by Lucas Belvaux, **RENCONTRE AVEC LE DRAGON (THE RED KNIGHT)** by Hélène Angel, **MR IBRAHIM ET LES FLEURS DU CORAN** by François Dupeyron, **CONFIDENCES TROP INTIMES (INTIMATE STRANGERS)** by Patrice Leconte, **PRENDRE FEMME (TO TAKE A WIFE)** by Ronit Elkabetz, **LES TEMPS QUI CHANGENT** by André Téchiné, **CRUSTACES & COQUILLAGES (CÔTE D'AZUR)** by Olivier Ducastel et Jacques Martineau, **PALAIS ROYAL!** by Valérie Lemercier, **ANGEL-A** by Luc Besson, **LA RAISON DU PLUS FAIBLE (THE RIGHT OF THE WEAKEST)** by Lucas Belvaux, **COW-BOY** by Benoît Mariage, **ÇA BRÛLE** by Claire Simon, **TRÈS BIEN MERCI** by Emmanuelle Cuau, **ANNA M.** by Michel Spinosa, etc.



Théo HEBRANS / THE OLD CARD PLAYER

Théo Hébrans started off in amateur theater in the Wallon language in 1962. In the 1966/1967 season, he joined the Trianon Communal Wallon Theater in Liege, known for presenting a new play every week, including an operetta monthly. He has been director of this theater for 12 years. He has over 900 plays in his repertoire and also works regularly for film and television.



CAST



Eric CARAVACA Patrick

Natacha REGNIER Carole

Lucas BELVAUX Marc

Patrick DESCAMPS Jean-Pierre

Claude SEMAL Robert

Elie BELVAUX Steve

Gilbert MELKI The scrap metal merchant

Théo HEBRANS The old card player

Philippe ANCIAUX Captain Magis

Renaud RUTTEN Arsène

Luc THOMAS The policeman

Christian CRAHAY Carole's father

Raymonde DOLLERS Patrick's neighbor

Danièla BISCONTI Gina

Andrée CAMBIER Robert's mother

Giovanni RUSSO The guide

Félix VALENTINO José

Luc LEJEUNE The security guard

CREDITS

Screenwriter and director **Lucas BELVAUX**

Cinematography **Pierre MILON**

Sets **Frédérique BELVAUX**

Sound engineer **Henri MORELLE**

Perchman **Frank STRUYS**

Costumes **Nathalie RAOUL**

Editor **Ludo TROCH**

Sound editor **Béatrice WICK**

Mixing **Gérard ROUSSEAU**

Assistant directors **Christophe MARILLIER**
Dominique HEINRY

Continuity assistant **Marika PIEDBOEUF**

Make-up **Catherine BRUCHON**

Line producers **Philippe GROFF**
Philippe TOUSSAINT

Production manager **Marie-Frédérique LAURIOT-DIT-PREVOST**

Production **Patrick SOBELMAN**
Diana ELBAUM

Original soundtrack **Riccardo DEL FRA**

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