BANDE DE FILLES [GIRLHOOD]
Céline Sciamma
France
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[GIRLHOOD]

CÉLINE SCIAMMA

‘Once again, this is a film about young people: about girls. I’ve returned to the theme of adolescence, or actually where it ends, with four girls who try to live their own youthful lives. It’s a different terrain in some ways, yet there’s a marked continuity with the issues I dealt with in my previous films: the stirring of desire, the strength of femininity and the need to escape a fate that’s preordained.’

_Bande de filles_ [Girlhood] zooms in on an important moment in the life of 16-year-old Marieme. Her family situation, her poor academic results and the dominant behaviour of the boys in her apartment building in the Paris suburbs make her feel she is suffocating.

When she meets three sassy young girls of the same age, she gets drawn into a new world, hoping to find her freedom.

**BEING NORMAL LIKE EVERYONE ELSE**

Vic – short for Victory – will be her new name. Once Marieme engages fully with something, there is, according to the other three, no way of stopping her…

And this name suits her well. At the beginning of the film, we see her as a quiet girl, a little shy, ordinary. When she learns that her grades are poor, she reacts decisively. She wants to get on, ‘to live a life like everyone else.’ The viewer immediately feels sympathy with her. But this is the beginning of a turning point in her life triggered by the encounter with the three other girls. They sweep Marieme along with them in their frantic way of life which she soon begins to enjoy. The fourth member of the band, she becomes more verbally assured and reacts more and more scathingly. We see her change, physically too.

**STRONG AND ALONE**

When someone asks her suddenly: ‘So you think you’re pretty smart, don’t you? But what do you really know?’ That really strikes home. For what does she really know? About herself? What does she want to do? And above all, what choices does she have in the suburbs where she has grown up and lives? Throughout the film, we see Marieme passing through different phases and trying to find out what is important for her. It is a fascinating journey of discovery that she has to undertake by herself, despite the permanent presence of people around her. Only she can find out what is important for her.
GIRLS IN THE HOOD

_Girlhood_ addresses very authentically the existence of youth gangs in the suburbs of Bagnolet and Bobigny, near Paris. The girls are here centre story. The film is not crude, grey or aggressive. Instead, everything is brought to the screen with a surprising sincerity and sense of atmosphere. The film is sensitive and full of hope, devoid of false sentiment. It is bursting with intoxicating scenes dominated by the music, group dynamics and a host of physical and verbal challenges. Although some scenes are hard-hitting, they are never overcharged.

A FILM WITH A DISTINCTIVE FEMININE TOUCH

It is not just the cast that is in mainly female. The director [Céline Sciamma] and her assistant [Delphine Daull], the head of casting [Christel Baras], the screenwriters [Céline Sciamma, Roselyne Bellec] as well as the director of photography [Crystel Fournier] are all women.

Céline Sciamma had already dazzled us with her magnificent portraits of teenagers in _La Naissance des Pieuvres_ [Water Lilies] and _Tomboy_. _Girlhood_ is her third feature film.

Crystel Fournier’s camera work is deft. With long tracking shots and beautiful close-ups [sometimes focused on parts of the body], she brings the public closer to the main characters. Even the zoom out of Marieme in the kitchen, shot from behind, is perfectly judged. That is a camera technique that might seem dated today, but it works well here. The viewer feels Marieme is making an essential choice. She chooses to live, to do what she wants.

Blue is the key colour of the film: Marieme's blue sweater, her blue bedroom wall, Ishmael's first kiss against a blue tiled wall – in which the light discreetly fades when they kiss –, the playback scene in the hotel room bathed in a blue light… All these make the film beautiful to watch. Combined with the black skin colour of the cast, it’s poetic at times.

_Girlhood_ could well be one of the best films about the relationships between girls and the pain of growing up. Here are some other titles that deal with the same topic: _We are the Best_ [Lukas Moodysson, 2013], _La Vie d’Adèle_ [Abdellatif Kechiche, 2013], _17 filles_ [Delphine and Muriel Coulin, 2011], _No et Moi_ [Zabou Breitman, 2010], _My Summer of Love_ [Pawel Pawlikowski, 2004] or the timeless _Fucking Åmål_ [Lukas Moodysson, 1998].
A NON-PROFESSIONAL CAST: ROUGH DIAMONDS

For four months, open casting sessions were held in and around the apartment blocks and commercial centres of the Parisian suburbs in the search for girls with a strong physical charisma and a very strong identity. We needed a diverse cast with different character types. The final selection is representative of many young people in the rough suburbs: Karidja Touré, Assa Sylla, Lindsay Karamoh and Marietou Touré were streets ahead of everyone else!

The energy that these four girls bring to the film is phenomenal. The young people from the suburbs are a target group that rarely gets to star in the cinema. This is another reason that the director felt it was important to make this film. It is not so much a question of cultural diversity but rather the uniqueness of these characters.

For Karidja Touré, who plays the lead role, this is her first experience as an actress [as it is for the other girls]. The way she interprets her role is intense because she is present in every scene and had also to express the full range of changes that characterise the character she is playing: shy and girly, elegant and feminine, rebellious and defensive, sexy but a tomboy. The movie explores all these nuances and Karidja expresses them with great aplomb. The fits of giggles shared by the four friends are delicious, their discussions are in-your-face, and their verbal skirmishes with other bands, their hoarse voices, their outgoing and voluptuous movements: it is this mixture that makes the film unique and infectiously enjoyable.

PARA ONE AND RIHANNA

For the composition of the music, the director turned to Para One who had also written the original soundtrack of her first film, La Naissance des Pieuvres. The soundtrack had to be limited to a single musical theme that would recur at different times of the film, each time a bit longer and more varied, reflecting Marieme's personal growth. It is a theme full of atmosphere, associated each time with a black background, a transition to a next phase of the film, the next phase for Marieme. Rihanna’s Diamonds also occurs in the soundtrack.
QUESTIONS

At the heart of the film, there is the gang of four girls. They live in a Paris suburb. Are these bands found in other cities too or are they typical of these neighbourhoods?

What makes this film different from other films about life in the suburbs? Why can we call this film ‘high-voltage’? Think of the characters, the events, the phases the film goes through, but also the visual elements.

How does the character of the protagonist Marieme develop? Is this a process that all teenagers go through, or do the special circumstances of the film have a role to play in all this?

Tine Van Dycke – 2014 – GIRLHOOD
The European Parliament is pleased to present the three films competing for the **LUX FILM PRIZE 2014**, which will be screened during the 3rd edition of the **LUX FILM DAYS**; the scenarios portrayed by the 3 short-listed films are very multi-faceted but united by the overall theme of youth:

Céline Sciamma, with her third film **BANDE DE FILLES [GIRLHOOD]**, reflects on the relationship between adolescents and authority, highlighting a different type of femininity through the portrayal of a gang of sixteen year old girls in the Parisian banlieue.

With **IDA**, Paweł Pawlikowski turns his gaze on Europe’s past portraying a young Polish orphan at the beginning of the 1960s who is confronted with her identity.

Rok Biček’s debut film, **RAZREDNI SOVRAŽNI [CLASS ENEMY]**, delves into the microcosm of a high-school class dealing with a particularly strict new teacher.
**BANDE DE FILLES [GIRLHOOD]** Oppressed by her family background, dead-end school prospects and by boys ruling the neighbourhood, Marieme starts a new life after meeting a group of three free-spirited girls. She changes her name, her style, and leaves school to be accepted in the gang, hoping that this will be a way to freedom.

**Director** Céline Sciamma  
**Country** France  
**Duration** 112 min  
**Year** 2014

**Cast** Idrissa Diabaté, Karidja Touré, Tatiana Rojo, Rabah Nait Oufella, Yannick Ruiz  
**Cinematography** Crystel Fournier  
**Producer** Bénédicte Couvreur  
**Production** Hold Up Films, Lilies Films, Arte France Cinéma

**IDA** Poland 1962. Anna is a beautiful eighteen-year-old woman, preparing to become a nun at the convent where she has lived since orphaned as a child. She learns she has a living relative she must visit before taking her vows, her mother’s sister Wanda. Together, the two women embark on a voyage of discovery of each other and their past.

**Director** Paweł Pawlikowski  
**Country** Poland, Denmark  
**Duration** 80 min  
**Year** 2013

**Cast** Agata Kulesza, Joanna Kulig, Dawid Ogrodnik, Adam Szyszkowski, Agata Trzebuchowska  
**Cinematography** Lukasz Zal  
**Producers** Eric Abraham, Piotr Dzięcioł, Ewa Puszczyńska  
**Production** Opus Film, Phoenix Film

**RAZREDNI SOVRAŽNIK [CLASS ENEMY]** Due to a huge difference in the way they perceive life, the relationship between students and their new German language teacher becomes critically tense. Emotions run high and the awareness that things are not so black and white comes too late.

**Director** Rok Biček  
**Country** Slovenia  
**Duration** 112 min  
**Year** 2013

**Cast** Igor Samobor, Nataša Barbara Gračner, Tjaša Železnik, Maša Derganc, Robert Prebil, Voranc Boh, Jan Zupančič, Daša Cupevski  
**Cinematography** Fabio Stoll  
**Producers** Janez Lapajne, Aiken Veronika Prosenc  
**Production** Triglav Film
OUR STORIES ILLUMINATED THROUGH THE EMOTION OF FILM

Culture plays a fundamental role in constructing our societies. It enables us to understand each other better and helps us respect diversity while binding us together.

Cinema mirrors today’s and often tomorrow’s societies, tells stories, sometimes our own stories. Film reminds us of people, places, events and moments in our lives. It moves and inspires us, broadening our view. It enriches debate. It can also create it.

This is why the European Parliament launched the LUX FILM PRIZE in 2007.

LUX FILM PRIZE

The purpose of the LUX FILM PRIZE is to enhance the distribution of films across Europe, while stimulating reflection and debate on a European-wide scale.

The three films competing for the LUX FILM PRIZE 2014 presented to you during LUX FILM DAYS are selected by a panel of cinema professionals. The winner is decided by the Members of the European Parliament. This year, the award ceremony takes place on 17 December.

LUX FILM DAYS

The LUX FILM DAYS are a unique cultural experience which transcends borders and from October till December creates a European public sphere in which European cinema lovers can see and share 3 remarkable films in the 28 Member States in the 24 European Union official languages.

The LUX FILM DAYS enable the largest possible number of Europeans to share the diversity and richness of European cinema and to debate the topics and issues raised by the films, both in person via debate and on-line via social media.

AUDIENCE MENTION

The Audience Mention is the people’s choice. It is your opportunity to elect your favourite LUX film or theme. You may also be selected to personally unveil the Audience Mention winner at Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in July 2015.

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