



Les Films du Fleuve, Archipel 35, Savage Film
Present

TORI AND LOKITA

Directed by Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne

89 mins, Belgium/France

In Theaters March 24th

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LOGLINE

From two-time Palme d'Or winners Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne (*Two Days, One Night*) comes the story of two immigrants struggling to survive on the margins of society. Winner of the 75th Anniversary Prize at the 2022 Cannes Film Festival, the latest humanist drama from the Dardenne brothers is a heart-stopping thriller that casts an unflinching eye on the trials of the young and dispossessed.

SYNOPSIS

From two-time Palme d'Or winners Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne (*Two Days, One Night*) comes the story of seventeen-year-old Lokita and twelve-year-old Tori (in remarkable debut performances from Pablo Schils and Joely Mbundu), two immigrants — from Benin and Cameroon, respectively — struggling for survival on the margins of society. The inseparable pair work as performers in a cheap trattoria, dealing drugs on the side for the restaurant's abusive cook, while balancing the demands of an indifferent bureaucracy and a band of violent smugglers. When Lokita is held captive while working in a marijuana grow house, Tori scrambles to save his companion from their abusers, as events spiral out of control. Winner of the 75th Anniversary Prize at the 2022 Cannes Film Festival, the latest humanist drama from the Dardenne Brothers is a heart-stopping thriller that casts an unflinching eye on the trials of the young and dispossessed.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Our film tells the story of a friendship — a beautiful and intense friendship, not a betrayed friendship, but an unfailing friendship.

It wasn't until we imagined such a friendship as the core of our film that we felt that our two main characters, Lokita and Tori, were coming to life as unique human beings, that they were becoming more than the mere illustration of a case, a situation, a theme or a subject. Their situation as exiled, solitary, and exploited adolescents has acquired a new dimension thanks to their friendship. It was important for us to show how even in this difficult situation they find moments of joy and tenderness, how their bond helps keep them alive.

For Lokita, the teenage girl, and Tori, the boy just out of childhood, both from Africa – Cameroon and Benin – friendship is not only about being there for each other, helping each other to pay smugglers, regularizing their situation, finding jobs on the black market, sending money to their families. Friendship is also about not being able to be one without the other, about loving each other as brother and sister, about making a family so as not to be alone in the dark with their nightmares, to be consoled by a gesture, a word or a song to avoid sinking into loneliness and panic attacks.

Within the framework of a plot that borrows from suspense and adventure films, the challenge facing us as directors was to film the mutual assistance and tenderness of this friendship between our two protagonists, a friendship that manifests itself and develops to the extreme, to the point of a possible self- sacrifice to save the other.

The way our script describes the relationship between Tori and Lokita, the importance we have given to their games, their exchanges of belongings, the songs they sing together and the tender gestures they have for each other all convey how closely our camera and microphone focus on the details of their gestures, looks and words, sketching out this friendship that allows them to resist the trials of their difficult condition as exiles and proves to be the refuge of a precious human dignity preserved in the midst of a society increasingly won over by indifference, if not by the cynicism of its own interests.

~~Given the lead characters' youth~~ we decided not to work with a professional actress and a professional actor. The casting process was therefore very important, and very long, especially as we were asking them not only to act but also to sing. And, furthermore, we wanted to make sure that the actors we cast were well cared for on our set, given the difficult subject matter.

We shot in Belgium, in the region of Liège and Condroz, with more or less the same team as for our other films. Our concern, both in terms of lighting and location, was not to mummify or freeze things, but to let the wind blow suddenly, without warning, and to let the movements of the friendship between Tori and Lokita appear, as if by surprise, as if coming to life before our eyes.

Our dearest wish is that at the end of the film, the audience, who will have felt a deep empathy for these two young exiles and their unfailing friendship, will also feel a sense of revolt against the injustice that reigns in our societies.

- Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne

ABOUT JEAN-PIERRE AND LUC DARDENNE

Jean-Pierre Dardenne was born in Engis, Belgium in April 1951. Luc Dardenne was born in Awirs, Belgium in March 1954. They have directed numerous documentaries. In 1975, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne created Dérives, the company that has produced over sixty documentaries, including their own. In 1994, they created Les Films du Fleuve for the production of feature films. They are among the most acclaimed filmmakers of their time, and their work has received countless awards worldwide, including two Palme d'Ors (for ROSETTA and THE CHILD), and an Academy Award® nomination for Marion Cotillard's performance in TWO DAYS, ONE NIGHT.

FEATURE FILM DIRECTOR CREDITS:

FALSCH - 1987

JE PENSE À VOUS - 1992

LA PROMESSE - 1996

ROSETTA - 1999 - Winner: Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival

THE SON (Le Fils) - 2002 - Winner: Best Actor (Olivier Gourmet) at the Cannes Film Festival

THE CHILD (L'Enfant) - 2005 - Winner: Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival

LORNA'S SILENCE (Le Silence de Lorna) - 2008 - Winner of Best Screenplay at the Cannes Film Festival

THE KID WITH A BIKE (Le gamin au vélo) - 2011 - Winner: Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival

TWO DAYS, ONE NIGHT (Deux jours, une nuit) - 2014 - Academy Award® Nominee for Best Actress (Marion Cotillard)

THE UNKNOWN GIRL (La Fille inconnue) - 2016

YOUNG AHMED - 2019 - Winner: Best Director at the Cannes Film Festival

TORI AND LOKITA - 2022 - Winner: 75th Anniversary Prize at the Cannes Film Festival

CAST

TORI - Pablo Schils

LOKITA - Joely Mbundu

BETIM - Alban Ukaj

LUCKAS - Tijmen Govaerts

MARGOT - Charlotte De Bruyne

JUSTINE - Nadège Ouedraogo

FIRMIN - Marc Zinga

Written and Directed by

Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne

Produced by

Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne

Delphine Tomson

Denis Freyd

Co-Producers

Bart Van Langendonck

Peter Bouckaert

Tanguy Dekeyser

Arlette Zylberberg
Philippe Logie

Editor

Marie-Hélène Dozo

Director of Photography

Benoit Dervaux (SBC)

1st Assistant Director

Caroline Tambour

1st Assistant Camera

Amaury Duquenne

Mix

Thomas Gauder

Sound Engineer

Jean-Pierre Duret

Sound Editor

Valène Leroy

Production Designer

Igor Gabriel

Costume Design

Dorothée Guiraud

Makeup Artist

Natalie Tabareau-Vieuille

Production Manager

Philippe Toussaint

Post-production Manager

Cédric Ettouati

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