

Minds Meet presents



HELLHOLE

a film by Bas Devos

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a film by **Bas Devos**

2019 • RUNNING TIME: 89' • BELGIUM, NETHERLANDS • SOUND: 5.1 • FORMAT: 2K FLAT

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Three starkly different people deal with the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Brussels in May 2016. A Flemish doctor, whose son is a fighter jet pilot on a mission in the Middle East, is forced to confront his loneliness. A young man from Algerian descent is asked by his brother to do him a deceptively simple favor. An Italian woman, who works in the heart of the European Institutions, is slowly losing control under the pressure of her demanding life. The same question that seems to haunt the city looms over their lives : where do we go from here?

Director's note

In their harshness and simplicity, the words used by prominent figures and the international press to describe the city I live in, have a darkly seductive quality. No-go-zone. Ghetto of misery. Jihadi Capital. Hellhole. In these politically charged times, there seems to be no place for nuance, complexity or even for imagination in the public debate. And so, for me, a space opens up for film. A space for subtlety and doubt. A space to counter the weight of all this apparent darkness and doom. In exploring the smallest, the submicroscopic moments between very different people, I find something I consider real: our tendency towards the light. They say, after all, that we are in hell. So the only way out, is up. ■

Bas Devos, Brussels 2019





Interview with Bas Devos

HELLHOLE takes place in Brussels after the terrorist attacks. The film follows three totally different characters which are not direct victims of these attacks. How did you develop those characters?

Even in the earliest versions of this film, long before the attacks in Paris or Brussels, these three people were at the center of the film. In a way, they represent the character of this city: a super diverse home of immigrants. I did not set out to make a film about terrorism, but the reality around me changed as I was writing. I just couldn't exclude this from the script and pretend it didn't happen. I had to deal with it, as everybody else in Brussels. I try to consider the event of the 22nd of March 2016 as the tip of an iceberg. It's the terrible, tangible result of a more complex, less visible process and its worst possible outcome. The underwater part of the iceberg is what my script, even back in 2015, was about. A society challenged to cope with the reality of the 21st century where global political changes are tangible in the streets.

On the contrary of most of the media, it seems that you want to reflect on those attacks in a sensory, cinematographic way instead of trying to theorize them. Is that true?

I hope the film reflects on something deeper than these attacks. I hope it reflects on the challenge of being a human being when faced with quite complex matters like global conflict, immigration and identity. I think many people, myself included, felt confused by the rapid succession of happenings and that, almost disorienting feeling is something I wanted to trace with my film. In many ways, I felt inside. I couldn't identify with the more natural perspective of a filmmaker: being on the outside looking in. In that sense, the feeling of the characters reflects my state of mind as well. Unable to come up with answers, we are left with our senses. So I tried to translate this into film.

This is your second feature with Nicolas Karakatsanis as DoP, does

he influence your creative process?

Nicolas and I are close friends and this friendship shapes me, I feel. In the writing process he is absent as I try only to speak to him about what we will actually *film*. Because I write very visually, we have a clear document to start from, to initiate the conversation. We don't make a *découpage* but we discuss the broad outlines of the form, how we want to treat space, light and time. For some more specific shots we go into detail and prepare and test extensively. But Nicolas isn't just about images. He understands storytelling and he is sensitive. I trust him. So when he speaks, I listen. And sometimes I agree!

Can you talk about the casting process of your main characters?

Hamza Belarbi's character was a challenge because I had to recognize how limited my own world really was. I found him by contacting many local sport clubs, youth centers and schools. He lives in the Cité Modèle where part of the film takes place. He had no experience as an actor but he was strangely at ease about the whole process. He stood out. Quiet and observing, but never intimidated. I knew I wanted to work with Alba Rohrwacher when I saw her in her sister Alice's second feature film *La Meraviglia*. I was impressed with her quality to be fragile and brutal at the

same time. So I wrote a part for her. I had met Alice by then and asked her for Alba's number. I called her and tried really hard not to sound nervous or weird. And she was extremely nice and said yes. And Willy Thomas is one of my favorite Belgian actors. I also consider him a friend. He's talented, modest and very kind. I wanted him in my film and I wanted to talk to him about Brussels, since the city means a lot to him. So I called him and told him he had no choice but to play Wannes. ■

Bas Devos *[Biography & Filmography]*

Since his graduation, Bas Devos (1983, Zoersel) has made four shorts: "Taurus", "Pillar", "The Close" and "We Know". His first feature, "Violet", won the Jury Prize at Berlinale Generations and was selected for New Directors New Films at the MoMA NY. He is currently working on his new feature film project "Night Palace".

2019 - **Hellhole** (feature) • 2014 - **Violet** (feature) • 2009 - **We Know** (short)
• 2008 - **The Close** (short) • 2006 - **Pillar** (short) • 2005 - **Taurus** (short)





Cast

Alba Rohrwacher

2018 - **ANGELO** By Markus Schleizer • **HAPPY AS LAZZARO** By Alice Rohrwacher • **THE MIRACLE – SEASON 1** (TV Show) • **DAUGHTER OF MINE** By Laura Bispuri • **LUCIA'S GRACE** By Gianni Zanasi • 2017 - **ISMAEL'S GHOSTS** By Arnaud Desplechin • **THE PLACE** By Paolo Genovese • 2016 - **L'AMI, FRANCOIS D'ASSISE ET SES FRERES** By Renaud Fely, Arnaud Louvet • **THE EAVESFROPPER** By Thomas Kruithof • **PERFECT STRANGERS** By Paolo Genovese • 2015 - **BLOOD OF MY BLOOD** By Marco Bellocchio • **TALE OF TALES** By Matteo Garrone • **SWORN VIRGIN** By Laura Bispuri • 2014 - **HUNGRY HEARTS** By Saverio Costanzo • **THE WONDERS** By Alice Rohrwacher • **TAJ MAHAL** By Nicolas Saada • 2012 - **BLISS** By Dorris Dorrie • **DORMANT BEAUTY** By Marco Bellocchio • **THE COMMANDER AND THE STORK** By Silvio Soldini • **A STREET IN PARLEMO** By Emma Dante • 2010 - **COME UNDONE** By Silvio Soldini • **THE SOLITUDE OF PRIME NUMBERS** By Saverio Costanzo • **SORELLE MAI** By Marco Bellocchio • 2009 - **I AM LOVE** By Luca Guadagnino • **DUE PARTITE** By Enzo Monteleone • **IN**

CARNE E OSSA By Christian Angeli • **THE MAN WHO WILL COME** By Giorgio Diritti • 2008 - **QUIET CHAOS** By Antonello Grimaldi, Antonio Luigi Grimaldi • **GIOVANNA'S FATHER** By Pupi Avati • **RIPRENDIMI** By Anna Negri • 2007 - **DAYS AND CLOUDS** By Silvio Soldini • **MY BROTHER IS AN ONLY CHILD** By Daniele Luchetti • **NELLE TUE MANI** By Peter Del Monte • **PIANO, SOLO** By Riccardo Milani • **VOCE DEL VERBO AMORE** By Andrea Manni • 2006 - **THE WEDDING DIRECTOR** By Marco Bellocchio • 2005 - **KISS ME LORENA** By Guglielmo Favilla • **MELISSA P.** By Luca Guadagnino • 2004 - **AN ITALIAN ROMANCE** By Carlo Mazzacurati

Willy Thomas

2018 - **THE DAY** (TV Show) • **DE INFILTRANT** (TV Show) • 2017 - **VELE HEMELS** By Jan Matthys • 2016 - **DE PREMIER** By Erik Van Looy • **VINCENT** By Christophe Van Rompaey • 2015 - **FALLOW** By Laurent Van Lancker • 2014 - **IN VLAAMSE VELDEN** (TV Show) • 2013 - **MET MAN EN MACHT** (TV Show) • 2007 - **FIRMIN** By Dominique Deruddere • 2002 - **GIRL** By Dorothee Van Den Berghe • 2001 - **AU-DELA DE GIBRALTAR** By Taylan Barman, Mourad Boucif • 1997 - **KONGO** (TV Show) • 1996 - **ELIXIR D'ANVERS** By Boris Paval Conen • 1995 - **IF**

THERE IS REALISM, THERE HAS TO BE POSSIBILISM TOO By Franciska Lambrechts

Lubna Azabal

2018 - **THE LITTLE DRUMMER GIRL** (TV Show) • **THE BREAK** (TV Show) • **THE CRIMSON RIVERS** (TV Show) • **TEL AVIV ON FIRE** By Sameh Zoabi • **SOFIA** By Meryem Benm'Barek-Aloisi • **NOX** (TV Show) • **A BLUEBIRD IN MY HEART** By Jérémie Guez • **MARY MAGDALENE** By Garth Davis • 2017 - **QUARTIER DES BANQUES** (TV Show) • **ABOVE THE LAW** By Jean-François Hensgens, François Troukens • **CATCH THE WIND** By Gaël Morel • **GRAIN** By Semih Kaplanoglu • **LOLA PATER** By Nadir Moknèche • **ON L'APPELAIT RUBY** By Laurent Tuel • **LIGHT THEREAFTER** By Konstantin Bojanov • **THE FROZEN DEAD** (TV Show)
2016 - **USTICA : THE MISSING PAPER** By Renzo Martinelli • **TREPALIUM** (TV Show) • **MA REVOLUTION** By Ramzi Ben Sliman • 2014 - **THE HONOURABLE WOMAN** (TV Show) • 2013 - **LA MARCHÉ** By Nabil Ben Yadir • **ROCK THE CASBAH** By Laïla Marrakchi • 2012 - **GOODBYE MOROCCO** By Nadir Moknèche • 2011 - **HEADWINDS** By Jalil Lespert • **FREE MEN** By Ismaël Ferroukhi • **LIPSTIKKA** By Jonathan Sagall • **CORIOLANUS** By Ralph Fiennes • **HERE** By Braden King •

2010 - **I AM SLAVE** By Gabriel Range • **INCENDIES** By Denis Villeneuve • **COMME LES CINQ DOIGTS DE LA MAIN** By Alexandre Arcady • 2009 - **UNE CHAÎNE POUR DEUX** By Frédéric Ledoux • **SISTERS** By Eléonore Faucher • 2008 - **BODY OF LIES** By Ridley Scott • 2007 - **24 MESURES** By Jalil Lespert • **STRANGERS** By Guy Nativ, Erez Tadmor • 2005 - **PARADISE NOW** By Hany Abu-Assad • 2004 - **LES TEMPS QUI CHANGENT** By André Téchiné • **EXILES** By Tony Gatlif • **VIVA ALGERIA** By Nadir Mokèche • **25 DEGREES IN WINTER** By Stéphane Vuillet • 2002 - **ARAM** By Robert Kechichian • **ALMOST PEACEFUL** By Michel Deville • 2001 - **FAR** By André Téchiné • 1999 - **LES SIESTES GRENADINE** By Mahmoud Ben Mahmoud • 1998 - **PURE FICTION** By Marian Handwerker

Nicolas Karakatsanis *[Director of Photography]*

2018 - **ANGEL** By Koen Mortier • 2017 - **RACER AND THE JAILBIRD** By Michaël R. Roskam • **I, TONYA** By Craig Gillespie • 2016 - **TRIPLE 9** By John Hillcoat • 2014 - **THE DROP** By Michaël R. Roskam • **THE LOFT** By Erik Van Looy • **VIOLET** By Bas Devos • 2011 - **BULLHEAD** By Michaël R. Roskam • 2009 - **LOST PERSONS AREA** By Caroline Strubbe • 2008 - **LINKEROEVER** By Pieter Van Hees



Tomas Leyers *[Producer]*

Biography

Launched into production with the EAVE workshop in 2006, Tomas Leyers has produced 11 feature films, co-produced more than 12 feature films and several shorts and documentaries since.

With a focus on European art-house cinema, he had films selected in festivals like Cannes, Berlin, Venice and Toronto. He participated in workshops like EAVE, EP2C, Biennale Cinema College and Puentes-Australab. He is the managing producer of Minds Meet and currently developing new films by directors like Gust Van den Berghe, Caroline Strubbe and Bas Devos. ■

Filmography

2017 - **I KNOW YOU ARE THERE** By Thom Vander Beken • **CHARLIE AND HANNAH'S GRAND NIGHT OUT** By Bert Scholiers • **WHEN THE BULL CRIED** By Bart Goossens, Karen Vazquez Guadarrama • **BLUE SILENCE** By Bülen Öztürk • **RAGE** By Guy-Marc Hinant, Dominique Lohlé • **IN SYRIA** By Philippe Van Leeuw • 2016 - **THE DAY MY FATHER BECAME A BUSH** By Nicole Van Kilsdonk • **A WEDDING** By Stephan

Streker • **ANORANZA** By Flo Flamme • 2015 - **DANSE MACABRE** By Michael Van Ostade (short) • **I'M DEAD BUT I HAVE FRIENDS** By Guillaume Malandrin, Stéphane Malandrin • **JOHNNY WALKER** By Chris De Meester, Anton Scholten • 2014 - **LUCIFER** By Gust Van Den Berghe **BETWEEN 10 AND 12** By Peter Hoogendoorn • **ABOVE US ALL** By Eugenie Jansen • **VIOLET** By Bas Devos • 2013 - **I'M THE SAME, I'M AN OTHER** By Caroline Strubbe • **LOS FLAMENCOS** By Daniel Lambo **BEHIND THE REDWOOD CURTAIN** By Liesbeth De Ceulaer • **A FAREWELL TO FOOLS** By Bogdan Dumitrescu • 2012 - **WELCOME HOME** By Tom Heene • **TANGO LIBRE** By Frédéric Fonteyne • 2011 - **BLUE BIRD** By Gust Van Den Berghe • 2010 - **KILL ME PLEASE** By Olias Barco • **LITTLE BABY JESUS OF FLANDR** By Gust Van Den Berghe • 2009 - **LE JOUR DIEU EST PARTI EN VOYAGE** By Philippe Van Leeuw • **THE TANGO SINGER** By Diego Martinez Vignatti • **LOST PERSONS AREA** By Caroline Strubbe

Cast

Mehdi..... **Hamza Belarbi**
Alba..... **Alba Rohrwacher**
Wannes..... **Willy Thomas**
Samira..... **Lubna Azabal**

Crew

Written and directed by **Bas Devos** • Assistant Director **Sofie Tusschans** • Director of Photography **Nicolas Karakatsanis** • Film Editor **Dieter Diependaele** • Production Designer **Elsje de Bruijn** • Costumes Designer **Manon Blom** • Sound **Boris Debackere, Benoit Biral** • Music **James Leyland Kirby** • Produced by **Tomas Leyers, Marc Goyens** • Coproduced by **Petra Goedings, Sibylle Smets, Nicolas Karakatsanis** • Production **Minds Meet** • Coproduction **Phanta Film, Shelter Prod** • With the support of **The Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF), The Brussels Capital, Region and Screen Brussels, the Netherlands Film Fund and the Netherlands Film Production Incentive, the Tax shelter Incentive of the Federal Government of Belgium, taxshelter.be** • International Sales **Les Films du Losange**

