HOLLYWOODGLEE, LLC
1226 N Salsipuedes Unit C 1(805)704-5994 |https://hollywoodglee.com Larry@HollywoodGlee.com



The AFI FEST Interview: DIVINES Director Houda Benyamina

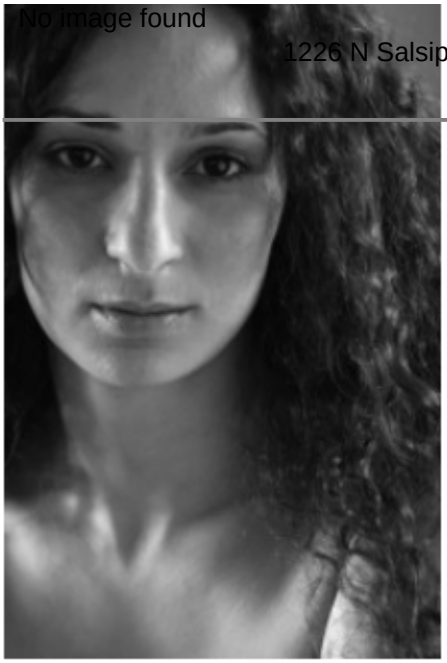
Description

Disenchanted and unimpressed by the parameters of life in the slums of Paris, a fearless and ferocious teenager named Dounia unabashedly dreams of prosperity, not only for herself but also for her charismatic best friend and alcoholic mother. In her audacious pursuit of money, power and respect, she aligns herself with a ruthless gangster who uses her as a pawn to exact revenge on a rival drug lord. When their plan goes off the rails and escalates into violent territory, Dounia is forced to reconcile the allure of quietly escaping to the life of her dreams with the reality of the ramifications of her actions. Shot in a style that is at once melodic and discordant, DIVINES is a cinematic haiku of empowerment, youthful angst, racial inequality and the consequences of poverty.

Winner of the Camera dâ??Or prize at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival, DIVINES is the feature film debut of director Houda Benyamina.

AFI: Oulaya Amamra gives an intense performance as the raw and uninhibited protagonist Dounia. How did you develop that character?

Houda Benyamina: One year of physical training was necessary. Dounia is a fighter who



Houda Benyamina

develops an incredible lust for life and you had to feel it through Oulayaâ??s body. Her body had to embody this strength and this lust for surpassing herself; that is why Oulaya took boxing and parkour lessons. Apart from that, the character had to be in peak physical condition to keep up with the pace of the rehearsals and of the shooting. This was long and intense, and needed stamina.

Dounia has a cat-like side, she slides in and out of underpasses, passageways; she is at the same time deep down and high up. So Oulayaâ??s task was to watch documentaries on felines to grasp their way of being and moving. She also viewed a lot of gangster films and films in which the hero is transforming. We were looking for an organic transformation and this required an important identifying process. Oulaya suggested lots of ideas of clothing. During a whole year she wore Douniaâ??s clothes, she ate, slept and lived like Dounia. She even went sleeping in a gypsy camp because she had to understand her characterâ??s rage due to a feeling of injustice, and to be able to find in herself Douniaâ??s anger for being ostracized.

AFI: What was your rehearsal process?

HB: During the shooting I developed a sort of safety line around the actors to protect them from any lapse in concentration. The camera, for instance, was on all the time so that the crew did not have to care about it and could keep focused on the actors. To me the film set is like a sanctuary, a holy place. I ask everybody to be extremely concentrated, full of solemnity toward the actors acting. And it is very important to me.

AFI: Questions of race and class inequality come up in the script. How did those themes shape the characters and plot?

HB: DIVINES is a film on spirituality and holiness. What was important to me was the apocalyptic ending. How does one rise from the ashes? How does one learn [that] there are so many things which shape us: family, social class, education, politics â?? but through these primary determinisms, I wanted to raise the question of free will and how it appeared in these characters looking for appreciation and

dignity. Injustice is my driving force to creation. I feel close to my characters, who oscillate between darkness and light; I like exploring the two sides of human beings. Social inequality and the hunger to overcome are present for sure, but they are elements of the characters and not their essence. The essence centers on them and their inner lives.

Most important was to arouse emotion, because it makes us think and allows us to understand and question society. I intended to make a universal film with universal issues of love, friendship, the quest for recognition and dignity, and ambition.

AFI: Youâ??re a celebrated short filmmaker. What made you want to make the transition to feature film?

HB: It was important to find someone who understands me and has the same artistic and human values, and I found him: my producer, Marc-BenoÃ®t CrÃ©ancier. Once we had made my medium-length film SUR LA ROUTE DU PARADIS together, it was obvious to me to make a feature film. As a film director and a great believer I have lots of doubts and I ask myself lots of questions. My producer helps me overcome them; he encourages and guides me and he trusts me so much that making a feature film with him was a foregone conclusion.

AFI: In one sentence, what statement or question would like to linger with the audience following the screening?

HB: What do I really need to succeed?

DIVINES screens at AFI FEST 2016 on Saturday, November 12, and Monday, November 14, as part of the New Auteurs section of the festival.



(Source: afi.blog.com)

Category

1. #AFI
2. #AFIFEST
3. Cannes Film Festival
4. Feature Film
5. Hollywood

Tags

1. Art
2. Camera d'Or
3. Cinema
4. cinematic haiku
5. Divines
6. empowerment

7. Film
8. Film Festival
9. Filmmaking
10. holiness
11. Houda Benyamina
12. Marc-BenoÃ®t CrÃ©ancier
13. Netflix
14. Paris
15. photography
16. poverty
17. Programming
18. racial inequality
19. Society
20. spirituality
21. Women
22. youthful angst

Date Created
November 6, 2016
Author
hollywoodglee