



**CRUEL FLESH:
FILMS OF THE NEW FRENCH EXTREMITY**

Them (Ils)

The films of the New French Extremity and the accompanying focus on Gaspar Noé examine an important, controversial and highly violent cinema movement. They are not suitable for all.

The film you are about to watch may contain very dark themes, graphic imagery, and scenes of a very upsetting nature including sexual violence and body horror.

David Moreau: We just wanted to make a film that would scare people. We began by asking ourselves what is the most scary thing, and we also talked to people around us and a clear answer emerged: what people find most terrifying is the idea of an intrusion into their home.

Xavier Palud: We worked this idea as a base, and at the same time, we were location scouting in the Czech Republic for an ad. While we were there, our driver told us about an incident that immediately grabbed our attention. It happened to some Austrians who'd been living there for six months and it crystallized everything we'd been thinking about.

Moreau: To make it easier to identify with, we just changed the nationality of the protagonists. The story seemed clear and linear, with two characters that become victims to something mysterious. But we quickly realised that developing the script to make it work over the length of the film would be a real challenge.

Palud: In four or five months, we had our first draft. Despite being determined to produce the film, we still showed the script to four producers in order to get an external opinion. Three responded positively, and that's how we met Richard Grandpierre. He was so enthusiastic that we decided to work with him.

Moreau: We were very impressed by the attention he gave to the project. He liked our approach. He just needed to be reassured because nobody knew who we were. We learned to understand each other and we worked together with him in a very constructive way. In the film, we always tried to place the audience in the situation with the protagonists. We were committed to always show things from the characters' points of view, to be by their sides and share their fear. There is one shot where Lucas comes down the staircase. We didn't try to suggest anything; we're just with him, step by step, in the rhythm of the mounting fear. The aim was neither to show nor to describe, but to make people experience.

Palud: We were also determined to use a lot of suggestion by never revealing the true nature of the threat. Everyone ends up imagining 'their' worst nightmare based on a situation they identify with. We didn't want to force the viewer to be frightened by what scares us; we wanted them to be confronted with what they find terrifying.

Moreau: A well-stimulated imagination generates much more fear than any slimy monsters or bloody decapitated heads we could show. We weren't trying to disgust or horrify, but to set people's nerves on edge and terrify them. We also decided to concentrate on realism. To scare people these days, they must be able to imagine that what they're seeing could happen to them. A couple at home is a very realistic situation with which it's easy to identify. That realism is also created by slightly raw imagery, almost like reportage.

Palud: Rhythm was also an essential factor. The film is a succession of episodes in real time. Each important event is experienced at its own speed, like a series of tragedies that link together. We deliberately didn't respect the normal rules of the genre, which say that after each scary moment there's a period of calm. In *Them*, when things begin happening, they never stop. No breaks, no chance to catch your breath. You go from one fear to the next. The film is driven by the couple. You get scared along with them. We looked at many different people for the roles of Clémentine and Lucas. We didn't meet actors and say 'here's what you have to play.' We saw them and we hoped they'd be the characters. They didn't have to act, they had to be.

Moreau: Our aim was to put the actors into the situation of their character as much as possible. They had to accept a certain amount of instability and that they would have to work and rework right up to being on set in order to adapt and seize upon everything that could be used to the service the plot. The film is not about intellectual dramatic art. The key elements are instinctive, vital and visceral. There aren't any long speeches the actors could use to build their characters. They had to be them and to feel them. Because there weren't any scenes of actual text, we based the casting on situations that had to be completely improvised. Olivia Bonamy and Michaël Cohen gave most in their acting and were the most reactive in the given situations. What's more, they already knew each other and that helped their on-screen relationship. They've always been good friends.

Palud: We shot for 30 days spread over five weeks. We filmed in Romania, some 30 kilometers from Bucharest. We ended up finding a huge mansion that we renovated to correspond to the needs of the story.

Moreau: The building was so big that we were able to work in it like in a studio. In terms of the sets, we modified it here and there. Clémentine and Lucas are young people without the money to do up the whole property. The house comes with the job and only certain areas like the bedroom have their personal touch and reveal something of their characters, but the rest is very basic, with second-hand furniture that get a little lost in such enormous rooms. That adds to the feeling of coldness and insecurity.

Palud: For the underground passages shots, we filmed in the real foundations. The place was incredible and corresponded exactly to the feeling we wanted to create, with lots of passages for plenty of surprises, no visual reference points and narrow, pretty claustrophobic passages.

Moreau: Our idea was to plunge the actors into a state of fear in which they would no longer have to act. Often, the ambience of the place, the house or the underground passages was so sinister and strange that we didn't need anything else to feel frightened. Olivia suffered in a few scenes because she's scared of heights and is slightly claustrophobic. And she had to climb up very high on the house, and even in the underground passages she had to climb ladders and lean over voids. Rather than act against her phobias and suffer from them, she used them to feed her performance and her expressions. The actors were remarkably patient. It was our first feature and we wanted to pursue everything right to the end. Next time, we'll go a bit easier on the actors probably.

Palud: It'll be hard to forget everything we shared. I remember Olivia and Michaël during the scene where they separate either side of the fence. Olivia was amazing. She gave so much. There are so many powerful emotions in this film. We're impatient to share it with the public. We'll know we did a good job if the audience double-lock their doors when they get home!

Production notes

THEM (ILS)

Directors: David Moreau, Xavier Palud
©/Co-production: Eskwad, StudioCanal, Castel Films SRL
In association with: Canal+, CinéCinéma
International Sales: StudioCanal
French theatrical distributor: Mars Distribution
Presented by: Richard Grandpierre
Executive Producer (Romanian Unit): Cristi Bostanescu
Producer (French Unit): Richard Grandpierre
Producer (Romanian Unit): Vlad Paunescu
Unit Production Manager: Andreea Iordache
Assistant [Unit Production Manager]: Iulia Lungu
Unit Manager: Nicolas Dancel
Preparation Unit Manager: Eduard Dafinoiu
Production Managers (French Unit): Nathalie Lampre, Frédéric Doniguan
Production Manager (Romanian Unit): Elena Valeanu
Production Supervisor: Bogdan Moncea
Production Co-ordinator: Oana Topliceanu
Cashier: Ruxandra Popescu
Production Administrator: Lavinia Mercea
Assistant Production Administrator: Viki Gospodaru
Post-production Supervisor: Doris Yoba
Production Assistant: Julia Rudich
Customs Liaison: Teodor (Dori) Mercea
1st Assistant Director: Franck Vestiel
2nd Assistant Director: Oana Ene
3rd Assistant Director: Horatiu Bob
Script Supervisor: Julien Boeuf
 Casting (French Unit): Guillaume Moulin, David Bertrand
 Casting Director (Romanian Unit): Floriela Grapini
Extras Casting (Romanian Unit): Ovidiu Paunescu
Screenplay: David Moreau, Xavier Palud
Director of Photography: Axel Cosnefroy
1st Assistant Camera: Gigel Dumitrescu
Camera Technician: Adrian Silisteanu
Gaffer: Stefan Tarzioru
Electricians: Florin Mihalache, Mihai Adrian, Catalin Grigoras, Cristi Peagu
Video Assistant: Laurentiu Ivan
Special Effects Technician: Daniel Parvulescu
Special Effects Assistant: Viorel Militaru
Editor: Nicolas Sarkissian
Art Director: Florin Gabrea
Set Decorator: Mircea Onisoru
Assistant Set Decorator: Ilinca Marin
Set Dresser: Florin Mirghes
Assistant Set Dresser: Stefan Preda
Properties: Alexandra Botoi
Properties Assistant: Andi Rosu
Lead Mar: Ionel Manolache

Construction Manager: Dodo
Swing Gang 1: George Marin
Swing Gang 2: Gabriel Ciufu
Costumes (French Unit): Elisabeth Méhu
Costume Designer (Romanian Unit): Oana Paunescu
Assistant Costume Designer (Romanian Unit): Ioana Popescu
Key Make-up: Dana Roseanu
Hairstylist/Wigs: Lidia Constantin
Laboratories: Scanlab, LTC St. Cloud, CinéStéréo
Original Music Composed/Conducted by: René-Marc Bini
Additional Programming: Guillaume Thomas
Musicians (Soloists): Anne-Claire Cazalet, Akosh Szelevenyi
Music Supervisor: Patrick Aumigny
Music Mixing: Studio Tex Avril
Music Recordist: Philippe Avril
Sound Recordist (French Unit): Madone Charpail
Sound Recordist (Romanian Unit): Viorel Dobre
Boom Operator (French Unit): Thomas Pietrucci
Boom Operator (Romanian Unit): Vadim Staver
Sound Mixer: François Hors
Sound Editor: Germain Boulay
Dialogue Editor: Serge Rouquairol
Sound Effects: Pascal Dédeye
Sound Effects Recordist: Didier Lesage
ADR Recordist: Marion Lorthioir
ADR (Trainee Recordist): Déborah Stauffer
Stunt Co-ordinator (Romanian Unit): Valentin Vasilescu
Stunts (French Unit): Stéphane Boulay, Jean-Benoît Guillon
Stunts (Romanian Unit): George Iulian, Aurel Dicu, Florin Barcun, Daniel Pasleaga
Miss [Olivia] Bonamy's Double: Mihaela Oros
Mr [Michaël] Cohen's Double: Nicu Constantin
Transport Co-ordinator: Octavian Tudor
Press Relations: Fox Press, Laurent Renard

Cast

Olivia Bonamy (*Clémentine*)
Michaël Cohen (*Lucas*)
Adriana Moca (*Ileana*)
Maria Roman (*Sanda*)
Camelia Maxim (*Maria*)
Alexandru Boghiu (*the child*)
Emanuel Stefanuc (*adolescent 1*)
Horia Ioan (*adolescent 2*)
Stefan Cornic (*adolescent 3*)
George Iulian (*adolescent 4*)

France-Romania 2005©
77 mins

CRUEL FLESH: FILMS OF THE NEW FRENCH EXTREMITY

Carne + La Bouche de Jean-Pierre

Sun 1 May 11:50; Thu 12 May 20:45 (+ Q&A with Lucile Hadžihalilovic)

Baise-moi

Sun 1 May 18:20; Sat 7 May 20:50

The Ordeal (Calvaire)

Mon 2 May 12:30; Sun 22 May 18:20

Man Bites Dog (C'est arrivé près de chez vous)

Mon 2 May 15:10; Tue 10 May 20:55

Sex and Death, but Make It Arthouse

Tue 3 May 18:10

Trouble Every Day

Tue 3 May 20:30 (+ intro by writer and creative Sophie Monks Kaufman);

Tue 24 May 20:45

Criminal Lovers (Les Amants criminels)

Wed 4 May 20:50; Sat 14 May 12:00

Pola X

Thu 5 May 20:25; Sat 28 May 17:50

Romance (Romance X)

Fri 6 May 18:00 (+ intro by Catherine Wheatley, King's College London);

Tue 17 May 20:45

Philosophical Screens: Romance

Fri 6 May 20:00

In My Skin (Dans ma peau)

Sat 7 May 17:50 (+ intro by Catherine Wheatley, King's College London);

Thu 19 May 20:40

High Tension (aka Switchblade Romance) (Haute Tension)

Mon 9 May 18:00 (+ pre-recorded intro by author Alexandra West);

Sat 28 May 12:20

Inside (À l'intérieur)

Sat 14 May 20:50; Thu 26 May 18:20

Them (Ils)

Mon 16 May 20:50; Sun 29 May 18:20

Irreversible (Irréversible) (theatrical version)

Sat 21 May 17:45

Martyrs

Sat 28 May 20:50; Tue 31 May 20:40

Horror à la Française

Free to view on the BFI YouTube channel from 11-31 May

BFI Courses: City Lit at the BFI: New French Extremity

Every Tue from 10-31 May 18:30-20:30

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