



Bled Number One (aka Back Home)

Director: Rabah Ameur-Zaïmeche

Production Companies: Sarrazink Productions, Les Films du Losange (Paris)

Executive Producers: Carole Solive, Lotfi Bouchouchi

Producers: Rabah Ameur-Zaïmeche, Margaret Ménégoz

Screenplay: Rabah Ameur-Zaïmeche, Louise Thermes

Directors of Photography: Lionel Sautier, Hakim Si Ahmed, Olivier Smittarello

Editors: Nicolas Bancilhon, Nikolas Javelle

Costumes: Sabrina Cheniti

Music: Rodolphe Burger

Sound: Timothée Alazraki, Bruno Auzet, Mohamed Naman

Cast:

Rabah Ameur-Zaïmeche (*Kamel*)

Meriem Serbah (*Louisa*)

Abel Jafri (*Bouzid*)

Farida Ouchadi (*Loubna*)

Ramzy Bedia (*Ahmed*)

France-Algeria 2006

102 mins

35mm

With the kind support of the Institut français du Royaume-Uni



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TIGRITUDES: A PAN-AFRICAN FILM CYCLE 1956-2024

Bled Number One

Rabah Ameur-Zaïmeche on 'Bled Number One'

The film features Kamel, the hero of your previous film Wesh, Wesh, in which he had just returned to France having been deported to Algeria after serving a term in jail. This time, we see him arrive in Algeria. Is this a kind of prequel to Wesh, Wesh?

A prequel... or a sequel. *Wesh, Wesh* ends with a shot of a lake after a chase between Kamel and a cop. We hear a gunshot but we don't know if Kamel is hit or not. All I know is that Kamel is a victim of 'la double peine' – a jail sentence then deportation – so there was scope to make a second film. Two punishments, two films! We had that in mind when we were shooting *Wesh, Wesh*. Whether it's a prequel or a sequel isn't important. Why always think of time strictly in chronological terms?

You introduce the audience to a society that functions according to myths and tradition rather than more factual, 'realistic' current events.

Yes, there's a sense of being caught in limbo, an ambience that's close to melancholy. We shot in bright, clear colours that are ageless. The aim is simply to join together the representation of contemporary Algerian society with the unlikely temporality of this land of origin. In *Wesh, Wesh*, we were in the host country, France. Here, we are in the country of origin. We have gone back to his roots. What distinguishes contemporary France from a patriarchal society like the ones around the Mediterranean basin? The 'atomisation' of society. In Algeria, traditional structures are more solid. That is revealed in the scene where they sacrifice the bull – the Zerda. It's a central scene that shows an ancestral practice on which the first civilisations were founded, born out of a primitive communism going back to the dawn of time. After the sacrifice, the meat is divided up into equal portions and shared out. That is inconceivable in Western capitalist society where exacerbated privatisation is the rule. It's a big shock when you cross from Algeria to France. It takes generations to absorb.

Your film shows Algeria as a land that combines various layers of civilisation. In the heterogeneous cities, there are traces of different periods.

Yes, we're in a world that's constantly in construction. There are building sites everywhere, full of noise and hustle and bustle. Algeria is in constant renewal, constant regeneration, even if its history is written in blood.

Kamel appears like a foreigner in his home country. Women provide his only point of entry into a society that should be his but isn't. It's as if they hold the key to the world, as if they have special insight.

That's absolutely true. Without making it a priority, I know that the film captures the essence of the country. In Algeria, women appear to be confined to a submissive role when, in some ways, they have an overpowering freedom, especially in the countryside. Their actions are imbued with values such as honour and dignity. They carry this responsibility and assuming it is what makes them more beautiful.

Your film is never didactic. It's an accumulation of nuances, colours and emotions. It is imbued with a relationship to the world rather than presenting a message about the world.

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Bled Number One

Sun 7 Jul 17:45; Tue 23 Jul 20:40

Shirley Adams + Firstborn Eersgeborene

Mon 8 Jul 20:40; Wed 17 Jul 18:00 + discussion

Original Voices

Wed 10 Jul 20:50; Sat 27 Jul 12:10

Coming Forth By Day Al-khoroug lel-nahar

Fri 12 Jul 18:20

African Odysseys Presents Night of the Kings

La Nuit des rois + intro & panel discussion on the

role of griot with Tony Warner of African

Odysseys and Black History Walks

Sat 13 Jul 14:00

Bezness

Sat 13 Jul 20:30

Félicité

Sun 14 Jul 14:40; Thu 18 Jul 18:00 (+ intro with author and presenter Kevin Le Gendre)

Bye Bye Africa

Wed 17 Jul 21:00

Faya Dayi

Fri 26 Jul 18:15; Wed 31 Jul 20:35

With thanks to

Saison Africa 2020, Institut français, Keith Shiri

For more information, go to tigritudes.com

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I really like Delacroix's paintings of Algeria and I think that's how he worked, building gradually stroke by stroke, one layer after another. At the same time, I direct very naturally, spontaneously, accepting the unexpected and unpredictable, which turns out to be what has to be filmed, the thing that stands out from the rest.

What does the original title, Bled Number One, mean?

It's a little dig at our Moroccan and Tunisian neighbours. People from North Africa like to joke with each other. Given that the subject was the Algerian diaspora, I had to go back to the 'bled' (village) where it all started, the first 'bled'. We could have called it *Bled 0*, but that would have required a little less susceptibility from the Algerians! If we'd called it that, they wouldn't have allowed us to film in their country. And I couldn't have shot the film anywhere else. The reality of *Bled Number One* is specific to Algeria and, at the same time, because it is rooted in that way, I believe it can attain universality.

The film also depicts the brutality of people's interactions.

I'm not fascinated by violence but I wanted to film its necessity, or at least its omnipresence. We all have an animal instinct, we're all predators and that's not a bad thing. It's very good news, in fact. The main thing is not to lose our bond with the land.

Do you think that being French of Algerian origin makes you see the world differently?

Yes. Everything seems much bigger. Thankfully, humanity doesn't yet derive from a single culture. Being divided between two cultures makes you more keenly aware of the fact that everything is in a state of flux, everything is changing. That's what's happening in a more general sense with the young guys of North African origin in the inner cities here in France. They are a long way from their country of origin and their culture, so they have to invent a new way of expressing themselves. But it's in everybody's best interest to avoid the trap of ghettoisation, of labelling people. Which is why I choose to act and produce as well. Being my own producer enables me to do what I want, to be totally free. I'd feel too restricted in a more traditional production set-up. The situation is still critical in Algeria. Another producer would have freaked out about shooting over there. I didn't learn to make movies at film school or by working as an intern, I learned by making films in a very empirical way. It's like something that floods out of you, and I discover the result in the editing room. I want to make the films that I have carried inside me since I was a kid.

Interview by Claire Vassé, production notes