



Taxi

Taxi

Director: Gérard Pirès

Producer: Michèle Pétin

Producers (ARP): Laurent Pétin,

Michèle Halberstadt

Producer: Luc Besson*

Screenplay: Luc Besson

Director of Photography: Jean-Pierre Sauvaire

Editor: Véronique Lange

Art Director: Jean-Jacques Gernolle

Music: 1AM

Cast:

Samy Naceri (*Daniel Morales*)

Frédéric Diefenthal (*Émilien Coutan Kermadec*)

Marion Cotillard (*Lilly, Daniel's girlfriend*)

Emma Sjöberg (*Petra, a cop*)

Manuela Gourary (*Camille, a cop*)

Bernard Farcy (*Chief Inspector Gibert*)

Georges Neri (*Joe*)

Guy Quang (*Pizza Joe motorcyclist*)

Maurice Murcia (*retired taxi-driver*)

Sabine Bail (*receptionist, town hall*)

Dan Herzberg (*Paulo*)

Sébastien Thiery (*driving instructor*)

Eric Berenger (*the butcher*)

Philippe Du Janerand (*airport fare in a hurry*)

Christophe Fesquet (*speed cop 1*)

Gérard Vantaggioli (*speed cop 2*)

Edouard Montoute (*Alain*)

Tara Römer (*Émilien's colleague*)

Christian Mazzuchini (*pilot 1*)

Guillaume Lanson (*pilot 2*)

Sébastien Pons (*Akim, called 'Rachid'*)

Malek Béchar (*Marco*)

Gérard Dubouche (*Gibert's chauffeur*)

Richard Sammel (*German 1*)

Niels Dubost (*German 2*)

Franck Libert (*German 3*)

Dominique Noé (*minister*)

Pierre Brichese (*minister's chauffeur*)

Stéphan Chriz (*German 4*)

Paul Fructus (*bar owner*)

Grégory Knop (*Kruger*)

Denis Braccini (*fireman*)

Bernard Destouches (*roadblock cop*)

Emilio Martinez (*cleaner, 2nd bank*)

Catherine Alias (*cleaner*)

Stéphane Algoud (*Jimmy, key cutter*)

Thierry Melia (*bank cashier*)

Jérôme Leleu (*Jean Bat*)

Jean-François Palaccio (*younger dumb cop*)

Henri Masini (*older dumb cop*)

Jean-Baptiste Chaudoul (*cop at traffic light 13*)

Paul Silve (*the commissioner*)

Didier Gayral (*man with the box*)

Stéphane Eichenholz (*speed cop 3*)

France 1998

86 mins

Digital

* Uncredited

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

This furiously fast and funny action flic flick kick-started one of the most successful franchises in French film history. A non-driving cop coerces a speed-obsessed, law-breaking taxi driver into helping him pursue a gang of Mercedes-driving bank robbers who bring mayhem to the streets of Marseille. C'est magnifique!

Dick Fiddy, bfi.org.uk

A contemporary review

Last summer's surprise hit in France, Gérard Pirès' cops-and-robbers car-chase comedy *Taxi* arrives belatedly in the UK with a certain reputation in tow: it drew a domestic audience of over 6 million, had high-octane panache rivalling the best of Hollywood and Luc Besson's name stamped all over it. Besson produced and wrote the film, reportedly turning out the script during pre-production discussions for *The Fifth Element*. Pirès, best remembered for his comedies *Erotissimo* (1968) and *Elle court, elle court la banlieue* (1972), graduated to feature film-making from shorts and television in the wake of May '68, and directed eight films before a serious motorcycle accident forced him into temporary retirement. He subsequently re-emerged as one of France's most successful directors of advertisements, notably of visually arresting car adverts.

On the evidence here, writing the script entailed for Besson subjecting his favourite US television series to a cut-and-paste process (*Starsky and Hutch* gets a nod, but the tone is more *The Dukes of Hazzard*), resulting in a compendium of familiar gizmos, plot twists and characters that unashamedly panders to aspiring boy racers everywhere. But the film is also played out through references to French comic-book and popular cop film traditions. Henri Verneuil's Jean-Paul Belmondo vehicles are obvious precursors (the Athens-based car chase in his 1972 *Le Casse* comes to mind), and Claude Zidi's incomparably superior *Les Ripoux/Le Cop* is referenced (or, less generously, recycled). Marseilles is shot to look like San Francisco circa *Bullitt* (1968), local colour reduced to the glimpses caught beyond the rapidly disappearing asphalt. A single picture-postcard view of the city is inserted presumably as a 'thank you' to the municipal authorities.

Where Godard threw similar ingredients together in 1966 and came up with the startlingly inventive *Made in U.S.A.*, Besson and Pirès' leaden hotchpotch has the flavour of *déjà vu*. Where *Made in U.S.A.* is fuelled by a biting critique of French society and a prescient reflection on the US colonisation of the European mindset, Besson and Pirès merely tack youth friendly clichés (institutionalised racism, police ineptitude and so on) on to the film's exterior. Granted, Pirès has done a good job on the stunts and car chases, some of them superbly choreographed at genuinely high speeds. For a film that draws

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Mon 21 Oct 18:30; Sun 3 Nov 13:30; Sun 10 Nov 11:45; Sun 24 Nov 14:30

Hell Drivers

Tue 22 Oct 18:15; Thu 14 Nov 12:20; Sat 16 Nov 20:40

The Thief of Bagdad

Wed 23 Oct 14:30; Thu 31 Oct 12:20; Sat 9 Nov 12:30

Goldfinger 60th anniversary screenings

Wed 23 Oct 18:20 (+ intro by season programmer Dick Fiddy); Sun 10 Nov 18:40; Sat 23 Nov 18:20

Bullitt

Wed 23 Oct 20:40; Sun 3 Nov 16:25; Thu 21 Nov 14:30; Tue 26 Nov 20:45

The Mark of Zorro

Thu 24 Oct 14:30 (+ intro by Bryony Dixon, curator, BFI National Archive); Sat 2 Nov 11:45; Sat 23 Nov 15:00

Enter the Dragon

Thu 24 Oct 20:45; Fri 1 Nov 14:40; Mon 4 Nov 20:50; Wed 13 Nov 18:10 (+ intro by film critic Katie Smith-Wong); Mon 18 Nov 14:30

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon Wo hu cang long

Fri 25 Oct 20:35; Sun 3 Nov 11:00 BFI IMAX; Fri 8 Nov 12:20; Mon 11 Nov 18:00; Wed 27 Nov 18:10 (+ intro)

Battleship Potemkin Bronenosets Potyomkin

Sat 26 Oct 13:20; Thu 7 Nov 20:55; Tue 12 Nov 14:30

Captain Blood

Sun 27 Oct 12:45; Wed 6 Nov 18:10 (+ intro)

The Train

Sun 27 Oct 17:45; Sat 2 Nov 20:25

Taxi

Mon 28 Oct 18:30; Fri 22 Nov 18:20; Mon 25 Nov 20:50

Three the Hard Way

Wed 30 Oct 18:15 (+ intro by Ti Singh, BFI FAN season producer); Thu 7 Nov 12:30; Sun 17 Nov 16:10

Police Story Ging chaat goo si

Fri 15 Nov 18:00 (+ panel discussion with Action Xtreme); Tue 19 Nov 20:55; Thu 28 Nov 18:20

District B13 Banlieue 13

Wed 20 Nov 18:20 (+ intro by Chee Keong Cheung, writer, director, producer and CEO of Action Xtreme); Fri 29 Nov 20:45

With thanks to

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freely on the French erotic comic-book tradition, the racial stereotyping and sexism come as no surprise. Besides being systematically introduced via shots of their legs, none of the female characters is more than a caricature. France's bypassing of the UK's detour through 'new man' sensibility, however, means that in this country the film can now plug neatly into a male youth market weaned on a brutish 'new laddism'.

Rap group IAM make a fair stab at encouraging the action along through the often laborious non-action scenes, then upping the tempo (and volume) appropriately for the sporadic big-bang crescendoes. The generally young cast provide a welcome injection of good-natured buffoonery into a stale film whose principal significance lies less in any intrinsic artistic quality than in the French public's acceptance of a young non-white French actor, Samy Naceri, in the lead role of a major box-office hit. But despite the film's success, which guaranteed an almost instant sequel (*Taxi 2* is currently in production), nothing dispels the lingering sense that this is a lacklustre hybrid. Besson and Pirès have ended up underscoring the paucity of a cinema that contents itself with the formulaic regurgitation of the forms and aspirations of Hollywood and its televisual derivatives or of a European cinema that is – in every sense other than geographically – made in the USA.

Michael Witt, *Sight and Sound*, December 1999

John Woo Focus

Red Cliff Chi bi

Sat 2 Nov 14:10; Mon 11 Nov 17:40

Red Cliff II Chi bi: Jue zhan tian xia

Sat 2 Nov 17:20; Tue 19 Nov 17:55

Face/Off

Sat 9 Nov 17:30; Mon 25 Nov 20:20

Broken Arrow

Thu 14 Nov 20:40; Sun 24 Nov 18:10

Hard Target

Sun 24 Nov 13:00; Wed 27 Nov 18:20 (+ intro by Ti Singh, BFI FAN season producer)

Woman Kings

The Woman King

Fri 1 Nov 18:00 (+ intro); Sat 30 Nov 20:10

Terminator 2: Judgment Day

Thu 7 Nov 18:00; Fri 29 Nov 20:20

Coffy

Sat 9 Nov 20:30; Thu 21 Nov 20:45

Polite Society + Q&A with director Nida

Manzoor

Sun 17 Nov 18:00

The Long Kiss Goodnight

Fri 22 Nov 20:35

Yes, Madam! Huang jia shi jie

Sat 23 Nov 18:30

Executioners Yin doi hou hap zyun

Sat 23 Nov 20:45

Run Lola Run Lola rennt

Tue 26 Nov 20:50

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