



ART OF ACTION: CELEBRATING THE REAL ACTION STARS OF CINEMA

District B13 (Banlieu)

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Un film de: Pierre Morel
©/Presented by: EuropaCorp
©/In Co-production with: TF1 Films Production
With the participation of: Canal+
Presented by: EuropaCorp
Production Services in Romania:
MediaPro Pictures (Buftea)
Executive Producer: Bernard Grenet
Unit Production Manager: Marc Guidetti
Production Manager: Thierry Guilnard
Production Accountant: Romuald Drault
Location Managers: Jean-Pierre Nossereau,
Évelyne Bausant
Post-production Supervisor: Éric Bassoff
1st Assistant Director: Stéphane Glück
Script Supervisor: Isabelle Querrioux
Casting (Director): Swan Pham
Scenarist: Luc Besson, Bibi Naceri
Director of Photography: Manuel Téran
Steadicam Operator: Éric Leroux
Digital Visual Effects: Éclair Numérique
Special Effects Supervisor: Philippe Hubin
Special Effects: Bigbang SFX
Editor: Frédéric Thoraval
Art Director: Hugues Tissandier
Set Decorator: Gérard Marcicreau
Properties: Pierre Bandini
Costume Designers: Alexandre Rossi,
Martine Rapin
Key Make-up: Myriam Hottois
Key Hairstylist: Frédérique Arguello
Titles: Éclair Numérique, Cinécool
Laboratory: Éclair
Colour Timer: Jean-Louis Alba
Original Music: Da. Octopuss
Original Music Performed by: Da. Octopuss
Supervising Sound Recordist: Frédéric Ullmann
Boom Operator: Pierre Dachery
Sound Re-recording: Didier Lozahic
Sound Editors: Alexandre Hernandez,
Maud Lombart
Associate Sound Editor: Frédéric Dubois
Dialogue Editor: Christophe Leroy
Stunt Co-ordinator: Frédéric Vallet
Parkours Choreography: Cyril Raffaelli
Armourers: Christophe Maratier, Arnaud Peltier,
Nicolas Sislian, Jean-Claude Lecoq, Armand Rivas
Cast:
Cyril Raffaelli (*Damien*)
David Belle (*Leïto*)
Tony D'Amario (*K2*)
Larbi Naceri (*Taha*)
Dany Verissimo (*Lola*)
Marc Andreoni (*Carlos*)
François Chattot (*Krüger*)
Alain Rimoux (*superintendent*)
Lyes Salem (*Samy*)
Mc Jean Gab'1 (*Nico Le Black*)
Jeffrey Zade Rudom (*Yéti*)
Ludovic Bertillot (*main hitman*)
Nicolas Woirion (*Corsini*)
Patrick Olivier (*colonel*)
Samir Guesmi (*Jamel*)
Tarik Boucekhine (*Yoyo*)
Grégory Jean, Warren Zavatta (*hitmen*)
Dominique Dorol (*Cerbère Taha*)
Turan Bağcı (*bodyguard*)
Azad (*Tarik*)
Gilles Gambino (*guard 1*)
Shamsy Meyeer (*guard 2*)
Nicolas Wan Park (*Chinese man*)
Eric Forcinal (*policeman*)

+ intro by Chee Keong Cheung, writer, director, producer and CEO of Action Xtreme (Wednesday 20 November only)

This dystopian actioner follows the same blueprint as the earlier *Taxi*: a cop and a civilian team-up in an uneasy partnership to try and stop a team of criminals. This time, instead of car-chases there is parkour, with one of the key pioneers of the discipline, David Belle, pairing his jaw-dropping abilities with the martial artistry of Cyril Raffaelli. It's a lightning-paced thrill-ride that had a huge influence on the action genre and inspired that chase in *Casino Royale*.

Dick Fiddy, bfi.org.uk

Set in a walled-off urban hellhole that must be penetrated in order to complete a deadline-based mission, Pierre Morel's *District 13* owes an overt debt to John Carpenter's *Escape from New York*. That it cannot easily be dismissed as a rehash of Carpenter's film is largely due to its dynamic displays of the French cultural phenomenon 'le parkour' (also known as 'free running'). Defined in the press notes as 'a philosophy of action-based movement in an urban environment in which objects such as buildings are obstacles to be scaled rather than circumvented', *le parkour* has previously been showcased in 2001's *Yamakasi* (produced by Luc Besson, who also produces and co-writes this), the documentary *Jump London* and a series of 2002 BBC idents featuring the concept's inventor, David Belle.

Belle it is who plays *District 13*'s hero, Leïto, who teams up with Cyril Raffaelli's police officer to track down the neutron bomb threatening the lawless ghetto of the film's title. Stunt expert Raffaelli previously appeared in *Taxi 2* (2000) and *Kiss of the Dragon* (2001), both co-produced by Besson. *District 13* is primarily a vehicle for the pair's remarkable physical prowess, giving them ample opportunity to jump across rooftops, swing from balconies and squeeze through tiny gaps with the fluid grace of acrobats (Raffaelli is a circus veteran) and the limitless stamina of video game icons. Both get thrilling solo set-pieces early on in the film (an extended foot chase followed by a casino bust) before they team up to find the supposedly stolen bomb.

Driving the techno-scored action along at an almost overwhelming pace, first-time director Morel (a former camera operator) tries to make room for a little social commentary. While displaying a faith in the law, or at least the law as embodied by rubber-limbed individualists, the film takes a cynical view of the French government, which is ultimately revealed as the villain of the piece. (Co-writer Larbi 'Bibi' Naceri makes a good fist of his role as ostensible bad guy Taha, a droll drug lord who goes out in a *Scarface*-style hail of bullets.) Following France's recent wave of riots, the images of Parisian lawlessness have a certain resonance beyond their dramatic function. Yet this is no *La Haine*-style meditation on life in the *banlieue*. Emblematic of *District 13*'s cursory class politics is the speeded-up tracking shot at the start that sketches out the setting's pervasive squalor but doesn't dwell on it. Meanwhile, Belle's

Roberto Gil (*Pedro*)
 Patrick Médioni (*shopkeeper*)
 Bernard Grenet (*M. Keijman*)
 Christophe Maratier (*SWAT team leader*)
 Philippe Soutan (*police van driver*)
 Michel Estrade (*prison guard 1*)
 Jean-Marc Bellu (*prison guard 2*)
 Olivier Lobe (*follower 1*)
 Louis Philippe Manuel (*follower 2*)
 Jérôme Paquette (*Yéti henchman*)
 Éric Boissier (*Krüger office officer*)
 Noé Nzaou-Niambi (*Bouboule*)
 Gadner Jérôme, Kazuma Steve Rognoni,
 Dominique Lexilus, Karim Mouhous,
 Stéphane Vigroux, Rudy Duong,
 Afif Ben Badra, Thierry Guerrib, Éric Mondoloni,
 Areski Garidel, Romain Moutault,
 Sébastien Goudot (*K2 boys*)
 France 2004
 85 mins
 Digital

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Mission: Impossible All-Nighter
 Sat 30 Nov 23:00 BFI IMAX

Big Screen Classics: The History of Action

Bullitt

Thu 21 Nov 14:30; Tue 26 Nov 20:45

Taxi

Fri 22 Nov 18:20; Mon 25 Nov 20:50

The Mark of Zorro

Sat 23 Nov 15:00

Goldfinger 60th anniversary screenings

Sat 23 Nov 18:20

Seven Samurai Shichinin no samurai

Sun 24 Nov 14:30

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon

Wo hu cang long

Wed 27 Nov 18:10 (+ intro)

Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior

Wed 27 Nov 20:50

Police Story Ging chaat goo si

Thu 28 Nov 18:20

District B13 Banlieue 13

Fri 29 Nov 20:45

Safety Last! + One Week

Sat 30 Nov

John Woo Focus

Hard Target

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

Broken Arrow

Sun 24 Nov 18:10

Face/Off

Mon 25 Nov 20:20

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closing lecture to the corrupt politician who plotted *District 13's* annihilation 'violence isn't the only way to solve problems' – rings hollow after more than 70 minutes of problem-solving by feet, fists and firepower.

But judged in terms of spectacle, *District 13* is a success. Morel makes occasional use of slow motion during the fight scenes, but doesn't rely much on flashy editing, CGI or stunt doubles. The result is close to Prachya Pinkaew's *Ong-Bak*, which Besson re-edited for international release and whose brutal authenticity provided a refreshing antidote to the 'wire-fu' balletics of post-*Matrix* action cinema. But whereas *Ong-Bak* was saddled with a slow first act, this has next to no downtime; it crashes through its crisply choreographed chain of pursuits, scraps and shoot-outs with single-minded exhilaration. Subtleties of plot, character and acting (the leads rip through their dialogue) fall by the wayside. Action fans won't mind the trade-off.

Matthew Leyland, *Sight and Sound*, June 2006

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