

Cinéma Sur l'Herbe – Films on the Green

FREE FRENCH FILM FESTIVAL IN NEW YORK CITY PARKS

New York, May 7, 2008—What could be better than lounging lazily in a park on a lovely summer evening? Watching a film while lounging lazily in a park on a lovely summer evening! The **Cultural Services of the French Embassy** and the **New York City Department of Parks and Recreation** have joined forces to show recent, **critically-acclaimed French movies in the East Village's parks in June** (from May 30 to June 27). None of the movies have been widely distributed in the U.S., and this will be the New York premiere for two of them (*Quand tu descendras du Ciel* and *Zim and Co*). The sub-titled screenings will take place **every Friday at sunset** (around 8.30pm), and will be **free of charge**. Some of them will be followed by Q&As with the director (see the program below for details).

The five movies form a collection called "**Living Together**" which revolves around solidarity, and the powerful links that are formed between communities, friends and neighbors. Profound and moving, each one depicts a different facet of **France's multiethnic, multicultural society**—from its animated *banlieues* to its typical countryside towns. The film festival will move to **Harlem parks in July**. These two neighborhoods were selected because of their dynamic and close-knit communities.

The first movie, *Samia*, by Philippe Faucon, has received rave reviews for its portrayal of fifteen-year old Samia, who rebels against the oppressive moralistic atmosphere of her family, recent immigrants from Algeria. *Quand Tu Descendras du Ciel* by Éric Guirado follows a newly hired city worker as he confronts a terrible quandary: he is asked to forcibly remove a homeless man, whom he has just befriended, from the city center. The up-and-coming star of Pierre Jolivet's uplifting *Zim and Co*, Adrien Jolivet, portrays a youth desperate to get hold of a car and a driver's license in 10 days to clinch a job—his only hope lies in the help of his friends. The winner of several prizes, *Wesh, Wesh Qu'est ce qui se Passe?* by Rabah Ameur-Zaïmèche is a take on the everyday life of an immigrant family which is struggling to integrate into France. Finally, in Malik Chibane's *Voisins / Voisines*, a rap musician trying to find inspiration dissects and transforms the lives of his neighbors through his writing, thus bringing beauty and meaning to the lives of those around him.

In addition to the above films, the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs holds the non-theatrical rights to a large number of documentaries and fiction films, all of them selected for their artistic quality and for their appeal to foreign audiences.

WHEN	WHERE	WHAT
Friday May 30	6th and B Community Garden	<i>Samia</i> #
Friday June 6	Tompkins Square Park	<i>Quand tu descendras du Ciel</i> * NYC Premiere!
Friday June 13	Tompkins Square Park	<i>Zim and Co</i> NYC Premiere!
Friday June 20	Tompkins Square Park	<i>Wesh, wesh, qu'est ce qu'il se passe?</i> *
Friday June 27	6th and B Community Garden	<i>Voisins, Voisines</i> #

* The director will be present for a Q&A after the screening.

The screenings will be followed by a discussion and drinks.

Please find detailed summaries of the movies below.

High-resolution photos can be downloaded here:

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Please note that all the films were shot in the same grainy style.

For more information: www.frenchculture.org (Press section user name: xxx | password: xxx)

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FILM CAPSULES

SAMIA

By Philippe Faucon

With: Lynda Benahouda, Mohamed Chaouch, Kheira Oualhaci, Nadia Koutei El, Yamina Amri, Lakhdar Smati

Awards: 20th Anniversary Award, Prize of the City of Amiens- 2000 Amiens International Film Festival

Fifteen-year-old Samia lives in Marseille's periphery. Sixth in a family of eight children of Algerian descent, she suffocates in the moralistic atmosphere made oppressive by beliefs and rules she respects but no longer shares... Yacine, her unemployed older brother, justifies himself by upholding family and religious traditions. Older sister, Amel, has excluded herself from family life by her involvement with a boy from a different cultural background. Samia's other sisters are completely focussed on academic achievement... And Samia, a series of school failures in her wake, forced to take up technical studies that don't suit her, obliged to keep her first romance secret, becomes aware that it's absolutely necessary that she alone decides just what to do with her life.

"A bracing lesson in the limits of cultural assimilation and mutual comprehension."

Boston Globe - Leighton Klein

"There have been few, very few films to depict this realm in such a subtle and truthful manner."

Le Monde - Jacques Mandelbaum

"Militant filmmaking free of doctrines, a brilliant film, moving and exemplary."

Libération - Jean-Marc Lalanne

"The way Faucon films, always on the watch for faces, a feeling or a reaction turned this small budget movie into a great, fascinating and deeply human film."

Le Parisien - Pierre Vavasseur

QUAND TU DESCENDRAS DU CIEL

By Éric Guirado

With: Benoît Giros, Serge Riaboukine, Jean-François Gallotte, Anne Coesens, Valérie Moreau, Ludmila Ruoso, Arthur Semay, Colette Emmanuelle, Bernard Cupillard, Yves Pignot

Awards: Jean Carment Award & Audience Award – 2003 Angers European First Film Festival

November comes to an end in the countryside. Jérôme and his mother struggle to keep their dairy farm running. One morning, he heads for town to look for work for a couple of months – a question of earning a bit of money for the farm. A fish out of water, Jérôme slowly finds his way. He strikes up a friendship with La Chignole, a boisterous tramp, and gets hired by the local mayor to decorate the town's Christmas trees. The trees remind him of the countryside and Jérôme is right at home perched high in their branches. But it's not long before an unexpected and less pleasant aspect of his job is revealed when city hall applies anti-begging laws to "clean out" the town center of its homeless people and tramps during the Christmas period. The local mayor puts the pressure on and Jérôme, fighting his conscience, reluctantly carries out his job. That is until the day he discovers that La Chignole is one of the homeless convoy.

Eric Guirado's initial background was journalism. When he decided to dedicate his work to fiction movies, his first and awarded feature film, realistic and social, was built on personalities he met during his years as a reporter.

"Quand tu descendras du ciel" is an exhilarating success because it captures, through its colours and frames, the magic and wonders of cinema, all the whilst sending an essential message."

Les Echos - Isabelle Danel

"Eric Guirado, famous director of short films, made a brilliant first long feature. The young director delivers a deeply moving and generous film, which reminds us of Manuel Poirier and Ken Loach's very human visions. A great surprise enacted by terrific actors."

Mcinéma - Olivier-Pierre Salvano

"The director tackles this social reality with a courageous simplicity: the events are not told from the victims' viewpoint, nor from those who want to help but from that very van in charge of 'cleaning up'."
Aden - Philippe Piazzo

"In violence as in comedy, the actors show amazing humanity and reality"
Zurban - N. T. Binh

"Emotions are vivid throughout the whole movie leading up to a happy end letting in a contemplative bliss. "
Le Parisien - Pierre Vavasseur

"The whole film is like Jerome, figure of Dostoievsky's 'Idiot' and its embarrassing kindness, interpreted by a talented and charismatic newcomer, Benoit Giros."
Telerama - Pierre Murat

ZIM AND CO

By Pierre Jolivet

With: Adrien Jolivet, Mhamed Arezki, Yannick Nasso, Naidra Ayadi, Vincent Grass, Pierre Jolivet, Nathalie Richard, Nicolas Marie, Maka Kotto, Abès Zahmani, Jean-Philippe Vidal

Awards: Presented in Cannes Film Festival and nominated at the 2006 César Awards for the Most Promising actor (Adrien Jolivet)

After an ordinary motorbike accident, twenty-year-old Zim must find a proper job if he wants to avoid jail. Zim isn't a lazy guy so he scans newspaper ads looking for something which will keep him out of trouble. The only one he can apply for, starts in ten days, requires a car and a driver's license. Not having either Zim has to get creative and come up with an inventive scheme. He turns to his supportive crew of buddies – Cheb, Arthur and Safia – ready to do anything, or almost, to keep him out of jail. This uplifting and emotional movie is about resourcefulness and solidarity. Spreading a strong message of hope on how the powerful link uniting three boys can make them overcome life's obstacles.

"A film filled with energy, a caustic sense of humour, and enchanting bypasses."
Première - Olivier de Bruyn

"The film is pleasurable, filled with energy and sincerity."
Elle - Elisabeth Quin

"Where can we see, nowadays, films that talk about our everyday life in such a bracing way?"
TéléCinéOb - Philippe Piazzo

"All the actors are perfect. (...) The cast is perfectly adequate, exhilarating."
Le Monde - Jean-Luc Douin

WESH, WESH QU EST CE QUI SE PASSE?

By Rabah Ameur-Zaïmeche

With: Rabah Ameur-Zaïmeche, Ahmed Hammoudi, Brahim Ameur Zaïmeche, Farida Mouffok, Ali Mouffok, Serpentine Textier, Salim Ameur Zaïmeche, Mambi Keïta, Bastien Sion

Awards: Bronze Rosa Camuna Award - 2003 Bergamo Film Meeting Wolfgang Staudte Award- 2002 Berlin International Film Festival Léo Scheer Award- 2001 Entrevues Film Festival Best First Film 2002 Prix Louis Delluc

Halfway between documentary and fiction, 'Wesh wesh' is a take on the everyday life of an immigrant family which is struggling to integrate into France or, rather into the 'Cite des Bosquets' a low-income housing project in the Parisian suburbs. Like every district, it is a world of its own, with its rules and values. Mousse, the younger brother has understood how it works there. He has integrated a gang, and deals everyday with small time drug trafficking and protects his territory. On the other hand, his older brother who just came back after 2 years in prison, wants to start a normal life and integrate into society. He understands soon enough that it is hard to succeed behind the walls of 'Les Bosquets'. He tries to find a job, with the help of his family. But without ID papers, and with the police after him, he is stuck in the neighborhood, spending time with the street kids. One day, he finds a fishing rod, and escapes from the city, going fishing in a lake, close to where he lives...

Moving and touching, this movie does not try to be an impressive fictional tale about the ghettos, but gives an exact testimony of the lives of society's left behind who survive through solidarity.

"Of all 'banlieue' movies, Wesh wesh enriches the debate like no other. Politicians should watch it over and over again."

Aden - Philippe Piazzo

"RAZ builds fiction with blocks of raw reality where the pressured actors act - and speak - their life with amazing confidence"

Télérama - Jean-Claude Loiseau

"This movie is like a ball that was just hit by a golf club: quick but floating, reaching to the sky (how many 'banlieues' movies have you seen where the skies are always in the background?) as high as possible, finally hitting the ground to leave a deep print. Who said 'necessary'?"

Libération - Philippe Azoury

"Made by he who 'simply invented a new way to direct'

Cahiers du cinema – Jean-Michel Frodon

VOISINS / VOISINES

By Malik Chibane

With: Anémone, Jackie Berroyer, Frédéric Diefenthal, Mohamed Fellag, Gwendoline Hamon, Hakim Sahraoui, Nora Armani, Sarah Maldoror, Insa Sané, Candice Berner

In the suburbs of Paris, there is a privatized former public housing estate called 'the Mozart estate'. There is no classic music there, but a rap musician lacking inspiration. Ideas? Lyrics? Music? But what if his inspiration were right on his doorstep? The rapper observes, composes, writes and sings. The life of the whole building is dissected and transformed through his writing. The Mozart estate metamorphoses into the stage for a hip hop fable. Discussions become poetry, situations are turned into tales, and every voice brings its own melody to a unique album. 'Voisins, Voisines' is a movie about how the vision of an artist brings beauty and meaning to the lives of his entourage.

"In this lovely hip hop tale, Chibane uses his characters' imagination to evoke the reality of social integration. With very little means, he achieved a truly social and musical film. Miraculous!"

Paris Match - Christine Haas

"Chibane is at his best when he delivers such fantasy and irony, when he orchestrates each and every situation"

Télérama - Jacques Morice

"There is nothing schematised in this lively and foretelling comedy. It shows the contrasts which human nature fosters" TéléCinéObs - Alain Riou

"Chibane paints a pacified social chronicle, conceived as a series of pictures backed by a beautiful light and a magnificent soundtrack" Zurban - Yasmine Youssi

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