

New Yorker Films Presents

The Little Thief

and

Alone

two films by Erick Zonca

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The Little Thief

CREDITS

Executive Producer.....Gilles Sandoz
Producer.....Pierre Chevalier
Screenplay.....Erick Zonca, Virginie Wagon
Cinematographer.....Pierre Milon, Catherine Pujol
Editor.....Jean-Robert Thomann
Production Designer.....Kristina Zonca
Sound.....Jean-Jacques Ferran

CAST

Nicolas Duvauchelle	“S”
Yann Tregouet	Barruet
Jean-Jérôme Esposito	The Eye
Martial Bezot	Chacal
Jean-Armand Dalomba	Mathias
Joe Prestia	Tony
Ingrid Preynat	Leila
Véronique Balme	Tina
Olivier Gerby	Vampire
Emilie Lafarge	Sandra

France 1999 Color 35mm 65 min in French with English subtitles

Synopsis

Erick Zonca's debut feature, *DREAMLIFE OF ANGELS*, stunned audiences with its intensely moving depiction of life on the fringes. With *THE LITTLE THIEF*, his impressive follow-up film, Zonca uses a similar cinema vérité style and focus on performance. The result is a poignant and brutally honest look at a descent into the world of theft. His rigorous and uncompromising approach, both in style and subject matter, is mitigated by the irresistible lead role of a young man who finds himself caught in a situation he is not equipped to handle.

-- Toronto Film Festival

The young protagonist (Nicolas Duvauchelle) is known simply as "S". Insolent and brooding, he tires of his job as a baker's apprentice, and is soon fired. He refuses to find another dead-end job and seeks the fast track to riches. Full of unconvincing pomp, he tells a close friend that he is determined to be his own boss, aspires to be a gangster and have people working for *him*. He then proceeds to steal from her when she offers him a place to stay. This introduces us to an amorality and weakness of character that will ill serve him as he enters a life of crime.

"S" heads south to Marseille where he falls in with a group of young thieves who congregate at a local boxing club. He wants only to fit in and prove that he too is a real tough guy. He accepts the low-level duties which are doled out to him, hoping eventually to be trusted. But perhaps he is too eager; confused and frightened, he is not yet mature enough to be fully aware of what he is doing. Starstruck, he can't see how everyone in his macho pecking order is perennially banged up and horribly scarred. He is utterly alienated from the only people with whom he really aspires to be acquainted. Disaster ensues in a jarring climax and retributive justice triumphs, leaving "S" in a vulnerable position to deal with a challenging and uncertain future. Barely surviving his bout with the big boys, this lost boy is eventually reformed and ultimately takes refuge in the labor he once deemed "slavery". In the end is he saved from a life of crime or damned to the life he tried to escape?

ERICK ZONCA

DIRECTOR

Erick Zonca was born in Orléans, France in 1956.
He decided to become a filmmaker at age 15.

At age 16, he moved to Paris where he discovered American movies, enrolled in acting class (Blanche Salan) inspired by the Lee Strasbourg method and earned a living by doing odd jobs.

At age 20 he moved to New York from Paris. There, he married a dancer from the Merce Cunningham company. His life involved taking classes at the Herbert Bergoff Studio, discovering European cinema at the Bleecker Street Cinema and continuing with his odd jobs.

At age 30 he obtained an apprenticeship and finally entered the film milieu. He soon became an assistant and then began directing TV documentaries.

His directed first short film RIVES in 1992. Subsequently, he directed ÉTERNELLES and SEULE. All three films screened on the film festival circuit and received numerous awards.

THE LITTLE THIEF is Zonca's second feature.

DIRECTOR FILMOGRAPHY

1999	THE LITTLE THIEF
1998	DREAMLIFE OF ANGELS
1997	SEULE
1994	ÉTERNELLES
1992	RIVES

NICOLAS DUVAUCHELLE FILMOGRAPHY

1999	THE LITTLE THIEF	Erick Zonca
1999	BEAU TRAVAIL	Claire Denis

NOISE AND FURY: Zonca tells of an initiation into violence and harshness

Q: *LITTLE THIEF was directed in the framework of the series Arte “Gauche-Droite”. Is it a political film?*

EZ: Let’s say that it shows in a rather brutal manner, without psychology and without explanation, the state of youth that has lost its mark a bit; and who initiates itself into violence and harshness. What interests me in this film is to show how one can stray, outside of politics. There is a kind of fracture, a schism between youth and politics. All that is left for this youth is a sort of disgust seeing that they live outside of any political framework. They are searching for their identity, and form a micro-society where it is necessary to become savage. The story takes place in the neighborhoods north of Marseille.

Q: *Do you know these neighborhoods well?*

EZ: No, I didn’t know them at all. It is like for DREAMLIFE OF ANGELS, I didn’t know Lille either. Meanwhile, many non-professional actors from LITTLE THIEF come from these areas.

Q: *In the meantime, you avoid using clichés of Marseille...*

EZ: I didn’t want, in effect, to show the port or the “Marseillaise” lifestyle. I wanted to go to the heart of the initiation and this harshness.

Q: *Is it important for you to take root geographically in your films?*

EZ: Lille was a very important city for DREAMLIFE OF ANGELS. I could not have imagined making it elsewhere. It was the same for Marseille. This city went well with my subject. One has the impression that it can explode at any moment, because temperaments manifest themselves very violently, the people speak to each other forcefully, things get stirred up, there is a sort of excitement. S., the protagonist, comes from Orléans: he is not agitated or excited like the others. He does not have this natural constitution, this outward appearance, this manner, this behavior.

Q: *Why call this character S.?*

EZ: S. is the letter “s”, it is a last name (Esse). For me, it is a bit like he has not yet found his name, his identity. The film speaks of that. Of someone who is searching for himself by becoming cynical, by not wanting to work for others, by refusing the working world. He suddenly says to himself, “ Now I am going to be strong.” The reality of work is sometimes without escape; that doesn’t have to mean that this situation is inevitably something bad happening between social classes. That simply signifies that people cannot do what they want.

Q: *The style of the film is rather dry, hard and pure...*

EZ: I wanted it to be a brutal account where one is never inside the character, where one regards him only from the outside – contrary to DREAMLIFE OF ANGELS, where one entered into the character. In LITTLE THIEF, the viewer is smacked rather brutally in the face with the reality that the protagonist is in the process of living.

Alone

CREDITS

Director.....Erick Zonca
Screenplay.....Erick Zonca
Cinematographer.....Pascal Poucet
Sound.....Jean Luc Audy
Editor.....Jean Robert Thomann

CAST

Amélie.....Florence Loiret
Sophie.....Veronique Octon

Erick Zonca's ALONE is another example of the director's exploration of life on the fringes, adolescent angst and working class rootlessness, depicted in a cinema verité style. Amélie loses her job as a waitress because the boss does not like her attitude. She goes home to find that she has been kicked out of her apartment. While hiding in an alley to avoid a police scuffle, she finds a gun, which she takes with her for confidence as she searches for a new job, to no avail. Her casual, but precipitous decline from being unemployed to being homeless to becoming a criminal, underlines the fragile, vulnerable quality of a teenager trying to survive on her own. Zonca uses an unsentimental, yet compassionate point of view to tell her story.

ALONE is Zonca's third short film.

In French with English Subtitles. 34 minutes 1996 A New Yorker Films Release