



# **RACER AND THE JAILBIRD**

**Directed by Michaël R. Roskam**

**Starring Matthias Schoenaerts and Adèle  
Exarchopoulos**

UK release date | 13<sup>th</sup> July 2018

Running time | 130 minutes

Certificate | 15

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## **SYNOPSIS**

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When Gino meets Bénédicte, it's love at first sight, passionate, unconditional, fiery. She is working in the family business, and she also drives cars on circuits. Gino is that kind of normal guy, cool, handsome... but he hides a secret. That kind of secret that can endanger your life and the lives of those around you. Gino and Bénédicte will have to fight against fate, reason and their own weaknesses to save their love.

## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT – MICHAËL R. ROSKAM**

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Racer and the Jailbird is a fictional tale of love and crime, of desire and failure. A love tragedy, or better, an Amour Noir. I consider Racer and the Jailbird to be the second part of my crime trilogy. Each part is freely based on a particular moment in Belgian criminal history. For Bullhead, my source of inspiration was the hormone mafia. This time, I draw inspiration from notorious Brussels gangs and the equally by adrenaline driven world of auto racing. However, as was the case with Bullhead, Racer and the Jailbird will not be a film about these gangs, nor a biography of one or another real-life gangster.

The foundation of this story is the love between a man and a woman and the impossibility of actualizing their relationship. Their love is thwarted not only by their characters and origins, but also by the blows that fate deals them.

## **INTERVIEW WITH MICHAËL R. ROSKAM**

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### **HOW DID THE IDEA FOR RACER AND THE JAILBIRD COME ABOUT?**

The seed was planted came when I was looking for a backstory for Steve, the brother of Jacky, the main character in Bullhead. I wanted something that mirrored what was lacking in Jacky's life: the possibility of having a family, to experience love. In that sense, Bullhead and Racer and the Jailbird are like a diptych. They have a lot in common yet they are also very different.

### **DO THE FILMS SHARE THE SAME CRIMINAL BACKGROUND?**

Racer and the Jailbird is also inspired by the gangster scene in Belgium of the 1990s and early noughties. Back then the gangsters' wives were almost as infamous as the gangsters themselves, and those couples were known for their tumultuous love lives. I took one of those real-life stories, dissected it and put it back together in a way that suited the plot I had in mind, just like I did with the hormone mafia in Bullhead.

### **WERE YOU THINKING OF MATTHIAS AS GIGI FROM THE START?**

From the beginning, Matthias was very much involved in this story. We were looking for a character that was totally different from Jacky in Bullhead, and we managed to do that. But if you put them together, they embody the very concept of love, or at least its more tragic side.

### **DURING FILMING THAT TRAGEDY BECAME VERY TANGIBLE FOR MATTHIAS.**

His mother passed away while we were filming. Her love and dedication, and her confidence in him had always been a tremendous source of inspiration to Matthias. I also got to know her very well, and through Matthias we'd become quite close. She read the script and she was a great inspiration.

### **DIDN'T HER PASSING MAKE IT THAT MUCH HARDER TO FINISH THE FILM?**

It helped us, strangely enough, because the emotions, the feelings and intensity we were looking for were handed to us on a plate. Although her death was the saddest thing that could have happened, as well as a personal tragedy for Matthias, we also felt it was her final gift to us. The ultimate inspiration.

## **WHY DID YOU CAST ADÈLE EXARCHOPOULOS AS BIBI?**

The backdrop of the film was the French-speaking criminal scene in Brussels, so I was looking for French-speaking actresses. At that point, Bibi was still a slightly older character and I had a few established actresses in mind for the part. Then I saw Blue Is the Warmest Colour and there was something about her that struck a chord. I thought: pity she isn't older... But a split-second later it dawned on me: I'm writing this story and I make the rules! So, I decided to make Bibi younger.

## **HOW DID THAT CHANGE THE STORY?**

One of the things I was struggling with was the fact that an older Bibi would have been less naive in the relationship I'm describing. Gigi is rather boyish. Inside he's still a little boy and I needed a woman I could insert in this relationship in a credible way. Going for a younger version of Bibi made that possible: Bibi's untamed nature and naivety suited Gigi's own character. And then circumstances force her to grow up practically overnight and that opens up the story. Having Adèle form in my mind took the script to another level.

## **AS IN BULLHEAD AND THE DROP, ANIMALS ARE IMPORTANT TO YOUR STORYTELLING.**

From the very first scene it's obvious that Gigi is frightened of dogs. It's almost as if he himself is a wild dog that must be domesticated. He needs to be tamed and trust in the love he receives. And eventually he does submit. Because that's what love is in a way: it is not only being seduced but also submitting to your partner. And I love that metaphor in the relationship between Gigi and Bibi. Just like Jacky in Bullhead, he becomes the very thing he fears, even though he doesn't realise it.

## **WHAT ATMOSPHERE DID YOU SET OUT TO CREATE IN RACER AND THE JAILBIRD?**

I wanted the opening to exude glamour so I told Nicolas (Karakatsanis, the DOP) that I wanted him to create a kind of 'Brussels Riviera'. That's a contradiction, but then so is the movie, because I always intended to contrast the tone and style of the film. Yet in spite of that glamour, the opening is also characterised by a grim atmosphere that develops in the course of the film.

## **WHAT KIND OF GLAMOUR WERE YOU LOOKING FOR?**

Classic motor racing photography was a big inspiration, and the livery of old race cars such as the Martini and the Gulf. Those colours come back in Bibi's outfits. When they meet in Brussels on a grey and overcast day, she is wearing a blue coat with orange high heels. Those are the Gulf colours. I wanted to infuse the film with the characteristics and grandeur of motor racing but at the same time it had to be obvious the film isn't set in Cannes or Saint- Tropez, or even Paris. It's Brussels.

## **DID ANY PARTICULAR FILMS INSPIRE YOU?**

I wanted this film to be part of a tradition, a meeting of American film noir and the French polar. To me, this movie is like the love child of Heat and A Man and a Woman. The storytelling was also inspired by Heat, but in a different way. Heat is about the game of cat and mouse between two men, a cop and a criminal. The women in Heat are of secondary importance, like moons orbiting a planet. For Racer and the Jailbird, I turned the love story into the sun and the crimes are the moons orbiting around it.

## **RACER AND THE JAILBIRD ALSO INCLUDES SEVERAL GREAT ACTION SET-PIECES. WERE THEY FUN TO DO?**

It was just awesome. It was fantastic when the choreography of the van hold-up fell into place. I wanted to be certain it would work in real time, so the scene is an accurate depiction of how such a hold-up would take place. The entire scene consists of a single shot, no cuts. It's like a ballet, really.

## **AND DID THE WHOLE FILM COME TOGETHER IN THE SAME WAY?**

It had to work on so many levels, from the chemistry between Matthias and Adèle, to the subtle changes in Nicolas' photography, the emotions and tension in Raf's music, the sound design and special effects, the costumes and choice of colours, the set designs... and we pulled it off. Everyone was on top of their game.

## **MICHAËL R. ROSKAM (DIRECTOR) BIOGRAPHY**

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Michaël R. Roskam was born in 1972 in Sint-Truiden (Belgium). He attended the St. Lucas Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels, where he studied Painting and contemporary art. In 2005, he graduated from the Binger Film Institute in Amsterdam with a master's degree in script writing and development.

He was also a journalist for Flemish newspaper "De Morgen". Racer and the Jailbird is his third feature film after the internationally acclaimed film Bullhead in 2011 (Oscar® and César nominee for Best Foreign Language Film) and The Drop, a dark crime film with Tom Hardy, Noomi Rapace and the late James Gandolfini playing the lead roles.

## **FILMOGRAPHY**

**THE DROP** (2014 - USA) feature film  
**BULLHEAD** (2011 - BE) feature film  
**TODAY IS FRIDAY** (2007) short film  
**THE ONE THING TO DO** (2005) short film  
**CARLO** (2004) short film  
**HAUN** (2002) short film

## **INTERVIEW WITH MATTHIAS SCHOENAERTS**

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### **YOU'VE KNOWN MICHAËL FOR A LONG TIME. HOW DO YOU WORK TOGETHER?**

Michaël and I are really good friends and we just talk a lot, so there is no pattern in the creative process, or method. We talk and exchange ideas, we fantasise and we dream like little kids: "Maybe we should have this?" or "What do you think of this!" That goes back and forth for years, and it's a very playful process. At a certain point, Michael starts working on a particular idea and shaping it, and maybe we'll talk about other things. Then he comes back to me after six months or so, and we take it again from there.

### **DO YOU RECALL WERE THE CHARACTER OF GIGI CAME FROM?**

It's hard to say, because the process lasted five or six years, but one of the constant elements was to get away from the archetypical and stereotypical gangster. You always think that they are heavy, brooding, dark characters, but we wanted to look for something different. So even though Gigi is still a heavyweight gangster and a thug, we asked ourselves: what does an elegant gangster look like, someone refined, soft-spoken?

### **HOW DOES THAT PLAY OUT IN HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH BIBI?**

We have to believe that this girl can fall madly in love with this guy, and vice versa. It's not that she is fascinated by a dark, mysterious figure and has a crazy one-night stand. No, we have to believe that this is a love that consumes them for years. And the audience has to want them to be together.

### **SO, THE LOVE IS HEAVY, NOT THE GANGSTER...**

Gigi has a very boyish persona. He's not malicious by nature, he's not calculating. A lot of gangsters seem to have dead eyes, but Gigi is alive. There's still this teenager in him, there's

something vibrant in him. And he's like Bibi, he's driven by adrenalin: it's the car, it's life, it's adventure. It's energy discovering itself through someone else, it's falling in love with that. And I find that an interesting concept.

### **IS IT A CHALLENGE TO PORTRAY A CHARACTER WHO IS SO MUCH IN LOVE?**

That's why I think this love is so interesting: it's absolute. But in the performance, it doesn't build up. His love is absolute all the time. There is no going there, he is permanently there, all the time. So, you need to feel the need, the desire and the fear. It's all-in, all the time, and that's complicated to play, because how do you bring shades into that? Luckily there are all kinds of different scenes in the movie that help bring out those textures and colours.

### **DRIVING SEEMS TO BE A GOOD METAPHOR FOR THAT KIND OF LOVE.**

Yes! You're on the edge. You've done this curve a billion times, but every time you are going to look for a way of taking it even faster. It's the speed, the fear that you are going to crash and then... doing it! It's the desire for adrenalin, it's the heartbeat, it's blood pumping...

### **HOW DO YOU BRING ACROSS SUCH INTENSITY?**

I know I can do it, because it's what I do as an actor, but it's not science. I know I can get myself there, but I don't really know how to do it.

### **HOW WAS WORKING WITH ADÈLE?**

She's fearless. She's also all-in, which is why she's the right actress for this role. She's magnetic on screen and just captures your attention. She's super intelligent in her reading of scenes, and the way she feels the layers that are there. She's also a little bit of street thug as well, so there is an attitude there that combines with her charisma. She's really in touch with her femininity as well, and she is able to express that in a very intelligent way. On top of all that, she's a lot of fun. In the moment itself, it's just fun to act with her. I had a blast.

### **THIS IS YOUR THIRD FEATURE WITH MICHAËL. WAS IT DIFFERENT ON SET?**

We both have more experience, so of course we've both grown through the years. But our friendship and our mutual understanding have grown as well. There's a complicity and an understanding there that makes working together really nice. We're really passionate about what we do, so we really enjoy being on set, even if it's very hard work. For us, it's a combination of fun and extreme focus, and we can go from one to the other in a split second.

### **HAVE YOU DONE ACTION SEQUENCES LIKE THIS BEFORE?**

Yes, but not to this extent, and that's the fun part. Michael knows how to respect the existential nature of his story, but at the same time he wants to make really great cinema moments. So, first of all I enjoy seeing my friend enjoy himself that much. And at the same time, it's fun for me, too, because I know he's creating a really strong cinematic moment.

### **YET DESPITE THESE GENRE MOMENTS, IT'S NOT A GENRE FILM.**

It doesn't have the typical plot of a crime film. Usually the heist goes wrong and the love story is determined by that. This film is different, it's driven by emotions instead of by the plot. And that's Michael's talent. He goes into a genre but really gives it a personal twist.

### **IS THAT WHAT MAKES THIS FILM STAND OUT FOR YOU?**

In these days, when there is so much cynicism going on, I think this film is a kind of antidote. The tagline of the film is: "Would you fight for something that is already lost?" Well, yes, if you love it you will. And that's why I think this film is important. It deliberately and explicitly portrays this absolute form of romantic love.

## **MATTHIAS SCHOENAERTS (GINO 'GIGI' VANOIRBEEK) BIOGRAPHY**

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Matthias Schoenaerts made his film debut at the age of 13 in *Daens* (1992), which was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. He is best known for his roles as Filip in *Loft* (2008), Jacky Vanmarsenille in the Oscar®-nominated *Bullhead* (2011), Ali in *Rust and Bone* (2012), Eric Deeds in *The Drop* (2014), Bruno von Falk in *Suite Française* (2015), Gabriel Oak in *Far from the Madding Crowd* (2015) and Hans Axlil in *The Danish Girl* (2015).

In 2013, he won the César Award for Most Promising Actor for *Rust and Bone*. In 2011, he won several prizes for *Bullhead*. *Loft* is the highest earning Belgian film ever at the domestic box office.

Our Souls at Night, in which he stars next to Robert Redford and Jane Fonda will have its world première in Venice (2017). In 2018, he will appear in Thomas Vinterberg's *Kursk*.

## **INTERVIEW WITH ADELÉ EXARCHOPOULOS**

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### **WHAT WAS IS THAT ATTRACTED YOU IN THE CHARACTER OF BIBI?**

From the start I thought it was wonderful how independent she was and how well she adapted to new situations, but it was mainly her mental resilience and pride that appealed to me. Also how she treats Gigi, how she loves him in spite of – or rather thanks to – his flaws. Even more than his looks, it's his scars and his dark side that draw her in.

### **WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HER RELATIONSHIP WITH GIGI?**

Bibi lives for Gigi and I rather like the rapport that they have. One can't live without the other. She needs him even though she is very independent. He helps her step out of her own shadow, he eases her loneliness but he always respects the person she is. Because he needs her as well. She guides him through life like a beacon in the night. Still, the film does not reveal everything about Bibi. Some aspects of her personality and past are left to the viewer to fill in or interpret. For instance, how did she manage to survive without her mother? And why does she let Gigi get away with so much? I myself had to find out the answers to these questions as I was reading the script and then playing the part. The viewer will have to do the same but that's okay. Such is life, after all. We all carry secrets even those closest to us know nothing about.

### **HOW DID YOU PREPARE FOR THE PART?**

By obtaining my driving licence! I didn't have one yet. I flunked twice but the third time was the charm, just three days before filming started. They let me drive such expensive cars that I felt it was only natural that I get my licence, if only out of respect. I also delved into what drives Bibi. She's a very dignified and proud individual, that's what I admire most about her. I focused very heavily on that aspect.

### **ARE YOU ALSO A SPEED DEVIL?**

Oh no, speed frightens me tremendously. Except in amusement parks, I like it when thrill rides frighten me. What we do have in common is that urge to go looking for danger and uncertainty. Both in life and in love.

### **WITH GIGI IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT, WHEREAS BIBI WEIGHED HER OPTIONS AT FIRST. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON HOW THEIR RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPS?**

She protects herself at first. But she is willing to pull out all the stops for him. Also, she has no desire to change him, she wants him to keep his freedom. I quite like that thought. I see their relationship as something obvious. They don't feel like defending their choice for each other to others. They just want to let their love for each other run its course.

## **HOW WAS IT TO WORK WITH MATTHIAS?**

Incredible. He's so generous, modest, cheerful and intense. He doesn't hold back and always stays true to himself.

## **HE IS A BIG GUY BUT AT TIMES IN THE FILM YOU HAVE TO DOMINATE HIM. HOW HARD WAS THAT?**

To be able to dominate someone first you have to subjugate yourself, or at least create the impression that you are subjugating yourself. Anyway, that's how I see it.

## **IT'S NOT THE ONLY PHYSICAL CHALLENGE BIBI FACES. HOW DID YOU PREPARE FOR THAT ASPECT OF THE STORY?**

I simply put my faith in my body and the people in make-up. But I have to watch what I say because I don't want to give away the ending. One thing I can say is that it was fascinating to undergo that transformation.

## **HOW WAS IT TO WORK WITH MICHAËL?**

I have so much admiration for him. I was completely blown away by the poetic power of Bullhead and the way in which he made that film. He was so exuberant during filming, it almost seemed as if it was his first time out. He is modest and generous. He is never pushy or domineering, he does everything just right. He has the mind of a grown man and the eye of a child.

## **HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE HIS DIRECTING STYLE? DID YOU HAVE A LOT OF FREEDOM OR DOES HE KEEP A FIRM GRIP ON THE REINS?**

He is a team player and it shows. He lets do your thing while still directing you and striving for perfection. That's what I call true talent. I've never had so much fun on the set as during the filming of Racer and the Jailbird. The whole team was closely knit and we had so much fun. It was a pleasure to be able to work for someone whose ego doesn't get in the way and who simply enjoys making something beautiful. This film is about an intense love relationship and Michaël has found an intelligent and visually attractive way of rendering the flaws and dilemmas of the main characters without the viewer feeling the need to pass judgment.

## **ADÈLE EXARCHOPOULOS (BÉNÉDICTE 'BIBI' DELHANY) BIOGRAPHY**

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Adèle Exarchopoulos is known for her leading performance as Adèle in Blue Is the Warmest Colour, a role that brought her worldwide attention and critical acclaim. She became the youngest artist ever to be awarded the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival. She also won the Trophée Chopard Award for Female Revelation of the Year at the 2014 Cannes Film Festival and received a total of 37 other nominations for her performance, including the César Award for Most Promising Actress.

## **CAST**

GINO 'GIGI' VANOIRBEEK  
BÉNÉDICTE 'BIBI' DELHANY  
FREDDY DELHANY  
SERGE FLAMAND  
YOUNES BOUHKRIS  
BERNARD 'NARDO' DELHANY  
SANDRA  
BENZE  
PRISON MANAGER  
ERIC LEJEUNE

MATTHIAS SCHOENAERTS  
ADÈLE EXARCHOPOULOS  
ERIC DE STAERCKE  
JEAN-BENOÎT UGEUX  
NABIL MISSOUMI  
THOMAS COUMANS  
NATHALIE VAN TONGELEN  
KEREM CAN  
SAM LOUWYCK  
FABIEN MAGRY

MIKE  
STÉPHANIE  
BANK MANAGER

GIANNI LA ROCCA  
ANAËLLE POTDEVIN  
STEFAN DEGAND

## **CREW**

DIRECTED BY  
SCREENPLAY BY

MICHAËL R. ROSKAM  
THOMAS BIDEgain  
NOÉ DEBRÉ  
AND

PRODUCED BY

MICHAËL R. ROSKAM  
PIERRE-ANGE LE POGAM (STONE ANGELS)  
BART VAN LANGENDONCK (SAVAGE FILM)  
PETER BOUCKAERT (EYEWORCS FILM & TV DRAMA)  
ROMAIN LE GRAND (PATHÉ)  
VIVIEN ASLANIAN (PATHÉ)  
ARDAVAN SAFAEE (PATHÉ)  
VINCENT MARAVAL (WILD BUNCH)  
BRAHIM CHIOUA (WILD BUNCH)  
JEAN-YVES ROUBIN (FRAKAS PRODUCTIONS)  
CASSANDRE WARNAUTS (FRAKAS PRODUCTIONS)  
MAARTEN SWART (KAAP HOLLAND FILM)

CO-PRODUCED BY

BRUNO FELIX (SUBLA)  
FEMKE WOLTING (SUBLA)  
GUIDO DEKEYSER (EYEWORCS FILM & TV DRAMA)  
ARLETTE ZYLBERBERG (RTBF - TÉLÉVISION BELGE)  
PHILIPPE LOGIE (VOO AND BETV)

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PRODUCTION MANAGER

LOCATION MANAGER

1ST AD

D O P

EDITING

SOUND

SOUND EDITING

MIX

ART DIRECTOR

COSTUMES

MAKE UP

VISUAL EFFECTS

ORIGINAL SCORE