

PRESS KIT

*These boys
will go to
any lengths*

JEAN-YVES ROUBIN
DANIEL MORIN
BART LANGENDONCK
PRESENT

Maroccan
GIGGOLOS

A FILM BY ISMAËL SAIDI

**EDDY
KING**

**FRANÇOIS
ARNAUD**

**REDA
CHEBCHOUBI**



TECHNICAL CREDITS

DCP/Bluray/HDCAM SR

82 minutes

Color – 1.85 – Surround 5.1

Three childhood friends dream of opening a snack-bar. But for that, they'll need money. Lots of money. And fast.

But none can hold down a job...until one day when Samir meets a beautiful bourgeois lady...who offers to pay him for a few moments of happiness.

Thus are born the Moroccan Gigolos.

SYNOPSIS

Three childhood friends: Samir, Nicolas and Dede dream of opening a snack-bar. They've even found the perfect place, right in front of a high school.

Not to miss out on such a perfect opportunity, they put all their savings towards the deposit. They've got to somehow find the rest of the money before the end of the month. But the rest of the financing is a lot of money, especially when you can't keep a job.

Just as they're on the point of throwing in the towel, they crash into another vehicle, driven by an attractive woman. Making matters worse, they're clearly in the wrong. Catastrophe with a capital 'C'. But the lady, a little rattled and disoriented, is unable to complete the paperwork on site. She asks Samir to take her home, where she promises to complete the required formalities.

Samir rejoins his friends with the claim resolved in their favour and an extra two hundred euros in his pocket, explaining that she only wanted a few moments of happiness. Samir keeps saying "I'm not a whore, guys" – but Dede has just stumbled on the great idea that will save their under-financed snack bar dream: creating a gigolo agency!

The perfect name even flashes to mind: the Moroccan Gigolos.

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR ISMAËL SAIDI

Ismaël, *Moroccan Gigolos* is your first Belgian feature film – but not your first film, or your first feature. Can you give us an overview of your young yet prolific career in Belgium and Morocco?

I began my career writing screenplays for other directors. As things progressed, I increasingly wanted to tell my stories by actually filming them. I made five short films, the first four of which sold very well internationally. The most recent one, *Loin des yeux*, was selected in competition at the Venice Film Festival. I was then lucky enough to be contacted by 2M, a Moroccan television broadcaster, who asked me to write and direct a TV movie, a comedy. It was a great hit with the public, and it eventually became a series of thirty 45-minute episodes! It was a daunting task, but enjoyable for a young writer-director like myself. The series has been a monster hit in every country where it's been broadcast, pretty much around the world via satellite. It even became something of a social phenomenon, since it reached 28% of the audience. After that, I wanted to get away from comedy for a bit, and I made the historical drama feature, *Ahmed Gassiaux*. The film was a critical success and had a great festival run. I then wanted to try my hand in live theatre, and I wrote and directed two plays: *Heureux qui comme Ulysse* and *Ceci n'est plus un couple!*. Both have been well-received by the public. In fact, *Ceci n'est plus un couple!* is still touring in France and Belgium.

What distinguishes this first experience with Frakas Productions from others you'd experienced to date?

Let's start off by saying the experience with Frakas Productions is my first film financed by Belgian institutions! I'd wanted to work with Jean-Yves Roubin for a long time. We took time to properly develop the film and that allowed us to build a relationship of trust. This is probably why things have gone well. In the film industry, a close, trusting relationship between director and producer is worth its weight in gold!

The core idea of *Moroccan Gigolos* is very funny – how did you come upon it?

When I wrote the first line, I saw Samir telling his friends that “Moroccan Gigolos” would sell better than “Belgian Gigolos”. It made me laugh and it became the title. I know the title is kind of pathetic and kitschy: it perfectly reflects my gigolos' naivety. They don't see beyond the tip of their nose. Their ideas seem clear, yet they have no awareness of the consequences of their actions. This title represents all of that for me. It also has ambiguity. It alludes to three things: the sex appeal of another era's slang, a fantasy evocation of Sahara dunes, and the darker note of prostitution.

A black man, a white man, and an Arab? This truly *is* the “united colors of comedy.” You're obviously not over-concerned with ‘political correctness’?

Who cares whether they're black, white, or Arab?! That debate is stale. These are just three guys ... from Brussels. Period. And if it's politically correct or not, who cares? On the plus side, it means that the world has finally changed and it makes sense to have a black and an Arab among a movie's headliners!

With the constraints of a co-production and your clearly typed characters, was casting difficult?

Let's say it wasn't the most straight-forward phase. But I was lucky enough to have producers on both sides of the Atlantic who understood the trio and helped me to form the one I wanted, taking into account the production's constraints. I don't like the word “constraints” – because I honestly viewed the situation as a real opportunity for a broad range of meetings and choices. I realize saying that is *also* politically correct – but in this case it's 100% true!

It wasn't only a question of finding three actors, but of ensuring that their interaction would be credible and dynamic. How did you manage that?

We all met two weeks before and spent evenings together with friends, just kind of messing around. The risk, of course, was that the chemistry wouldn't work. But, guess what? It did!

Reda Chebchoubi isn't unknown to you. When watching the film, we sense that he is your alter ego in the film, your reflection...

Yes, I'll admit I scoured a few bars in my youth on the lookout for cougars, so I didn't dare play the role myself, lest they recognize me...! But seriously, Reda is an actor I grew up watching, in the professional sense, and he has an incredible talent. He has this "everyman" quality that I love in movie characters—and, on top of that, he's a great guy! There's been a certain symbiosis between Reda and me for a few years now – in the theater and on screen – and I'll admit that sometimes, on a few occasions, I transpose a little of myself on to him. But don't tell him I told you that – or he'll wind up with a big head!

You write, you direct, but you also act for the stage – most notably, with Audrey Devos in *Ceci n'est plus un couple!*. Have you ever been tempted to make a 'grand slam' of it and also appear before the camera?

Strangely enough, I *hate* acting in front of a camera. In fact, what I particularly love about the theater is that "big leap" of risk. If the audience doesn't like you, you get it square between the eyes. And since it's a comedy that I've been acting onstage in – well, if they don't laugh... you get the message loud and clear! The "cheating" side of film just doesn't excite me as an actor. But I have put in cameos in all my film projects. Even in *Moroccan Gigolos* – watch the movie closely... I have my fleeting 'Hitchcock' moment.

You have the reputation of having a fertile imagination and of writing quickly. Was that also the case for *Moroccan Gigolos*?

Yes, very quickly even. The TV series that I wrote was a real revelation of my abilities in that respect. I had to write around 1800 pages in five months – writing at night and filming during the day. A lot of producers find that scary. In addition, I'm a "workaholic" and sometimes I just can't stop. As my wife would say, "Ismaël's way of resting between writing two screenplays... is to write a screenplay!" In fact, truth be told, I don't actually consider writing a job. For me, it's more of a vital need. I've also never written a script thinking about it being produced. I just write stories, I put them in a drawer and one day I take them out and give them to a producer. One might say that I have an illness and that writing is my medicine. To return to *Moroccan Gigolos* – yes, I wrote it very quickly, but I won't tell you just how quickly, since you probably wouldn't believe me anyway... And if my producer knew, he suddenly wouldn't want to pay me...!

You write, you direct, and you then follow the film's post-production. What's your favorite phase of the overall process?

Post is a magnificent phase of the creative process. I have this sense of power, of getting back to the text using machines. And since I'm a true geek – well, I like to keep a finger in all stages of post-production! I love shooting too, because that's where you first really hear your words spoken by the actors. And I swear to you on that first day, when I first heard what I'd written late one night in pajamas in my office, coming out of François Arnaud's mouth – well, it really was something!

Were there any periods of doubt? Any segments that were harder than expected to pull off? How did you overcome them?

During post-production, we had to find the right pace for a comedy. We tried dozens of different ones. And since I'm a comedy writer who doesn't find my scripts funny, I had trouble believing that the public would laugh while watching the movie. We held a test screening, and when I heard the whole audience laughing, then the doubts vanished.



What's the best memory you have from *Moroccan Gigolos*?

Since we laughed every day of the shoot, there are thousands of them. But, if I had to pick one, it would probably be the first day of shooting when I saw the whole team – some of whom came from the other side of the Atlantic – just working their butts off to allow *me* to tell the story I'd written up on the big screen... Well, I thought that life couldn't really get much better, could it?

Belgium produces few comedies. Did you find it difficult to carry out your project?

It's something of a paradox. In Belgium, we love to laugh, we love to make others laugh, but in film it's a bit of a taboo. Maybe we've got a complex because of France. Reactions like "Ah, a comedy, yes... – but it isn't a *film d'auteur*." When I hear that, I want to say "I suppose that means my film wrote itself, on auto-pilot, without any help?" But Jean-Yves Roubin and Daniel Morin, the film's producers, did an amazing job financing this film. And they succeeded. I'm proud of them, because though they may not yet realize it, they've opened a breach through which I think hundreds of gremlins like me will pass through. I was willing to produce the film on a shoe-string, but Jean-Yves has always refused. He insisted that we have the same money as for any other film.

And for that I'm eternally grateful to them. Belgian comedy has a promising future, and my producers are largely responsible for opening up its possibilities.

Your film will be released in November with a lot of fanfare. How do you think it will be received by the public?

I love the contact with people. I love hearing them laugh. I love to hear their thoughts and comments, even negative ones – so I'm truly looking forward to the moment when they finally meet my gigolos face to face. This film is (thankfully) not auto-biographical, but it contains hundreds of little fragments of me that I look forward to sharing with people.

The film will be distributed in Belgium by Kinopolis Film Distribution, who clearly have high ambitions for *Gigolos* – along with the means to fulfill them. In Quebec, there's also a great deal of enthusiasm in the air about the project. So would it be safe to presume you're living a dream for now...?

Well frankly, yeah! I didn't really expect this. When you're working on a film, you don't have time to stop and ask yourself these kinds of questions. You're too busy working non-stop on the images and the script. Then you hear that a distributor is interested. I've been around the block a few times, and I realize the huge opportunity this represents, and I savour it. Well,... you're actually freaking me out a bit with your question...

THE CAST

FRANCOIS ARNAUD – In the role of Nicolas



Since graduating from the Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Montréal in 2007, François Arnaud has built a notable reputation in theatre. At the Conservatory, he worked under the direction of such major talents as Claude Poissant, Hugo Bélanger and Patricia Nolin.

On television, he has been seen in Patrick Huard's *Taxi 0-22*, in Richard Roy's *The Double Life of Eleanor Kendall* and in Michel D'Astous and Anne Boyer's *Yamaska*. His performance also earned him a Gemini Award nomination in 2010.

On the big screen, Francis appeared in *Les grandes chaleurs*, a film by Sophie Lorain, written by Michel Marc Bouchard – he played Yannick alongside Marie-Thérèse Fortin. He also starred as Antonin in the film *J'ai tué ma mère*, written and directed by Xavier Dolan, winner of numerous international awards, including the Cannes Film Festival in 2010.

Over the past three years, he has incarnated Cesar Borgia alongside Jeremy Irons in high-budget series *The Borgias*, directed by Neil Jordan and broadcast on Showtime. More recently, François joined the cast of the American feature film *Copperhead*, directed by Ron Maxwell.

REDA CHEBCHOUBI – In the role of Samir

In 1998, Reda Chebchoubi began working in film, landing his first role, as “Camel” in Elst Dietvorst's *The Return of the Swallows*.

After this initial experience, he took on numerous roles, in both short and feature-length films. In 2005, in order to familiarize himself with the technical aspect of film world, he took “film-making” courses in the evening. He emerged at the top of the class in this venture with the completion of his first short film *Coeurs Brisés* (Winner of the Audience Award, in March 2006's Week against Racism Festival).



In 2008, he collaborated with Ismaël Saïdi for the first time on the Moroccan web series *Yah Biladi*. He also starred in Mourad Boucif's *Les Larmes d'Argent*.

In 2009, he continued his career with Brahim Chkiri's *Vengeance* as well as Eric Lavaine's *Protéger et server* with Kad Merrad and Clovis Cornillac.

In 2010, he took on several key roles, in Farid Metioui's *Jamal Disco II* and Said Naciri's *Les Frangins*.

He then reunited with Ismaël Saïdi onstage for *Heureux qui comme Ulysse* (Theatre 2010), *Soins à Domicile* (a TV movie, 2012) and, of course, *Moroccan Gigolos* in 2013.

EDDY KING - In the role of Dede

Born of Congolese origin in the suburbs of Paris, France, Eddy moved to Québec as a teenager. It was through rap music that he discovered his artistic abilities, forming the group Dögone Tribe with his friends.

His attraction to the stage and its many entertainment opportunities lead him to discover a blossoming passion for “stand up” comedy.

Finding his niche, he set out to nurture his talents as a comedian. But it was only in 2007 that he began receiving broad recognition, most notably via *Concours de la relève Juste Pour Rire* (Just for Laughs – the Next Generation). He was then a finalist on the *En route vers mon premier Gala*. In 2009, he was invited to participate in Rachid Badouri’s Gala, where he presented an original number entitled *Tintin in the Congo*, which charmed both the audience and the Montreal media. This, in turn, led to a nomination as “Discovery of the Year” at 2009’s Just for Laughs Festival. Since then, his growing success has earned him the opening spot on Rachid Badouri’s recent Quebec tour *Arrête ton Cinéma*.

His reputation precedes him. Just for Laughs has asked him to produce his first One Man Show. The critical praise was unanimous after his recent show at Theatre St-Denis. Since then, he has toured the province of Quebec.



TINE EMBRECHTS- In the role of the Realtor

Born in 1975, Tine Embrechts received her degree in dramatic arts with honors in 1997 from Herman Teirlinck’s Studio. Since 1994, she has been part of the *De Kakkewieten* theatre company, which has received great success and acclaim in Flanders.

In 1995, their play was broadcast on television (*De Vliegende Doos et De Liegende Doos*), raising the performers to national celebrities. In parallel, she has collaborated with other theater companies including: *Het Toneelhuis, Stan, Laika, Bronks* and *Hetpaleis*.

Thereafter, she has grown increasingly popular through comic roles in the *Het Peulengaleis* television series. A dozen of other TV roles followed (*Anneliezen, Los Zand, Quiz me Quick*).

In 2009, she made her big screen debut in Pieter Van Hees’ comedy *Dirty Mind*.



GUYLAINE TREMBLAY – In the role of Catherine

Guylaine Tremblay has shared many facets of her talent, both on stage and in film and television. Greatly loved by the public, she received the Metro-Star award as Female Personality of the Year in 2005, and the Artis Prize as Female Personality of the Year in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009.



On stage, she played some beautiful roles such as Madeleine in Michel Tremblay's *Albertine en cinq temps*, which was later adapted for television, thus earning her a Gemini Award for Best Actress in a Supporting Role in 2000.

She is fondly remembered for Alexis Martin's play, *Matroni et moi*, which was also later brought to the big screen in 1998, as well as Serge Boucher's play *24 poses*, the television adaptation, which earned Guylaine Tremblay another Gemini Award as Best Actress in 2003. She was part of the cast in Michel Tremblay's *Belles-soeurs*, directed by René Richard Cyr and set to music by Daniel Bélanger. She then toured with *Ça se joue à deux*, a play written by the team of Piérard Dansereau.

On television, we enjoyed her performance in *La petite vie*, playing the colorful character of Caro – which earned her yet another Gemini Award in 2003 – but it was her character of Annie in *Annie et ses hommes*, which she incarnated for seven years, earning the public *cote d'or* and three more Gemini Awards for Best Actress in a Drama Series, and thus raising her status to being among Quebec television's true immortals. She has also been involved in *Les Rescapés*, directed by Claude Desrosiers and Francis Leclerc.

Since September 2012, viewers have followed her in the popular *Unité 9* series. On the big screen, Guylaine Tremblay has participated in over a dozen productions. Recently, we enjoyed her performance in Bernard Émond's *Contre toute espérance*, for which she won the Best Actress Jutra in 2008. Her role in *Le grand départ* also earned her another Jutra nomination in 2009, and more recently she can be seen in Catherine Martin's *Trois temps après la mort d'Anna*.

STEPHANIE VAN Vyve – In the role of Clementine

Before acting on the stage and on the web, Stephanie worked as a school teacher, and loved it. It seems the role of Clementine was made for her...



Today, biking through the city – connecting theaters and film studios – she has starred in over 30 plays, along with a dozen short films, some television series and a few feature films. She acts, writes plays and skits, and hosts theater workshops. She's a founding member of the *Fabuleuse Troupe* in which she acts, writes, directs, and is an administrator... The rest of the time she is a passionate dilettante, pushed on by an enthusiastic curiosity and a desire to make life fun, and bring fun to life.

The 2013-2014 season, along with the launching of *Moroccan Gigolos*, she can be seen onstage in *Je mens tu mens* (Théâtre des Martyrs), in *Les gens bien n'osent plus sortir le soir* at the Riches-Clares, in *Un air de famille* and *Chaos* at the Jean Vilar Atelier Théâtre and *Le voyage d'Alice en Suisse* at the Théâtre de Poche.



CAST

Samir
Nicolas
Dédé
Clémentine
Catherine
Real Estate Agent
Geneviève
Cliente Dédé
Sylvie

Reda Chebchoubi
François Arnaud
Eddy King
Stéphanie Van Vyve
Guylaine Tremblay
Tine Embrechts
Astrid Whettnall
Bambina Liberatore
Elise Larnicol

CREW

Director – Writer
Executive Producers

Co-Producer

Production Manager

First Assistant Director

Script Girl
Casting Director
Cinematographer
Sound Engineer
Boom Operator
Costume Designer
Head Makeup Artist / Hairdresser
Production Designer
Editor
Sound Editor
Mixer
Original Music Composer

Ismaël Saidi
Jean-Yves Roubin
Daniel Morin
Bart Van Langendonck

Thierry Baudrais

Caroline Tambour

Fanny Bellavance
Christophe Hermans
Jean-Pierre Gauthier
Jean-Sébastien Roy
Anick Fleury
Fanny Sun Klinkenberg
Joan Patricia Parris
Igor Gabriel
Thijs Van Nuffel
Valène Leroy
Mathieu Cox
Roger Coderre

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

ISMAEL SAIDI – Writer / Director

Born in Saint-Josse-ten-Node (Belgium) in 1976, he grew up and lived all his life in Schaerbeek. Having graduated with a degree in Public Relations and Social Sciences, Ismaël Saïdi wrote several short films and started directing with *Les uns contre les autres*, *Marie-Madeleine*, *Beaucoup de bruit*, *Absurde* and *Loin des yeux*. His television movie, *Rhimou*, shattered all audience viewing records in Morocco. In 2010, he wrote and directed *Ahmed Gassiaux*, his first feature film.

He has recently completed *Moroccan Gigolos*, his second feature film, a comedy about multi-culturalism...

JEAN-PIERRE GAUTHIER – Cinematographer

Jean-Pierre Gauthier was born in Jonquière, Quebec, on March 30th, 1972. Soon after completing his BFA, he founded the SPYKEFILM production company with two other partners, through which he has served as director of photography on over three hundred different productions.

For the past eight years, he has worked as a freelancer with many advertising firms, as well as on documentaries, shorts and feature films. In addition to these, he has also worked on several television series, including *Fortier* and *Défect inc.*, as well as on several features, such as *Night Wave*, *Going for Broke* and *Deadly Betrayal*.

Jean-Pierre has served as Director of Photography on more than twenty short, medium, and feature-length films. His talents are on full display in Jim Donovan's *Pure*, which took the "Best Cinematography" prize at Toronto's Canadian Filmmaker awards in 2006. It was also in 2006 that Martin Talbot's *L'annulaire gauche* received the prestigious "Audience Award" at the Drummondville Festival. Among his other achievements is Salif Traore's feature *Faro, La reine des eaux*. In 2007, this film proved a great success at over forty international festivals.



THIJS VAN NUFFEL – Editor

Having graduated in 2010 from RITS in Brussels as a "picture editor", Thijs Van Nuffel declined numerous studio jobs to devote himself full time to editing and the creation of a large number of short student films from a variety of film schools.

Having honed his craft on these smaller projects, in 2012, he accepted the position of assistant-editor with Nico Leunen (*Altiplano*, *Kid*, *The Broken Circle Breakdown...*)

In 2013, Nico Leunen offered him the opportunity to become head picture editor on *Moroccan Gigolos*, his first major project.



IGOR GABRIEL – Production Designer

In the film business for over 15 years, Igor Gabriel is the benchmark for Production Designers.

He was Production Designer for the Dardenne brothers since their debut with *La promesse*, and has collaborated closely with them through their various projects.

Originally from Liège, Igor also oversaw set design on Gérard Corbiau's *Le roi Danse* and on Pierre Grimblat's *Lisa*.

In 2004, he was responsible for the design, construction and set decoration on the Costa Gavras film *Le couperet*. He has worked closely with numerous Belgian directors, such as Bouli Lanners and Frédéric Fonteyne. More recently, he has worked on Jessica Woodworth and Peter Brossens' *The Fifth Season* and Jacques Audiard's *De rouille et d'os*.

FANNY-SUN KLINKENBERG – Head Costume Designer

Born in 1977 in Seoul (South Korea), Fanny-Sun Klinkenberg is a fashion and costume designer. After completing a degree in architecture in 2002 (ISA St Luc Liège), she found herself following her true childhood passion –for textile and fashion design. She opted to train as a stylist (IFAPME). In 2009, she joined Walter Wright's fashion team in London, UK.

In 2010, Fanny-Sun Klinkenberg launched, in collaborative partnership, her first ready-to-wear ladies' collection: Collette Klinkenberg.

Having long admired her work, it became a natural step for Frakas Productions to offer her to collaborate with them as Head Costume Designer on Ismaël Saïdi's film, *Moroccan Gigolos*.

Frakas Productions



Early on, Jean-Yves Roubin embarked on a career as an Executive Producer, concentrating primarily on feature-length documentary and fiction projects. In 2007, with seven years of experience under his belt, he created Frakas Productions.

Its purpose? Combining the development of special local projects and international co-productions. Its requirements? To produce films that meet market expectations without denying cultural diversity. Always, first and foremost, with a view to his own society.

Associated with the Dardenne brothers and Tarantula Belgium, Frakas Productions also co-founded Cinéfinance SA, an important fundraising Tax Shelter.

An Administrator of Universciné Belgium, Jean-Yves Roubin is also part of its board. He is a member of the ACE Network, of the UPFF (Union des Producteurs de Films Francophones) and of the Film Selection Committee of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels Committee.



Boreal Films



Founded in September 2000, BOREAL FILMS is an independent production company that promotes the emergence of new talent and supports the first bold, international productions of French-language works. Led by Daniel Morin, producer and screenwriter, the company has produced or co-produced, more than a dozen films, including Dany Laferrière's *Comment conquérir l'Amérique en une nuit*, Salif Traore's *Faro, la reine des eaux*, Isabelle D'Amours' *Les mots gelés*, as well as Xavier Dolan's first two films, *J'ai tué ma mère* and *Les amours imaginaires*, which have won numerous international awards.

In 2012, their latest feature film, *Hors les murs* by Belgian filmmaker David Lambert, won the Audience Award (Rail d'Or) at the Semaine de la Critique in Cannes. Still deeply involved in co-productions, Boréal Films recently completed Ismaël Saïdi's *Moroccan Gigolos*, a fun comedy to be released in the Fall of 2013, and Boréal is preparing to shoot a pair of new films: Alain Vézina's *Le scaphandrier*, the first Quebec zombie film, and *Je suis à toi*, David Lambert's second feature.

Filmoption International



Founded over 30 years ago by Maryse Rouillard, Filmoption International specializes in the distribution of feature films and in the sale in Canada and overseas of films, documentaries and television programs. Filmoption represents on an exclusive basis a large number of companies in Quebec and Canada and several foreign companies (USA, France) on international markets. In Quebec, Filmoption imports foreign feature films and documentaries for theatrical exhibition. The company also works closely with several Quebec producers to develop and finance films, documentaries and TV series.