

tiff40 toronto
international
film festival
OFFICIAL SELECTION 2015

FROM THE OSCAR NOMINATED PRODUCER OF *BULLHEAD*

OFFICIALLY SELECTED FOR
FILM FEST GENT

VEERLE BAETENS KEVIN JANSSENS JEROEN PERCEVAL

THE ARDENNES

SAVAGE FILM PRESENTS

A FILM BY ROBIN PRONT

ALL CREDITS NON-CONTRACTUAL

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intro

Bart Van Langendonck, Producer

THE ARDENNES is a raw 'Flemish noir', a crime drama in the tradition of films like A SIMPLE PLAN, GOOD FELLAS or TRAINSPOTTING. Just as in these films, the setting of The Ardennes is a rather poor, almost marginal environment that many of us only know from far. Yet the viewer immediately creates empathy for all the characters because he/she feels that, eventually, they are all just victims of our contemporary society. The Ardennes thereby provides a glimpse into the lower social classes, a growing group in Flanders - today plagued by unemployment and economic handicaps - that tries to make ends meet, and whose future prospects are rather bleak. Their economic situation actually forces them into a criminal lifestyle.

Yet the film is absolutely no social drama: it is an accessible thriller that - as I have experienced in recent weeks - yields new surprises at every viewing, thanks to the witty dialogues interpreted by a top cast, the wonderful camera work of Robbrecht Heyvaert, the excellent 'Bonzai' tracks and the original music of Henry Willems (of Belgium top pop act 'Arsenal').

Robin's award-winning short film "Injury Time", in which Schoenaerts and Jeroen Perceval play somewhat similar characters to the two brothers in The Ardennes, created high expectations for his first feature film. Today it is obvious that the film's ambitions have been reached ; Robin has managed to raise 'The Ardennes' to a level we had also aspired with Bullhead. Robin's future and that of The Ardennes look very promising indeed.

synopsis

Brothers Dave and Kenneth are reunited on Kenneth's release after four years in prison following a failed home invasion. While Kenneth is anxious to dive headfirst into the drug-centered existence that ensnared him in the first place, both Dave and Kenneth's erstwhile girlfriend Sylvie, have adopted clean lifestyles. Drugs, crime and the bonds of brotherhood create this dark crime thriller journey in The Ardennes.



screenwriter's notes

Screenwriter, **Jeroen Perceval**

Initially I never planned to make a film out of *The Ardennes*. Simply because this was the first play I wrote, not yet sure if what I wrote would please. but the story and my dialogue seemed to strike a chord with the public and some friends and strangers told me that there was a good film in it. I had some discussions with potential directors and producers but the idea remained in the drawer until Michael R. Roskam, the director and screenwriter of *Bullhead*, expressed his enthusiasm. I was admitted and I started writing an adaptation of the play at the Binger Institute in Amsterdam. Because of *Bullhead*'s Oscar nomination and the fact that it took more time than expected to write a complete first draft, other things came along Michael's way. I knew that Michael still wanted to do it, but it wasn't sure anymore when. Until Robin Pront, with whom I worked as an actor on the short film *Plan B*, who was very enthusiastic about the story, asked if he could direct it. Robin, who won the International Short Film Festival of Leuven as a student, seemed like the most suitable director for the project. He masters the visual language that was needed for the story and is familiar with the kinds of characters that are featured in the story.

Eventually, I transformed the original play into a full-fledged screenplay. New characters were created and where the play had three main characters, the film script is written from the point of view of one character.

The essence of the story deals with the inability to stand up for oneself and one's surroundings out of fear of rejection. About the moral issue where the boundaries of fraternal loyalty lie, about racism, the inability to deal sensitively with love, and about addiction. About uncontrolled anger, at one's own destiny, an anger that turns itself against oneself and one's loved ones.



director's notes

Director, **Robin Pront**

The Ardennes tells the story of a complex relationship between two brothers, protagonist Dave and his brother Kenneth, who both bear the scars of their shared past, but each dealing with it in their own way.

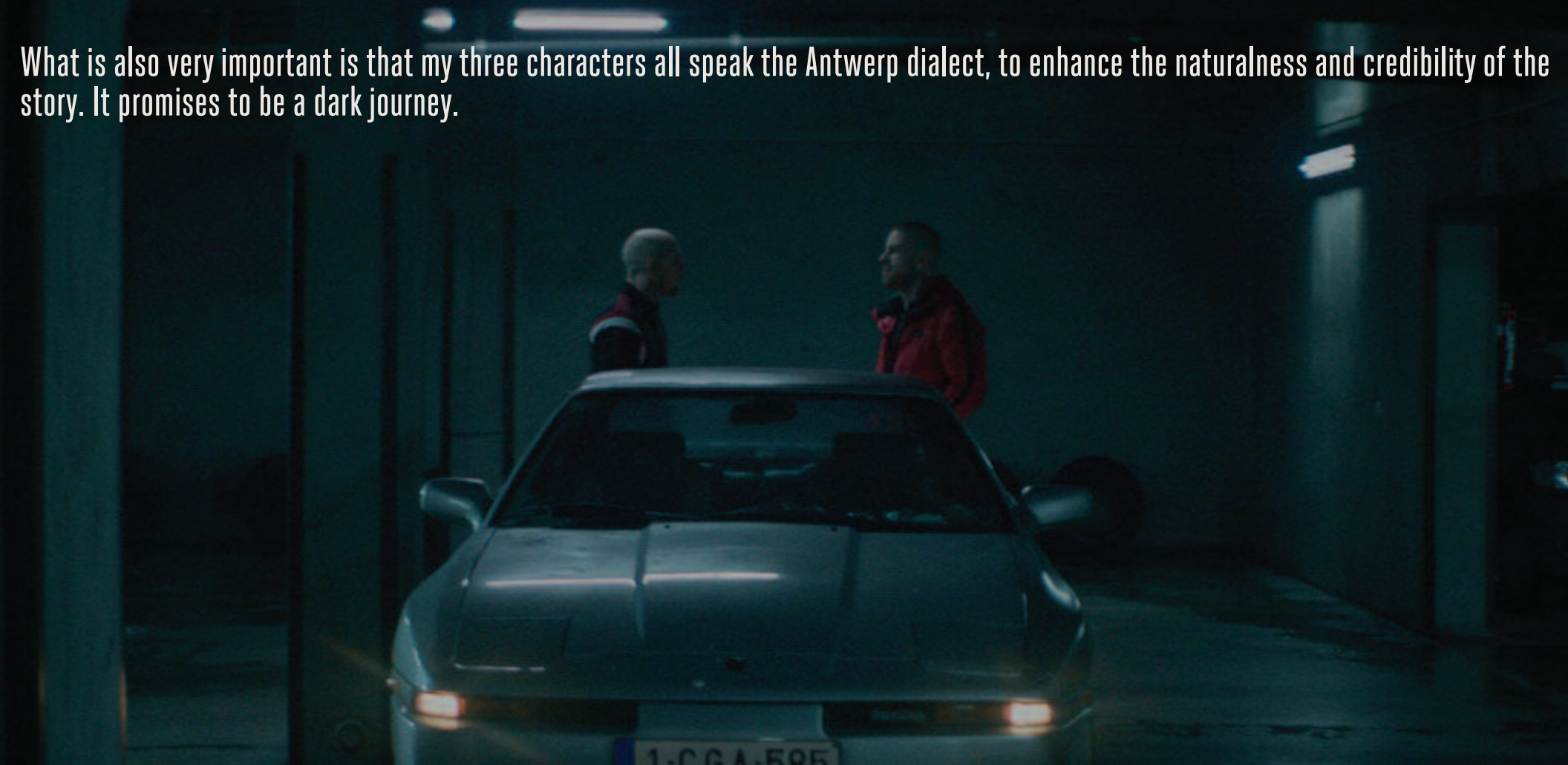
The story, which pays great attention to character development, unfolds like a crime thriller that reaches its climax in the Ardennes (in Wallonia, the French-speaking southern region of Belgium). I wanted to explore the theme of loyalty between brothers and friends, with a specific focus on the harsh environment of these individuals. This is also a recurring theme in my previous short films, characters who act according to standards and values that are different from what is considered normal and who live in a world where violence is the solution and drugs are invariably present. I always had a great affinity for people who live at the margins of society and who seek, consciously or not, extremes. Despite the dark source material, the story also has humorous moments, because humour is a part of life: how people nevertheless try to make things bearable by finding humour in all situations, even if it might be out of place.

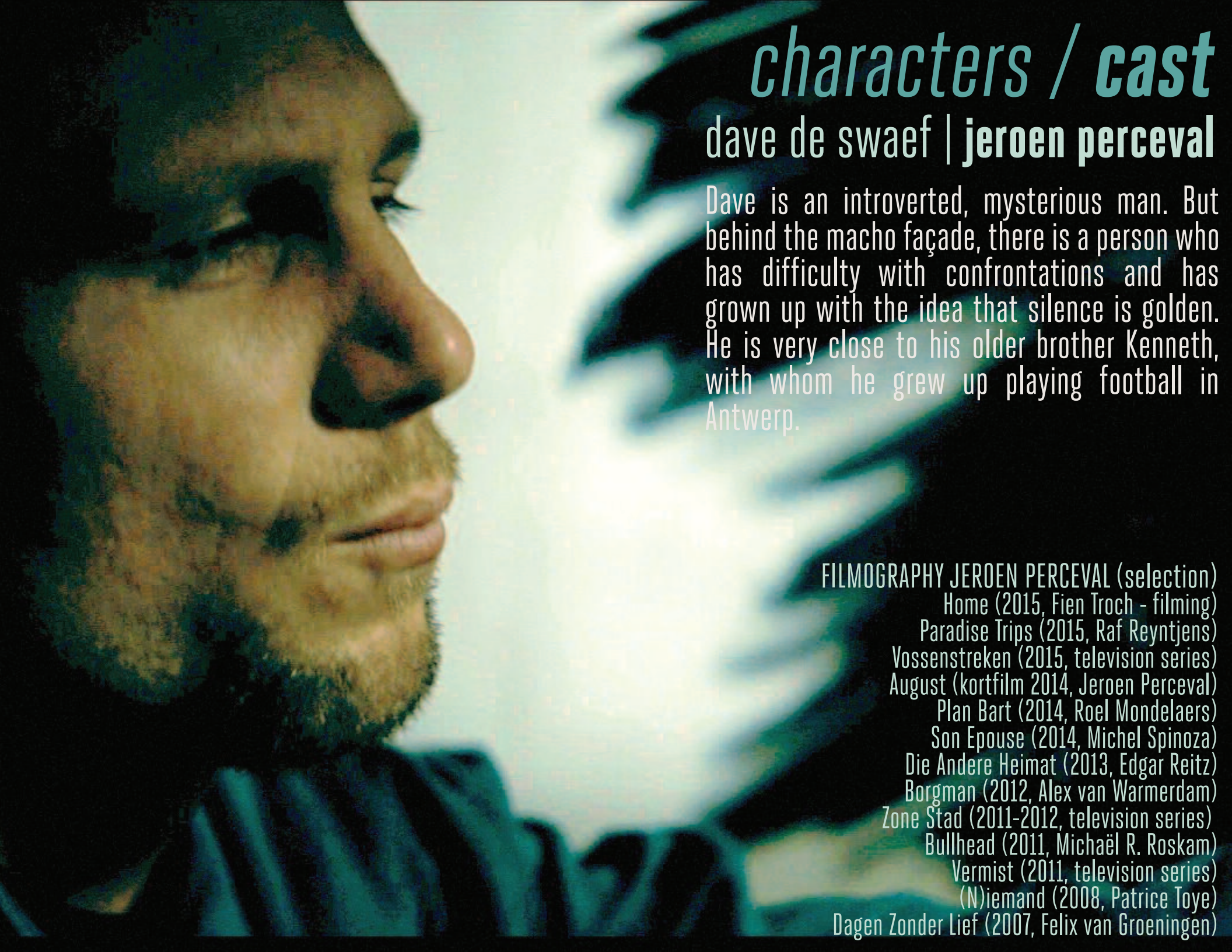
The complicated love triangle between Dave, Sylvie and Kenneth is central to the plot. It is the main thrust of the story. None of the three characters are happy with where they are right now in their lives and, although it is easy to portray Kenneth as the 'bad guy' of the story, this is not what interests me as a filmmaker. I wanted to explore the grey areas between good and evil and to ask myself why people are the way they are and do what they do. After all, everyone is a cute baby at birth - a blank canvas. The answers to the questions of how Kenneth ends up in jail, whose corpse is in the trunk and why it is there, ensure that the characters are always seen in a different light by the viewer, and that is what I want to achieve.

The collaboration with Jeroen Perceval as co-screenwriter gives unique impetus to the script. The stage play on which this script is based has already proven itself and enjoyed much success. But this screen adaptation, also by Jeroen, has been translated in every way possible into the medium of film. While my short films have always contained a certain element of chaos and frenetic camera work, I wanted to take more time in this film to allow the characters and images to breathe, so to speak, in order to strike relentlessly in the third act, where I close in on the protagonists. From the third act onwards, we are in very dense pinewoods, characterised by a certain isolation and obscurity. Just as the Coen brothers and Tarantino often strike a balance between black humour, suspense and character development, I wanted to convey just as effectively the bleakness that British filmmakers portray so strikingly - an excellent example being Shane Meadows.

Jeroen is not only also the author of the film, he also plays one of the main characters. The nervousness with which he plays is perfect for the character of Kenneth.

What is also very important is that my three characters all speak the Antwerp dialect, to enhance the naturalness and credibility of the story. It promises to be a dark journey.





characters / cast

dave de swaef | jeroen perceval

Dave is an introverted, mysterious man. But behind the macho façade, there is a person who has difficulty with confrontations and has grown up with the idea that silence is golden. He is very close to his older brother Kenneth, with whom he grew up playing football in Antwerp.

FILMOGRAPHY JEROEN PERCEVAL (selection)

Home (2015, Fien Troch - filming)

Paradise Trips (2015, Raf Reyntjens)

Vossenstreken (2015, television series)

August (kortfilm 2014, Jeroen Perceval)

Plan Bart (2014, Roel Mondelaers)

Son Epouse (2014, Michel Spinoza)

Die Andere Heimat (2013, Edgar Reitz)

Borgman (2012, Alex van Warmerdam)

Zone Stad (2011-2012, television series)

Bullhead (2011, Michaël R. Roskam)

Vermist (2011, television series)

(N)iemand (2008, Patrice Toye)

Dagen Zonder Lief (2007, Felix van Groenigen)



characters / cast

kenneth de swaef | **kevin janssens**

Kenneth's older brother, Dave, is a dangerous man who differs in many ways from his brother. While Dave can be very vain, Kenneth is much less focused on himself. He is impulsive and struggles with an inferiority complex. He has built up a lot of frustration, he has a short fuse and acts dumber than he really is.

FILMOGRAPHY KEVIN JANSSENS (selection)

Vermist, de Serie (2014, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2008, television series)

Salamander (2012, television series)

Vermist, de Serie IV (2012, television series)

Quiz Me Quick (2012, television series)

Weekend aan Zee (2012, Ilse Somers)

Het Varken van Madonna (2011, Frank Van Passel)

Het Goddelijke Monster (2011, television series)

Smoorverliefd (2010, Hilde Van Mieghem)

Zot van A. (2010, Jan Verheyen)

Vermist, de Film (2007, Jan Verheyen)

De Smaak van De Keyser (2008, television series)

Koning van de Wereld (2010, Guido Henderickx)

Windkracht 10 – Koksijde Rescue (2006, Hans Herbots)

characters / cast

sylvie de winter | **veerle baetens**

Sylvie is very good-looking but insecure. She has a history of bad boyfriends, but Kenneth has brought her unconsciously to a low point in her life. Sylvie, Dave and Kenneth share a drug problem and they all deal with it in different ways.

FILMS (selection)

AU - DELA DES MURS - Herve Hadmar
DES NOUVELLES DE LA PLANETE MARS
THE ARDENNES - 2015
UN DEBUT PROMETTEUR - 2014
HALF WAY - 2013
THE VERDICT - 2013
THE BROKEN CIRCLE BREAKDOWN - 2012
CODE 37 - the film - 2011
CRAZY ABOUT YA - 2010
THE LOFT - 2008
STORMFORCE - 2006
LOVE BELONGS TO EVERYONE - 2005
LONG WEEKEND - 2004
ROMANCE - 2003

TELEVISION (selection)

TABULA RASA - 2015
THE TEAM - 2014
CORDON - 2013
THE WHITE QUEEN - 2012
CODE 37 - I - II - III - 2009-2011
SARA - 2006-2007
COPS - 2004





characters / cast

stef de volder | jan bijvoet

Stef, Kenneth's mysterious cellmate, runs a macabre little business in the Ardennes and prefers to be left alone. His view on life, to put it mildly, is peculiar and there is no place in it for women. Behind his eternal smile hides a dangerous person who, finally, doesn't care about life or death.

FILMOGRAPHY JAN BIJVOET (selection)

El Abrazo de la Serpiente (2015, Ciro Guerra)

Cordon (2014, television series)

Borgman (2013, Alex van Warmerdam)

The Broken Circle Breakdown (2012, Felix van Groeningen)

Van Vlees en Bloed (2009, television series)

Dirty Mind (2009, Pieter Van Hees)

(N)iemand (2008, Patrice Toye)

Recht op Recht (2000, television series)

Ad Fundum (1993, Erik Van Looy)

director / robin pront

As a Belgian citizen of semi-Dutch heritage, Robin Pront is known for his straightforward and no-nonsense style. He rose to prominence with his first short film PLAN B, a short film about the drug scene in Antwerp and its effects on the main characters. The film won the award for best short at the Leuven Film Festival in 2008, as well as the Public's Choice award. Having quickly made a name for himself, his next film, INJURY TIME, about football hooliganism starring BULLHEAD stars Matthias Schoenaerts and Jeroen Perceval, received high critical praise. INJURY TIME was his graduating film from the Sint-Lukas Academy in Brussels in 2010. It was selected for several national and international festivals and won prizes in Brussels and Ghent.



FILMOGRAPHY

PLAN B - 20 min (2008) Cast : Jeroen Perceval, Manou Kersting, Maarten Westra Hoekzema, Eric Kloeck, Jehon Gorani

- Jury Prize at the Leuven International short film festival, 2008
- Public Prize at the Leuven International short film festival, 2008
- Selection Hochschule Filmfest Munich
- Bought by Canvas and shown on TV

INJURY TIME - 15 min (2010) Cast: Jeroen Perceval, Matthias Schoenaerts, Mario van Dyck, Olivier Bony

- Premiere Leuven International short film festival, 2010
- Honourable mention Wildcard jury Leuven International short film festival 2010
- Winner best short film Brussels film festival
- Winner best short film CinePublic Ghent
- International Short Film Festival Shnit Bern/Singapore
- Dutch Film Festival Utrecht (NFF)
- I've Seen Films International Film Festival Milan (ICFILMS)
- International Film Festival Oostende (FFO)
- International Short Film Festival Leuven (IKL)
- Best of Short Film Festival La Ciotat
- International Short Film Festival La Côte Bleue Marseille
- International Film Festival Regiofun Katowice
- International Short Film Festival Sediciorto Forli
- International Film Festival Grand Off World Off Warsaw
- Regensburg Short Film Week



Savage Film is an independent production company founded in 2007 by Bart Van Langendonck and operating from Brussels in an association with Eyeworks. The company established itself internationally with Michaël R. Roskam's film "Bullhead" <http://www.savagefilm.be/fiction/BULLHEAD-AKA-RUNDSKOP-T-TE-DE-BOEUF> ("Rundskop"), a box office hit in Belgium in 2011 as well as a César and Oscar® nominee for Best Foreign Language Film in 2012. The film sold to over 20 territories and was awarded at numerous festivals.

Savage Film produces fiction films and documentaries with subjects just as versatile as its directors' backgrounds. Daring or controversial, Savage Film projects often balance on the boundaries of genres, be it fiction, documentary or art.

Thanks to five slate fundings from the Creative Europe - Media Program of the E.U.) and matching financial support from other sources (most importantly from the Flanders Audiovisual Fund), Savage Film has been able to release over twenty film projects since 2007.

Savage Film also co-produces internationally with companies in, a.o., The Netherlands, Ireland, Germany, Italy, France, Hungary, Denmark or Germany (Submarine Channel, Eyeworks, Cobos Films, Phanta Films, Waterland Films, CTM-Lev, Family Affair Films, PRPL/Bastide Films, Fastnet Films, UJ Budapest Film Studio, Gebrüder Beetz, 41 Shadows, Les Films Pélléas, Batisphère, Orisa Films...)



*producer savage film /
bart van langendonck*

FILMOGRAPHY

FICTION

THE ARDENNES (dir. Robin Pront) – release October 2015
GALLOPING MIND (dir. Wim Vandekeybus) – release September 2015
LIEBLING (dir. Ellen Schoenaerts) – release 2015
CHOCO (dir. Vincent Coen) – development
THE HAB (dir. Tom Barman) – development
LE FIDÈLE (dir. Michaël R. Roskam) – development
TONIC IMMOBILITY (dir. Nathalie Teirlinck) – development
DIAMANT NOIR (dir. Arthur Harari) – release 2015 (co-production)
KEEPER (dir. Guillaume Senez) – release 2015 (co-production)
AUGUST (dir. Jeroen Perceval) – short film – 2014
THE LIFE ACCORDING TO NINO (dir. Simone Van Dusseldorp) – 2014 (co-production)
LABYRINTHUS (dir. Douglas Boswell) – 2014
ALLELUIA (dir. Fabrice Du Welz) – 2014 (co-production)
MORROCAN GIGOLOS (dir. Ismaël Saidi) – 2013
BULLHEAD | RUNDSKOP (dir. Michaël R. Roskam) – 2011
NIGHT FEVER (dir. Frank Theys) – short film – 2011
PORTABLE LIFE (dir. Fleur Boonman) – 2011
MONKEY SANDWICH (dir. Wim Vandekeybus) – 2011 (associate producer)
27 (dir. Nicolas Daenens) – short film – 2010
NOWHERE MAN (dir. Patrice Toye) – 2008 (associate producer)
TODAY IS FRIDAY (dir. Michaël R. Roskam) – short film – 2007



DOCUMENTARIES

GARDENIA - BEFORE THE LAST CURTAIN FALLS (dir. Thomas Wallner/Eva Küpper) – 2014 (co-production) – 2015
THE LAND TO THE ENLIGHTENED (dir. Pieter-Jan De Pue) – release December 2015
ARNO – Vive ma liberté – development
THE LIONS (dir. Jean-Frédérique de Hasque) – development (co-production)
ZATO (dir. Ross McDonnell) – development (co-production)
WELCOME TO THE CHOCOLATE CITY (dir. Bram Van Paesschen) – production
GRANDS TRAVAUX (dir. Olivia Rochette & Gerard-Jan Claes) – post-production
GREEN GOLD (dir. Sergio Ghizzardi) – post-production (co-production)
FRANKY (dir. Matthias Schoenaerts) – post-production
LAB-LIFE (dir. Frank Theys) – 2014
LAST HIJACK (dir. Tommy Pallota & Femke Wolting) – 2014 (co-production)
SILENT VISITORS (dir. Jeroen Van der Stock) – 2012
CINEMA INCH'ALLAH! (dir. Vincent Coen & Guillaume Vandenberghe) – 2012
RAIN (dir. Olivia Rochette, Gerard-Jan Claes & A. T. De Keersmaeker) – 2012
WORK: THE LIFE OF ANTON CORBIJN (dir. Klaartje Quirijns) – 2012 (co-production)
NO COMMENT (dir. Pascal Poissonnier) – 2011
EMPIRE OF DUST (dir. Bram Van Paesschen) – 2011
OUR COMRADE TITO (dir. Robin Hunzinger and Sabina Subasic) – 2011 (co-production)
WALKING BACK TO HAPPINESS (dir. Pascal Poissonnier) – 2010
LOST IN TRANSITION (dir. Thom Vander Beken) – 2008
WILD BEAST (dir. Jeroen Van der Stock) – 2008

OTHER PROJECTS

THE CO(TE)LETTE FILM (dir. Mike Figgis / choreographie: Ann Van den Broek) - 2010
CROSSOVER (dir. Pierre Coulibeuf) - 2009
HERE AFTER (dir. Wim Vandekeybus) – 2007

cast



Dave.....	JEROEN PERCEVAL
Kenneth.....	KEVIN JANSSENS
Sylvie.....	VEERLE BAETENS
Joyce.....	SAM LOUWYCK
Stef.....	JAN BIJVOET
Mariette.....	VIVIANE DE MUYNCK
Gérard.....	ERIC GODON
Chalid.....	RACHID APPA
Officer Linda.....	CAROLINE STAS
Jailer Tommy.....	DOMINIQUE VAN MALDER
Robert.....	PETER VAN DEN BEGIN
Thierry.....	KUNO BAKKER
Cindy.....	BRIT VAN HOOF

crew

director.....ROBIN PRONT
writers.....JEROEN PERCEVAL & ROBIN PRONT
director of photography.....ROBRECHT HEYVAERT
producer.....BART VAN LANGENDONCK | SAVAGE FILM
line producer.....XAVIER ROMBAU
co-producer.....PETER BOUCKAERT | EYEWORKS
ELLEN HAVENITH | BASTIDE FILMS PRPL (NL)
production manager.....SIEBER MARLY
1st assistant director.....PETER GHESQUIERE
script.....AMBER DAEREN
location manager Antwerp.....JEAN-BERNARD WINDELS
location manager Ardennes.....RENAUD BOUCQUEY
sound engineer.....ROBIL RAHANTOEKNAM
production designer.....GEERT PAREDIS
set dresser.....JORIS VAN LAERE
costume designer.....CATHERINE VAN BREE
make-up.....BARBARA BIJELIC
SFX make-up.....SASKIA VEREYCKEN
SFX supervisor.....STEFAN RYCKEN
editor.....ALAIN DESSAUVAGE
sound editor.....JEF AERTS
original music.....HENDRIK WILLEMYNS



partners

Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF)

Screen Flanders

Dutch Film Fund

Belgian Tax Shelter for Film Financing

VMMA

Telenet

Kinopolis Film Distribution

Media Programme of the European Union



A person is lying down, and a zipper is visible on their face, specifically around the eye area. A hand is shown unzipping the zipper. The entire image has a blue tint.

technical sheet

title.....The Ardennes
original title.....D'Ardennen
duration.....93 minutes
original language.....Dutch & French
location.....Antwerpen, Waterloo, Nivelet, Tenneville
shoot.....12th of January – 27th
of February (34 days)
genre.....thriller | crime | drama
producer.....Savage Film
co-producers.....Eyeworks Belgium, PRPL/Bastide Films
format.....scope
home territory release.....October 14, 2015



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