

cinéart

# PERSMAP

HABIB ATTIA EN MARC ILMER PRESENTEREN



OFFICIAL SELECTION  
INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL  
ROTTERDAM



WINNAAR  
BESTE ACTEUR  
INTERNATIONAAL FILMFESTIVAL  
VAN VENETIE

**'SUPERB'**  
VARIETY

**'AN EXCITING DEBUT'**  
HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

**'THE ENTIRE CAST  
IS EXCELLENT'**  
SCREENDAILY

# un **بيك نعيش** fils

EEN FILM VAN MEHDI M. BARSAOUI

**SAMI BOUJILA  
NOOMEN HAMDA**

**NAJLA BEN ABDALLAH  
SLAH MSADDAK**

**MOHAMED ALI BEN JEMAA**

**YOUSSEF KHEMIRI**

Scenarij: MEHDI M. BARSAOUI. Regie: MEHDI M. BARSAOUI. Productie: ANTOINE HERICQUE, ALICE SERRA, LUCAS HERBERLE, THOMAS HILTONIC, CYRILIN VIDAL, ELADY HELMER, Cécilie TOUBES. Original script: AMINE BOUJAMA. Coproductie: SOPHIE ABDELKHALI. Coproductie: RANJA KREIBER. Make-up: ANA MOUSTAFA ABDO, NAJLA BOUZID. Haar: ALE SALEM, DALBOUL. Productie: ANTOINE HERICQUE, ALICE SERRA, LUCAS HERBERLE, THOMAS HILTONIC, CYRILIN VIDAL, ELADY HELMER, Cécilie TOUBES. Coproductie: AMINE BOUJAMA. Coproductie: SOPHIE ABDELKHALI. Coproductie: RANJA KREIBER. Make-up: ANA MOUSTAFA ABDO, NAJLA BOUZID. Haar: ALE SALEM, DALBOUL. Productie: ANTOINE HERICQUE, ALICE SERRA, LUCAS HERBERLE, THOMAS HILTONIC, CYRILIN VIDAL, ELADY HELMER, Cécilie TOUBES. Coproductie: AMINE BOUJAMA. Coproductie: SOPHIE ABDELKHALI. Coproductie: RANJA KREIBER. Make-up: ANA MOUSTAFA ABDO, NAJLA BOUZID. Haar: ALE SALEM, DALBOUL.

Produktie: ANTOINE HERICQUE, ALICE SERRA, LUCAS HERBERLE, THOMAS HILTONIC, CYRILIN VIDAL, ELADY HELMER, Cécilie TOUBES. Coproductie: AMINE BOUJAMA. Coproductie: SOPHIE ABDELKHALI. Coproductie: RANJA KREIBER. Make-up: ANA MOUSTAFA ABDO, NAJLA BOUZID. Haar: ALE SALEM, DALBOUL. Productie: ANTOINE HERICQUE, ALICE SERRA, LUCAS HERBERLE, THOMAS HILTONIC, CYRILIN VIDAL, ELADY HELMER, Cécilie TOUBES. Coproductie: AMINE BOUJAMA. Coproductie: SOPHIE ABDELKHALI. Coproductie: RANJA KREIBER. Make-up: ANA MOUSTAFA ABDO, NAJLA BOUZID. Haar: ALE SALEM, DALBOUL.

**BINNENKORT IN DE BIOSCOOP**

# UN FILS

EEN FILM VAN MEHDI M. BARSAOUI



Drama - 2019 - Tunesië - 95 minuten  
Releasedatum: T.B.A.

Meer over de film: [www.cineart.nl/films/un-fils](http://www.cineart.nl/films/un-fils)

Persmaterialen: [www.cineart.nl/pers/un-fils](http://www.cineart.nl/pers/un-fils)

Distributie:  
Cinéart Nederland  
Herengracht 328-III  
1016 CE Amsterdam  
T: +31 20 530 88 48

Contact:  
Julia van Berlo  
T: +31 20 5308840  
M: +31 6 83785238  
[julia@cineart.nl](mailto:julia@cineart.nl)

# SYNOPSIS

UN FILS is een meeslepend familiedrama en indrukwekkend debuut van de Tunesische regisseur Mehdi M. Barsaoui.

Tunesië, zomer van 2011. Fares en Meriem beleven gelukkige dagen met Aziz, hun 11-jarige zoon. Tijdens een verblijf in het zuiden van het land, verandert een gebeurtenis voor altijd hun leven. Wat volgt is een race tegen de klok, waarbij Fares en Meriem geconfronteerd worden met tegenstrijdige emoties en moeilijke keuzes. UN FILS legt op ingenieuze wijze de realiteit van de huidige Tunesische samenleving bloot.

UN FILS ging in première op het Filmfestival van Venetië, waar de film geselecteerd werd voor de Orizzonti-competitie. Sami Bouajila won daar de prijs voor beste acteur voor zijn vertolking van Fares. Op het Internationaal Film Festival van Rotterdam (IFFR) werd de film omarmd door het publiek.



# MEHDI M. BARSAOUI

Director

Born in 1984 and raised in Tunisia, Mehdi M. Barsaoui is a graduate of the Higher Institute of Multimedia Arts of Tunis and holds a degree in film direction from DAMS in Bologna, Italy. He has directed three short-films to date. His most recent, *WE'RE JUST FINE LIKE THIS*, won the Golden Muhr for Best Film in Dubai in 2016. His international career begins with *UN FILS*, his debut feature-length film, selected at the 76th Venice International Film Festival.

## FILMOGRAPHY

2019 UN FILS - FEATURE LENGTH  
2016 WE'RE JUST FINE LIKE THIS - SHORT FILM  
2013 BOBBY - SHORT FILM  
2010 SIDEWAYS - SHORT FILM



# INTERVIEW WITH MEHDI M. BARSAOUI

Director

**You start the film with a wonderful scene of the closeness between Fares and his son, Aziz. It doesn't hint at what is to come, but rather expresses their fusal relationship.**

It was primordial to start the film like that. The opening shots had to show that the bond between father and son was extremely strong. I film the hands of the father and his son on the steering wheel like a kind of line around which the entire film will develop. This idea of the child steering is also symbolic. He holds the reins, and it's he who will plunge us into the family's past.

**UN FILS is a drama about filiation that you have chosen to set in 2011. What were the reasons for that?**

In Tunisia, both politically and socially, 2011 was a watershed year. We are in August and September, seven months after the revolution. For me it was important to set the story in this precise period because it allowed me to give the story a social and historical context. From the start I had no pretense to talk about the revolution. I have neither the credentials nor the means to do so. I'm neither a historian nor a political scientist. What interested me were the repercussions of political life on a normal-looking family. And that is the reason why my story takes place a few months after the fall of Ben Ali, and a few weeks before that of Gaddafi, who will be killed in October. Many things are changing in that part of the world, and I wanted my characters to be situated in that precise moment. Yet at the same time, I wanted it to remain under the surface.

**How so?**

The political context never invades the intimate and personal sphere of the film. Those events influence how the story develops, but the storyline remains focused on the drama gripping the family. At the beginning of the story, before the ambush, we sense that the family is well protected. They move from one cocoon to another. There's the cocoon of their social life, with their friends, and then the cocoon of their car, a Range Rover that costs a fortune in Tunisia – and then their hotel, their room... That's why when the shooting starts, an element that is both a trigger and shock, I chose to show the car window shattering. For me it symbolizes the relationship that Fares and Meriem have with reality – their country and the world around them. The personal sphere is invaded, and the protective barrier is stripped.

**How did you develop the script? What was the starting point?**

Whether intentionally or not, to some extent you always draw on your own life. I'm convinced that in every story there's a bit of the author. My parents divorced when I was very young. Afterwards I lived with my mother and two brothers from a previous marriage, and I always wondered what it would be like to have a father, what the difference is between a brother and half-brother, the question of filiation and blood ties... And when I was growing up I started thinking about those blood ties that link family members. How do you define a parent? What does parenting consist of? Does the reproduction of a genetic sequence make a parent of us? Those questions may have been the seed for this script.

**The film is a melodrama, a marital drama and a political film, all at once. How did you articulate these different textures?**

The script was developed over a period of close to four years, with different periods of writing. Since this is my first feature, I participated in several screenwriting workshops to hone my technique. Each time I worked on the different layers. So I'd concentrate on the main story line, then work on the secondary elements before trying to flesh out the story's context by grafting on the political backdrop, and then finally I'd consider the more personal story involving the

couple. While keeping in mind that the film isn't only about paternity, but also maternity and adultery. At a certain point I felt slightly disoriented, and that's when I decided to bring in Magali Negroni as a script consultant. She was a huge support, because she really helped me recenter the story's foundations. And to ensure that the drama doesn't drift into melodrama, and that the pathos doesn't take the upper hand.

**The screenplay is structured around several marked ellipses, such as the scenes where Meriem confesses to Fares, or when Fares goes to see Aziz's biological father.** Whether for the desert or the pain. The characters were strong enough already; if we'd overloaded them with the directing, we would've gone straight into the pathos that I wanted at all cost to avoid.

**You often film in close-up, which, combined with the CinemaScope ratio, amplifies your protagonists' distress.**

From the start I wanted to shoot in Scope, and we finalized the choice when I went location scouting with my DOP, Antoine Héberlé. I thought that Scope would allow me to isolate my characters even more. It's a format that lets you include parts of the surroundings and location to create perspectives that isolate your characters a bit more. The choice started out as theoretical, but it proved itself when I understood that it allowed me to portray the situation and solitude of my characters through the framing, without resorting to more elaborate directorial means.

**Tell us about your desire to work with Sami Bouajila...**

I had him in mind from the very beginning. Sami has so much charisma, he's the embodiment of the reassuring man. The character he plays is successful, he speaks well, he doesn't keep his wife under tight rein, he's not jealous of her success – on the contrary, he's proud of it. He's a good guy in every way. But as soon as drama looms, his weaknesses come out. And Sami is such a versatile actor, he's a chameleon. You can't pigeonhole him. Is he a good guy? A bad guy? I like actors like him. He was really invested in the part. From the moment we started read throughs, and during our preparation together, I got to know him. He's at ease with his fragility and doesn't try to hide it. He's authentic and honest. He was perfect for Fares.

**And Najla Ben Abdallah, who plays Meriem?**

She had a bit less experience. She'd done a little television, which had given her some recognition in Tunisia. I chose her after a casting process that was quite long, since it lasted almost seven months. I have to say that I hate classic auditions where you ask an actor to play a scene from the film on camera. I didn't even want to work with a casting director, I did it all myself. Of course, I met with a huge number of candidates. I would quickly explain the story to them, tell them a bit about the character, but rather than have them act out a scene from the script – which always leaves me disappointed, since usually you don't find the right energy and rhythm – I asked them to play a scene that I'd completely invented, where I played the husband and she the wife. Without any preparation. It was all in the moment. And it was filmed. Najla's screen test lasted seventeen minutes, and during that time, I saw all the facets of the character. I saw her cry, scream, stand mute, distraught... In short, I saw Meriem.

# CAST

Fares	SAMI BOUAJILA
Meriem	NAJLA BEN ABDALLAH
Aziz hemiri	YOUSSEF KHEMIRI
Dr. Dhaoui amda	NOOMEN HAMDA
D108	QASIM RAWANE
The Businessman	SLAH MSADDAK
Sami	MOHAMED ALI BEN JEMAA



## SAMI BOUAJILA

Sami Bouajila was born in 1966 and raised near Grenoble, France. He first-starred in Abdellatif Kechiche's first feature-film, *POLITICAL REFUGEE*, before he was revealed to a broader audience with *DAYS OF GLORY*, for which he won the Award for Best Actor at 2006 Cannes Film Festival along with his co-stars (Jamel Debbouze, Samy Naceri, Roschdy Zem, Bernard Blancan). In 2008, he won the Cesar Award for Best Supporting Actor for *THE WITNESSES*, by André Téchiné. He was then featured in *OMAR KILLED ME* (2011), which deals with the Omar Raddad court case.

## NAJLA BEN ABDALLAH

Najla Ben Abdallah was born in Tunis, Tunisia in 1980. She starts her acting carrier in 2010 by shooting local TV shows that will have a successful run. In 2015, she's featured in the Tunisian film *THALA, MY LOVE* by Mehdi Hmili. In 2019, she's cast alongside Sami Bouajila in Mehdi M. Barsaoui's *UN FILS* world premiering at the 76th Venice Film Festival.

# CREW

Written and directed by MEHDI M. BARSAOUI  
Photography ANTOINE HÉBERLÉ (A.F.C)  
Sound LUCAS HÉBERLÉ, ROMAIN HUONNIC,  
CYPRIEN VIDAL, ELORY HUMEZ  
Editing CAMILLE TOUBKIS  
Music AMINE BOUHAFI  
Art direction SOPHIE ABDELKEFI  
Costume Design RANDA KHEDHER  
Make-up and hair MOUNA BEN ABDA, NAJOUA BOUZID  
First Assistant Director SALEM DALDOUL  
Production manager KHALED W. BARSAOUI  
Continuity EMNA BOUYAHYA  
Producers HABIB ATTIA, MARC IRMER, CHANTAL  
FISCHER  
Coproducers CYRILLE PEREZ, GILLES PEREZ, ETIENNE  
OLLAGNIER, SARAH CHAZELLE, ANAS  
AZRAK, FAYCAL HASSAIRI, GEORGES  
SCHOUCAIR, MYRIAM SASSINE, ANTOINE  
KHALIFE

