

P'TIT QUINQUIN

a film by
Bruno Dumont



Quinzaine Cannes 2014
Golden Globe Best Foreign TV Series

France 2014 / 200 mins / French with English subtitles / Cert tbc

Opens July 10th 2015

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SYNOPSIS

Originally conceived and broadcast as a four-part miniseries, Bruno Dumont's *P'tit Quinquin* has now been released in several countries in its cinema version.

Dumont has once more shot in the countryside of his birthplace, the region around Calais.

Police Captain van der Weyden (Bernard Pruvost), a man with extraordinary facial and bodily tics, and his assistant the inscrutable Carpentier (Philippe Jore), are tasked with an investigation that spins off from the discovery, in an abandoned WWII German bunker, of a dead cow apparently stuffed with human remains. Following their efforts and generally raising havoc, are good-for-nothing kid Quinquin (Alane Delhaye), his trumpet-playing girlfriend Eve, and a small gang of mischievous friends.

Inevitably the bodies mount up, the mysteries deepen, and the policemen wade further into what may be an insoluble puzzle.

P'tit Quinquin's tone is comic, but in the course of its running time Dumont touches on numerous issues that complicate his corner of France: immigration, racism, marital discord, illicit sex, and violence.

More details and downloads at www.newwavefilms.co.uk

Photos at www.newwavefilms.co.uk/press.html



CREW

Written and directed by
Cinematography
Sound
Editors
Mixer
Costumes
Props
Make-up
Production Director
Casting
Producers

Bruno Dumont
Guillaume Deffontaines
Philippe Lecoer
Bruno Dumont, Basile Belkhiri
Emmanuel Croset
Alexandra Charles
Martin Dupont-Domenjoud
Alice Robert
Cédric Ettouati
Claude Debonnet, Clément Morelle
Jean Bréhat
Rachid Bouchareb
Muriel Merlin

Coproduced by 3B PRODUCTIONS &
ARTE France
With PICTANOVO
With the support of Région Nord-Pas de
Calais & LE FRESNOY, Studio national
des arts contemporains
In partnership with CNC
In association with Cofinova 10
With the participation of CNC & TV5
Monde

CAST

P'tit Quinquin
Eve
Captain van der Weyden
Lieutenant Rudy Carpentier
Kevin
Jordan
Mohamed Bhiri
Aurelie Terrier
Forensic examiner
Monsieur Lebleu
Quinquin's Father
Quinquin's Mother
Dany
The Majorette Mme Campain

Alane Delhaye
Lucy Caron
Bernard Pruvost
Philippe Jore
Corentin Carpentier
Julien Bodard
Baptiste Anquez
Lisa Hartmann
Frederic Castagno
Stephane Boutillier
Philippe Peuvion
Celine Sauvage
Jason Cirot
Cindy Louguet

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Bruno Dumont was born 1958, Bailleul, France. To date, he has directed seven feature films, and now with P'tit Quinquin a TV series. *L'Humanite* and *Flandres* won the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival. Dumont has a background in Greek and philosophy.

FILMOGRAPHY

La vie de Jésus / The Life of Jesus (1997)

L'humanité / Humanity (1999)

Twentynine Palms (2003)

Flandres / Flanders (2006)

Hadewijch (2009)

Hors Satan (2011)

Camille Claudel 1915 (2013)

P'tit Quinquin (2014)



INTERVIEW WITH BRUNO DUMONT BY NICHOLAS ELLIOTT IN BOMB MAGAZINE (Extracts)

Nicholas Elliott There's a scene in *Li'l Quinquin* in which Police Captain van der Weyden meets the prosecutor in a restaurant and is asked to report the facts about his investigation. His attention is gradually distracted by a disabled young man who is knocking plates off his family's table and generally wreaking havoc. This is where I realized that while the film follows a police investigation—an attempt to explain events—what we're really dealing with is the incomprehensible and the irrational, and that actually things cannot be explained.

Bruno Dumont Yes. What I'm really interested in is getting as close as possible to the mysterious, but I don't want to follow the paths of mystery as a genre. I like to find metaphors or analogies that evoke the mysterious. By definition, a police investigation is quite a mysterious path. But the people investigating are researchers, not alchemists. They're not looking for the Holy Grail. It's very concrete and easy to understand. I already used a police investigation in *L' Humanité* (1999). At the time, I thought about what Jean-Pierre Melville said, which is that a detective story makes a good vehicle to set the quest in motion—the quest for the Grail, one could even say—through an outwardly accessible, non-head-scratching method. Many criminal investigations are mysterious, we don't actually know what happened. It's interesting not to know, to be stumped, because it's an analogy for the quest for truth, which I consider equally vain. I'm always looking for equivalences when I write. I try to avoid being cerebral. In the restaurant scene, we're colliding with the irrational. I like when things are apparently highly naturalistic but are actually totally wacky. They're not naturalistic at all, they're totally surrealist. That scene is completely surrealist. Everything's going off in every direction. But that doesn't mean it's easy. It's still in a restaurant, with actors. The banana peel we're going to slip on isn't obvious. I know there are viewers who don't understand. Some people can't see that it's wacky, they take it at face value. But I like that too—I like to leave the viewer the freedom to take it at face value, or at any other level. It's not evident.

NE It's not evident on many planes. The film reaches a point where everything could be funny or not funny at all. I'm thinking of the discovery of a dead woman, tied naked to some driftwood on the beach. The captain says her body reminds him of a Flemish master's painting. On the one hand, the situation is hilarious; on the other, it's obviously tragic.

BD Absolutely.

NE I see the same thing in the way that the two cops are always trying to explain things. They use lots of clichés and their clichés drive the viewer away from easy explanations. For instance, when the Muslim teenager Mohammed starts shooting at people from his bedroom, you appear to explicitly show us that his action is a response to racist insults. Yet hearing that explanation in cliché form from Captain van der Weyden casts doubt on the most obvious explanation. Suddenly I no longer know how to interpret the boy's action.

BD That's the idea. It's to lead the viewer to a fault line where we no longer know if an event is dramatic or not. That's the point where the burlesque and the grotesque encounter drama. When the captain does his cop show duck and roll but something awful is happening in the background—the kid is about to die—we move very quickly from one extremity to the other. Even when I edited it, I was stunned by that moment's impact. Because we're not used to being flung from one side to the other. It's a kind of instability vis-à-vis our academic

and even moral canons. We're used to going in *one* direction, that's it. It really shakes you up to be tossed around between the grotesque, the comedic, and the absolutely serious, with deeply banal sociological and even historical elements thrown into the mix. That's what I'm interested in: being jostled. I think we're jostled in relation to our own ambiguity. There is a kind of irony between what is off and what is in, what we say and what we don't. For instance, public speech is highly regulated, but it conceals a totally contradictory deviousness. That's what the film is about—it's borderline immoral, reactionary, decorous. Some people are shocked. They tell me we don't have a right to make fun of clerics or prosecutors. I was quite surprised, because the film is wacky enough to avoid that kind of ambiguity. But some people disagree. Because the ambiguity is violent; it's not clear.

NE What is your relationship to your characters? Captain van der Weyden is ridiculous, but the film doesn't seem to mock him. How do you do that?

BD That's exactly what I'm interested in. I want to be able to go from one to the other in a single narrative. Meaning that I can make the character of Li'l Quinquin beautiful—I think he's beautiful due to the way I look at him, despite the fact that physically he's not beautiful. It's the same with the captain. By the end of the movie, he's touching. He leaves the ridiculous behind, though initially I made him a clown, that's his function, but it's a function that doesn't remove his humanity. And humanity is acquired, it isn't a given. You have to go on the journey with the captain to reach the fourth episode and notice that he takes on a near-mystical dimension. He receives that, it's not there at the beginning. I met a lot of people who had a hard time with the captain in the first episode, who were like, "Who the hell is this guy," but wind up loving him. I find it fascinating to travel with characters and change your opinion of them.

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NE You never have the impression that there is a disturbing ironic distance in the way characters are treated in other people's films? The actor is an instrument, but he's also a human being.

BD Sure, when you can feel that an actor is being used to ... That's a problem. There's no doubt that the people in my films are people I really love and like to work with. They are so human. I really believe in the diversity of beings. I like to work with disabled people. I like my relationship with them. I spent a lot of time with Jason Cirot, who plays Dany, to get to what we see on screen. I enjoy the process of companionship with him. It's really interesting to have him work, to listen to him, to have him say *yes* or *no* to me. He's not a puppet. That's impossible. He'd tell me to fuck off in a hurry. I've been drawn to disabled people ever since I was a child. Disability is another enigmatic thing; it's truly human, but it's a little dislocated. It really speaks to me, but I don't know exactly why. It goes back to what you were saying earlier about the mysterious—there's something very mysterious about a disabled person. I bring them into the films so that they will participate in its machinery. When Jason spins on himself, that's something he found himself. We were looking for a way for him to hold himself in the film and he told me, "There's a thing I like to do." And off he went spinning. So I integrated it. There were times when he fell over. It's funny, and people are going to say I'm making fun of the disabled guy. Of course not! I make as much fun of the captain falling as Dany falling. We all fall. He's in on it. Jason knows he's participating in a comedy. He understands, he's not mentally impaired in the slightest. He's acting, he's performing a character who is what he, Jason, is. There's no commentary: he is what he is, just like the rest of us. There's no judgment. On the contrary, I think it's an enrichment. ...

Whereas Bernard (van der Weyden) is docile. We found his peculiar way of walking because I was looking to disrupt his natural way of moving. He did it with tremendous pleasure.

I like my actors' presence and what they have to say. Li'l Quinquin's father contains something ... human, like every being. I need that in order to be true. Because I've got a fictional story but at the same time something needs to resist. I can't regulate everything, that's impossible. There's something true about actors being human. That needs to be preserved because it is useful to get to what I'm aiming for. The captain is as he is in life, with his physical appearance, his facial tics, his hearing problems, but he's also interpreting a text. Sometimes he forgets his lines and comes up with weird lines like, "It's as clear as a mussel," and it's great, it's funny. So he also perturbs the dialogue's rigidity, which I like. I give them their dialogue because you have to give them something, but I do it hoping that somehow they'll turn it upside down.

NE Bernard Pruvost's tics are perfect, because they're like constant question marks.

BD That's it. He has a very expressive way of amplifying his questions. It's wonderful to go so far in interpreting a score of which he is a part. The wildest thing isn't casting him in the film, it's giving him that particular mission. He has no business being there. Bernard is no boss, he's never given an order in his life. I made him a boss and made him talk a lot. In real life he doesn't talk much and Philippe Jore, who plays his assistant Carpentier, talks non-stop. I prevented Carpentier from talking. I basically made them switch roles. Fiction does that too. I don't leave them the way they are. You have to give them a costume. I disguised them as police officers and gave them guns. Of course, when Bernard pulls his gun out, he's never done that in his life, which enriches the upheaval. The detective genre is so heavily coded that the comedy comes from the upheaval. The two are so unlikely in that job that they immediately break down the clichés of detective films. The comedic aspect also comes from complicity with viewers who know police procedurals and tell themselves, Wow, this is crazy.

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NE We've talked a lot about apparently complex things. One aspect of the film appears to be simple. In each of the four episodes, you show Li'l Quinquin and his girlfriend Eve embracing, accentuating that gesture either by cutting closer or using several set-ups. Why do you repeat it?

BD The power of their love is always there no matter what happens. Li'l Quinquin and Eve are the guardians of love, the seeds. But Li'l Quinquin is also shady. Evil is there too. Yet he has an extraordinary ability to love. Those two little ones are starting to do what grown-ups do. It's good to have this major brightness that accompanies the obscurity and darkness that you see elsewhere, because that's life. So there's something bright, optimistic, and joyous, which is love. When Eve loses her sister, Li'l Quinquin accompanies her, he takes her in his arms. That's glorious. The glory of love illuminates. It's the same at the end: Li'l Quinquin accompanies his grandfather and he wraps his arm around his love. There's that mysterious look he gives. What does that look mean? I have no idea. And the captain looks at Li'l Quinquin holding Eve. The power of love is there contradicting what's going on in the farmyard. It's all a matter of orchestration. It's as if while the violins were doing one thing, there were a kind of sonic disorder going on behind them, but it still makes music. A counterpoint.

NE You said the children are like adults. I was struck by that, even in the expression on their faces.

BD Those scenes were very difficult to shoot, because children don't hold each other that way. It was especially difficult with the little girl. When *Li'l Quinquin* held her, she went stiff as a board. It was quite forced, but ultimately that pays off. It's more fruitful to have recalcitrant actors. The script says it's a hugging scene, that's what the viewer will see. But to a certain extent the way it's played goes against the grain, because of her. Her difficulty held him back too. So actually *Li'l Quinquin* is tense, but the viewer is going to analyze that tension, like you did. I find it really interesting to have a performer who has difficulty doing the scene and leave the difficulty in. I wasn't going to force a little girl. It was the same thing on *Life of Jesus*. Marie didn't like Freddy, but I still shot the scenes. You can't really tell, but if you do, it creates something bizarre. If you include a point of alteration, it creates surprise. I find that engrossing.

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NE Did you think about the codes of television series?

BD No, that's exactly the point. I didn't give a shit about them. I wasn't going to send my actors to observe a police squad for three months. I really didn't care. I wanted them to bust things up, which they did naturally. They didn't know how to do most of the things according to police canons and that's what I wanted. There were no rehearsals: action, let's go.

NE I meant the structure of TV series. I don't watch many of them—

BD —me neither.

NE But what bothers me in those I do see is the structural repetition in each episode. Whereas *Li'l Quinquin* has repeating elements in each episode, like the town gatherings, but they don't each follow the traditional arc. Did you conceive *Li'l Quinquin* in terms of episodes or a single film?

BD A single film. I wanted to have a single, sweeping narrative line, and afterwards I'd have to cut it up. But to cut something up, you need to start with something whole. I never wrote four episodes. I wrote a big story. At first, I delivered it in six parts, they told me four would be better, so I took the six parts and pop! I didn't touch a thing, I turned it into four. There's no writing different parts. You need continuity. For example, Aurélie's narrative line: you see her once at the beginning, she needs to sing in the church, then in the courtyard of her farm, and at the concert. You see her in the fight with her girlfriend and Mohammed, then her death. I constructed that. I had the threads for Aurélie, for the two kids, and the captain, and then I had to weave them together. Generally, I don't like the resolution in series. What's beautiful is the suspense. You're pulling at everything and launching the viewer on a quest. But the end is always very rational.

What I like about the big criminal cases is that you don't know, like with the murder of the French boy Grégory Villemin in 1984. It's still a mystery what happened. In a mystery, you find the mystical and come up against the incomprehensible. But that incomprehensible aspect fits into a police investigation, it's not a mystical quest with all the obscurity and head-scratching that that could entail. Mystery is beautiful. I end in mystery.

NE What was your starting point for *Li'l Quinquin*?

BD Him. Since that's the title, I had him. I was interested in the character Li'l Quinquin, then there was the investigation and especially the idea of working with very different colours and that the film's richness could come from taking a rest from comedy in the midst of making comedy. Putting children—who can be very lyrical, romantic, slightly corny—into this funniness, gives us a rest from the funniness but also increases it. The cops are funny, but you can't laugh all the time. The children immerse us in fresh water. You have to change the water to feel something. If you stay in the cold, you get used to it after a while. So I increase the viewers' sensitivity by plunging them in different baths. You're a lot more likely to laugh if you've been with the children and haven't laughed for a while. The viewer needs to take a rest from laughing in order to laugh again. The idea was to have characters who allowed that kind of orchestration.

Translated from the French by Nicholas Elliott.

Complete interview [here](#)

