



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
2021 OFFICIAL SELECTION

TOM MEDINA

A FILM BY

TONY GATLIF

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**DAVID
MURGIA**

**SLIMANE
DAZI**

**KAROLINE ROSE
SUN**

**SUZANNE
AUBERT**

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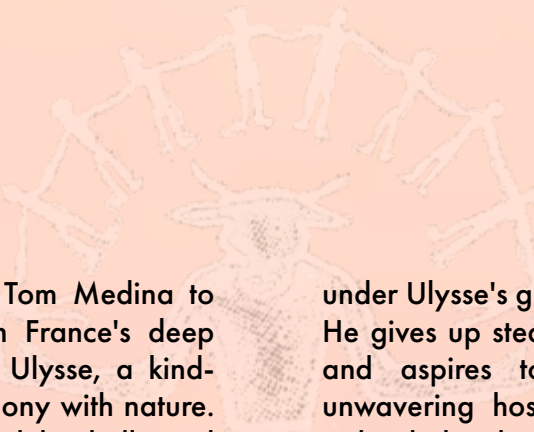
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COMING SOON

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A juvenile tribunal sends Tom Medina to Camargue, a region in France's deep south, into the care of Ulysse, a kind-hearted man who lives in harmony with nature. Inhabited by visions, fascinated by bulls and horses, Tom becomes an apprentice gardian,

under Ulysse's guidance. He gives up stealing, is hungry for knowledge, and aspires to change. Revolted by the unwavering hostility he faces, Tom continues to battle his destiny. Then he crosses paths with Suzanne... ♦

INTERVIEW WITH TONY GATLIF

◆ Is Tom Medina autobiographical?

Tom Medina is the closest to my own story of any of my movies, but it's not autobiographical. I don't tell my life story in my films. That bores me. I am inspired by real events that happened to me. The starting-point for this film is the educator who helped me when I was on the streets in Paris after fleeing Algeria in the 1960s. I was sent to a home, then a reform school. I had the good fortune to meet an educator named Claude Orange, who became my master and guide.

◆ Did you know anything about the Camargue?

I'd never heard of it. I first saw White Mane some time later. For a teen like me, from my background, Camargue was a real shock. It's the jumping-off point. The film opens with the kid's arrival there. I was sent to live with a horse-breeder who looked like Charles Bronson with a scar. His name was Jeannot Cochet. That was the inspiration for this film. Tom Medina meets a master, who teaches him all about life in the Camargue. His guide teaches the boy to channel the violence he feels. He saves him.

◆ Is Tom Medina really Tony Gatlif?

I'll tell you a story I never told before. At the age of 13, as an undocumented runaway from Algeria, I was sleeping on the streets. Stealing. The police arrested me, and handcuffed me. They asked me who I was. I was afraid they'd send me back if I gave them my real name. I told them I was Tony Gatlif, and that changed my whole life. Gatlif was the name of a park in Algiers where I used to take a break from shining shoes. It was a fabulous park with flowers, scents, kissing lovers, and the sea in the distance. It was romantic, it was magnificent. And it belonged entirely to me. Gatlif Park was mine.

◆ Did you realize this was a turning-point in your life?

I sensed my life would change with that name. But I wondered what would happen to me. Go to prison? Work on construction sites? In the end, I made the right choice. It's my name now. The name of the person making the film. I fought destiny and I won. The plan destiny had laid out for me was poverty and injustice. My family was poor. The poorest of the poor. Stripped of everything, even their dignity. My father took



a beating from the police right in front of me. That's this film: a kid changing his destiny.

◆ Why choose to make it now?

I was shooting a movie on Lesbos, in Greece. One morning, thousands of migrants had turned up on the beach. Syrians, Afghans... It was unimaginable. The only time I'd seen panic like it was when the French settlers left Algeria after independence. The same emotional shock. It's all linked, it all holds together in my memory, just like the 2015 terrorist attacks in the neighborhood where I live in Paris—people massacred in cafés that I frequented. I needed to release those emotions. Tom Medina is my exorcism. Tom Medina is undocumented, like the people on Lesbos, the survivors of shipwrecks. Tom Medina is a usual suspect. If a theft is reported, they arrest Tom. What hurts most is not the violence, but the humiliation. The humiliation must be washed away before you can become a good person.

◆ Where does the magic that runs through the film come from?

Superstition, magic, demons—the whole film is built on that. My mother was a bit of a witch. A healer, perhaps. She healed people in the neighborhood. She gave me lots of undrinkable mixtures as remedies. I was fearless. I'd take risks, I'd flirt with death. I'd be brought home, bloody and unconscious, and my mother would heal me. In the movie, Tom Medina is very scared of demons and attracted to magic.

◆ What does the white bull symbolize?

The white bull represents a threatening spirit, but it also symbolizes strength. Tom Medina wants to fight it. He wants to pit himself against the force of an animal, his version of Melville's white whale. I filmed the bull as if it were a positive character, not a demon or dangerous beast. It's a being that guides Tom Medina, not an enemy that must be fought, as he allows himself to believe.

◆ How did you cast the movie?

The cast is a miracle. It takes a lot of miracles to make a movie. I had cast David Murgia to play Lucky in a previous film, Geronimo. His character only had one week's shooting, so I felt very frustrated. David Murgia, therefore, is Tom Medina. David Murgia is me, only better and stronger. He is fearless. He goes all-in. On set, he anticipates all my intuitions. He suggests



everything I should have thought of telling him. For Ulysse, I had Slimane Dazi in mind when I was writing the script. I saw him in the Audiard movie. He's usually cast in the bad guy role. Slimane is the Mediterranean Sea, the prototype of someone from an indefinable Mediterranean country. He could be Sicilian or Turkish. He reminds me of Anthony Quinn. I was looking for a taciturn character, a wounded man with a big heart. For Stella, it took me barely an hour to cast Karoline Rose after seeing her at the Avignon festival. The character of Suzanne was inspired by two stories: a young woman from an aid organization, whom I met working with migrants on Lesbos; and a young woman I encountered outside Bastille opera house, who held her hand out with great dignity, while her 3-year-old daughter clung to her skirts. I spoke with her. Her family had kicked her out of the house. One day in a café on the Left Bank, I met a group of young actors. One of them was just like my mental image of the character. Her name was Suzanne Aubert. I went to see her in a Molière play, and liked her sylphlike agility. Suzanne is a luminous presence in the film.

◆ **You were forced to break off shooting during the first lockdown. What did the situation change in the movie?**

Yes, I didn't want to stop shooting. You never shut down a film. But we had no choice. The virus altered the script. My point of view changed. I started feeling affection and compassion for people. People who weren't allowed to visit their dying

relatives. Refrigerated trucks being used as morgues. I was touched by people's stories. The film accords value to human nature. I didn't want any violence in the movie, against people or animals. I didn't want anything to happen to them. The film is influenced by Covid, but Covid does not feature. There are only signs, such as the owl on a sealed mailbox.

◆ **The virus also influenced a song on the soundtrack.**

The music was created at the same time as the film in the same Covid context. One day, I bumped into Nicolas Reyes, the Gipsy Kings' lead singer, in Arles. He was depressed by the cancelation of upcoming concerts all over the world. He told me his daughter was making masks for him from the fabric of a polkadot dress. I said, Nicolas, now's the time to sing. I wrote the lyrics for *Vida de Mascara* (Mask Life), and we recorded it in his home studio. He was very happy. The song is Arles, the soundtrack of a town: Arles flamenco swept across the planet in the 1980s. *Baila, Baila!* is the chorus of the city of Arles. You recognize the Gipsy Kings, without it being the Gipsy Kings. There is also another song, performed by the great Gipsy singer Manero. For the last half-hour of the movie, I had written a long monologue. When I gave David Murgia the text, he didn't feel he could deliver it. In the scene, David is speaking the text in his head. I gave the text to Manero. What needed to be said is said in music and singing.

Interview by **CHRISTOPHE CACHERA**







MIRROR OF MAGIC AND SUPERSTITION IN THE FILM



Gravure : Mathieu Cossé • Dessin taureau farandole : Denis Mercier



- The lion of Arles of the bullrings.
- The evil-tempered goat, which represents guilt.
- The curse of the black cat. In olden times, in the Nîmes bullring, a famous torero saw a black cat and refused to fight the bull. Story told by the Andalusians of Tarascon.
- Engraving (Dordogne)
Young people wearing animal hides perform a magic dance in order to approach wild animals.
- The white bull, a deity that appears at night with its magical aura.
- The devil.
- Horses of the Camargue, wild and free, like all the animals of the Rhone Delta.
- The Rhone Delta abounds with telluric energies.
- The fer (mark) of the herd.
- The owl, a symbol of perspicacity and wisdom.



- Farandole bull: symbolizes living together.
- Ulysse, a maverick master, at one with the roots of the world.
- The church at Saintes-Maries de la Mer and its five bells: Marie Jacobé – Marie Salomé, Claire, Rosa, Reconciliation and Fulcranne.
- Chicken-foot amulet to ward off bad luck.
- Egyptian amulet named "she who eats" or "the devouress," guardian of the threshold of the invisible.
- The feral cry of singer Karoline Rose.
- Amulet etched on a wall to keep away the demons of disease.
- Cardinal points
Lines on a palm to tell its owner's fortune.
- Saint Sara in the crypt of the church at Saintes-Maries de la Mer. During prayers she brings divine protection to those who are suffering.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE ON THE MUSIC



Tom Medina is a film inspired by a period in my teenage years. Having been sent by a juvenile tribunal to the Camargue region to learn to be a gardian, Tom Medina pits his violence against the forces and mysteries of the Camargue. Doing so, he finds an equilibrium in a turbulent world and chooses the course of his destiny by following Suzanne, the young activist.

The music evolved at every stage of the writing process, taking shape alongside the characters and scenes. Composed for the film, it integrates and resonates with the rhythm of the story. As a protagonist in its own right, the soundtrack often reveals whole aspects of the story, in lyrics that are like lines of dialogue. In its untamed, feral liberty, it embodies the Camargue. Combined with intoxicating and feverishly upbeat percussion, it features: galoubet, cajón, palmas, flamenco guitars, electric guitars, wind instruments, flute, ney, sax, clarinet, pipes. A trance to express "living in harmony."

It is inspired by nature, gatherings of wild animals and birds, the mistral wind and storms. The songs are from a variety of horizons and languages. The creative process, with regard to the music, began well ahead of the shoot, primarily with singer and actress Karoline Rose, who plays Stella in the movie.

Karoline's sound was a dream for me because I could perceive the pain and lament. She twisted the sound like a blacksmith, fanning the flames until it was white-hot, hitting her guitar strings as she might hammer horse shoes. I needed that strength for the character of Stella, who earns a living as a traveling blacksmith. She was the singer I needed for this film, which travels deep into the mysterious Camargue and its delta, with is full of telluric energies.

Nicolas Reyes, the Gipsy Kings' former lead vocalist, whom I ran into after the first lockdown on a plaza in Arles, was disappointed not to be able to perform on stages worldwide. I mentioned the song I had written in



lockdown while adapting the film's script to the new reality of the world. Mascara, the song, is the story of a child who makes a mask out of worn scraps of her mother's dress. We recorded it in his studio to play over the end credits.

The creative process that led to the film's main theme, Vengo del Lejos, also with Nicolas Reyes and Robert Marshall, focused on the natural phenomenon of the blue hour, the fleeting moment when birds of the night make way for birds of

the day. It is a moment that evokes both melancholy and a rebirth.

This theme plays at a moment in the movie when mysticism fully takes over the character of Tom Medina. We tried to transcribe it with guitar chords and wind instruments, such as flute, clarinet and Robert Marshall's saxophone, which captures Tom's takeoff, transition and evolution in the world around him. The rebirth of Tom and nature leads to a rearrangement of the theme for cimbalom, bass and violins played by gipsy musicians—rugged sounds that radiate warmth and nostalgia for the blue hour.

Delphine Mantoulet, our composer, was at work at every stage of the production of the film. While writing the script, the pulsation of Tom's destiny played out in the environment. On location scouting trips, we recorded sounds that provided the basis of the construction of hymns to nature, including the bellowing of the bulls, the sounds of thousands of birds, songs in the Provençal dialect, and the power of the galoubet and pipes.

Contrasting with folklore we wanted to attain the intensity of the depths of the Camargue through sounds that are electric as well as organic, responding to the necessary incarnation of the hopes and flaws of Tom Medina, and of the new world into which he is venturing. ♦



CAST

Tom Medina **DAVID MURGIA**

Ulysse **SLIMANE DAZI** • Stella **KAROLINE ROSE SUN** • Suzanne **SUZANNE AUBERT**
 Bobpuppeteer **LYESOUZERI** • Carlos **ROMAIN CARBUCCIA** • Louis **MORGAN DESCHAMPS** • Clément
CLÉMENT BOUCHET • Le Grêlé **DIDIER BOURGUIGNON** • The lieutenant **PIETRO BOTTE** •
 Lorie activist **CHLOÉ CATRIN** • Maëlys activist **MAËLYS REBUTTINI** • Fleur activist **FLEUR TOGNET**
 Bence activist **BENCE HORTOVÀNYI** • The policeman **ADRIEN COCHE** • Man from the crypt **TONY**
GUERRERO • Losada **AUGUSTE LOSADA** • Corrida's President **YVES LEBAS** • Bull breeder **CÉSAIRE**
SALOMON • Sevillian bullfighter **TRISTAN ESPIGUE** • Bullfighter **ADAM SAMIRA** • Rider **MANON**
VIDAL • Farrier **LUCE DEJOIE** • Romane **ANAIIS DURR** • Injured girl **MANON COLOMB DE**
DAUNANT • Friends from Provence **MARYSE MAURIN, PHILIPPE REIG**



CREW

Written and directed by **TONY GATLIF** • Produced by **PRINCES PRODUCTION** • Production Manager
DELPHINE MANTOULET • In coproduction with **MAJA HOFFMANN** and **LUMA** • Coproduction
 Collaboration **TONY GUERRERO** • Cinematography **PATRICK GHIRINGHELLI** • 1st Director's Assistant
VALENTIN DAHMANI • Editing **MONIQUE DARTONNE** • Colorization **YOV MOOR** • Sound Editing
ADAM WOLNY • Mixing **DOMINIQUE GABORIEAU** • Animals shooting **MARC REBUTTINI** • Production
 Administrator **SYLVAIN MEHEZ** • Original Music by **KAROLINE ROSE SUN, NICOLAS REYES, MANERO,**
DELPHINE MANTOULET, TONY GATLIF

The film's original score is available on <https://soundcloud.com/tgatlif/sets/bofilmtommedina/s-f1EIBCEJ9B>

DAVID MURGIA

15 MINUTES OF WAR by Fred Grivois, 2017 • **BLIND SPOT** by Nabil Ben Yadir, 2016 • **ALL THE DREAMS IN THE WORLD** by Laurence Ferreira Barbosa, 2016 • **THE FIRST THE LAST** by Bouli Lanners, 2015 (*Magritte Award for Best Actor in a Supporting Role*) • **THE BRAND NEW TESTAMENT** by Jaco Van Dormael, 2014 • **GERONIMO** by Tony Gatlif, 2013 • **ALLELUIA** by Fabrice de Welz, 2013 • **ÊTRE** by Fara Sene, 2012 • **JE TE SURVIVRAI** by Sylvestre Sbylle, 2012 • **I AM A STANDARD SUPPORTER** by Riton Liebman, 2012 • **TANGO LIBRE** by Frédéric Fonteyne, 2011 • **HEADFIRST** by Amélie Van Elmbt, 2011 (*Magritte Award for Most Promising Actor*) • **BULLHEAD** by Michaël R. Roskam, 2010 • **THE BOAT RACE** by Bernard Bellefroid, 2009



KAROLINE ROSE SUN

TOM MEDINA by Tony Gatlif is her first part in a feature film

SLIMANE DAZI *(Select filmography)*

THE HORIZON by Émilie Carpentier, 2020 • **SUICIDE TOURIST** by Jonas Alexander Arnby, 2020 • **SOUTH TERMINAL** by Rabah Ameur-Zaimeche, 2019 • **SIMPLE PASSION** by Daniel Arbid, 2019 • **ABOVE THE LAW** by François Troukens, 2017 • **ORCHESTRA CLASS** by Rachid Hami, 2017 • **CHOUF** by Karim Dridi, 2016 • **I WANT TO BE LIKE YOU** by Konstantin Bojanova, 2015 • **FULL CONTACT** by David Verbeek, 2014 • **THE STORM INSIDE** by Fabrice Camoin, 2014 • **96 HOURS** by Frédéric Schoendoerffer, 2013 • **ONLY LOVERS LEFT ALIVE** by Jim Jarmush, 2013 • **FEVERS** by Hicham Ayouch, 2013 (*Best Actor Award at the Marrakech International Film Festival*) • **HOLD BACK** by Rachid Djaidani, 2012 • **FREE MEN** by Ismaël Ferroukhi, 2011 • **A PROPHET** by Jacques Audiard, 2009



SUZANNE AUBERT

TOM MEDINA by Tony Gatlif is her first part in a feature film

TONY GATLIF

1975 - **LA TÊTE EN RUINES** • 1978 - **LA TERRE AU VENTRE** • 1981 - **CANTA GITANO** (Short Film / César Awards Nominee 1982) • 1982 - **CORRE GITANO** (Spanish production) • 1982 - **GIPSY** (Grand Prix – Munich European Film Festival / Grand Prix – Taormina Festival / Silver Epi – Valladolid Film Festival) • 1985 - **THE WAY OUT** (Grand Prix – Florence French Film Festival) • 1988 - **DON'T CRY MY LOVE** • 1990 - **GASPARD ET ROBINSON** • 1992-93 - **SAFE JOURNEY** (Un Certain Regard Award – Cannes Film Festival, 1993 / “Mémoire France Libertés Danielle Mitterand” Award / American Critics Award for the Best Experimental Feature) 1994 - **MONDO** (based on J. M. G. Le Clézio's novel) • 1997 - **CRAZY STRANGER** (Silver Leopard and Special Award for Best Actress (Rona Hartner) – Locarno International Film Festival, 1997 / “Grand Prix Spécial des Amériques”) • 1998 - **CHILDREN OF THE STORK** • 2000 - **VENGO** (Venice International Film Festival Official Selection, 2000 / Toronto International Film Festival Official Selection, 2000 / César Awards Nominee for Best Music) • 2002 - **SWING** (Berlin International Film Festival Official Selection, 2002) • 2004 - **EXILES** (Director Award – Cannes International Film Festival, 2004 / César Awards Nominee for Best Music, 2005) • 2006 - **TRANSYLVANIA** (Cannes International Film Festival Official Selection – Last Screening, 2006) • 2010 - **FREEDOM** (Montréal World Film Festival, 2009 / “Grand Prix Spécial des Amériques” / Henri Langlois Award, 2011 / César Awards Nominee for Best Music, 2011) • 2012 - **THE OUTRAGED** (Panorama Berlin International Film Festival – Opening film, 2012) • 2014 - **GERONIMO** (Cannes International Film Festival Special Screenings, 2014 / Locarno International Film Festival Piazza Grande, 2014) • 2017 - **DJAM** (Cannes Film Festival Special Screenings, 2017) • 2021 - **TOM MEDINA** (Cannes International Film Festival Official Selection, 2021)





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