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**EBU'S TV DIRECTOR:**

**The State of Public Service TV**

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*De guerre lasses* by Laurent Bécue-Renard. © C. Cottagnoud

The producer left me the cinema rights and so I began to concentrate on festivals. It was screened at the Berlin Film Festival and that was the real beginning. I invested the prizes that I had won and part of my own personal money to carry out the first session of kinescoping. So far, the initial version of the film has appeared at 40 festivals! I needed this period to meet the public to help formalise what had originally been its guiding light... At the same time it also allowed me to work on the project for my next film during this period of reflection.

EB: *So this was the beginning of the last phase of De guerre lasses?*

LBR: I wasn't completely satisfied with the kinescoping or the editing. In 2002 I decided to go back to the drawing board and to lengthen the film by the amount necessary to make it into a feature film. The CNC judged my film to be different and so they gave us an advance against the takings after production, and we received support from the regional council of Ile de France through the organisation Thécif. For the new kinescope, we changed from 4/3 to 1.70 to intensify the relationship between the viewers and the women in the film, which required us to re-centre the film shot by shot. The film, which opens at cinemas on 29 October at the beginning of The Documentary Film Month, is therefore a totally original version.

EB: *What do you expect from the release of the film?*

LBR: Until now, I have only met the public at festivals which is really a captive public, a privileged public. I'd really like to discuss the film with the general public. I hope that people ask themselves what they take from war, war as a collective experience of violence. Wars will not stop the day that they disappear from our screens...

EB: *What now?*

LBR: There are always well-intentioned people who say to me, "It's time to do something else now..." But what do they know? I didn't go to film college, I made a film because at a certain point in my life, I had something to say and cinema was the essential means of expression. It turned out that I took great pleasure from making the film and I've still got other things to say and express... but I have to let it develop. I'm not doing this from a career perspective and that gives me great freedom. Nobody else is waiting for me to do anything, only me! ☺

## Emma Baus

is a journalist for France 5, France Culture.

## Bandits

Germany 2003, 52 min.

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Deprive people of their privacy, and they will start to leave your country. After the Soviet Union was established, thousands attempted to escape from Big Brother. People tried to get under and over the Iron Curtain, across the sea and through the mountains, through foreign consulates and underground channels. The great majority of these attempts failed, and we do not even know about them, but some succeeded, some became legends. Many books were written and many films have been made – fiction and documentaries – about the human fight for freedom. Why single out this film by Zaza Rusadze from many similar works? The film itself is professionally well made, short interviews are interchanged with old photos and film reels, proper timing and so on. But the story itself is excellent! It is devoid of allusion to modern terrorists, devoid of personal evaluations and judgements – it is a real story about how it all happened and what the participants feel now, twenty years later.

It is a story of several young Georgians who hijacked an Aero-flot airplane in an attempt to fly abroad to the "free world". They used a unique opportunity to bring weapons on board – boarding as a wedding cortege, a couple just married, with friends, relatives and a priest. Some of them were killed along with three crew members when KGB commandos stormed the plane. The others were executed about a year later after an open trial that was also filmed, and excerpts were even shown on Soviet TV. Only the young bride survived and the interview with her takes up a big part of Rusadze's film.

The hijackers were young artists, musicians, actors, though they were well known in Georgia not for their own works but as the children of prominent artists, musicians, and actors. This fact has two important consequences. First, the young people were raised in the shadow of their parents' glory. They constantly had to prove that they are not just celebrity kids, they were capable of *doing* something themselves, *thinking* interesting thoughts, *daring* to act on their own. Secondly, the Bohemian way of life formed their personality – the kids of rich, affluent parents (by Soviet standards) had access to western goods like jeans, chewing gum, cassette tape recorders, and so on. Moreover, they had also access to information:

books, magazines, films, tapes and vinyl records.

If society does not want to appreciate the work of an artist, he has two possibilities: either change his art or change society. To change art means to surrender, to lose face. This path was impossible. But how can one change society? The Soviet colossus seemed unchangeable. The young people decided to escape to the West. And this entire story took place.

Leo Isiemine





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# flicks: our picks



**Bandits**

**ORIGINALS@BABYLON: BANDITS** On November 18, 1983, a group of Georgians in their twenties hijacked an airplane out of Tbilisi with the plan to escape the Soviet Union. Things went horribly wrong. There was a mid-air exchange of fire, the plane returned to the Georgian capital, and the army, ordered by the KGB, began shooting at the plane as soon as it landed. The surviving hijackers were sentenced to death in the following show trial, and only one of them survives today. *Bandits* is a straightforward documentary, using interviews, the recorded exchanges between tower and cockpit, and film material from the trial. It follows the chronology of the events and tries to understand why those young people - well-situated young people, fun-lovers dreaming of the West - hatched their crazy plan. At the trial, they were called bandits and terrorists and executed in the most obscure if not appalling conditions. Now a play celebrates them as "Generation Jeans." But their actions led to the death of innocent people, after all, passengers and crewmembers. *Bandits* does not shy away from this aspect, either, and interviews relatives of passengers and crewmembers. There are as many opinions as there are Georgians and the case is inextricably connected with the recent history of Georgia. Filmmaker Zaza Rusadze will be at the screening on May 27. *In English OV. Filmkunsthaus Babylon. May 27, 19:00; May 28, 20:00; May 30, 22:00*

**VAN HELSING** On a sweeping epic scale in the vein of his previous reimagining of horror classics, *The Mummy* and *The Mummy Returns*, director Stephen Sommers here returns to the genre by assembling a cavalcade of cinematic monster heavies all in one feature. Hugh Jackman plays Dr. Van Helsing, the vampire hunter extraordinaire of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Sent by a secret society to Transylvania, Van Helsing begins a series of battles against an array of classic film creatures, including Frankenstein's monster, the Wolf Man, and of course the brides of *Dracula*. By his side is Kate Beckinsdale as Anna Valerious, the heiress of a family on which a curse was put that can be lifted only by *Dracula's* demise. A grand monster-mashing tour of late 19th century Europe ensues, with stops in London, Paris, and Rome, with Igor and Dr. Hyde thrown in for good measure. *Cinestar, May 7, 20:00*

**VAN HELSING TICKET GIVEAWAY**  
Call the EXBERLINER on Tue, May 4  
at noon to win one of 10 pairs of tickets

**MoMA FILMS** Come November, the art currently on loan to the Neue Nationalgalerie will be on display in New York only a plane ticket away. Here's something that's not so easy to see, here or there: movies from the Museum of Modern Art's film archive. There's something for every taste (and you don't have to stand in line), from early cinema to avant-garde films, documentary, animation, comedy. Not to be missed is a show of what might be considered the earliest form of music video: hand-colored slides from the early 20th century that illustrated popular songs. They were shown in cinemas together with movies to promote records, and Arsenal recreates the experience on May 30. Great fun and an exceptional aesthetic treat is the program on May 31: Mae West and Cary Grant in *She Done Him Wrong*, prefaced by Basil Wright and Harry Watt's "Night Mail" as well as two shorts by Len Lye. Also noteworthy: a collection of early American classics including Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* and D.W. Griffith's *A Corner in Wheat*, (May 12) and two different collections featuring New York City (May 9 and 21). *Arsenal, May 9 - Jun 5.*

## AND ALSO

**Nam June Paik and the Worlds of Film and Video** Before video was art, Nam June Paik could see its potential. One of the most influential video artists worldwide, Korean-born Nam June Paik's German connections date back to a dissertation on Schoenberg, studies at the University of Munich, and the influence of one of his teachers, Karlheinz Stockhausen. This retrospective, presented in coordination with the German Guggenheim, covers the period 1965-1974, from the *Digital Experiment at Bell Labs* to the performance video *Vertical Roll*. *Arsenal. Throughout May.*

**Eraserhead** As part of a retrospective on the films of David Lynch, *Babylon* is showing in the original version his first feature film, bizarre even by his standards. Shot in black and white, *Eraserhead* is set in a ragged industrial landscape and brims with horrific and surreal sights and sounds, among them a woman whose home is behind a radiator and the birth of a mutant baby. Jack Nance stars as Henry Spencer, the odd everyman protagonist who fathers the deformed child with a woman named Mary X. A must-see cult classic. *Babylon. May 6, 22:15; May 9, 20:00; May 10, 22:00.*

**Emile de Antonio** An American radical filmmaker whose documentaries opposed to the worse reactionaries of the cold war years, Emile de Antonio's provocative work is the subject of this month-long retrospective. Ranging the whole gamut of American political controversy, it includes *Underground*, about the Weather Underground group of leftist terrorists; *Mr. Hoover and I*, about de Antonio's troubles with the FBI; *Mill House: A White Comedy*, on Nixon's political life; and *Rush to Judgment*, about the JFK assassination. *Arsenal. Throughout May.*

**Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi** A young star of French cinema, Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi appears in three films this month at Babylon covering the scope of her burgeoning career: from her small part in *Die Bartholomäusnacht*, about the 1572 massacre of Protestants by French Catholics, to *Encore* and *Eber geht ein Kamel durchs Nadelöhr*. *In German and French. Babylon. Throughout May.*

**When We Were Kings and Ali** A Muhammed Ali double feature. *When We Were Kings*, Leon Gast and Taylor Hackford's 1996 documentary about the infamous 1974 Ali-Foreman "rumble in the jungle" bout in Kinshasa, Zaire, includes a younger Don King and interviews with Norman Mailer and George Plimpton, and appearances by James Brown and B.B. King. Complementing this is Michael Mann's 2001 biopic *Ali*, starring Will Smith and featuring Jon Voigt made up into Howard Cosell, whose climax, fittingly enough, is the rumble in the jungle. *Regenbogenkino. May 23-26, 20:00.*