

Extracts

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Australian Premiere

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Brisbane IFF

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The times London Film festival BFI

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Berlin Film Festival

“*Violent Days*, a seemingly rambling but ultimately pointed French indie, Chaufour’s skill is in maintaining a potentially explosive atmosphere in which anything could happen at anytime”

Variety

“The movie is good for a number of reasons. It does a great job of capturing what most underground music scenes are like. The feeling of being ‘in the club’ and so on. The best part of the film though is the performance by Serena Lunn.”

Rockin’ Tim’s House o’ Culture

Film festival 14th Brisbane international

This sharp, stylish début feature opens, as the title suggests, with a palpable and unsettling physical tension—three friends, Frédéric, François, and Frank, drinking and listening to rock'n'roll end up trashing their living room despite the protestations of Frank's unnamed girlfriend, played by Serena Lunn. The next morning, after she has cleaned up after them, they set off to Le Havre to see a band. The road trip there is fraught with the boys' reckless driving, again despite pleas from Lunn's character. The group's journey is spliced with scenes of other members of the rockabilly scene going about their daily lives in kitchens, laundries, and factory floors. The grinding pace maintains the film's simmering tension and underscores the frustrations of the characters' working-class lives, in which music, drinking, and fighting is their only release. __

Violent Days is shot in black and white, and Lunn's suicide-blond hair and pale dress give her an ethereal quality—contrasted with the dark sunglasses and leather jackets of her boyfriend and his mates, she seems to radiate light. For these men, the responsibilities and restrictions associated with settling down, and the horror of labouring for 40 years only to retire bored and die, eat away at them. The obvious appeal of the rock'n'roll lifestyle and its rejection of this way of life plays out in the film's final scenes in which Teds, Fifties and Rockabilly Rebels converge at the dance. Chaufour's vérité style and empathy for the subject make for a dignified, artful rendering of this explosive scene.__

The times London Film festival BFI

Three rockabilly boys spend a night listening to music, playing cards, drinking and scuffling in a Parisian apartment, while a bottle blonde girlfriend fusses around them and clears up their mess. The following morning, the hungover quartet pile into a battered jalopy, put a cassette in the tape deck and head to Le Havre, where there's a rock 'n' roll gathering of bands and like minds: gangs out for bopping, booze and bother, where all the boys want to be Eddie Cochran and all the girls look like Jayne Mansfield. Tense, poetic and gorgeously shot in black and white, *vérité* style, *Violent Days* feels intriguingly out of time, displaying a number of generation crossing influences, referencing Godard's notion of cool, Lindsay Anderson's astute observations, and at other points bringing to mind American pioneers Cassavetes, Clarke and Jarmusch. Yet Lucile Chaufour's debut feature is also strikingly unique, an insight into a white, working class, cultural clique that has few precedents in French cinema. The wonderful 50s soundtrack trawls the vaults of Sun Records and beyond, dusting down numerous gems from the early days of rock.

Australian Premiere

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We love this film...lean, stark, packed with great and low key performances and dripping with great and authentic 50s rock sounds, *Violent Days* harks back to the loose stylings of the 60s French New Wave with the added punch of today's underground youth movements. This film begs the question of where does the fiction stop and the documentary start? It follows a close knit group of four French rockers (3 guys and one doll) on their way to a

rockabilly show through the countryside that seems to take forever to get to.

Along the way and at the show itself however, things start to fall apart for them all and a crash course in discovery is afoot.

Interwoven with the fictional story are documentary grabs of some of the characters that inhabit this fringe rock subculture that is scattered throughout poor French housing projects. The rock show itself contains powerhouse performances of a ton of 50s standards by contemporary and very authentic rockers from France and the US.

Very, very atmospheric and with a real honest edge that most low-budget films find difficult to find, *Violent Days* is a real rough and rare gem - just the way we like them. The result is a film *"in which the bluntness of the depiction harmonizes perfectly with these underprivileged youths' violence as everyday pastime. And last but not least: emerging from this melancholy, old-fashioned atmosphere is the beautiful, tragic portrait of a woman."* (Julian Weler, ARTE)

Highly, highly recommended for those with a taste for new cinema.

Karlovy Vary IFF

Section: Forum of Independents

A group of friends living in Paris have two things in common: their love for 1950's rock'n'roll music and their working-class origins. On the weekend, after a night of beers and stupid fights, they set off in a half-wrecked car for a rock concert at Le Havre. A young woman, her boyfriend and two other young men get lost, fight again, get lost again and finally end up at a beach near Le Havre. The concert is getting under way and the whole of the French rockabilly scene is there. Lots of beer is consumed again. Somebody starts a fistfight. Then the concert is over and our friends leave, heading back to Paris... This black-and-white road-movie, shot in a style reminiscent of early Jim Jarmusch or Aki Kaurismäki, is set in a vague time-span. It could be the 1950s, the 70s, or maybe even today...

Variety Violent Days **By Russell EDWARDS**

The cost of slavishly adhering to rock 'n' roll's adolescent values is weighed against the necessity of growing up in "Violent Days," a seemingly rambling but ultimately pointed French indie. B&W lensing and retro-retro-hipster characters evoke memories of Jim Jarmusch's "Stranger Than Paradise," though the three male protags are actually closer to Jean-Paul Belmondo's boorish lead in "Breathless," without the cultural sophistication. Deceptively aimless tone will hamper pic's commercial prospects, but festival audiences will take notice — if they last the relatively brief, but still testing, running time.

Pic exists in two versions. A 106-minute one, reportedly with more emphasis on docu elements, unspooled at the 2003 edition of the Belfort "EntreVues" fest; much shorter, 79-minute version caught at Berlin first showed at Belfort last year under the title "Violent Days — Dry." Helmer-producer-scripter Lucile Chaufour is mulling the possibility of releasing both versions in Paris in October, though it's unclear at this stage how each version will be differentiated from the other.

Berlin version begins with rockabilly renegades, Frederic (Frederic Beltran), Franck (Franck Musard) and Francois (Francois Mayet) having a latenight, laddish tussle over a few drinks and

a card game. As the guys create havoc, Frederic's unnamed, bottle-blonde g.f. (Serena Lunn) tries to smooth everything over. The next morning, as the men sleep, she dutifully cleans up the debris.

Hungover but ready to start again, the men decide to drive to Le Havre to see their favorite band. Punctuated by inserts of rockers laboring in working-class locales, the road trip is an irritating affair for Frederic's g.f. Auds, too, may get crabby as her companions niggle endlessly while the small car booms out rockabilly.

In Le Havre, the apparently real McCoy Gallic rockers aggressively vie for the camera, spill beer, hoot, holler – and dance good, too. Most wouldn't even have been born when Elvis died.

Rivalries between the men build an expectation of violence – which erupts outside with an Arab gang while the concert audience rocks on obliviously within. No catharsis is achieved, though the pic's temperature is cooled. The real climax comes as the quartet begins its trek home.

Basically, nothing much happens in the film; but Chaufour's skill is in maintaining a potentially explosive atmosphere in which anything could happen at anytime – a world in which alcoholism and drug use keep the day violently simmering for no other reason than to relieve boredom. Though the film could be briefer than even 79 minutes, the power of Chaufour's B&W images and her understanding of her subject are undeniable. Lunn is aces as the long-suffering girlfriend who survives her lot with a pained dignity.

B&W lensing is grainy and with a docu flavor, full of poor lighting, focus-dropping and other glitches that add to pic's sense of authenticity. In contrast, the final crawl is an arty and sharply executed exercise, with soothing music encouraging viewers to remain and contemplate a hazy but pristine image of Lunn. This final moment, both haunting and a relief, elevates Chaufour's verite-style exercise to another, more poetic level.

Camera (B&W), Dominique Texier, Nicolas Eprendre, Bertrand Mouly; editor, Elisabeth Juste, Albane Penaranda, Sophie Bousquet; music, Chaufour, Thomas Couzinier, Flying Saucers, Hillbilly Cats, Bad Crows; sound, (Dolby Digital/DTS Digital), Xavier Pierouel, Raoul Fruhauf.
Reviewed at Berlin Film Festival (Forum), Feb. 18, 2005. Running time: 80 MIN.

Berlin Film Festival **By Julien WELTER**

The members of a clique in Paris have three things in common: their love for 1950s rock'n'roll, their working-class origin, and their low status in society. On the weekend, these friends set off for a rock concert in Le Havre. The entire French rockabilly scene is meeting there. Lots of beer is drunk and someone starts a fistfight. The girlfriend of one of the young men wants to hang out with the group; she more or less becomes their scapegoat.

“In France, depiction of 1950s youth culture is limited to a very few films in the '60s and a few clichéd, third-class productions from the '80s. No wonder French film is hardly interested in the characters Lucile Chaufour portrayed in her first full-length film “Violent Days”. The film is neither reactionary nor revolutionary, but is something special, not least because its plot is set in an indeterminate past. The director uses a quite fitting black-and-white, so that the viewer finds it difficult to place the time (it could just as well allude to the militant workers of the '70s). The workers' milieu, which has increasingly weakened in recent decades as a consequence of economic change, melds quite naturally with the rockabilly scene, an

autonomous cult movement, often sneered at, that arose in the proletariat. Lucile Chaufour lets the protagonists have their say directly, sometimes in front of the camera, sometimes offscreen, thereby achieving more credibility than with construed, fictitious scenes. The result is a film in which the bluntness of the depiction harmonizes perfectly with these underprivileged youths violence as everyday pastime. And last but not least: emerging from this gloomy, melancholy, old-fashioned atmosphere is the beautiful, tragic portrait of a woman, played by Serena Lunn.”

Perth International Film Festival

Revealing Revelation:

The Fiction, the Facts & the Subversion by Tanja Vision

Tanya Vision is a film and video lecturer at Edith Cowan University and a film critic for ABC Radio in Perth.

Violent Days (Lucile Chaufour) is another fiction film that feeds a documentary style structure throughout its narrative line. Two accounts of this film exist, a longer version with more documentary footage and a the tighter version which was programmed as part of the Revelation festival.

In Violent Days four French “rockers” work ordinary and repetitive jobs so they can get away for the weekend. It is a languid cinematic tour that touches me on the end of the Marxism dream and the enchantment of ‘50s nostalgia. A bully of boys plan their getaway to catch a rockabilly band in Le Havre, yet the presence of one of their girlfriends creates a thorn. This road trip is a symbolic realisation of their slow death. They labour during the week to fulfil their life on the weekend. They just want to get there, the gorgeous girlfriend (Seren Lunn) just wants to stop off at the seaside. They never go to the seaside. Tension builds as they reach their destination.

At the concert you can map a passage from production to reproduction to simulation as the rockers sculpt their hair and fashion their collars. Violence mounts as other racial quarters intersect at the venue. The beautiful bleached-blond girlfriend is tossed aside in the macho chaos. It was she that gave me my most memorable ending from the festival. Tragically, she returns to the ocean and gives herself up to the water, floating in a sea of symbolic exchange.

Chicago Reader

“An intriguing look at a curious cross-cultural milieu”

-Michael Wilmington, Chicago Tribune Recommended!

Festival of New French Cinema

Four disaffected and economically marginal French people—three guys and the often mistreated girlfriend of one of them—drive to Le Havre for a 50s-style rock concert in this nowadays feature. First-time director Lucile Chaufour juxtaposes intense but stilted performances of songs with fights at the entrance to the concert, and her black-and-white cinema verite close-ups of the characters reflect how hopelessly they’re trapped in their world. This makes their aimless and alienated lives vivid, but they’re not pleasant characters to spend time with.

80 min. (Fred Camper)

Rockin' Tim's House o' Culture

The last BIFF movie I saw was:
Violent Days France dir. Lucile Chaufour

This one was interesting. It follows four people obsessed with rockabilly for a day as they travel from Paris to Le Havre for a show. The four are three men, Franck, Francois and Frederic, and Franck's un-named girlfriend.

The three guys are pretty much just chuckleheads. The focus of the film turns out to be how the girlfriend deals with them, and with their unwillingness to grow up. They are all in their late 30s, but it seems like for the guys, the rockabilly scene is a way for them to stave off adulthood. The film also picks up the old French obsession with boredom, and how violence often seems to be the only antidote that people can find for it.

The movie is good for a number of reasons. It does a great job of capturing what most underground music scenes are like. The feeling of being 'in the club' and soon. The best part of the film though is the performance by Serena Lunn. She does a great job of showing a woman who is realising that her relationship is going nowhere, and trying to figure out how to respond to that (and, ummm, she's absolutely gorgeous too). The movie is slow, and leaves a lot of loose ends. But I really liked it.



MAD RAT MAG

FILM REVIEW

VIOLENT DAYS

Directed by Lucile Chaufour
With Frederic Beltran, Serena Lunn

Just to make the UK rockin' scene aware (if they are not already) of the film Violent Days. Although in my opinion the film does not give Rockabilly huge amounts of credibility the clothes, hair, music and tattoos are very good. The live footage of the Flying Saucers is tremendous making the film a must see for Flying Saucers fans, and is of good general interest to rock'n'rollers and rockabillys in the UK.

Rolling Rob, Towcester

Three Rockabilly boys spend a night listening to music, playing cards and scuffling in a Parisian apartment, while a bottle blonde girlfriend fusses around them and clears up their mess. The following morning, the hung over quartet pile into a battered jalopy, put a cassette in the tape deck and head to Le Havre, where there's a rock'n'roll gathering of bands and like minds: gangs out for bopping, booze and bother, where all the boys want to be Eddie Cochran and all the girls look like

Jayne Mansfield. Tense, poetic and gorgeously shot in black and white with a wonderful 50's soundtrack.

Michael Hayden

The same sense of everyday emptiness informs Lucile Chaufour's debut feature, Violent Days. Opening in a Parisian apartment, where Serena Lunn tries to retain order as boyfriend Frédéric Beltran and his buddies François Mayet and Franck Musard party the night away, the action soon hits the highway, as the quartet makes for a rockabilly gig in Le Havre. The road trip is filled with minor incidents and glorious music from the vaults of Sun Records. But the atmosphere changes the moment the first band takes to the stage, as the venue is staked out by local thugs looking for trouble. Brandishing the pared down authenticity of Free Cinema, the self-assurance of the nouvelle vague and the dramatic naturalism of such US independents as John Cassavetes and Shirley Clarke, this is a disconcerting monochrome odyssey that challenges the mythical innocence of a highly romanticized era.

David Parkinson BBC.CO.UK

Divergences

Working-Class Culture, Rock'n'Roll and Social Crisis

By Larry Portis

Are you waiting for the Revolution ? Well the time is right, because the long-awaited financial collapse has already happened. All we have to do now is wait for the social and political consequences.

Just kidding ; we know it's more complicated. After all, the working class has to be politically conscious, and that means being aware of its historical role as the bearer of revolutionary change in the form of a new mode of production and social relations that preclude domination and exploitation. Yet, wherever you go, the workers—the proletariat if you will—seem to be far from realizing this destiny. In fact, they could be further from it than almost any other group.

But I've just seen a film that somehow inspires a strange kind of optimism, even if working people quite rightly place little confidence in those who would push them onto the front lines of social combat. No, it isn't Ken Loach's *Looking for Eric* (2009), although his glorification of collective working-class action is certainly thought provoking. After all, who would have thought that a group of elderly soccer fans led by an ex-Teddy Boy had the potential to carry out the efficient commando operation that is the movie's climax. But Loach's film is a fantasy about a soccer star (Eric Cantona). And the idea that spectator sports can somehow weld unique social bonds, a new expression of proletarian solidarity, and then lead to direct action in the defense of the humble and down-trodden is not optimistic ; it is fantastic.

The film I'm thinking about is Lucile Chaufour's *Violent Days* (completed in 2004, but just now released). Here, strangely, the working-class element is exactly that depicted in Loach's *Looking for Eric*, that is to say the working-class subculture of rockers. Yes, rockers, those people out in the cultural wasteland somewhere, who still believe rockabilly, or rock 'n' roll, or rock, or whatever you want to call it, is the pinnacle of rebelliousness. Nothing new. Ever since *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) and *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) right up to *This is Spinal Tap* (1984) and Todd Haynes' *The Velvet Goldmine* (1998) or I'm Not There (2007) we've had to put up with the celebration of sex, drugs and rock and roll in one form or another.

But Chaufour goes further. She shows how rock and roll music has, at times in recent history, represented a window onto working-class mentality in all its dimensions : social, gender, aesthetic. Watch this film, and you understand the potential for violent rebellion possessed by working-class people.

In any case, this is the story. After a night of drinking, a young couple and two male friends leave in the morning for a coastal city to attend a rockabilly concert. Once there, they drink and disperse, allowing us to observe the scene, which finishes early the next morning with a whimper, but not after a rather brutal fight between rockers and local gangs. However, this fight happens outside the shabby concert hall, and hardly anyone is aware of it.

The unique thing about this film is that the story, essentially about the relationship between the young couple, is placed within a carefully constructed context of labor, love and desperate living.

Lucile Chaufour films—in a grainy black and white—the protagonists at their different work places, interviews different couples with their children talking about their lives and (limited) aspirations. It's like a combination of Diane Arbus' photography and Barbara Koppel's *Harlan County U.S.A.* (1976), except that Chaufour gives us much more to analyze.

Firstly, she shows how rockabilly and much rock and roll is music that reflects and stimulates aggressive behavior. Simply observing the relation between driving a car and the driving rhythm brings home how speed, risk taking and nihilistic bravado is an expression of proletarian mentality. Drugs, and here beer is the drug of choice, can be placed in the same category. Getting smashed and then risking getting smashed in a crash is the kind of self-destructive behavior that working people have always been encouraged to exult in. Taking it to the limit, racing with the devil, as Gene Vincent put it, is the ultimate kick.

But there is also fighting. Alan Sillitoe's novel *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958) is the best literary evocation of this working-class pastime, and for sheer emotional tension Chaufour's film can't be beat. Her graphic docu-fiction is the closest thing to being there we can get. The senselessness and brutality of modern day, proletarian "honor" vendettas is a high few "bourgeois" people can appreciate. With this film, you can appreciate not being there at all. Between rockers and homies, only the outward symbols and the available weapons have changed.

The problem is that this working-class culture is infused with consumer values holding-out the false promise of some sort of material liberation from social domination. But we see that family life for proletarian people still features early marriage and childbearing, indebtedness, domestic violence and arrested development of all kinds. And we might as well go back to the original meaning of "proletariat"—*Ad prolem generandum* : those people without property who reproduce in relatively great numbers. Their condition does not permit equal or healthy conjugal "relationships", "planned parenthood" or mature childrearing.

Violent Days puts it right in our faces. The Romans during the late empire were more-than-apprehensive about the uncontrollable political potential of this class of people. Even bread and circuses sometimes were not enough to keep them in line.

The bad news is that Lucile Chaufour's film is in French. Moreover, this impressive analysis of workingclass culture is based on interviews and study of French rockers, who for the past fifty years have been assiduously replicating the experiences of alienated U.S. and British, working-class youth. The "globalization" of capital has, slowly but surely, "globalized" the culture and sub-cultures we know so well.

But no matter, the film may be released soon in English speaking countries. If it is, it will be far more useful in understanding popular uprisings than the innumerable popular culture studies by academics, who forget how thwarted intelligence and energy is the great political unknown in any situation of economic "crisis". "Violent Days" may be here again.

French Teddy Boys rock to imaginary America by Daniel Brown – RFI Radiofrance internationale

Lucile Chaufour has spent years defending a concept of cinema that is unique. In *Violent Days* the Parisian director mixes documentary interviews of Teddy Boys and rockabilly fans with a dense cinema script brought to life by superb acting. No-one has ever quite attempted this mix of fiction and nonfiction in such a seamless style.

”In this film, I’m looking at what people call ‘white trash’.”

Lucile Chaufour sips on her coffee in a northern Paris café as she explains what motivated her first feature-length film *Violent Days*.

A musician herself, Chaufour has spent the better part of a decade familiarising herself with a community that has often been marginalised and reduced to a cliché.

“I wanted to give back some pride to this so-called ‘trash’, but not to avoid the problems that this community has,” she says.

Her film does anything but that. Chaufour begins with an apparently bland storyline where three men and a woman go on a daytrip to the northern port of Le Havre to see a concert.

But *Violent Days* soon becomes a gritty and unrelentingly bleak vision of a white, working-class, misogynist and often racist world.

Chaufour, however, also captures the magic that 50s rock’n’roll operates on this lumpenproletariat.

“It doesn’t show that rock is cool. The film tries to show how people can be deeply involved in this American dream. And yet a lot of these people don’t speak a word of English. But they are completely attracted to this American dream, this fantasy.”

Hence Chaufour’s provocative sentence in presenting *Violent Days*.

“In France,” it reads, “in Paris, in Le Havre, there are rockers who continue to dream of a country which does not exist: America.”

Lucile Chaufour is a musician herself and plays alongside the stunning lead actress in *Violent Days*, Serena Lunn.

It’s quite fascinating to know that here in France, it’s a very popular culture. In *Violent Days*, the multitude of 50s music followers interviewed reflect how rock’n’roll music is an escape route from their numbingly destructive jobs. It is also an outlet for a violence that is omnipresent.

“It is because of this misery that everyone eats everyone else up,” comments a worker from sub-Saharan Africa in the conclusion of the film.

Chaufour’s choice of grainy black-and-white gives this wonderful debut film a timeless and disturbing quality, reminiscent of *Rumblefish* by Francis Ford Coppola.

Violent Days has been rewarded in France and Australia, as well as being shown in several other international film festivals.

Chaufour, meanwhile, is already working on her next film, a hard look back at the role of punk music in eastern Europe when it was dominated by the Soviet Union.