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present

# THE EMPIRE

a film by Bruno DUMONT



France, Germany, Italy, Portugal / French with English Subtitles / 110 min  
Aspect ratio 2.35 / Sound 5.1

## INTERNATIONAL PRESS

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# SYNOPSIS

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*Opal Coast, Northern France. In a quiet and picturesque fishing village, something finally happens: a special baby is born. A child so unique and peculiar that it unleashes a secret war between extraterrestrial forces of good and evil.*



# DIRECTOR'S NOTES

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In an attempt to restore their empires, two opposing forces from the depths of outer space, One and Zero, unleash an apocalyptic conflict on Earth.

At the center of this digital war and genuine interplanetary insemination, humans are the sexual, spiritual and reproductive prey of this universal and alternative procreation.

Demons of the Zero forces, covertly prepare the invasion disguised as the inhabitants of a small coastal village in northern France. These demons take over the locals, possessing their bodies and damning them, in order to establish pandemonium on earth.

Procreation between a human and an incubus demon has given birth to the Wain, an imperial prince and future procreator of the Zero Race and, incidentally, Freddy, son of a young divorced couple, Lou and Jony.

But, at the same time, a new species of creature formed by the Ones, also from humans, is working for an alternative and beneficial evolution. Before the apocalyptic puberty of the Wain, the Ones try at all costs to thwart this infernal destiny.

While waiting for the final battle, the imperial legions struggle to win humanity over to their cause.

This arresting movie spectacle, a "space and earth opera", is a galactic metaphor for the internal struggle, in the heart of each human being, between 0 and 1, evil and good... the physical and metaphysical struggle of nothingness and being. At the same time, THE EMPIRE is a monstrous synthesis of auteur cinema - with its naturalism - and of the blockbuster - with its sophistication of spectacular entertainment - bringing together non-professional actors and movie stars as part of its attraction.

## THEME, GENRE AND REFERENCES

THE EMPIRE is the fabulous tale of the forces that, from the very beginning to the very end, contribute to shaping the world and humans... into what they are. The film explains how, on Earth, the supreme forces of Good and Evil are torn between the natural forces of love and instincts in their conquest of humankind.

THE EMPIRE mixes characters from two iconic cinematic genres in the history of film: the science fiction superheroes of Hollywood's space odysseys and the antiheroes of naturalism typical of the social chronicles of international auteur cinema. It blends them without specifically referencing a particular film, drawing inspiration from the models of the genre.

THE EMPIRE is therefore the tragi-comic narrative of the human condition because it depicts the perpetual, futile, and slippery struggle between ideals and inclinations.

The underlying philosophies of the two cinema genres THE EMPIRE refers to (space odyssey and naturalistic chronicle) are diametrically opposed, much like the contrast between Italian



and Flemish paintings in the Middle Ages. The first embraces a philosophy based on the sacred, on ideals, morality, and virtues. The second adopts a philosophy of the secular, of the reality, the common, and the natural.

The aesthetics of the film are consequently: sophisticated versus commonplace. The former believes in the Truth (the Good, the Evil, the Fair and the Unfair) with all the discriminations resulting from it. The latter relativizes Truth and explores the infinite complexity of the world and all its diversity.

Two opposing cinematic universes are brought together in a single story, and through their unprecedented confrontation, we tragically witness the unresolved fate of the human condition.

### LOCATION AND DESIGN OF THE SPACESHIPS

Audresselles, where the film is shot, is a typical village of traditional fishermen. This village is also where LIL' QUINQUIN and COINCOIN take place.

The idea was to invent new shapes, breaking away from the stereotypes of space operas, by associating spaceships with emblematic monuments and jewels of French architecture (such as the Sainte-Chapelle and the Caserta Palace, replica of the Versailles Palace in Italy). And all of this interconnected with the reality of the Pas-De-Calais region: the sea, the woodlands, the local horses and the World War II bunkers ruins, military remnants of the Atlantic Wall...

With this in mind, the Sainte Chapelle architectural jewel is used as the cockpit of one of the spaceships. Its landing pad on earth being a ruined World War II bunker located in a field, another example of the confrontation between the ideal and the ordinary.



# THE CHARACTERS

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LINE (Lyna Khoudri) has just moved in the village with her mother and her stepfather. She sunbathes in the dunes, hanging out around Jony. But this irrepressible attraction for Jony is in fact due to her belonging to the same race of invaders, the subjects of the Emperor of Evil. Line's transformation, unlike Jony's, is not yet fully complete and she struggles between her human and demonic halves, the former resisting the ultimate fusion that the latter demands. Line obeys Jony and serves the same cause, protecting Freddy, Jony's son, the future Prince of Darkness to oversee the advent of the Zero Empire.

JANE (Anamaria Vartolomei) is a princess of the One Empire, the other alien kingdom that covets Earth in order to spread absolute good. Jane is a warrior devoted to her Queen. She has been sent to Earth to save the human race from the clutches of the Zero Empire and to prevent Beelzebub and his son from ruling. To do this, Jane must watch over Freddy, the satanic Wain. Evil is growing inside of him and she must kill him when the time comes to annihilate the enemy empire. While Jane is convinced that she is fighting for a just cause and is entirely devoted to her mission to conquer the hearts of men, she is nonetheless charmed by Jony, her enemy, when her human side takes over.

JONY (Brandon Vlieghe) is the young fisherman of the village. Every morning, he puts his boat in the water and ignores the noisy holidaymakers who invade the beaches in summer. He shares custody of his son Freddy with Lou, his ex-girlfriend. However, behind the illusion of a simple and human life, Jony is in fact a knight of the Zeros, an extraterrestrial race ruled by Beelzebub, the King of Darkness, who is secretly preparing to invade the Earth. The demon has colonized Jony's entire body and has completed his mutation to become a fervent soldier of Evil. He has one main mission on Earth: to watch over Beelzebub's heir, the Wain, who is hiding within Jony's son Freddy, so that he will grow discreetly and spread the hold of evil over humans to facilitate the invasion of the Zero Empire. But, within this human envelope, Jony discovers new sensations and carnal pleasures that will make him lose sight of his goal.

RUDY (Julien Manier) is Lou's new boyfriend, with whom he takes care of the Wain when she has custody of the child. But Rudy is above all a worthy sentinel of the Ones, devoted to the cause of Good. He wants to become a soldier for the Queen's army. Rudy obeys Jane's orders and carries out attacks without any hesitation: he eliminates Lou to monitor Freddy and his evil influence on humans.

BEELZEBUB (Fabrice Luchini) is the King of Darkness, ruler of the Zeros. With the help of Jony, Beelzebub will try to spread Evil on earth by protecting Jony's son, Freddy, the Wain and incarnation of Evil. Eager to monitor operations on the ground, Beelzebub takes the body of a local guide.

THE QUEEN (Camille Cottin) is the leader of the Ones, the empire of Good. In order to better understand the situation on Earth, the Queen takes the body of the local mayor and wanders about in the company of Jane and Rudy.

# THE DIRECTOR - BRUNO DUMONT

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Bruno Dumont directed his first feature film at the age of thirty-eight: *THE LIFE OF JESUS* in 1997, shot in Bailleul, his native town in Northern France. This film earned him immediate recognition: selected for the Directors' Fortnight, it received a Special Mention for the *Caméra d'Or*.

Exploring a demanding, singular, raw cinematographic path, Bruno Dumont returned to Cannes in 1999 with *HUMANITY*, in Official Competition. He was awarded with the Grand Prix and a double prize for the interpretation of the two non-professional actors.

Bruno Dumont moved away from the North of France to shoot in the California desert, *TWENTYNINE PALMS*, a road movie selected at the Venice Film Festival in 2003.

In 2006, *FLANDERS*, a harsh film about the ravages of war, received the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival.

Bruno Dumont then directed two films on the themes of religion, mysticism and their drifts: *HADEWIJCH* and *OUTSIDE SATAN*.

After a biopic with Juliette Binoche, *CAMILLE CLAUDEL 1915*, Bruno Dumont opened up to a new audience with the brilliant success of the mini-series *LIL' QUINQUIN*, a much more comical project than his previous works. He continues on the same burlesque path with *SLACK BAY*, which was presented in Official Competition at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival.

He then turned his attention to the tragic fate of Joan of Arc and directed the musical *JEANNETTE: THE CHILDHOOD OF JOAN OF ARC*, selected at the Directors' Fortnight in 2017 and then *JOAN OF ARC* selected at Un Certain Regard in 2019 where he received a Special Mention from the jury. The film also received the prestigious Prix Louis Delluc.

*FRANCE*, starring Lea Seydoux, an acerbic satire of the media world through a portrait of a star journalist, was selected in competition at Cannes Film Festival in 2021.

In 2024, Dumont's new feature, the galactic comedy *THE EMPIRE* will compete at the 74th Berlinale.



# SELECTED FILMOGRAPHIES

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## BRUNO DUMONT

2024 – THE EMPIRE with Brandon Vlieghe, Anamaria Vartolomei, Lyna Khoudri, Camille Cottin, Fabrice Luchini  
*Berlinale Competition*

2021 - FRANCE with Léa Seydoux, Blanche Gardin  
*Cannes Competition, Toronto IFF, New York FF, Busan IFF*

2019 - JOAN OF ARC with Lise Leplat Prudhomme, Fabrice Luchini  
*Cannes Un Certain Regard Jury Special Mention, Louis Delluc Prize, Best Film at Seville EFF, New Horizons IFF, Busan IFF, Prix Louis Delluc.*

2018 - COINCOIN AND THE EXTRA-HUMANS (TV Series)  
*Locarno Honorary Leopard Award, San Sebastian IFF, RDV with French Cinema in NY FF*

2017 - JEANNETTE - THE CHILDHOOD OF JOAN OF ARC with Lise Leplat Prudhomme  
*Cannes Directors' Fortnight, Toronto IFF, Busan IFF*

2016 - SLACK BAY with Juliette Binoche, Fabrice Luchini, Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi  
*Cannes Competition, Karlovy Vary IFF, Best Film at Seville EFF, New Horizons IFF, Melbourne IFF*

2014 - LIL' QUINQUIN (TV Series)  
*Cannes Directors' Fortnight, New York IFF, Nominated for Best TV Film or Series at the Crystal Globes Award*

2013 - CAMILLE CLAUDEL 1915 with Juliette Binoche  
*Berlinale Competition*

2011 - OUTSIDE SATAN with David Dewaele, Alexandra Lematre  
*Cannes Un Certain Regard Jury Prize, Toronto IFF Masters*

2009 - HADEWIJCH with Julie Sokolowski  
*Toronto IFF International Critics' Award, San Sebastian FF Competition*

2006 - FLANDERS with Samuel Boidin, Adélaïde Leroux  
*Cannes Grand Prix, Nominated for Best Director at the Lumière Awards, Nominated for Best Film at the Louis Delluc Awards*

2003 - TWENTYNINE PALMS with Katerina Golubeva, David Wissak  
*Venice Competition*

1999 - HUMANITY with Emmanuel Schotté, Séverine Caneele

*Cannes Grand Prix, Best Actor, Best Actress*

1997 - THE LIFE OF JESUS with David Douche, Marjorie Cottreel  
*Cannes Caméra d'Or, Chicago IFF FIPRESCRI Prize, London FF Best Film, European Film Awards European Discovery of the Year, Nominated for Best First Film at the César Awards*

### ANAMARIA VARTOLOMEI

2024 - THE EMPIRE by Bruno Dumont  
2024 - MARIA by Jessica Palud (in post-production)  
2021 - HAPPENING by Audrey Diwan (*Golden Lion Venice, Best Upcoming Actress at the César Awards*)  
2020 - HOW TO BE A GOOD WIFE a film by Martin Provost  
2017 - THE ROYAL EXCHANGE a film by Marc Dugain  
2016 - ETERNITY by Anh Hung Tran  
2016 - MY REVOLUTION by Ramzi Ben Sliman  
2016 - THE IDEAL by Frédéric Beigbeder

### LYNA KHOUDRI

2024 - THE EMPIRE by Bruno Dumont  
2023 - THE THREE MUSKETEERS: D'ARTAGNAN by Martin Bourboulon  
2023 - THE THREE MUSKETEERS: MILADY by Martin Bourboulon  
2022 - NOVEMBRE by Cédric Jimenez  
2021 - THE FRENCH DISPATCH by Wes Anderson  
2020 - GAGARINE by Fanny Liatard and Jérémy Trouilh  
2019 - PAPICHA by Mounia Meddour

### CAMILLE COTTIN

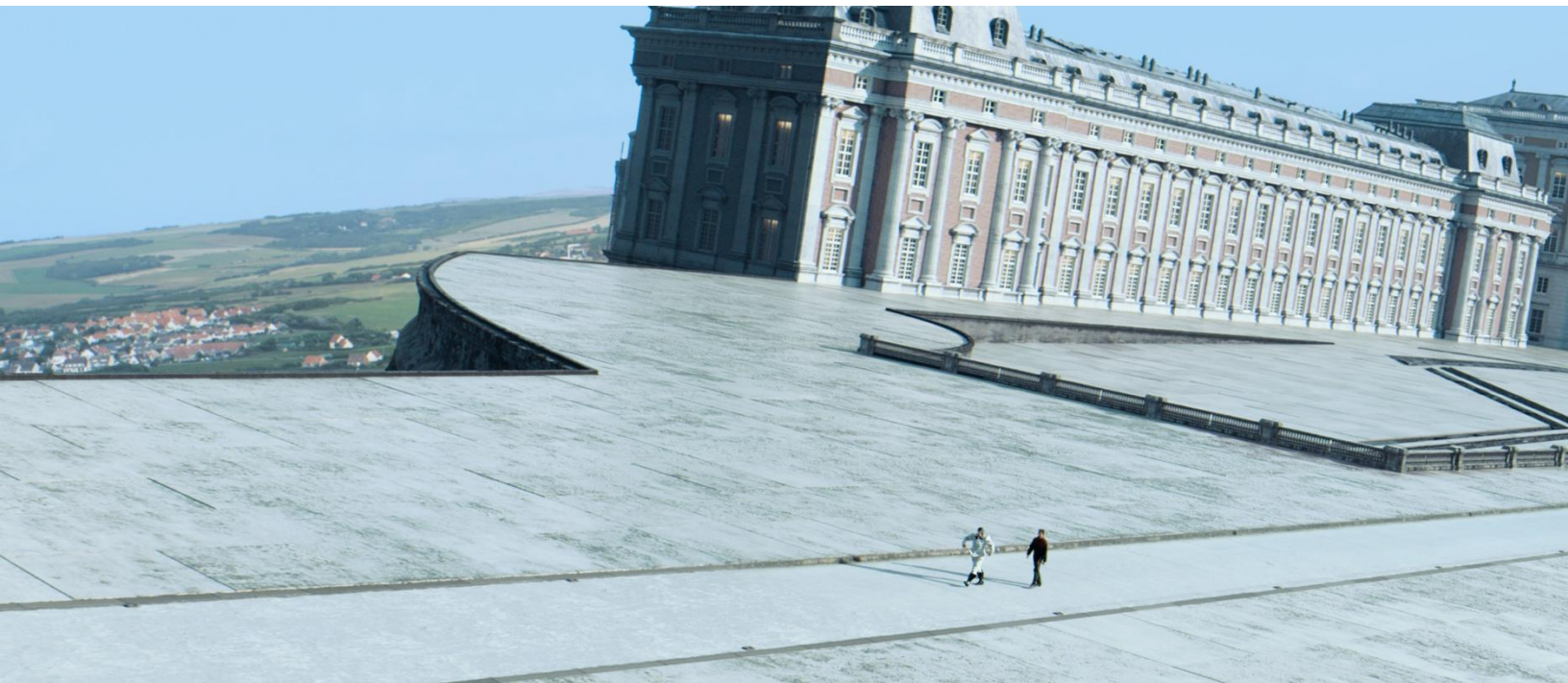
2024 - THE EMPIRE by Bruno Dumont  
2022 - HOUSE OF GUCCI a film by Ridley Scott  
2021 - STILLWATER a film by Tom McCarthy (Cannes Official Selection)  
2018-2022 - KILLING EVE by Phoebe Waller-Bridge ( TV Series - Four seasons )  
2018-2022 - CALL MY AGENT ( Netflix TV Series - Four seasons )  
2020 - SOMEONE, SOMEWHERE a film by Cédric Klapisch  
2019 - THE MYSTERY OF HENRI PICK a film by Rémi Bezançon  
2019 - ROOM 212 a film by Christophe Honoré  
2018 - SAVAGE a film by Vincent Mariette  
2016 - ALLIED a film by Robert Zemeckis  
2015 - THE PARISIAN BITCH, PRINCESS OF HEARTS by Camille Cottin

### FABRICE LUCHINI

2024 - THE EMPIRE by Bruno Dumont  
2022 - THE CRIME IS MINE by François Ozon  
2019 - ALICE AND THE MAYOR a film by Nicolas Pariser



2019 - THE BEST IS YET TO COME a film by Alexandre de La Patellière  
2019 - THE MYSTERY OF HENRI PICK a film by Rémi Bezançon  
2018 - THE EMPEROR OF PARIS a film by Jean-François Richet  
2016 - SLACK BAY a film by Bruno Dumont  
2015 - COURTED a film by Christian Vincent  
2014 - GEMMA BOVERY a film by Anne Fontaine  
2013 - BICYCLING WITH MOLIÈRE a film by Philippe Le Guay (*César for Best Actor*)  
2012 - ASTERIX & OBELIX: GOD SAVE BRITANNIA a film by Laurent Triard  
2012 - IN THE HOUSE a film by François Ozon (*César for Best Actor nomination*)  
2010 - POTICHE (TROPHY WIFE) a film by François Ozon  
2008 - PARIS a film by Cédric Klapisch  
2007 - MOLIÈRE a film by Laurent Triard (*César for Best Actor in a Supporting Role nomination*)  
1999 - NOTHING ABOUT ROBERT a film by Pascal Bonitzer  
1993 - TOUT CA... POUR CA ! a film by Claude Lelouch (*César for Best Actor in a Supporting Role*)



# CAST

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Jony	Brandon Vlieghe
Jane	Anamaria Vartolomei
Line	Lyna Khoudri
The Queen	Camille Cottin
Belzébuth	Fabrice Luchini
Van der Weyden	Bernard Pruvost
Carpentier	Philippe Jore

# CREW

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Director	Bruno Dumont
Writer	Bruno Dumont
Producers	Jean Bréhat Bertrand Faivre
Coproducers	Dorothe Beinemeier Fabrizio Mosca Marcantonio Borghese Andrea Paris Matteo Rovere Ines Vasiljevic
Photography	David Chambille
Editing	Bruno Dumont Desidera Rayner

Sound

Philippe Lecoeur  
Elsa Ruhlmann  
Jeremy Hassid  
Romain Ozanne  
Emmanuel Croset  
Olivier Walczak

Director of production &  
postproduction

Cédric Ettouati

1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Director

Rémi Bouvier

Script-girl

Virginie Barbay

Costumes

Alexandra Charles  
Carole Chollet

Casting

Clément Morelle

Production Design

Erwan Legal  
Celia Marolleau