



MUSIC BOX FILMS

Presents

LADS & JOCKEYS

A film by Benjamin Marquet

Press information available at <http://www.musicboxfilms.com/lads-jockeys>

Running Time: 100 Minutes
In French with English Subtitles

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SYNOPSIS

September 2006. Everywhere in France kids are back to school. In “Gouvieux,” a small village in the neighborhood of Chantilly, 14 years old boys and girls enter “Le Moulin à vent” boarding school, a training centre for future lads and jockeys. 3 years later, the best will become famous jockeys; the majority will be lads.

For these young pupils, the transition from the family environment to this new world is brutal. They leave a cozy life to enter in a world where the hours of working are endless and where the comfort of horses comes before their own.

INTERVIEW WITH BENJAMIN MARQUET

“Lads and Jockeys” is your 1st feature film. What did you do before this?

I started at a one-year university studying History, but I stopped in the middle to shoot a short: “La vie en beau”. Then I worked on sets, in different departments from production to direction. I went back to university to study anthropology. During my masters, I spend one year in Senegal where I shoot a 35 minutes documentary, “L’humanologue,” a portrait of the son of a Marabou who wants to marry a white girl.

How did you come the idea of doing “Lads and Jockeys”?

It was not my idea. After I showed “L’humanologue” to my father Daniel, he discovered the genre of Documentary! He had the idea to do a feature on the subject of racehorses. This is a subject he knows very well, as he has been an amateur jockey for years! For myself, it is a world I only knew through him and that I did not really care for—though I believed it had some interesting characters. The idea started to mature and I spent time in the training centre of Chantilly where I discovered a lot of unusual people, and a secluded world that I liked instantly. To start with, I did not have a clear idea of what I would be shooting. Daniel explained a lot of things to me about racehorses.

He gave me a lot of information that I needed to start. Quickly I realized I would not be doing a picture about horses, but a picture about the people taking care of them. What is called “morning work” is completely ignored by the public that is familiar with races. It is very hard. It starts every day at 5am and is far from the image of glory of racetracks. Gradually I finally settled on doing a documentary about the school of jockeys.

How did you prepare yourself to shoot that picture?

When I started my Anthropological studies, I knew ultimately I wanted to become a director. For this picture, I immersed myself for months in this particular world: I took a room in a hospitality centre where lots of lads live in a 9 square meter room. I learned to ride. I spent a month as an employee with a trainer. I got frightened to death; I shared the routine of the lads.

Once we started shooting, we settled the producer's offices in an apartment in Chantilly where I also lived. It gave me the opportunity to be two minutes away from the school.

To do a documentary, honesty is key and that's why it is so important to share as much time as possible with the people you are filming. In our case, it was even more crucial. It is the rather close world with the presence of very reactive animals that makes things quite tricky for safety reasons.

What to you want to show in the picture?

This is a picture about kids. Kids who leave their families to enter a new one: the horse's family. This is a picture about family stories and family background. Where are those kids coming from? What have they left behind? Where do they belong? Strangely enough and although I cherish my freedom, the places I feel best in are the ones grounded in strong values and structures.

It is a picture about a very tough world where people most often share a lifetime passion that they are above all happy to live and share.

Once in the school, the routine is divided in 2 sessions: For 3 weeks they are in the regular school and for 3 additional weeks they are under the supervision of a horse trainer in a given stable. At school they are taught the traditional subjects such as math or geography, and in the afternoon they ride. Once with their respective trainer, they conform their dreams to the hard reality of the apprenticeship. Waking up at 5 AM, they discover the fear, the thrill, the power of the racehorse, the world of the adults, the hard physical work, the strict orders of the boss, the joy of galloping with no limits, and complete devotion to the horse. The film follows the classroom in the 1st year of apprenticeship. Steve, Florian, Flavien, and Justine are part of it. They share the world of teenagers, flirting, mobile phones, Play Stations, and the dreams of glory. Unfortunately, not all of them will achieve their dreams. Steve, scared to death when riding, will most likely stay a stable lad. Justine and Steve are still wondering what their future in this world will be. Florian is already in his head a future crack jockey and seems to have the qualities to become one. At the end of the film, we will follow the 1st race of a group of students on the racetrack. This will officially put them in the world of jockeys and no longer in the one of apprentices.

CREW

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