

SAUVAGES

Original version: French/ English subtitles



Director: *Claude Barras*

Release date (France): *October 16th, 2024*

Genre: *Animation, Family, Adventure, Environment*

Countries of origin: *Switzerland, France, Belgium*

Run time : *86 minutes*

AGE APPROPRIATENESS

Film identity

Category: **Feature films** 

Publics: **Kids, Family**

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Country: **Switzerland, France, Belgium**

Festival d'animation d'Annecy

SYNOPSIS

In Borneo, at the edge of the tropical forest, Kéria adopts a baby orangutan which lost his mother when the government soldiers entered the forest to establish the oil palm plantation where her father works. At the same time, her young cousin Selaï has come to live with them, seeking refuge from the conflict between his nomadic family and the logging companies. Together, Kéria, Selaï and the little ape will battle the destruction of their ancestral forest home, now under greater threat than ever. But for Kéria, the fight will also allow her to discover the truth of her own origins.

LES CRITIQUES

A Heartfelt and Galvanizing Animated Film Calls for Environmental Protection

The latest from 'My Life as a Zucchini' director Claude Barras is about a group of Indigenous people trying to protect their land from rampant deforestation. his incisive and edifying animated feature about an 11-year-old girl trying to protect her land and people from encroaching deforestation.

Lovia Gyarkye – The Hollywood Reporter

...And the film is unwavering in how it advocates for the need to protect these nomad's home, both through collective action and direct fighting against the forces that threaten it. Despite how fantastical the jungles of "Savages" may look, it's a film that's very much rooted in real life, and all the more powerful for it.

Wilson Chapman – Indie Wire

Sauvages is another adorable fable by Barras, and one that has an important message for the younger generation, so that their children can loan our planet to them too one day."

Sauvages tackles the destruction of forest land head-on, showing not only the detrimental effects on nature but also the threat it holds to breaking the balance between humans and animals; the displacement of indigenous people by these deforestation activities is one of the key points of the film.

(...) The stop-motion work is exemplary; especially the lighting makes the Borneo Forest come alive, and the detailed soundscape provides further texture to the jungle.

Marc van de Klashorst -International Cinephile Society

The savages of the film are not Kéria and her family, but the employees of the palm oil plantation who try to corrupt them, as if nature could be bought with money. The real villains are not those who try to defend their land, but those who, out of selfishness and greed, want to destroy it. With a decidedly anti-colonial approach, Barras shows us how important it is to fight to defend one's ideals, identity and people from human greed.

Muriel Del Don – Cineuropa – Annecy 2024

it's a charming coming-of-age picture, certainly, but it's also a film that directly engages with Indigenous rights and some of the more urgent environmental issues of the moment.

Wendy ide – Screen international

DÉTAILS

LANGAGE

The film is in French with English subtitles, but also in the language of the Penan living in the rainforest of Sarawak in the Malay state. When the Penan speak their language, there are no subtitles. What's the reasoning?

Here is what Claude Barras, the director of the film, says in response to this question.

*X.K-T.: Like Kéria, like a traveller in a foreign land
who does not know the language, the spectator must try to
understand the meaning of words through the situation, the expression
non-verbal characters. It is a choice consistent with the
project of a "realistic tale" that is yours.*

C.B.: Absolutely, that was really the point of view I wanted to defend. In general, I was committed to ensuring that the film is as realistic and documented as possible.

The language of Jeanne the biologist is very colourful.

When she speaks to the children, she has a rich vocabulary of animal words expressing her kindness such as (the translation comes from the subtitles of the film)

Mes petits furets – my ferrets

Ma petite loutre – my chipmunk

Ma belette – my weasel

Mon bichon – My darling
Allez les doryphores -
etc.

For the capitalist exploiters responsible for deforestation, Jeanne's vocabulary is more striking and somewhat familiar:

- *Tu vas **la boucler** [tu vas te taire] ta sale bouche de sapiens*

Shut your dirty mouth

- ***Charognards** à col blanc qui sont en train de tout **bousiller** [tuer]*

And these white-collar vultures are ruining it all

- *C'est **un truc de ouf** [fou] que les **pourritures** ultra-libéraux sont en train d'organiser*

It's crazy that the greedy scumbags who are organizing this massacre

- *Le progrès... **mon cul!***

Progress schmogress

- *En plus de manger de la **merde**, le monde entier va **se torcher** avec votre forêt*

The world eats poo and now it's gonna wipe its bum with your forest

- *Bravo les gars des tonnes de bois pour faire du papier de **chiotte** [toilette]*

... tons of woods to make toilet paper

- *Bande de vermine*

Bloody vermin!

- *On va se battre ensemble contre **ces salopards***

We will fight together against these jerks

The other characters use occasional familiarities such as:

C'est quoi ce bordel? What the heck? At the beginning of the film, or "I don't care" for *Je m'en fous!* Said by Kéria and her cousin Selai. "This hell hole" (*Ce coin perdu!*) is evoked as this exclamation "Incredible!" for *Trop classe!*

Kéria calls her father a "coward" or her cousin a "massive jerk" (*gros débile*) in her angry fits. She uses the word *Dégueu* "disgusting" / "too nasty" several times when yanking the leeches out of her legs.

The foreman calls Kéria a "little."

The story is very much about mythical characters of the Penan such as

Tepun: The soul of the forest. The daughter of the moon and the forest

Maten Dau: the eye of the day

Lakei Ket: Ket with his big eyes, he sees all the spiders in the dark

Jeanne uses scientific vocabulary to refer to the poisonous snake.

Contemptuous remarks towards the inhabitants of the tropical forest in danger of destruction

"The company and the government won't give into a pack of half-naked savages. There's plenty of work... we even hire savages" says the foreman who insults the natives for being illiterate.

The legal jargon of the escort agent also remains contemptuous.

Selai is bullied by Kéria and her friends which drives him to leave, hence the wandering in the forest.

Note that the entrance arch of the school bears the inscription: Jesus loves you

VIOLENCE

The Green Forest Company wants to shamelessly destroy the habitat of the Penan who live by hunting and fishing in the forests.

The sound of tractors and saws cutting down trees is seen as an act of violence against these nomadic inhabitants.

The damage caused by the workers is shown from the beginning with the death (non-graphic) of the mother orangutan, an endangered species.

We see her caught in the invaders' nets, running and falling to the ground after being killed by rifle bullets that we hear: the scene is off-screen so not graphic.

The tension between government agents and the natives is palpable because of the violent remarks they hurl at each other.

After an hour of the film, the foreman presents a permit issued by the government to enter the forest. The tractor forced its way into the forest beyond the banner *We are nature defending itself*.

The soldiers of the Malaysian army threaten with their rifles, just as the young Selai threatens to poison the invaders with his blowpipe with toxic darts.

Noises play an important role because they reveal the life of the animals with their cries and the threats of destruction by tractors, trucks, saws.

Life in the forest is not idyllic, the animals have to eat, hence the toad that swallows the dragonfly and the spider that is eaten. The thunderstorms are brutal with heavy rain and loud thunder.

Humans also have to eat too, hence hunting and fishing and the deer hunting scene.

NUDITY

Oshi, the baby orangutan, feeds on his mother's breast. When she disappears, Kéria uses the bottle but in times of crisis (Oshi being bitten by the snake and lost in the forest), Oshi regains his usual instincts. Among Kéria's family, a mother breastfeeds Oshi as if it were her own baby.

The breast is not visible.

However, as the natives live "half-naked", the grandmother is bare-chested as it should be. It's in a context of realism and not sexuality.

SEXUAL ACTIVITY

N/A

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT/ MESSAGES

The resistance of the Penan is represented as an act of bravery enhanced by principles based on respect for nature and human life.

Thus, unlike soldiers armed with rifles, the natives did not use poison in their blowpipes to defend themselves against them.

Respect is mixed with gratitude for the nature that feeds the natives. The film shows how an animal can teach humans to protect themselves from the rain for example (scene of the storm and leaves on the head)

Several lines from the film summarize the principles of life of the natives:

- A wild animal is made to live in freedom.
- Money cannot be eaten. If you cut down the forest, we will no longer be able to hunt, and the red earth will flow into our rivers. What will we eat afterwards?
- The forest is our mother. She takes care of us; she gives us food. Without the forest we are like orphans
- Well done guys... Tons of palm oil to become obese
- Those who cut down trees make a lot of money. Those who run the country, obey them
- Violence should never be responded to with violence

MESSAGES FROM LAETITIA DOSCH (JEANNE'S voice in the film)

GP. Mag': *What do you want to tell with this story that addresses many themes such as environmental preservation, human rights, but also social networks, growing up, straddling two worlds and two cultures?*

Laetitia Dosch: There is a political, environmental and ecological message. It's a film for children that shows deforestation today, how much it damages nature, to make palm oil. At the same time, there is also all the beauty of the island of Borneo, of the life of the natives, animals, birds, which is transmitted to children through the beauty of the drawings and images. It also involves a lot of work on the sound atmosphere carried out by Charles de Ville, in the sound editing, who recorded a lot of birds and sounds there. In this way, we really take the children into that world.

DANIEL BALAVOINE'S SONG – TOUS LES CRISLES S.O.S

<https://www.musixmatch.com/fr/paroles/Daniel-Balavoine/Tous-les-cris-les-S-O-S/traduction/anglais> (words of song)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7aI3hM7J0Y> – Daniel Balavoine sings his song

...*Tous les cris les S.O.S.* devient plus qu'un simple accompagnement sonore, reflétant à la fois la détresse face à la destruction de la nature et l'espoir d'un avenir meilleur, porté par les jeunes protagonistes du récit.

<https://www.diverto.tv/actualites/cinema/sauvages-pourquoi-tous-les-cris-les-sos-de-daniel-balavoine-t-il-ete-choisi-14850>

Ce qui pourrait faire peur aux jeunes enfants :

- La mort de la maman orang-outan. Oshi est orphelin un peu comme Bambi
- Jeanne donne le doigt d'honneur (geste impoli)
- L'apparition de la panthère: on ne sait pas qu'elle est la manifestation de l'esprit de sa maman qui habite Kiéra/Do Bilung
- Certains animaux comme les araignées, le serpent et sa morsure

Ce qui pourrait faire rire les petits :

La scène où l'orang-outan lâche des pets avec grand bruit. Détail réaliste.

PHOTOS DU FILM



Kéria adopts Oshi whose orangutan mother was killed by government soldiers



Kéria and her cousin Selaï are lost in the forest with Oshi

A big storm breaks out. Oshi teaches them to cover their heads with leaves





**Kéria meets
Jeanne, the
biologist who
will try to save
the forest**



Kéria reconnects with her Indigenous origins thanks to her grandfather



Confrontation: the foreman shows his permit to enter the forest



The family defends itself by threatening workers and soldiers with a blowgun with supposedly poisoned darts