

Eat Your Bones (Mange tes morts): Cannes Review

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Writer-director Jean-Charles Hue ("The Lord's Ride") continues to chronicle the lawless lives of Northern French trailer park folk in this Cannes Directors' Fortnight entry.

CANNES -- Subtitles are required, even for French viewers, in *Eat Your Bones (Mange tes morts)*, a gritty Gallic noir set among the slang-spouting trailer park gypsies of Northern France, whose love of beer, barbecue, crime and God are about the closest thing Europe may have to the gun crazy communities of America's Deep South.



The Bottom Line

French shotgun story combines documentary and film noir traditions for generally compelling results.

Reminiscent of **Bruno Dumont's** *The Life of Jesus* in both its setting and cast of colorful (and colorfully looking) locals, but sticking closer to genre conventions while offering up moments of reckless fun, this third feature from writer-director **Jean-Charles Hue** (*The Lord's Ride*) meanders too much in its documentary-style first act before hitting the right stride in its action-packed final stretch. As such, it could find takers mostly in Francophone territories, as well as at offshore fests and with niche distributors, following a premiere in the Directors' Fortnight sidebar in Cannes.

Bringing back the same players -- many of them members of the same family -- featured in 2010's *The Lord's Ride*, and adapting a similarly freewheeling and improvised approach, Hue nonetheless delivers a more succinct narrative this time around,

veering close to film noir traditions as he tracks a band of brothers during one long and dangerous night of delinquency.

Opening scenes, all set in a wasteland of caravans adjoining a highway, introduce us to 18-year-old Jason Dorkel (**Jason Francois**), first seen wielding a shotgun as he rides a moped with his protective cousin, Moise (**Moise Dorkel**). About to be baptized by a fellow gypsy-cum-preacher, and already committing petty thefts on the sly, Jason's life is soon upended when his older half-bro, Fred (**Fred Dorkel**), arrives home after a 15-year prison stint, ready to engage in more mayhem.

It's a rather classic good bro vs. bad bro plot that's been seen in plenty of westerns or suspense flicks, but one that's enhanced by Hue's rough, handheld depictions of his gypsy characters -- many of whom hail from the Yeniche nomadic peoples, whose origins can be traced to Germany and Central Europe. The film's early sections could almost be seen as an exposé on the Dorkel family itself, and while they are sometimes fascinating to watch in a trashy, **Harmony Korine** sort of way, those trailer park scenes tend to lag on for too long without adding much to the story.

But once Jason, Fred, Moise and conflicted middle brother, Mickael (**Mickael Dorkel**) hit the road to heist a truckload of used copper, things pick up considerably as their plans are gradually thwarted by Fred's ineptness and their own constant infighting, leading to a denouement that heads straight into thriller territory. The film's final sequences -- captured by DP **Jonathan Ricquebourg** in a series of starkly backlit nightscapes -- are marked by a few standout action scenes, including a high-speed road chase that has the fury and energy of the early *Mad Max* movies.

Working closely with the Dorkel clan to give us an intimate glimpse of their wild lives, Hue coaxes good performances out of his non-actors, even if regular editor **Isabelle Proust** could have hemmed in a few scenes that outstay their welcome. But the controlled chaos on display offers up several engaging moments, as well as snippets of dark comedy where we watch the brothers take the piss out of each other to no end.

Moody music by **Vincent-Marie Bouvot** (*Angel Dust*) is sparingly used, enhancing the tension in certain key sequences.