

A Prophet

France 2009

Director

Jacques Audiard

Screenplay

Thomas Bidegain

Jacques Audiard

Director of Photography

Stéphane Fontaine

Original Music

Alexandre Desplat

Cast

Malik El Djebena

Tahar Rahim

César Luciani

Niels Arestrup

Ryad

Adel Bencherif

Jordi the Gypsy

Reda Kateb

Reyeb

Hichem Yacoubi

155 minutes Subtitles

Our next screening...

Samson & Delilah (Aus)

Tue 19 October 2010

Dir: Warwick Thornton

Glorious cinematography in this dazzling aboriginal journey of survival.

Welcome to our season showcasing our choice of the best of world cinema. In our constant strive for diversity, we have balanced four classics from across the decades with a quartet of films from first-time directors. As always we hope the season encourages enjoyment, emotion and debate.

The newcomer Rahim is an enigma. What is he thinking? I believe that's the quality Audiard wants. He's a newly poured man, and when the mould sets, it happens inside. He learns from Cesar to reveal nothing. Many movies and actors are too ready to inform us what everyone is thinking, and why. It's more absorbing for us to read significance from mystery. An actor who reveals nothing, like Alain Delon in Melville's *Le Samourai*, is fascinating.

Roger Ebert, Chicago Sun-Times

It's perhaps a little early in the year to be making such bold claims, but *A Prophet*, Audiard's masterful prison saga, will undoubtedly be considered to be one of the great films of 2010, if not the coming decade. At 2h 40m it's a hefty investment in time, but Audiard keeps the film miraculously free of flab and padding. It's lean, dangerous, urgent: every stark frame included for a reason.

Wendy Ide, The Times

You'll have heard already that Jacques Audiard's *A Prophet* is an extraordinary prison movie, and that's true. But more than that, it's a film about education. *A Prophet* is unfailingly brilliant in detailing the prison world. Audiard's team – including art director Michel Barthélémy and cameraman Stéphane Fontaine – creates a harshly vivid jail environment that's actually a set although you would easily believe it was real, with its distressed walls and comfortless spaces. Audiard's film is a culturally provocative statement, given France's anxiety about the visible signs of Islamic identity. And by making its anti-hero a whip-smart Arab criminal on the make, who plays Muslims against mafiosi, *A Prophet* offers as much of a barb to Islamic as to European sensibilities. The film further suggests that there's no real law in France, just a reign of universal corruption in which the man who uses his wits may emerge looking purer than his peers – may come, indeed, to be taken as a prophet. This is a film of considerable brilliance that contrives to get us rooting for a man who, in his time, is a betrayer, a plotter, a willing stooge – and makes him emerge as a heroic figure. In the end, you feel that *A Prophet* is only incidentally about the education of a criminal, & fundamentally about the making of a politician.

Jonathan Romney, The Independent

