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ANONYMES FILMS & TOBINA FILM present

# LET THE CORPSES TAN

A FILM BY  
HÉLÈNE CATTET  
BRUNO FORZANI

FROM THE NOVEL BY  
JEAN-PATRICK MANCHETTE  
JEAN-PIERRE BASTID  
ÉDITIONS GALLIMARD

WITH **ELINA LÖWENSOHN** **STÉPHANE FERRARA** **BERNIE BONVOISIN** **HERVÉ SOGNE**  
MICHELANGELO MARCHESI MARC BARBÉ PIERRE NISSE MARINE SAINSYL DORILYA CALMEL ALINE STEVENS DOMINIQUE TROYES BAMBA

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY **MANU DACOSSE** FILM EDITING **BERNARD BEETS** SOUND EDITING **DANIEL BRUYLANDT** PRODUCTION **EVE COMMENGE & FRANÇOIS COGNARD**  
IN COPRODUCTION WITH **DOUG HEADLINE DAVID CLAIKENS & ALEX VERBAERE PHILIPPE LOGIE** WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY **HÉLÈNE CATTET & BRUNO FORZANI**

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5 - 15 OCTUBRE 2017

SITGES

# LET THE CORPSES TAN

A FILM BY  
**HÉLÈNE CATTET  
BRUNO FORZANI**

Belgium/France - 2017 - 92'

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# LET THE CORPSES TAN



## SYNOPSIS

Belgian filmmakers H el ene Cattet and Bruno Forzani pay homage to 1970s Italian crime films in their giallo-influenced, third feature (following their previous features *Amer* and *The Strange Color of Your Body's Tears*). After stealing a truckload of gold bars, a gang of thieves absconds to the ruins of a remote village perched on the cliffs of the Mediterranean.

Home to a reclusive, yet hypersexual artist and her motley crew of family and admirers, it seems like a perfect hideout. But when two cops roll up on motorcycles to investigate, the hamlet erupts into a hallucinatory battlefield as both sides engage in an all-day, all-night firefight rife with double-crosses and dripping with blood. Based on the classic pulp novel by Jean-Patrick Manchette and featuring music by Ennio Morricone.



## BIO-FILMOGRAPHY OF HELENE CATTET & BRUNO FORZANI

Hélène Cattet (born in Paris) and Bruno Forzani (born in Menton, France) have been making films as spouses since the early 2000s. Their shorts as co-directors include *Chambre jaune* (2002), *La fin de notre amour* (2004), *Santos Palace* (2006). They were also among the 26 international directors who directed a highly erotic segment in the anthology *The ABCs of Death* (2012), called *O is for Orgasm*. Their features have included *Amer* (2009) and *The Strange Color of Your Body's Tears* (2012). In 2016 they reunited with producers Eve Commenge and François Cognard for their third feature film, *Let the Corpses Tan* based on the novel with the same title by cult authors Jean-Patrick Manchette and Jean-Pierre Bastid. The film had its world premiere at Locarno Film Festival, North American premiere at Toronto International Film Festival's Midnight Madness section and US premiere in Austin's Fantastic Fest.

## LET THE CORPSES TAN





**LET THE  
CORPSES TAN**

## THE ACTORS



### ELINA LÖWENSOHN (Luce)

Elina Löwensohn arrived in New York at the age of 14 from Romania to study theater at the the Playwrights Horizons. She began her movie career in 1992, starring in Hal Hartley's *Simple Men* and continued to work with him in *Amateur* (1994), *Flirt* (1995) and *Fay Grim* (2006). Dividing her time between the United States and Europe, and starring in both studio movies and independent productions, she has had notable performances in movies such as Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993), Philippe Grandrieux's *Sombre* (1999), Jean-Pierre Jeunet's *A Very Long Engagement* (2004) and Abdellatif Kechiche's *Black Venus* (2010). Since 2011, she has also worked extensively with director Bertrand Mandico in all his daring cinematic adventures like *Boro in the Box* (2011) and *The Wild Boys* (2017).

### STÉPHANE FERRARA (Rhino)

Born in France to Italian immigrants, former 1982 French middleweight boxing champion Stéphane Ferrara made his film debut the same year in Gérard Oury's *Ace of Aces*. He has appeared in several thrillers opposite Jean-Paul Belmondo (*The Outsider*, 1983), Alain Delon (*Cops Honor*, 1985), and played a boxer in Godard's *Detective*. He's also worked with Italian directors like Tinto Brass, Stelvio Massi and Aldo Lado and returned to France to work with auteurs like Jean-François Richet (*Inner City*, 1994), Philippe Faucon (*The Strangers*, 2000) and F.J Ossang (*Dharma Guns*, 1997). In 2009, he directed the documentary feature *Medal of Glory* (2009), an ode on boxing and young athletes reflecting France's ethnic diversity.



### BERNIE BONVOISIN (Gros)

Bernie Bonvoisin is the songwriter and lead singer of the French hard rock band TRUST currently touring France. His first appearance onscreen as an actor was in Denis Amar's *Winter of 54*, Father Pierre then in Mathieu Kassovitz's *Hate* (1995) and Antoine de Caunes' biopic, Coluche, *L'Histoire D'un Mec* (2008). In 1997, he decided to switch to directing with the outrageous comedy *Les Démons de Jésus*, followed by *Les Grandes Bouches* (1999) and the historical satire *Blanche* (2002). He recently directed the documentary *Syria, Children of War*, for the France Télévision program *Envoyé Spécial*.



# BLASTED BY THE BULLETS: HÉLÈNE CATTET & BRUNO FORZANI DISCUSS “LET THE CORPSES TAN”

Daniel Kasman talks to the filmmaking duo about their delirious hybrid of spaghetti Westerns and Italian crime films of the late '60s.

Originally published by MUBI ([www.mubi.com](http://www.mubi.com))

Having plunged as deep as their knives could go into the long-dead corpse of the giallo genre in *Amer* and *The Strange Color of Your Body's Tears*, Hélène Cattet and Bruno Forzani now forge a kind of hybrid of the spaghetti Westerns and Italian crime films of the late '60s, stripping out nearly all story and keeping the sublime transfixion on material iconography and brute behaviour. Adapted from Jean-Patrick Manchette's lean debut novel from 1971 (co-written by Jean-Pierre Bastid, who, like Manchette, was also immersed in genre cinema), *Let the Corpses Tan* opens with target practice shooting up neo-expressionist paintings, introducing the two groups (artists and gangsters) hiding atop a Corsican redoubt. After a whip-fast gold heist along the coast (executed by Cattet and Forzani with a fiercely staccato musical precision) attracts the local police, the mixed-class gang holes up in the sun-baked ruins to fight first against the law and, soon, against one another.

What follows is an elaborate choreography: inside the story, a dance of desperate people exchanging bullets and positions among the sharp rocks and crumbling buildings; and across the screen, an ecstatic cavalcade and cataloging of gleaming guns, fantastic injuries, shifty eyes, squib bursts, and deliriums of gold (and golden showers). That one artist is a painter (Elina Löwensohn) and the other a writer (Marc Barbe), the former falling into daydreams of being inside the world of the latter, allows Cattet and Forzani to festoon the vibrant violence with a psychedelic touch, the bloodily nihilist showdown a mind game in both senses. Shot on Super 16 CinemaScope in deliciously lurid colour by Manu Dacosse, backed by old music cues by Ennio Morricone (who else?) and featuring a sound design heavy on panting, scrunched leather, and the click-clack cocking of firearms, *Let the Corpses Tan* transforms genre pulp into pop art, keeping fetishism intact and frequently erupting into abstraction.

Introduction originally published for Cinema Scope's Toronto International Film Festival coverage.

**DANIEL KASMAN:** Jean-Patrick Manchette is not someone really known in the English-speaking world—even though he's written scripts for Claude Chabrol, as well as film criticism—because only three of his novellas have been translated. Can you tell me about how you found *Let the Corpses Tan* and why it resonated with you both?

**HÉLÈNE CATTET:** In fact, I was working in a bookshop—it was ten years ago—and it was there I discovered his work. *Let the Corpses Tan* is his first novel. He co-wrote it with Jean-Pierre Bastid. It's his first work, and the one I began with. I told Bruno, “You have to read this,” because it's just like...for us, usually I don't really like adaptations, but there it was like there was a place for us and for our universe. Bruno read it and thought the same.

**BRUNO FORZANI:** Yeah, because it was very cinematographic in terms of space and time. It reminded us a lot of Italian westerns. Our two features [*Amer* and *The Strange Color of Your Body's Tears*] were in a kind of giallo genre, a genre of *mise en scène*, and the Italian western is genre of *mise en scène*, too. So it was very exciting. Jean-Patrick Manchette created at that time a new wave in hard-boiled stories. Before him it was more conservative, and he had an anarchist point of view on detective stories. It was very different at the time from other classical police

stories, because it was behaviorist. It totally fits with our points of view, because each time we don't make movies with a psychologization, but all the characters are driven by their acts and are in the present. The way of writing is exactly the same as what we have written before.

**KASMAN:** You mention that Manchette started this new wave of less conservative crime writing—anarchist, and some of it is even quite leftist. How do you see the politics in your film?

**FORZANI:** In this film, in fact... Let me think, hmm [laughs]. Because there are two things that are political. In the book, it's people of two different kinds of social class who are confronted: You have the decadent artist, who is part of high society, and the gangsters, who are working class. And after, when we were in pre-production, there had been the Charlie Hebdo massacre. In fact, the book is about this artist of the '60s who has broken taboos, taboos about sexuality, about religion, authority. To do a film like this today, I think it can be political. I don't mean to say it's a political movie, but there is a kind of regression about those aspects, and these people have made society move on and open minds. Now, we are in something like a time of closing minds, maybe. Voila! You know, Charlie Hebdo has an anarchist culture, and Jean-Patrick Manchette was working in Charlie Hebdo. And Jean-Pierre Bastid has collaborated with people who worked in that area, too.

**KASMAN:** How do you adapt a text like this? Your films are, as you say, very driven by *mise en scène*. What does a script for a film like this look like? How is the action laid out, are the images described?

**FORZANI:** It's the first time that we worked on an adaptation. At the beginning, we always made intimate movies, very personal, and it's very difficult to work together on something each time that comes from inside, from the guts. After *The Strange Color of Your Body's Tears*, it was nearly the crash for the two of us. So we decided to do this adaptation to have a neutral area so as not to fight together. This story doesn't come from us. It was a pleasure to work on the adaptation because the book is very visual. It has been very, very fast. I think we wrote the script in three weeks. You know, there is one sentence, an action that's not developed, but it opens your mind and you go inside and develop that. It was a kind of bridge to put our universe in the universe of the book. The book is visual, so the script is very visual. It's behaviorist, so the action is leading all the storytelling. It was like an editing impact, the script, because there is all the rhythm inside the sequences. It was very, very fun to do.

**KASMAN:** To break down a script action, like “Man loads gun and shoots at building,” into a dense amount of images—a shot of a clip going into a gun, a point of view down the barrel of the gun, the muzzle flashing, the ejection of the cartridge, squibs bursting—when does this decoupage come into your writing? Is it in the script or found on set?

**FORZANI:** Jean-Patrick Manchette is very fetishistic of the weapons. Us, no [laughs], not at all. We are fetishist of white weapons. The challenge for us was to re-transcribe that fetishism of the weapons. So we kept all the models—they are all Second World War weapons, and we have tried to keep that aspect to give a

certain atemporal quality. It's in the writing of the script that we had all these descriptions of all these shots. After, when we do the storyboard, we re-transcribe what we have written.

**CATTET:** We had to discover these weapons. The armorer presented us all the weapons and it was at that time that we could do a storyboard.

**FORZANI:** Because when we were writing the script we didn't know what it looks like, really. We went on the web to see. But after he showed us you do like this [mimics loading a clip], you do like that [mimics cocking a gun], it helped us for the storyboard.

**CATTET:** For the weapons, it was all in the preparation for the movie that we went into the details.

**FORZANI:** But it was very disturbing, because a razor or a knife you can cut things, it can be something artistic—it's not just death. But these guns are just made to kill. It was a bit disgusting.

**KASMAN:** At the same time, there is so much love on the screen for these objects.

**CATTET:** Yes, it was the challenge for us to reach this goal.

**KASMAN:** You don't have a, let's say, moral problem with this? Valorizing the beauty of the weapons despite your disgust at the harm they are for?

**FORZANI:** As I told you, Manchette is a fetishist of that, so if we want to be respectful of his work, it's part of his style. We have to do that.

**KASMAN:** Is it a clothing you wear, his vision that you're honoring?

**FORZANI:** It's our vision through his vision [laughs]. For us, the film is not in a contemporary time, it's not real. It's more atemporal: There's no time. It doesn't talk about a society of consumption. It's not in a realistic area, so I think you can explore that fetishistic, strange thing about weapons in this way.

**KASMAN:** I love the aerial photographs showing the hideout from above, with ants crawling over it representing the characters scrambling from one building or position to another during the action. The film could be, in a way, very geometric: This guy is here, this other guy is over there, one goes this way, the other that, this woman sees them from this place, and so on. Did you have draw out all your action in order to understand the space you were working with?

**CATTET:** Yeah. One thing we loved in the book was the treatment of the space, but we were looking for a place like it was in the book, but we didn't find it. We had to cheat a lot—a lot. It was like a puzzle, we worked a lot on the geometry. I'm happy you say that!

**FORZANI:** For the shot of the ants, we really wanted the ants to go in the right place, the same place as the people! [laughs] It was complicated.

**CATTET:** Really complicated.

**FORZANI:** But it worked out.

**KASMAN:** I was struck, too, about how the first half of the film takes place during the day, much shot on location, and the second half at night, much shot on sound stages. Do you prefer shooting on location? Or do you have greater freedom and flexibility in the studio?

**CATTET:** Personally, I prefer to work during the day because you are in nature, you have the force of the elements to give you strength. That's the best moments of the shooting.

**FORZANI:** It was so difficult to shoot on this set, because you have to go by foot half an hour, there's no car, nothing can go there. A helicopter brought all the materials. Donkeys brought food every day. It was very difficult to make the action in that.

**CATTET:** We had no water, no electricity—nothing!

**FORZANI:** We had to prepare a lot for this location, so when we shoot it it was very easy. Because it was so difficult to shoot there, we had to think through all the problems. After, when we came back to the studio, there hasn't been all that work of preparation, and it was just abstraction. "Ah, we're going to do a shot like this," and you don't do a storyboard with the space. It was very, very difficult to shoot; it was horrible. After, the work during the night was very playful to do, because it was a mix of the kind of night we made in Amer and the darkness we did with *Strange Color*. It was a natural way to bring colors—fireworks, gunfire and things like that—so it was a very playful way of doing it.

**KASMAN:** Every object and action in this film seems to have a very vivid and unique sound to it—you're really aware of the squelch of leather, the metallic ring of a chambered round, the gravel crunch under foot or someone breathing heavily. How did you approach the film's sound design?

**CATTET:** We are shooting without any sound. It's to be more efficient, as we have so many shots to make. When we have the edit, then we have another "shooting": it's the sound shooting, with the foley guy. He does all the sounds. It's like an animation movie, in fact. After that, we have to make the sound editing. It's five months of work just for the sound, so we can in fact be very precise. There are different levels and layers of sound for each sound. We play with unconscious emotions—we love that.

**FORZANI:** When you take that [places sunglasses on the table], you have the sound of the [rubs the metal frames together], and the sound of the [rattles the lenses in the frame], the sound of the [taps the table with the frame]. If you want to make something more sensual, you can put a leather sound or a breath inside, so you construct through different levels one sound. And sometimes you put another sound [drops glasses again] that's not there. We can talk to the subconscious of the spectator with the sound. It's great. It was a bigger job than the other films because they were more in an abstract world, and this one, at the beginning, is really realistic. So it was a big, big, big work—enormous. Because you have to sound real, you're not in abstraction. It was tough. There are a lot of characters and the more characters in a shot the more you have to do sounds.

**CATTET:** You can't imagine, but we are recreating all the breathing, the [inhales deeply]—you don't hear it, but if it's not there you hear that it's not there! And the characters are not living any more. It's so precise.

**KASMAN:** Do you ever have an idea for the sound design that you end up doing differently once you see your footage cut together?

**CATTET:** We are thinking a lot about the sound since the writing of the script. There's a script for the sound. In the shooting, we are thinking of the sound for the length of the shot.

**KASMAN:** Can you tell me more about your soundtrack choices? There are a great number of cues from Ennio Morricone scores.

**FORZANI:** Since this was like an Italian western, we wanted to have real western track. It was very difficult to find because it's not a western and if you put western music on the film, it doesn't fit. For instance, when there's the final fight between the cop and the bad guy, if you put Morricone music on that, western-style, you are doing a pastiche. For those moments we put giallo music by Morricone from *Who Say Her Die?* [1972], because if we do a giallo and put the giallo soundtrack on it it doesn't work because it's too obvious. If you put giallo music on a western fight, it's different and you get something totally special. For the beginning of the movie, when they are preparing themselves to steal the gold, we wanted not to have a policier score, because it would be too obvious, so we have real western music. And the one we have chosen—*Faccia a faccia* [1967]—is very different from other western music Morricone has made. At one moment it was very difficult to have this music, but...

**CATTET:** ...it was the only music that matched.



**FORZANI:** The other ones were too western, they didn't work. But this one there's something different, maybe in the organ, and in the way it's built you have three different moments in it—viola. We had written the script listening to this music.

**CATTET:** It's like this: We are listening to soundtrack music and it are those movies that inspire us.

**KASMAN:** As you've spoken about, this film is indebted to Italian westerns of the 1960s and 1970s; Italian crime films, too. What is your relationship to looking back at film history and making something new that comes from a specific era?

**CATTET:** For me, I see movies and everything I see or hear goes inside me. I forget them, but something is still there. They aggregate themselves and finally they go out of me, in a way. Sometimes one can think I'm making an homage to something, but in fact it's not that.

**FORZANI:** References are not made as homage. We have, in fact, seen all these movies, but we have a personal image of them. The purpose isn't to make an homage to these movies, but...

**CATTET:** ...it's part of us and it's part of our sensibilities.

**FORZANI:** Movies gave us a lot of pleasure and when we read this book it reminded us of some images, general images, of what could be an Italian western or crime movie, and it's like a fantasy of those movies.

**CATTET:** It's so familiar for us. We don't like to make just homage—it has to push us in a way to express something. If it's just to be an homage, and without any sense for the story, it's not interesting. Sometimes we are taking elements because it's our way to...it's a tool to develop a character or a situation or give another sense to the story, to have a switch.

**FORZANI:** For instance, for the last fight, the duel, we have watched all the Sergio Leone movies to not do it. It has been done, it's a masterpiece...

**CATTET:** ...so perfect!

**FORZANI:** ...it's stupid to do the duel like this. The references, may be what not to do! In fact, the only reference was the book...

**CATTET:** ...and what the book evokes for us.

**FORZANI:** When we were thinking about the gunfight—and you know we are not big fans of guns and cars and things like that—the references were not to make what has been done, but just to be the most sincere in our approach, in our way to edit it, to choose a large scale or very big close-up, and do something very personal.

**KASMAN:** Were you fairly true to the original story of the book?

**CATTET:** Yes.

**KASMAN:** I was curious about the women characters and how they are treated by the story. Especially this figure of the "mad-woman" artist who owns the house, who may also exist inside a book by the writer. By the end, she's almost in control of everything in the story, psychedelically.

**FORZANI:** We are very close to the book, but after we added some points. This character you mention, Luce, is a secondary character, not the main character. We have made her the central character in the movie. For us, it was the character that will give all the craziness to the plot, so it's not just people who pow, pow, pow. It allowed us to go into something more abstract, more surreal, not just having people fighting. For the fantasy sequences, it's one sentence in the book, but we have built it into something more. It's very faithful to the book, and close to our universe, too.

**KASMAN:** A film like this is so precise in its look and approach to filming a story. Do you have difficulties explaining, either to your artistic collaborators or to the money people, what the film will be like? This is a film that is easy to picture once I've seen it,

but if it was on paper I'm not sure I'd could envision what you're seeing.

**CATTET:** It's difficult for us. When we are writing the script, it's very technical. It's a description of the shots, so it's terrible for the reader. For the moment, we're always working with the same crew. They trust us. Here, too, there was the book. It was easier because we had the book.

**FORZANI:** I remember, for instance, Manuel [Dacosse], the DP, when he had read the script, he said, "but with the money we have, we can't do it." We said, "don't worry, we know exactly what we're going to do." After he saw what we had in mind, with the storyboards, he understands that it was feasible. We have made two features before, and for the actors they were very confident with us, so it was very easy, easy, easy to work with them, because they trusted us. We didn't have to explain that the way we work is very special—everybody trusted us and it was great. Because each time when you have new collaborators, it's always [face goes agog], "What is that?"

**CATTET:** This time, they accepted not having all the keys.

**KASMAN:** Was it a challenge to find an editing rhythm for the different action scenes? Are you working a great deal on the nuances of the timing of scenes like the opening car chase?

**FORZANI:** We had just five weeks to edit. It's nearly the first draft of our editing.

**CATTET:** Yup.

**FORZANI:** It's very musical when we do it, and viola. There hasn't been a lot of editing work, but there was a lot of preparation that led to that.

**KASMAN:** Is it getting harder for you to shoot on film?

**CATTET:** It's difficult because we were in Corsica and to see the rushes it was only once a week. So you have a little stress [laughs]. But we don't mind, we have to...

**FORZANI:** ...shoot in Super 16 [millimeter], because it was the light and the nice colors. We wanted to have the same film as Amer, the shots we made with the teenager and her mother. We wanted the same aesthetic.

**CATTET:** Though in fact we've always shot in Super 16. We're very afraid of digital film.

**FORZANI:** We shot on a certain type of film for *The Strange Color* that doesn't exist any more. Fuji 500. There has been a little revival of film, but I don't think it'll last. In Belgium, Fabrice du Welz shot *Alleluia* in Super 16. You have *Star Wars*, so there's a bit.

**KASMAN:** What stock was *Let the Corpses Tan* shot on?

**FORZANI:** Kodak 50D.

**KASMAN:** It makes the shots of the silhouettes against the blue sky look incredible.

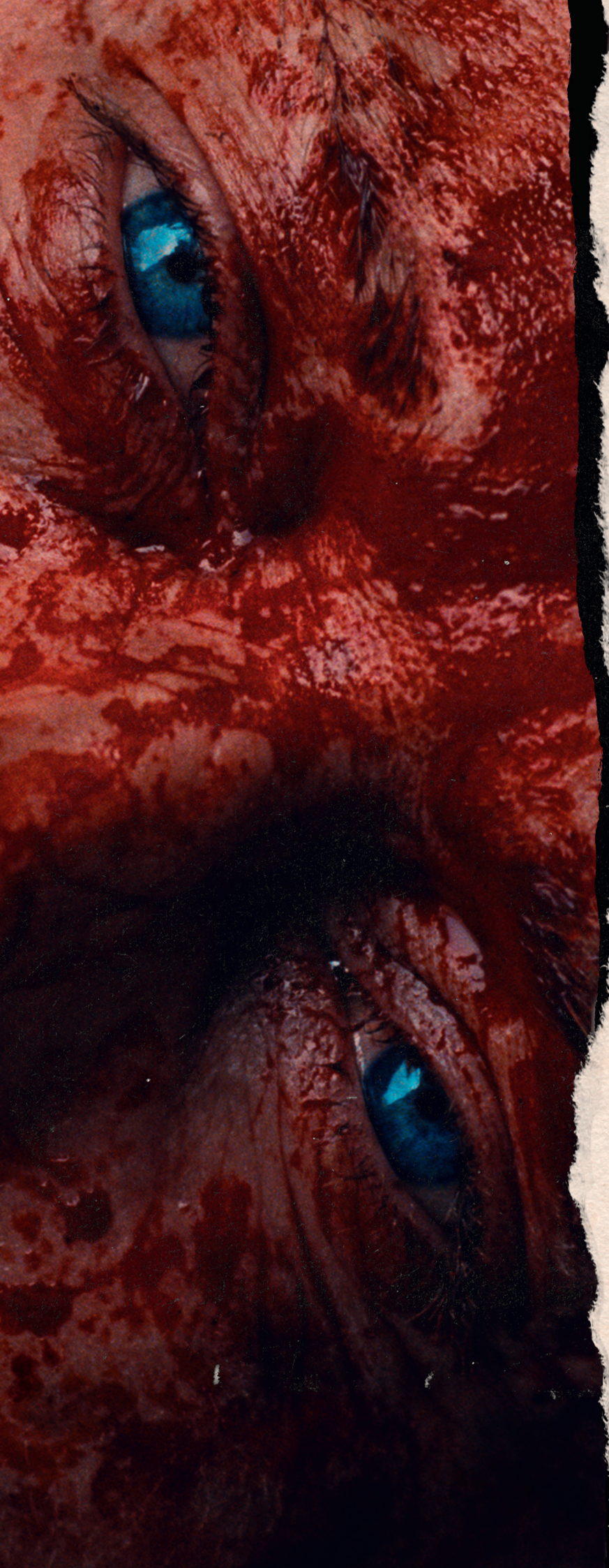
**FORZANI:** Yeah, and to have a pop aesthetic, to have the blue, the gold and the black. It's perfect.

**KASMAN:** Lastly, I must ask about the origin of one incredible shot: That of a woman whose clothes are being torn off by the wind of machine gun fire. Where does this image come from?

**FORZANI:** You imagine that when someone shoots near you that there's a blow, whoosh, wind, and when we did the preparation before the shoot and the armorer shot guns to show us how it works, you feel this wind. It was that feeling...

**CATTET:** ...to be blasted.

**FORZANI:** There's something erotic in it, very sensual. In the book, she discovers the power of these weapons, and it was in our unique way to make this power of the gun. To be blasted by the bullets.



## MAIN CAST & CREW

Directors:

Hélène Cattet & Bruno Forzani

Screenplay:

Hélène Cattet & Bruno Forzani

Inspired by the novel «Laissez bronzer les cadavres!» written by Jean-Patrick Manchette & Jean-Pierre Bastid, Editions Gallimard, 1971

Photography:

Manu Dacosse

Sound:

Yves Bemelmans & Olivier Thys

Film editing:

Bernard Beets

Sound editing:

Dan Bruylandt

Mixing:

Benoit Biral

Cast:

Elina Löwensohn, Stéphane Ferrara,  
Hervé Sogne, Bernie Bonvoisin,  
Pierre Nisse, Marc Barbé,  
Michelangelo Marchese.

Production:

Eve Commenge  
ANONYMES FILMS (Belgium)  
& François Cognard  
TOBINA FILM (France).