

**KINO LORBER**  
i n c o r p o r a t e d

Jonathan Demme  
Presents

# HORSES OF GOD

A Film by Nabil Ayouch

*Moroccan / in Arabic (with English subtitles) / 115 minutes / 16:9 (1.85) / Color*

**A Kino Lorber Release**

Kino Lorber, Inc.  
333 West 39 Street, Suite 503  
New York, NY 10018  
(212) 629-6880

Publicity Contact:  
Rodrigo Brandão – [rodrigo@kinolorber.com](mailto:rodrigo@kinolorber.com)

# KINO LORBER

i n c o r p o r a t e d

## CAST

*Yachine*

Abdelhakim Rachid

*Hamid*

Abdelilah Rachid

*Nabil*

Hamza Souidek

*Fouad*

Ahmed El Idrissi Amrani

## CREW

Directed by

Nabil Ayouch

Written by Jamal Belmahi

Inspired by the novel "The Stars of Sidi Moumen" by Mahi Binebine

Presented by Les Films Du Nouveau Monde & Jonathan Demme

Producers:

Pierre-Ange Le Pogam, Eric Van Beuren, Patrick Quinet, and Nabil Ayouch

Executive Producers:

Ferantz Richard (Ali n'Films), Marie Kervyn (YC Aligator Film), Stéphane Quinet (Artebis).

DP: Hichame Alaouie

Sound: Zacharie Naciri and Eric Lesachet

Editor: Damien Keyeux

Original Soundtrack: Malvina Meinier

Set Design: Hafid Emly and Hind Ghazali

Costumes: Nezha Dakil

Executive Production: LES FILMS DU NOUVEAU MONDE

Co-production: ALI N'PRODUCTIONS (Morocco); STONE ANGELS (France) – YC ALIGATOR  
FILM (Belgium) – ARTEMIS PRODUCTIONS (Belgium)

# KINO LORBER

i n c o r p o r a t e d

## Synopsis:

Ten year-old Yachine and his thirteen year-old brother Hamid live in Sidi Moumen, a destitute slum on the outskirts of Casablanca. Days are spent trying to draw some pleasure from their petty existence, in the backdrop of a noxious environment of poverty and violence. Hamid, though just a child, forcefully sustains his unbalanced family by any means. As he hangs out with a bad crowd and becomes one of the local neighborhood bosses, he continues to fiercely protect his younger brother Yachine until the day he is thrown into prison for a few years.

Released from jail, Hamid, now an impassive Islamic fundamentalist, persuades Yachine and his pals to join their “brothers.”

The Imam Abou Zoubeir, their spiritual leader, starts to direct their long-standing physical and mental preparation. One day, he tells them they have been chosen to become martyrs. On May 16<sup>th</sup> 2003, they commit the deadliest act of terrorism in Morocco’s history.

## About the Title “HORSES OF GOD”

The title is drawn from the ancient Muslim expression, “fly, horses of God,” frequently used among the first Muslims as a call to the jihad, or “holy war.” The complete phrase being, *“fly, horses of God, and to you the doors of paradise shall open!”*

It has lived on throughout the centuries and has been reused either in speeches, songs, or poems, as an incitation to the holy war. The expression is found in Al-Qaeda’s present-day propaganda, particularly in the famous declaration made by the organization following September 11<sup>th</sup>, broadcast by the news station Al-Jazeera and pronounced at the time by the Kuwaiti Islamist Suleiman Abu El Ghait, one of Al-Qaeda’s official spokesmen.

## Director's Statement

I am very familiar with the shantytown of Sidi Moumen, as I shot some documentary films there since the end of the 90s. On May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2003, when five bombs exploded in the center of Casablanca, it was a terrible shock for the whole of the Moroccan people. A Jewish cultural circle and cemetery, an Italian restaurant, a Spanish restaurant and a high-end hotel. The suicide bombers had decided to touch that which makes the heart of Moroccan identity: 2,000 years of history based on tolerance and on the mixture of races and religions.

In the days that followed, I learnt that these suicide bombers all came from that famous slum of Sidi Moumen, which I knew inside out, and were for the most kids of about twenty; uneducated, abandoned by the state and cut off from the rest of society. I decided to return to Sidi Moumen and begin the long process of listening to this forgotten youth, in collaboration with the local associations. I especially decided to build step by step the foundations of a film that goes beyond the barbaric act that these suicide attacks represent. Violence is not a show, violence does not come from nowhere; it has an origin. “Horses of God” goes back to the roots of this violence and shows us, without judging, how 10-year-old children lost their humanity and were transformed into human bombs. More than ever, it seems to me important today that the American audience hears another voice on a phenomenon as sensitive as terrorism.

*-Nabil Ayouch*

### **About Nabil Ayouch**

Nabil Ayouch was born April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1969 in Paris. He works and lives in Casablanca.

In 1997, Nabil Ayouch directed his first feature film MEKTOUB which, like ALI ZOUA (2000), represented Morocco at the Oscars. Next came UNE MINUTE DE SOLEIL EN MOINS (2003) and WHATEVER LOLA WANTS (2008), produced by Pathé. His first short film, in 1992, THE BLUE ROCKS OF THE DESERT marked the discovery of Jamel Debouzze.

In 2009, he created and directed the closing show of the World Economic Forum of Davos after having directed several live shows such as the opening of “Temps du Maroc” in France at the Palace of Versailles in 1999.

In 1999, Nabil Ayouch founded Ali n’Productions, a company through which he helps young directors launch their careers thanks to initiatives such as the Mohammad Reggab Award — a script and production competition for short films in 35mm. Between 2005 and 2010, he produced forty genre films in the framework of the Film Industry. In 2006, he launched the Meda Films Development program with the support of the European Union and the International Film Festival Foundation of Marrakech — a structure to accompany producers and scriptwriters from the ten countries on the south shore of the Mediterranean in the development phase of their films.

Nabil Ayouch founded the G.A.R.P. (Group of Authors, Directors, Producers) in 2002 and the Moroccan Coalition for Cultural Diversity in 2003. In 2008, he participated in the creation of the Moroccan Anti-Piracy Association, of which he is president.

In 2011, he released his first documentary feature film MY LAND which was filmed in the Middle East.

In 2012, Nabil Ayouch finished HORSES OF GOD, inspired by the Casablanca suicide bombings of May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2003.

**CANNES FILM FESTIVAL – OFFICIAL SELECTION: UN CERTAIN REGARD**  
FRANÇOIS CHALAIS AWARD

**GIFFONI FILM FESTIVAL**  
AWARD OF THE AUDIENCE  
AWARD OF THE JUNIOR AUDIENCE

**FIFF – INTERNATIOANL FILM FESTIVAL OF NAMUR**  
SPECIAL AWARD OF THE OFFICIAL JURY  
SPECIAL MENTION TO THE ACTORS  
AWARD OF THE JUNIOR JURY

**VALLADOILID INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL**  
GOLDEN SPIKE  
GRAND PRIX OF THE INTERNATIONAL JURY – OFFICIAL COMPETITION

**CINEMED – MEDITERRANEAN FILM FESTIVAL OF MONTPELLIER**  
YOUNG AUDIENCE AWARD

**AFRICAN FILM FESTIVAL OF BENZAÇON**  
COUP DE COEUR OF THE AUDIENCE

**BRUSSELS MEDITARRANEAN FILM FESTIVAL**  
BEST NARRATIVE FILMMAKER AWARD

**DOHA TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL**  
BEST NARRATIVE FILMMAKER AWARD

**BASRTIA MEDITERRANEAN FILM FESTIVAL – ARTE MARE**  
GRAND PRIX ARTE MARE  
MEDIATION

**FESPACO**  
BEST SCREENPLAY AWARD

**TANGIER FILM FESTIVAL**  
BEST PICTURE AWARD  
BEST MUSIC AWARD

**SIFF – SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL**  
BEST DIRECTOR AWARD – OFFICIAL JURY  
BEST DIRECTOR AUDIENCE AWARD

**CINEMATOGRAPHIC DAYS OF CARTHAGE**  
FIPRESCI AWARD (International Federation of Film Critics)

**NOMINATION FOR THE FRANCOPHONIC TROPHIES**  
BEST DIRECTOR  
BEST SCREENPLAY

**ALGIERS FESTIVAL OF CINEMA FROM THE MAGHREB**  
GRAND PRIX

**ALEXANDRIA MEDITERRANEAN FILM FESTIVAL**  
BEST ARTISTIC CREATION AWARD  
BEST SCREENPLAY AWARD