



HOLY COW (12A)

Director: Louise Courvoisier

Starring: Clément Faveau, Maiwenne Barthelemy, Luna Garret, Mathis Bertrand

France, 2024, 1 hour 30 minutes, French + English subtitles

Holy Cow is a 2024 French comedy-drama film, written and directed by Louise Courvoisier. It had its world premiere at the 77th Cannes Film Festival on 17 May 2024, where it won the Un Certain Regard, Youth Award.

Holy Cow, or "Vingt Dieux", tells the story of French adolescent, Totone. He spends the majority of his time drinking and partying with his friends in the Western Alpine region of Jura. Everything changes for Totone when he has to suddenly take on the care of his seven year old sister, and start making a living. He decides to enter a competition for the best Comté cheese in the region in the hope of winning the gold medal and 30,000 euros.

Louise Courvoisier decided to tell a story in the town she grew up in. The film was shot on location in the Jura region and the cast is made up of first-time actors. The cast was assembled over several months as casting directors travelled across the area attending agricultural shows and motocross races to find talent. Clément Faveau, who plays Totone, is eighteen and works on a poultry farm. The casting choice adds to the authenticity of this film, as do the documentary-style aspects such as sequences depicting the making of Comté cheese and a real calving sequence. The region and its agriculture are crucial players in the story but the cheese is a real character in its own right.

This is a coming-of-age story that borrows from the western genre by implementing techniques like the Scope format. It also focuses on themes of a life well lived, fear of the unknown and the conquest of territory. Courvoisier worked closely with Cinematographer, Elio Balezeaux, and states "*we worked a lot on contrasts, by alternating between very tight shots and very wide shots. I chose to use mostly sequence shots and to stay as close as possible to my character, to use panoramic shots rather than dolly shots, and to aim at a rather stripped-down style. Sequence shots, such as the one in which Totone is chatting with his friend on the roof of a car, also allowed us to play with silences and build rhythm from within the scenes.*" (Louise Courvoisier, Pyramide International Press Pack)

Notes compiled by Angharad Evans

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