

STÉLION FILMS

# GROUNDS OF HOPE

*"A french independant contemplative thriller, in the footsteps of Jeff Nichols"*

JULIEN  
BARBIER

JULIEN  
KITITI

SÉBASTIEN  
CORONA

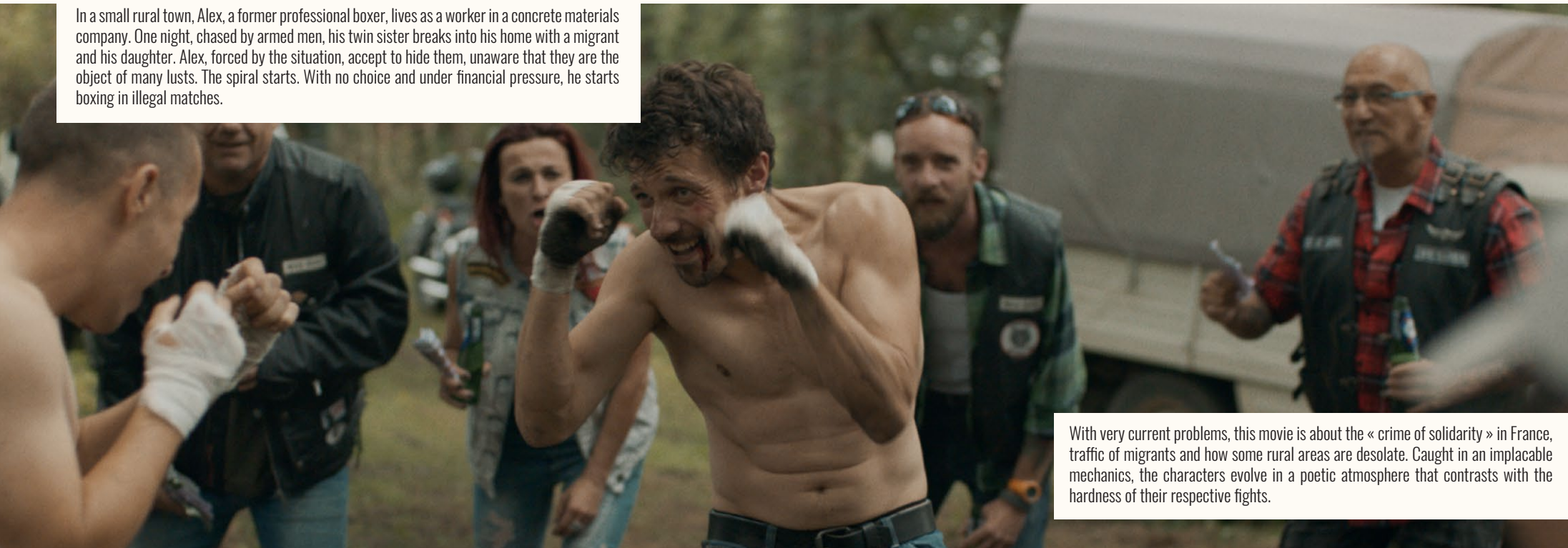
STÉPHANIE  
SCHOONJANS

*written and directed by* Lionel Bernardin

- DOCUMENTATION FOR PROFESSIONALS ONLY -

# STORYLINE

In a small rural town, Alex, a former professional boxer, lives as a worker in a concrete materials company. One night, chased by armed men, his twin sister breaks into his home with a migrant and his daughter. Alex, forced by the situation, accept to hide them, unaware that they are the object of many lusts. The spiral starts. With no choice and under financial pressure, he starts boxing in illegal matches.



With very current problems, this movie is about the « crime of solidarity » in France, traffic of migrants and how some rural areas are desolate. Caught in an implacable mechanics, the characters evolve in a poetic atmosphere that contrasts with the hardness of their respective fights.

# DIRECTOR

**Lionel Bernardin** was born in Angoulême, France, in 1981. Graduated in image and communication, he began as composer for shortfilms and worked with several Hip Hop artists from the New York scene during the early 2000's. He started to direct some music videos and, attracted to fiction, he wrote and directed his first short movie in 2009. After that one, he had worked on 4 others shorts, including the original music, composed and played by himself.

His shortfilm, "Financial Confessions", was awarded by the famous french director Cédric Klapisch, at the Sundance Channel Shorts in 2015 (Paris, France). This shortfilm will be selected at the International Film Festival of Sacramento, the European Short Film Festival of Bordeaux, the Francophone Film Festival of Angoulême, the International Short Film Festival Combat, then in screenings and debates on "the financial crisis seen by the cinema" at La Sorbonne University.

In 2018, Lionel Bernardin wrote his first feature film, "A Terre Promise / Grounds Of Hope » which will be shot during august and december of 2019. The editing process was done during the covid pandemy, forcing teams to adapt to the situation, rethinking the workflow to allow the creative process not to be stopped by the national containment in France.



The story is about a man who lives in a rural and working-class community, under economic pressure. Through the destiny of this man, the movie tells us about economic and social topics such as poverty in rural areas, but also the issue of those people who came in France, leaving everything behind to flee their country, and who are called "migrants". I wanted to speak from the point of view of the welcoming in France, from the person who open his home and about the risk from this "crime of solidarity". Something very intimate, very close to the real working class people.

This film is part of a naturalistic cinema movement, that centers its narrative on one destiny, on a personal and intimate history, a universal dramatic force. I wanted to express a vision of cinema with Nature as a real character, changing mood during the movie, by filming an agricultural region whose landscapes are crossed by a river. It was important for me to find the balance between the individual, his social context and his natural environment of life.

Part of the story came from the several trials in France, for "crimes of solidarity", people who chose to help "migrants", and who have been prosecuted for reaching out. Before writing the script, I spoke with a journalist who had been investigating for months on a prostitution network of isolated minors, all from the recent wave of immigration. All this testimony touched me deeply. Just before writing « Grounds Of Hope », I co-wrote a biopic about the youth of a french naturalized boxing champion, from a middle Eastern country. I thought to associate these universes within a new ensemble, anchored in a rural and working class environment.

To start the story, I needed a set. The scouting took us to the north of the Charente (France), This region, which has experienced significant rural desertification, was the perfect place to put my history. When we arrived, I saw a strong visual potential and real possibilities to develop the universe I looked for this film. I went there, spent time with local people, I was able to understand the socio-economic mechanisms of the region. From there, I began to feed my characters and draw their contours. I created a dramaturgic link between all this material, and that link was Love. That one from a man who tries to face grief for the last four years, day by day. This is the very deep heart of the film, in this intimate, impossible to heal, this absolute pain and this bravery you must have for living with this. And then comes a new encounter, facing difficulties to open your mind again to another people, then finally, when the barriers have fallen, a link so natural, so universal.

It's also important to talk about how I wanted to show the Nature, the link between Humanity, Animals and our natural environment. I am very close to mother Nature in my everyday life, conscious of this subtil and fragile balance. Nowadays, Humans being is the heart of the problem. I wanted to include that dimension in the movie, it's my way to put this film in the footsteps of the incredible work of Jeff Nichols, Terrence Malick or David Lowery. The river that we see at the very beginning is everywhere in the story, it's the blood of this luxurious Nature and this absolute calm. I took all that things, all that different textures of sounds, and build a strong contrast, a strong opposition with Alex and his everyday life, the noise of the concrete plant, the cries of gamblers during boxing matches, his old noisy pickup. It's something that I've included when I've worked on the soundtrack. During the musical working process, this raw material have contributed and enriched the soundtrack, clearly. I also managed to have on set my acoustic guitar, the main theme is born during a late production meeting, at the headquarter of the crew.

Lionel Bernardin







# CAST

**ALEX** - JULIEN BARBIER  
**TAÏNAWO** - JULIEN KITTI  
**AZARI** - SÉBASTIEN CORONA  
**ÉVA** - STÉPHANIE SCHOONJANS  
**JEAN-MARIE** - JEAN-PIERRE MESNARD  
**AWAN** - CLÉMENT LAGOUARDE  
**JOEY** - HERVÉ FONTENY  
**AÏDA** - SORAHYA PINVILLE-ASPILAIRE  
**TALLECK** - GUILLAUME DELANOUE  
**KURT** - MICKAËL PANNIER  
**SARAH** - MIRA DISIC

# CREW

**SCREENWRITER, DIRECTOR** - LIONEL BERNARDIN  
**PRODUCER** - STÉPHANIE SCHOONJANS  
**FIRST DIRECTOR ASSISTANT** - GILLES BOTINEAU  
**DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY** - ROMAIN VALLADE  
**SET DECORATION** - JONATHAN CHARRIAUD  
**SOUND OPERATOR** - DAMIEN DEWET, ALAIN BLONDEAU  
**SCRIPT** - LOGAN RICHARD  
**EDITOR** - LIONEL BERNARDIN  
**ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK** - LIONEL BERNARDIN  
**SOUND MIXER** - JONATHAN MEREAU  
**COLORIST** - VALENTIN DAMON





S T É L I O N F I L M S

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