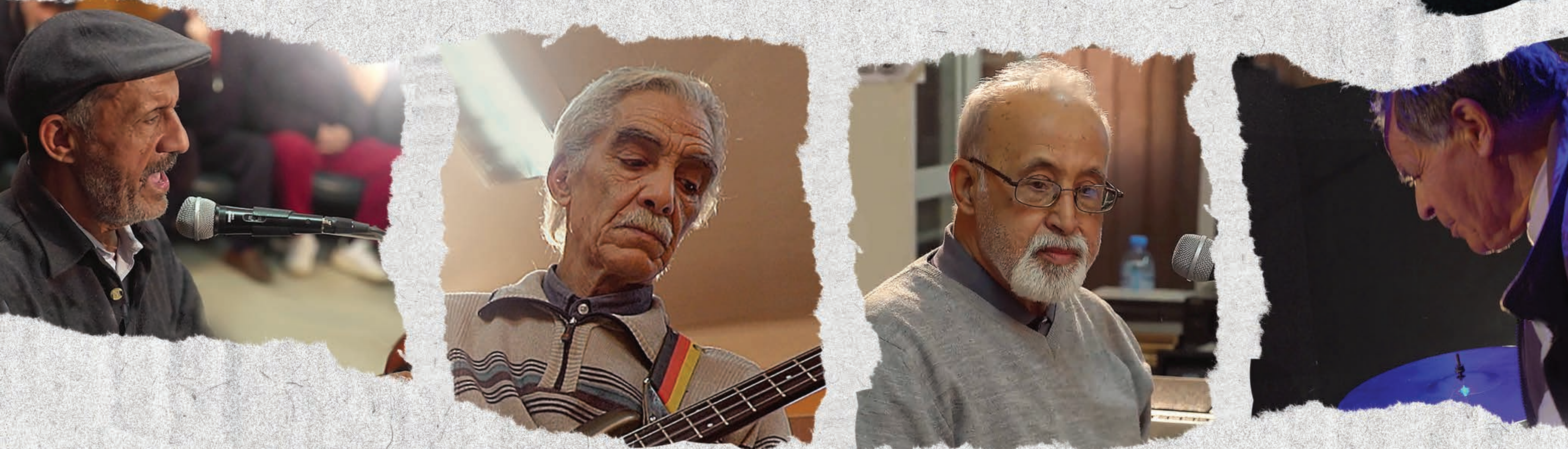


BACK TO TOWN

BATNA, QUE JE T'AIME, QUE JE T'AIME

باتنة لأنني أحبك



PRES
BOOK



REGENT FILMS
presents

BACK TO TOWN

documentary feature-film
by Djamel Lakehal

Staring: Lazhar Hadj-Tayeb, Nabil Tamine, Laid Benmahmoud, Hamoudi Hlalate & Hakim Said Krim.



SYNOPSIS

At the Café du Marché, two young musicians fantasizing about starting a rock band cross paths with two septuagenarians, founding members of The Play-Boys (1965-1971). From this coincidence is born a vibrant exchange: the elders guide the novices, while the energy of youth rekindles in them the desire to return to the stage after half a century. Blending documentary and fiction, the film captures not only this improbable comeback, but also the pulse of a city that seems to have erased its cultural memory and artistic soul.



TECHNICAL DETAILS

Original title	Back to Town
Genre	Documentary-fiction
Country of production	Algeria & Switzerland
Year of production	2025
Length	1h18
Shooting format	4K
Screening format	DCP, 1:2,39, Dolby 5.1 ,24 fps
Languages	Arabic & French with English subtitles.

CREW

STAGING & SCREENPLAY Djamel Lakehal **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR** Sofiane Haffar **EXECUTIVE PRODUCER** Lyes Bafou **PHOTOGRAPHY** Salah Haffar, Salah Djelal **CAMERA** Sofiane Haffar, Lokmane Bencheikh, Rostom Hamdi-Aissa, Benini Salah-eddine, Chouali Mohamed El-hacene **COLOR GRADING** Zineddine Boudehane **EDITING & AUDIO MIXING:** Youcef Debbihi **MASTERING:** Hakim Said Krim **MUSIC** Lazhar Hadj-Tayeb, Hakim Said Krim, Fayçal Maalem



INTERVIEW WITH DJAMEL LAKEHAL

Your camera lingers a lot on faces, gestures, silences — far from the usual nostalgic narrative. How did you build this emotional tone?

I didn't mean to make a nostalgic film. I was interested in reconnecting the threads between what was and what remains, between those who are still here and the others. When I film the Play Boys today, I'm not portraying musicians, but their time, the vibrations of their youth that still inhabit them. The emotion comes naturally, without forcing it.

The film is also an act of transmission to younger generations who may not know this part of Batna's cultural history. Was that important to you?

Absolutely. If we don't tell our own stories, others will tell them for us, and they'll get them wrong. Batna has an extraordinary cultural legacy, but little by little, memory fades, places disappear, and witnesses go silent. I wanted to leave a modest, living footprint, so that young people could see that, yes, their city has produced musicians, rebels, and artists who have burned with the same passion as elsewhere.

The film oscillates between joy and melancholy, humor and pain. How did you find that balance ?

It's simply the truth of life : laughter and tears are never far apart. When you meet these guys after fifty years, how can you not laugh at the absurdity of time passing ! laugh at the

absurdity of time passing ! They have defied the insane regularity of the clock, as it is said in their song "Back to Town" ? That mixture of tenderness and revolt is part of who we are. I didn't want to make a sad film, but a vibrant one, covered with light and shade.

Behind the film's rock-inspired title lies a declaration of affection, both playful and sincere. Can you elaborate on this choice ?

It was Nabil who whispered the idea, singing Johnny Hallyday's "Que je t'aime" during rehearsals. Hearing him and Lazhar hum those verses fifty years later was electrifying. His eyes sparkled with sincerity.

The film gives new life to Les Plays-Boys, who in the 1960s and '70s embodied a modern, Western-influenced sound.

They had no recordings... They weren't serious about it — they were just having fun. Laid was happy to impress the girls ... That freedom, that innocence, was simply beautiful, and you can't just ignore, do you ?

And what comes next?

There are other ideas, still linked to memory and art, always with that desire to film what's diluting, what's fragile (our common memory !) that needs to be protected.

Interview by J. Guettala, for Le Matin d'Algérie. July 2025



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