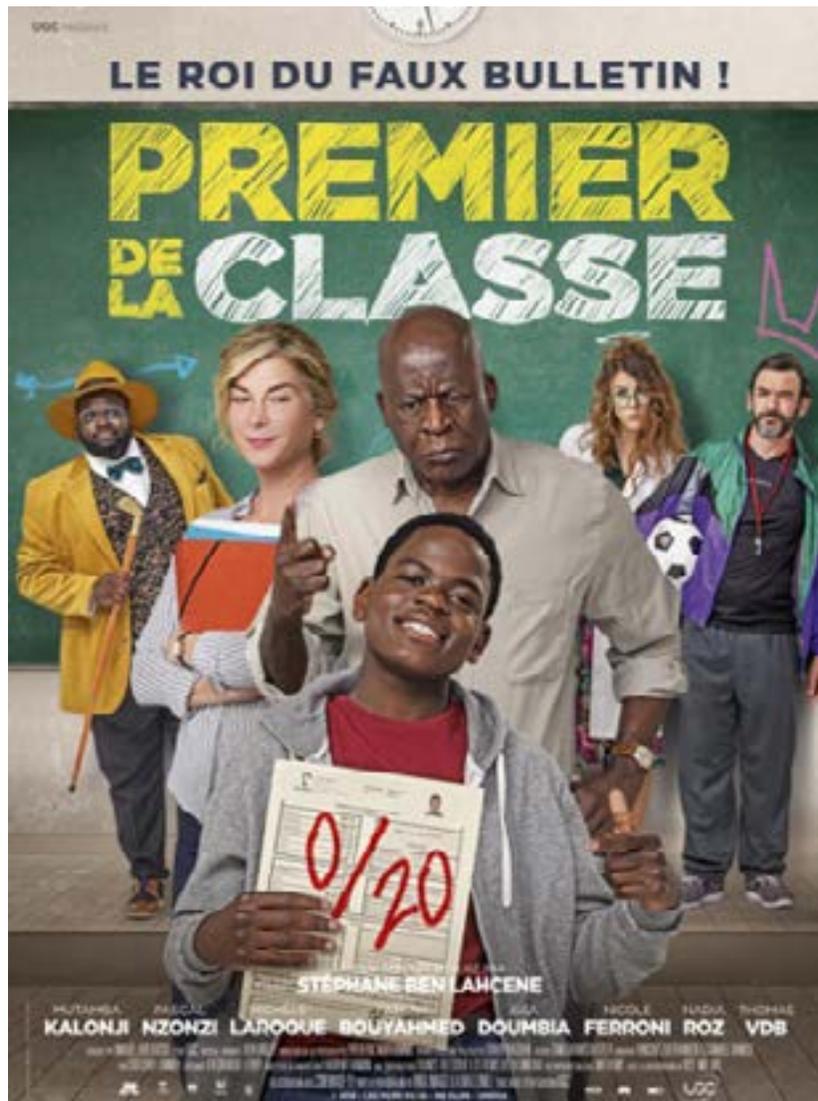


PREMIER DE LA CLASSE



Original version: French (English subtitles)

Director: Stéphane Ben Lahcène

Opening date (France) : July 10, 2019

Genre: Comedy

Countries of origin: France, Belgium

Length: 82 minutes

Recommended for 14 years and older

SYNOPSIS

Abou, 13, is his father's pride and joy. Unlike his 3 brothers, he's 'top of his class'. Well, that's what he pretends to be. Actually, Abou is more the king of lies and rigged report cards! When the first parent-teacher conference comes up, he will stage the biggest lie of his life: hire fake teachers to meet his father, while his real teachers will meet his fake father. It should be easy... in theory!

REVIEWS

Stéphane Ben Lahcène's first film clearly lacks neither energy nor ambition. While being quite humorous, it deals with many topics ranging from education to immigration and even burn-out. (...) Michèle Laroque is very convincing and even moving as an understanding teacher in a suburban school.

— *Sens critique* (Translated from French)

Abou is first of all an ordinary teenager with the same issues all teenagers face: how to manage girls, parents, teachers and life in general, which goes in all directions.

Stéphane Ben Lahcène paints a beautiful portrait of an African father, interpreted by the great actor Pascal Nzonzi. His culture is different from his children's. He does not know how to express his feelings and he is very strict with his 4 sons, but they know how to translate his gestures and attitudes into words. He wants to transmit his work ethic so that they do not become like him, a mason on a construction site: "I left misery with my feet. You are going to leave it with your head. You are my pride." But Abou doesn't care, he prefers to hang out in the neighbourhood with his friends rather than doing homework.

Everything is right in the film: the cramped apartment of Abou's family, in a highrise; the young Syrian refugee who learned French in three months; the dealers exploiting the most naïve, and finally the reactions of the teachers, exhausted by the lack of means and the rebellious kids. Among them, Madame Martin (Michèle Laroque, perfect), becomes irascible and demotivated by their lack of attention and their insolence, ready to compromise for a peaceful end of the year but who will eventually find her vocation as a teacher.

There are very funny moments like the parent-teacher meeting scene, the shame of felt by Abou when he sees his father going out in traditional costume (we have rarely seen such republican clothing!) And colorful secondary characters, like the follower of "sapology". Always keeping the tone of family comedy, *Premier de la classe* is a film about transmission, transmission through the unique history of each family but also transmission of a society's values.

— *signis.net* (Translated from French)

DETAILS

LANGUAGE

The language spoken by the children and some adults is familiar or slang: une grosse engueulade (a huge rant), les potes (friends), tu me fais marrer (you make me laugh), idée pourrie (lousy idea), un mytho (a liar), du fric (money), la sape, les fringues (clothes), ton taf (your work), foutre le dawa (to raise trouble), tu t'en fous (you don't even care), enfoiré (con artist), dégueulasse (disgusting).

Salopard is translated as *bastard* or *jerk* in the subtitles. Other coarse words and their translations:

Le plus con de la famille = the family idiot

C'était con = it was dumb

Je ne suis pas con = I'm no dummy

L'autre conne = the bitch

Des arnaques à la con = dumb scams

Défonce-le = beat the shit out of him.

Le graffiti bitch est écrit sur un casier dans la classe.

Ça m'emmerde l'informatique = I hate computers

Salaud = bastard

Comment tu te la pètes (tu frimes, tu te vantes) = you think you're hot shit

J'ai couché avec sa copine = I screwed her girl friend

Abou gives the finger to the marabout witch doctor and vice versa

Flipper ta race = freak out

Fuck you, mother fucker, exclaims the customer who has been caught stealing to show that she is able to speak English and will be able to be the fake English teacher.

C'était le bordel = it was a mess.

Le foutoir = a damn mess

Vos ordinateurs, on s'en branle = we don't give a damn about your computers

VIOLENCE

The violence is mostly comical or caricatural.

For example, Abou's father abruptly pulls him out of bed in the morning or pinches his cheek when he does something stupid. His favorite language is "body language" and his sons call him "Konan the Barbarian"! His four sons fear him as he is strict and very demanding regarding their school work.

Abou devises a ploy whereby his father does not come to school to see Madame Martin, his computer teacher. He convinces a marabout to replace his father and beat him up in front of the teacher, who asks him to stop immediately.

The security guard at a department store catches a customer who has stolen a few items and takes her forcefully to an office.

Abou puts his hand on Tanja's mouth to prevent her from screaming.

Madame Martin slaps her daughter Tanja when she tells her that she is ashamed of her when she refuses to help Abou with his school work.

NUDITY

We very briefly see the naked buttocks of a woman (very eccentric and recovering from depression) in a pottery workshop when she turns around and says that she accepts to be the fake biology teacher.

SEXUAL ACTIVITY

A teacher gives a presentation on contraception in the gymnasium. When he asks Abou what is the only effective procedure against sexually transmitted infections, he replies: masturbation. All the students burst out laughing. The teacher explains that it is the condom and then demonstrates how to put a condom on by rolling it down the leg of an overturned chair.

Tanja asks Abou if he wants to go out with her.

Tanja briefly kisses Abou on the lips in front of her house. Her mother, who is watching behind a window, sees them and smiles.

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT/THE MESSAGES

◆ ADOLESCENCE : PARENTS, SCHOOL, FRIENDS AND GIRLS IS WHAT MATTERS

It seemed important to me that these four parameters beat the heart of the story. (...) I wanted to reverse the usual codes between girls and boys. Tanja is a more determined kid than the ones we usually show and, on the contrary, Abou is a bit clumsy. It amused me that it was not the “male hero” who went looking for the princess! This is my contribution the evolution of our society!

— *Stéphane Ben Lahcène director of the film, Allo Ciné (Translated from French)*

◆ THE WORLD OF EDUCATION

Stéphane Ben Lahcène shows teachers who are certainly committed but are also victims of their difficult working conditions and the school system.

I tried to show reality ... The school inspector wants the teachers to teach advanced computer science courses in a completely decrepit college and by the end of school year – an impossible objective. I would also point out that the two institutions in which we filmed were in the state that you will see in the picture: this is not a decoration job!

— *Stéphane Ben Lahcène director of the film, Allo Ciné (Translated from French)*

Abou continuously lies to his father because he is doing poorly in school. He does not hesitate to ask a friend to prepare a fake school report with very good grades.

The teachers are sarcastic with their students who do not perform well.

Abou recruits young adults he knows to be his fake teachers at a parent-teacher meeting. These fake teachers will say positive things about Abou's work and conduct.

Abou recruits Blondin, a young man who has already been arrested by the police. He will be the fake math teacher.

A man comes up to Blondin and gives him a banknote in exchange – one can presume – for some kind of drug.

Blondin threatens to tell the truth to Abou's father if he doesn't give him the key to the computer room so he can steal laptops. Abou agrees to do so and will become the accomplice of a thief. He feels very bad.

When Abou's father tells him that he is proud of him and explains how his life as an immigrant and manual worker has been and still is difficult, we sense that Abou feels guilty, that he is remorseful and that he deeply regrets having lied and cheated.

Abou's mother tells her husband that he is too hard on his children. Very discouraged and angry, he asks her if their life has not been hard as they experienced racism and poverty. He refuses to apologize to their son Issa whom he just hit. She decides to leave the house and go and live with her sister for a few days.

When Abou finally admits that he has made many mistakes, his very angry father raises his hand to strike him in the face but restrains himself. He will now ignore his son and his school friends.

◆ ALCOHOL USE

Alex plays “babyfoot” [table soccer] with the villagers. At the end of each segment, the loser has to drink a shot. Alex wins when one of her opponents falls down after a few shots.

PHOTOS OF THE FILM



Abou's father, who is very strict, pinches his cheek.



Abou and his friends.



Abou and his dad at a parent-teacher interview.



Albert de Paris, owner of a clothing store and fake teacher.



Madame Martin, the computer teacher has accepted helping Abou with his school work so that he can be promoted to the next grade at the end of the school year.



Tajan et Abou try clothing on and dance in Albert de Paris' store.