

Blu-Ray Review: French Drama ‘A Prophet’ Demands Your Attention

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on August 10, 2010 - 10:44am

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CHICAGO – One of the best films of the last several years was recently released on Blu-ray and DVD courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics in the riveting, remarkable, and simply amazing “A Prophet.” The winner of dozens of international awards and an Oscar nominee for Best Foreign Language Film, “A Prophet” is only starting to make waves stateside. As more and more people catch on to the film through its Blu-ray and DVD release and word-of-mouth spreads, the film will develop the following it deserves. Movies THIS good always do.

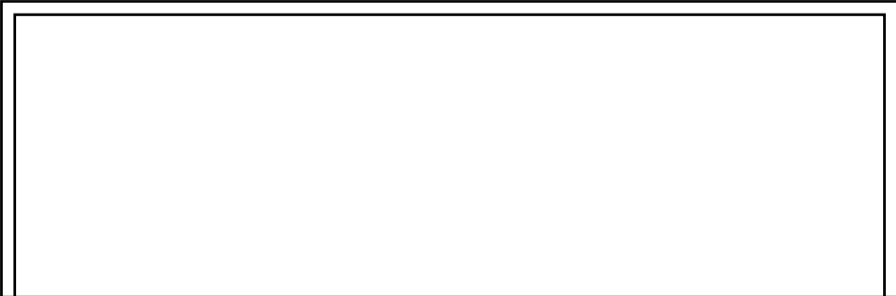


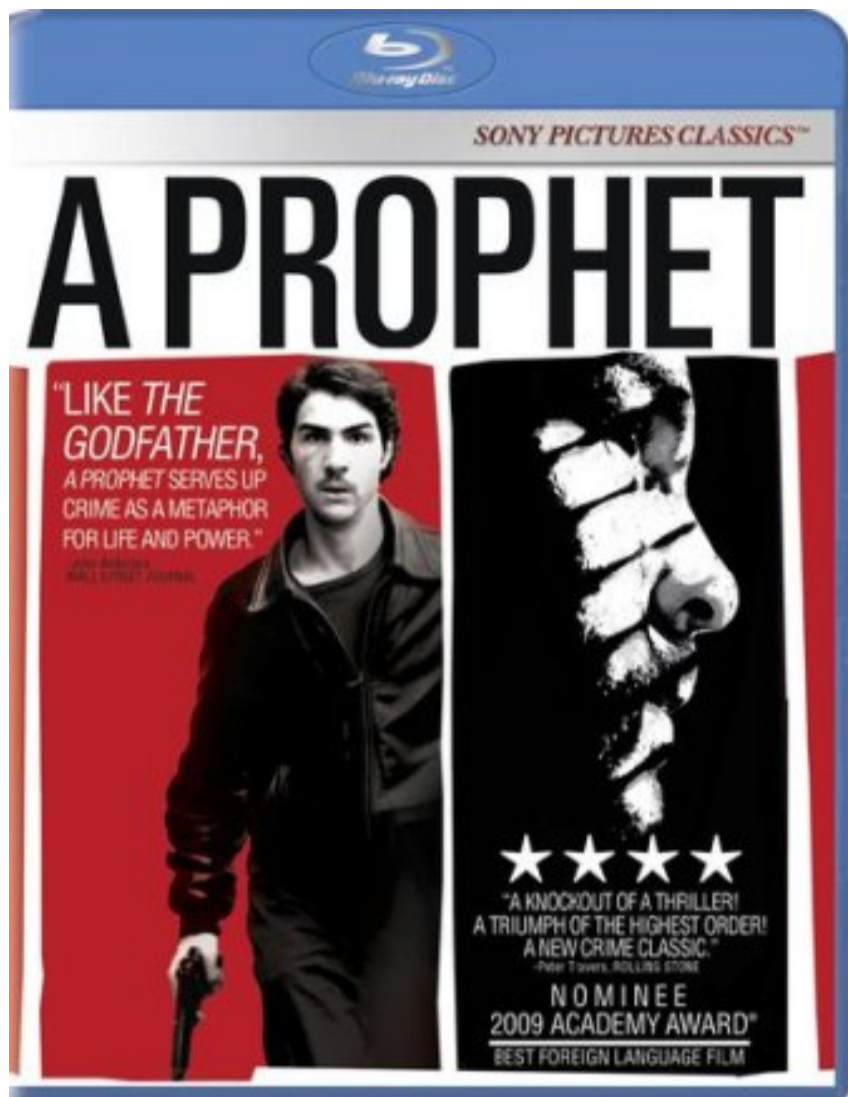
What’s so remarkable about “A Prophet”? Let the hyperbole begin. No film has ever documented the transformation a man goes through from a simple thug to a notorious criminal in the same naturalistic, riveting detail as this one. Sure, “GoodFellas” is a masterpiece, but that’s a more stylized film. “A Prophet” captures something natural about how so much of our life is determined by the people around us. It is about a young man forced into a life of serious crime by his situation who then merely moves up the ladder by force of inertia. It is brilliant in too many ways to recount in a simple review — one of the best films of not just this year but all time.



A Prophet was released on Blu-ray and DVD on August 3rd, 2010
Photo credit: Sony Pictures

Malik (Tahar Rahim) is a young French teen of Arab descent who has been sent to jail on a six-year stint for assaulting a police officer. If not for a random encounter in a shower, Malik probably would have done three years for good behavior, maybe even less, and returned to a life of petty crime or possibly even turned his life around. But that encounter makes Malik an important pawn for the powerful Cesar (Niels Arestrup), a Corsican who runs the prison with a phalanx of minions around him and full control of the “hacks” or guards.





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Photo credit: Sony Pictures

When the film opens, Cesar is the Don Corleone of the prison, the opposite of Malik on the criminal ladder. But he needs Malik. He orders him to assassinate a fellow Muslim for him, the man who wanted to bargain with the young criminal in the shower. If Malik kills the man, Cesar will protect him for the rest of his time behind bars. If he refuses, they'll simply kill Malik. It's kill or be killed. The hesitant murder scene that follows is one of the most remarkable ever filmed. It will literally take your breath away.

With the first assignment done, Cesar realizes that Malik could be of a lot of use to him because he naturally has an "in" with the Muslims who are taking over both the prison and the gang world outside. Cesar sees the future but doesn't quite realize that he's grooming his replacement. While Malik cannot read nor write, he is a very quick learner and he begins to play his own game within the complex structure of mob life. Malik watches Cesar's power erode and positions himself in just the right way; the way that Cesar has taught him. This is a very unusual coming-of-age story about a boy not just becoming a man but becoming a godfather.

"A Prophet" moves with the force of a runaway train, feeling much shorter than its 149-minute running time. Director Jacques Audiard has made a film that feels both epic and intimate; an amazing duality that's much harder to pull off than it looks. "The Godfather" is beloved because it is both the story of the mob (and the growth of America) on a large canvas while never losing the story of family at its core. "A Prophet" similarly recognizes both the complex large picture and the personal story at the same time.



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Photo credit: Sony Pictures

Rahim and Arestrup are incredible, the former perfectly selling the transformation without losing the character to the cliché and the latter giving

one of the most remarkable supporting turns in years as a man so keenly aware of everything going on around him that he seems to constantly be making chess moves even when he knows he’s going to lose the game. Director Jacques Audiard marvelously keeps his audience on their toes, never sure where the story is going next. It’s an incredibly complex film with multiple speaking roles in French, Arabic, and Corsican, but the viewer never loses their way and never loses sight of what’s really important – the arc of Malik from his first day in prison to his last.

“A Prophet” is one of the most riveting films in years; an instant gangster classic that has already won nearly every award it could overseas and is now being presented to Americans on Blu-ray. Foreign films can often be a tough sell with so much traditional escapist fare on the Blu-ray shelf. Don’t wait for them to remake this amazing film before seeing for yourself what the future of mob movies looks like. Jump on the bandwagon now. Start the word-of-mouth on your end. Your friends will thank you.

Special features:

- o Commentary with Director Jacques Audiard, Actor Tahar Rahim and Co-writer Thomas Bidegain
- o Deleted Scenes
- o Rehearsal Footage
- o Screen Tests
- o Theatrical Trailer
- o Previews

“A Prophet” stars Tahar Rahim, Niels Arestrup, Adel Bencherif, Reda Kateb, and Hichem Yacoubi. It was written by Jacques Audiard and Thomas Bidegain and directed by Audiard. It was released on Blu-ray and DVD on August 3rd, 2010. It is rated R and runs 155 minutes.



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By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [15]

Content Director

HollywoodChicago.com

brian@hollywoodchicago.com [14]

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