

Film Review: Easy Metaphors for WWII in 'War of the Buttons'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on October 21, 2012 - 11:24pm

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CHICAGO – World War II, also known as “The Good War,” had more than its share of darkness and sorrow. As the conflict winds down for a French town in the new film “War of the Buttons,” young love and rival town kid gangs create metaphors for the context of the war in its time and place.



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

This is a sweet movie, more than a bit twee, but containing a sentiment that is life affirming, even up to its “The Sound of Music” type ending. The child and teen actors actually carry the film, which is the third remake of the novel “La Guerre des boutons” by anti-war French writer Louis Pergaud. This also contains metaphors for war and its futilities, as exemplified by the rival kid gangs in the French townships. It also throws in a youthful romance, between a tough kid leader and a Anne Frank-like Jewish girl hiding in the town. All of this somehow works, and has an almost live action Disney movie feel, for the dialogue is cutesy and the endings are happy.

In 1944 small town France, the war is winding down. The townspeople are counting down the days, and keep themselves apart from the Nazi occupiers, including their own traitorous fellow townsmen. The children are aware of the adventure of war, and start a rivalry with a nearby town where mock battles are staged, and the spoils of victory are the buttons on the rival’s clothing. The teenage boy Lébrac (Jean Texler) is the leader of the main town’s battles, and begins to take it a bit too seriously.

A major change occurs with the arrival of Violette (Ilona Bachelier), the niece of Simone (Laetitia Casta), the beautiful shopkeeper in the town. Violette has her charms, and turns Lébrac’s head. The schoolteacher (Guillaume Canet) tries to keep order, but the pressure of the Nazi occupiers and his former relationship with Simone seek to undermine him. As the kid gangs get rougher in their button war, and Violette is revealed as a Jewish refugee, the tension of the worldwide conflict is about to come home.

“War of the Buttons” continues its limited release in Chicago on October 19th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring J Jean Texler, Laetitia Casta, Clément Godefroy, Théophile Baquet, Guillaume Canet and Ilona Bachelier. Screenplay by Christophe Barratier, Stéphane Keller and Thomas Langmann. Directed by Christophe Barratier. Rated “PG-13”



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Young Lovers: Violette (Ilona Bachelier) and Lébrac (Jean Texler) in 'War of the Buttons'
Photo credit: The Weinstein Company

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