

LACME STUDIOS
presents

SALOUM

A Southern by Jean Luc Herbulot



Senegal / 2021 / 80 min / Color
Wolof and French with English subtitles

Festival Press Kit

2021 Toronto International Film Festival
Midnight Madness Section
(World Premiere)
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LOGLINE

In Jean Luc Herbulot's cool and kinetic genre-shifting supernatural thriller, a legendary trio of on-the-run mercenaries carrying a stolen gold bounty and a kidnapped drug lord take refuge in a remote and mystical area of Senegal, where dark ancestral forces unleash hell on them all.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Shot down after fleeing a coup and extracting a drug lord from Guinea-Bissau, the legendary mercenaries known as the Bangui Hyenas – Chaka, Rafa and Midnight - must stash their stolen gold bounty, lay low long enough to repair and refuel their plane and escape back to Dakar, Senegal. When they take refuge at a holiday camp in the coastal region of Sine-Saloum, they do their best to blend in with their fellow guests; including a mute named Awa, with secrets of her own, and a policeman who may be on their tail, but it's Chaka who happens to be hiding the darkest secret of them all. Unbeknownst to the other Hyenas, he's brought them there for a reason and once his past catches up to him, his decisions have devastating consequences, threatening to unleash hell on them all.

PRINCIPAL FILMMAKERS

Director:	Jean Luc Herbulot
Story by:	Jean Luc Herbulot and Pamela Diop
Written by:	Jean Luc Herbulot
Production Company:	LACME STUDIOS
Producer:	Pamela Diop
Executive Producers	Douglas Jackson, Hus Miller
Co-Producer:	Alexis Perrin
Cinematographer:	Gregory Corandi
Editors:	Sébastien Prangère Alasdair McCulloch Nicolas Desmaisons
Original soundtrack:	Reksider

PRINCIPAL CAST

Yann Gael	Chaka
Evelyne Ily Juhen	Awa
Roger Sallah	Rafa
Mentor Ba	Midnight
Bruno Henry	Omar
Renaud Farah	Felix
Ndiaga Mbow	Souleymane

Babacar Oualy
Marielle Salmier
Abdou Basse Dia

Salamane
Séphora
Youce

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Jean Luc Herbulot, Director / Writer

I have always admired Sergio Leone's Westerns, Akira Kurosawa's Samurai films, Jean Pierre Melville's Noirs, George Miller's post-apocalyptic action, and the Kim Jee-woon's and the Park Chan-wook's of the filmic world - all strong ambassadors of a genre but also a continent or a country. I believe you can survey an entire country's identity and mood by its best genre films and filmmakers.

I want SALOUM to feel real, hard, raw and darkly poetic in its own original way. A film that stands as purely African and that also speaks unconditionally about universal truths, and is also respectful of the Sine Saloum area's ancestral stories. The time has come for Katiopa (Africa in our indigenous language) to bring its heroes and myths into the modern mix.

Growing up in Congo and witnessing the lack of African heroes as a child, it was my imagination of a bigger world that brought me to filmmaking. The creation of SALOUM is part of a bigger universe - a universe I based on reality and military and political history that I later tainted with a layer of adventure and horror.

SALOUM was created in collaboration with my creative partner, Pamela Diop. We went on a creative brainstorm weekend trip to the mystical and isolated region of Saloum, where Pamela has a deep and spiritual family history. It was here that the initial seeds of the story took shape. We wanted to capture the atmosphere of the region, the mysticism that lives in the air, and were also inspired to tell a story of strong characters on a tale of revenge.

And then we decided to bring some heroes in... some colorful ones may I say. That's how the Hyenas were born. That's how Chaka was born. SALOUM is not a hero movie, but a movie *about* heroes. Heroes that we have not seen before.

I love movies, I breathe movies, and SALOUM is my love letter to Africa and to cinema.

DIRECTOR Q&A

What is your background as a filmmaker?

No film-school. No camera. Just an eight-year-old filled with feverish dreams.
I am and always have been what I refer to as a hostage of creativity.
As an adult, I finally found the outlet to release those dreams into visual stories.

What was your initial inspiration for making SALOUM?

A lucid dream and an experience of drowning.

When I was a kid, 5 or 6 years old, in Congo, I was alone on the seashore, and I suddenly got sucked into the water. I fought my way back but remember losing it and just letting go... But then, I finally came out of it, like somebody pushed me back to shore. I remember being helped by an adult that was guarding me. This guardian said I had disappeared for more than five minutes. And she was not joking, she was crying and scared to death. That experience made me question about the unknown and perceptions.

Later on, some years ago, I was in Dakar. I was pretty sick, feverish, but I won my battle against insomnia that night. I slept and had this weird dream of floating and being a camera in the middle of a gunfight, more precisely an execution. I witnessed a military kid going forward, gun pointed to his destiny/enemy? Who was that kid morphing into an adult?

The rest is in the movie.

The performances in the film are exceptional– what was your casting and rehearsal process?

I don't go through a traditional casting process I spend time choosing people I want to work with. We all lived together in the camp that you see in the film, so the tenderness and the tensions were based on reality. The performances in SALOUM are what happens when you isolate thirty people with a thirst for creativity in a contained desert camp, in a spiritually overloaded environment.

What are your cinematic and creative influences, and how did they influence the making of SALOUM?

Red Dead Redemption 2, the ancestral spirits of Saloum and "The Strummer's law" – the idea that a constant flow of creative inspiration into one's life is as important as breathing.

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

Producer Pamela Diop

At the genesis of SALOUM, there is the meeting of my partner in crime Jean-Luc Herbulot. We both had a visceral need to create works in Africa, filled with heroes and monsters. It was what we craved as kids to see coming from African film, so we created it ourselves. During a trip to the Saloum region of Senegal in 2018, we wrote the short story "The Twilight of the Hyenas" an African western... a horror film... a fantastic epic... an ode to the imaginary world in which we would like to stay and a furious artistic deliverance rather than a desire to fill an empty box.

The movie was filmed in nature, mostly in the mystical and wild region of Saloum, Senegal where my journalist father had filmed wrestling matches more than forty years ago and where my mother still lives; on an island without cars, far away from all levels of city life.

SALOUM is the first feature film from LACME STUDIOS, co-constructed with the actors and technicians, day-after-day for five straight weeks - the epic adventure of a group living outside the comfort of their respective homes, much like the hero-mercenaries of the film itself. The absence of a network, the random supply of water, the regular silting up of vehicles... blood was shed along with tears. SALOUM is the result of the talents we gathered who were kind enough to follow us on this adventure.

The production of SALOUM was a natural shifting of gears, the result of adrenaline rushes, soul encounters, inevitable pains, loves, the divine and fears of emptiness ... a birth of a bloody new-born already adored by its parents.

"When you want to succeed as bad as you want to breathe ..." Eric Thomas recounts in his motivational speech, explaining how an old man kept his student's head under water, thus demonstrating the true meaning of the word "motivation." This best explains why I believed in this film, why I expected it and why I didn't hesitate to take the risk.

It's important for me to release African artistic madness, so universal and yet so rare on international screens.

KEY FILMMAKER BIOS

Director / Writer Jean Luc Herbulot

Jean Luc was born and raised in Congo Brazzaville. Jean Luc started drawing and writing at a very young age, rapidly followed by music and video game programming. In 2000, Jean Luc flew to Paris to pursue Economics before transferring his creative interests into Graphic design.

In 2004, while studying editing as part of his multimedia studies in Paris, he directed his first short movie, titled *Vierge(s)*, for which he also did the scriptwriting, storyboard, lighting, and editing.

Jean Luc graduated as a multimedia project manager and started to work for TF1 as a graphic designer. Meanwhile, he created his own production company, which made music videos exclusively for independent artists to maintain high creative standards for low-budget productions.

In 2009, he co-produced and directed the short film *Concurrence loyale* (Loyal Competition), which was bought by Canal Plus.

In 2013, Jean Luc won his first award for a hip hop music video at the French International Music Video Festival in Paris.

He worked for TF1 for six years before moving to Los Angeles. Repped by WME, he shot his first feature in 2014, *DEALER*, which became the first French indie movie bought by Netflix. He moved back to Africa in 2017, and in 2019 he created, directed and operated as showrunner for the TV series *Sakho & Mangane*, entirely filmed in Dakar, Senegal for Canal + Afrique. *Sakho and Mangane* made history by becoming the first French language African TV series bought by Netflix.

In 2019, he partnered with producer Pamela Diop in Dakar, Senegal and together they started LACME STUDIOS in order to create a stronghold for African filmmaking, starting with SALOUM, which Jean Luc wrote and directed in 2020. In 2021, Jean Luc and Pamela partnered with filmmaker Hus Miller (Tableland Pictures) and went into production on the action/thriller ZERO, which he wrote and directed in Dakar, Senegal and is now in post-production.

SELECT FILMOGRAPHY

2022 - ZERO (feature film, currently in post-production)

2021 - Saloum (feature film, World Premiere, 2021 Toronto International Film Festival)

2019 - Sakho and Mangane (Television Series, Netflix and Canal +)

2014 - Dealer (feature film, Netflix)

2012 - Sick (short film)

2009 – Concurrence Loyale (short film, Canal +)

Producer Pamela Diop

Pamela Diop was born in 1981 to a French mother who worked in advertising and a Senegalese father who was a journalist and documentary filmmaker. Pamela discovered the city of Dakar at the age of nineteen and fell in love with it. She moved to the Senegalese capital in 2002 and created her first import-export business by age 21, marking her first steps as an entrepreneur. In 2009, she worked in PR for Canal Plus and started her first production company in Paris in 2012. She gained a foothold in the business "by learning on the job" but returned to school in 2014 earning her Master's degree from INSEEC Paris in production management for Film and Television.

After working for a prime-time television program in Gabon, she returned to Dakar and began managing key accounts for McCann, an American ad agency.

In 2017, Pamela started LACME, a communications agency which primarily worked with NGOs and intergovernmental agencies. LACME STUDIOS was created in 2019 in partnership with Jean-Luc Herbulot, to develop content for cinema and television. In 2020, she produced her first feature film SALOUM, which is premiering at TIFF in 2021.

Pamela is the mother of three children and the president of A.W.A (African Woman Action), an association for the financial autonomy of women in Senegal, which works toward empowering and training women in the film industry.

US partner/producer and executive producer of Saloum, Hus Miller came on board to collaborate on LACME's most recent feature film ZERO; an American-Senegalese action/thriller shot in the heart of Dakar city. The film is currently in post-production.

Executive Producer Hus Miller

Hus Miller majored in Theatre Arts at the University of Oregon and was accepted to the prestigious American Academy of Dramatic Arts in Los Angeles. As an actor, writer and

producer, Hus has worked with *Twentieth Century Fox*, *Skywalker Ranch*, *Park Pictures*, *Gunn Films*, *CBS* and is currently teamed with LACME STUDIOS based in Dakar, Senegal.

Hus produced and acted in the award-winning short film *Deer Season* and wrote, produced, and acted in the film *You Can't Say No*, one of Peter Fonda's last roles.

Hus recently produced, co-wrote, and acted in the upcoming action/thriller *ZERO*, which was successfully and safely filmed in Dakar, Senegal during the Covid-19 pandemic. Hus is an executive producer of the African genre-shifting supernatural thriller *Saloum*, premiering at the Toronto International film Festival in 2021. Both films are part of a continued collaboration with LACME STUDIOS, run by producer extraordinaire, Pamela Diop and visionary director, Jean Luc Herbulot.

Hus is the founder and CEO of the film production company Tableland Pictures. Hus lives in Santa Rosa, California with his wife and two sons and enjoys spending time riding motorcycles whenever he gets the chance.

Executive Producer Douglas Jackson

Doug is the Co-Chief Executive Officer of BOLD, a company he co-founded to help give people the career and educational tools they need to change their lives for the better. A former Vice President of Corporate Strategy at Monster Worldwide and a leading entrepreneur in the fields of online marketing, career management, and product development, Doug holds a PhD in Educational Psychology from Stanford University. When he's not busy building BOLD into the world's premier destination for transforming work lives, you might find Doug building treehouses or making hard cider or executive producing independent films. Doug's keen eye for unique and interesting projects led him to a film production collaboration with Hus Miller (*Tableland Pictures*) and LACME STUDIOS. Along with Hus Miller, Doug executive produced *Saloum*, which is premiering at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2021. Doug also executive produced the upcoming film titled *ZERO* with the same team of filmmakers. Doug resides in Puerto Rico and enjoys spending time at his TreeCasa Resort in Nicaragua whenever he gets the chance.

Co-Producer Alexis Perrin

Alexis Perrin is the manager of Rumble Fish Productions, and the co-founder of French mini studio Logical Pictures and ex-executive at VFX powerhouse BUF (*The Grandmaster*, *Nymphomaniac*, *Life of Pi*, *Thor*).

He produced Wi Ding Ho's *CITIES OF LAST THINGS* (Platform Award at Toronto International Festival in 2018; Best Supporting Actress at Chinese Oscars Golden Horse), which was released as a Netflix Original in 2019. Rumble Fish's credits also include the space opera *BLOOD MACHINES* by Seth Ickerman, which was released in 2020 by streaming platform Shudder and had a successful 40+ festivals run.

In the continuity of their collaboration on *DEALER*, Alexis is currently co-producing Jean Luc Herbulot's second feature *SALOUM*, produced by Paméla Diop of LACMA STUDIOS. Alexis is also in post-production on Kristina Buozyte and Bruno Samper's sci-fi drama *VESPER*

SEEDS (with Eddie Marsan attached), and Del Kathryn Barton's BLAZE (with Simon Baker attached) produced by Causeway (The Babadook, Buoyancy, Cargo).

In 2016, Alexis partnered with Frédéric Fiore to create Logical Pictures, a genre-driven boutique financier. In a few years, Alexis was involved in the production of a dozen films including Coralie Fargeat's REVENGE, Pascal Laugier's INCIDENT IN A GHOSTLAND, Carlo Mirabella-Davis's SWALLOW.

Original Soundtrack Reksider

REKSIDER is a French self-made and multi-instrumentalist composer. He loves to combine pop, electro, organic sounds to bring us his own style. Its main speciality is to be able to produce, for example, a symphony orchestra on its own, to interpret all the voices of a complete choir or to reproduce a section of stringed instruments. His skills also extend to dance and video, and he enjoys producing them regularly for social media. Reksider started out by performing on stage, as a bassist, beatboxer, percussionist and beatmaker for the hip hop scene. His work now extends to various brands, movies, TV shows and even popular French comedians.

KEY CAST BIOS

Yann Gael – Chaka

Yann Gael is a French-Cameroonian actor born in Garoua. He is Beti from his mother and Bassa from his father. Yann grew up in France and was classically trained at CNSAD - Conservatoire National d'Art Dramatique, Paris. He debuted on stage playing Chocolat, directed by former head of La Comédie Française Marcel Bozonnet.

Yann made his television debut in *Duel au Soleil* (2014) (2013-2016), co-starring Gérard Darmon, becoming the 3rd french black actor to lead in a french television show. Yann is known in France for the television period drama *They Had a Dream* (2017). This earned Yann the Best Male Performance Award at La Rochelle Film Festival 2017, one of the most prestigious French recognitions for television work. He is also known in Africa for being the rookie cop Lieutenant Basile Mangane of *Sakho and Mangane* (2019), directed by Jean Luc Herbulot.

He made his film debut playing Michel Martinez, a soccer player Silvio Berlusconi wants in his football club, in Paolo Sorrentino's film *Loro* (2019).

Yann stars as Chaka in the feature film *Saloum*, directed by Jean Luc Herbulot and will soon be seen in the upcoming Netflix series *1889*.

Yann's performances are widely acknowledged as complex, human and avoiding clichés on African descendants.

Roger Sallah – Rafa

Roger Felmont Sallah is an actor/model of Senegalese and Ghanaian origin. Roger's modeling career began in 2011 at a competition called Fashion Day. He was awarded best model and received a scholarship in modeling at the agency Top Model by L'As Des As.

Along the way, he began training as an actor and landed his first role for the short film UN AIR DE KORA, which won the Bronze Foal award at FESPACO as well as best short film at FESTICAB, International Film and Audiovisual Festival of Burundi in Benin, Nigeria.

He has worked as a voice actor on POD ET MARICHOUE and NAFI series and on the television series SAKHO AND MANGANE and RENAISSANCE, the latter earning him a best supporting actor award at the Teranga Movie Awards in Dakar, Senegal.

He had a small role alongside Dane DeHaan in the Amazon Original Series Zero Zero Zero. He played Rafa (one of the three Bangui Hyenas) in Saloum, directed by Jean Luc Herbulot, which is premiering at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2021.

His other credits include Black and White, a television series on France 3, and the feature film Mali Twist. Roger recently played a supporting role in the upcoming film titled ZERO, also directed by Jean Luc Herbulot and the film ABSA, directed by Moussa Sène. He is currently filming an original Canal + television series in Ivory Coast.

Roger has his BA in African and Post-Colonial Studies at the English department of Cheikh Anta DIOP University.

Mentor Ba - Midnight

Mentor is a former telecoms technician who started his career in entertainment after an early retirement in 2019. He is a model/actor and began his career featuring in local television series *Idols*, *It's Life*, *Golden*, *Black and White*, *Values* and *Big Five* and then starred in the feature films *An Angel* and *Awa De Moussa S Absa*. He stars as Midnight in the feature film *Saloum*, directed by Jean Luc Herbulot, which is premiering at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2021. Mentor is married, has four children, and currently lives in Dakar, Senegal.

Evelyne Ily Juhen – Awa

Evelyne Ily JUHEN, 30, born GBOBIA, comes from a modest family of 7 brothers and sisters. She was born and raised in Abidjan in the Ivory Coast. Passionate from adolescence, she joined an artistic troupe in her religious community "the Sentinels". In this same burst of passion, she was noticed by theater professionals after obtaining her prize for best National female performer in a Christian environment.

Motivated by this desire to continue in this cultural branch, she was held back by her parents who guided her to pursue the path of school studies. She devoted herself to it until her training in Human Resources and Communication studies before realizing that her passion would not stay asleep.

She participated, therefore in a casting in 2013 with a movie company called PEMA ACT, where she obtained the first role in the movie "SECOND CHANCE" directed by Gilbert

OKORONKO. The same year she got the idea of writing the movie “RESOLUTION”. While waiting for her project to materialize, she is making more appearances in movies and series.

In December 2016, she created her company YEVEDI PRODUCTION Sarl with which she launched several co-productions: A KA NA FO by Samuel OUEDRAGO, KAMISSA by Guy KALOU, and launched in 2017 the production of her first feature film “RESOLUTION”. This film deals with the issue of violence against women with a universal perspective.

RESOLUTION allowed her to win two special prizes at FESPACO 2019 / SPECIAL PRIZE “ECOWAS INTEGRATION FOR THE BEST WEST AFRICAN FILM” and “FELIX HOUPHOUET BOIGNY AWARD FROM THE CONSEIL DE L’ENTENTE”, as well as two nominations for the SOTIGUI AWARDS 2019 in the categories: Best West African Interpretation and the SOTIGUI d'Or for Best African Interpretation.

Five awards at NISA 2021, including the NISA 2021 Best Actress Award.

The LILI WOMEN FESTIVAL awards her the prize for best Ivorian actress.

For the film "DESRANCES" by Apolline Traoré, she won the prize for best female interpretation at the “BRUSSELS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL”. Her commitment to violence against women has earned her the award for BEST COMMITTED ACTRESS AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN by CPDEFM AND ENGENDER HEALT.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

ABOUT LACME STUDIOS

LACME STUDIOS is a Pan African film and television production company based in Dakar, Senegal that is creating a new standard for African cinema. Founded in 2019 by entrepreneur Pamela Diop and acclaimed filmmaker Jean Luc Herbulot, LACME STUDIOS is a stronghold for contemporary African filmmaking, working with an elite roster of creative African and international talent to develop and produce uniquely African stories with universal, global appeal.

Their first feature film production, SALOUM, will world premiere at the 2021 Toronto International Film Festival in the prestigious Midnight Madness section. In partnership with filmmaker Hus Miller of Tableland Pictures, they are currently in post-production on their second feature film, the American-Senegalese action thriller ZERO, shot in the heart of Dakar city. They currently have over ten films in development.

More information at <https://www.lacme.sn/>

FILM INFORMATION

Country: Senegal

Language:	Wolof and French with English subtitles
World Premiere:	2021 Toronto International Film Festival, Midnight Madness Section
Filming Locations:	Sine Saloum, Senegal
Running Time:	80 minutes
Production Company:	LACME STUDIOS
Film Format / Camera:	Digital