

## Red Island [12A]

2023 France/Belgium/Madagascar

116 mins

UK released **1 March 2024**

Director **Robin Campillo**

Screenplay **Robin Campillo ; Gilles Marchand ; Jean-Luc  
Raharimanana**

Cinematography **Jeanne Lapoirie**

Music **Arnaud Rebotini**

Cast **Nadia Tereszkiewicz** (Colette Lopez); **Quim Gutiérrez**  
(Robert Lopez) ; **Charlie Vauselle** (Thomas); **Amely  
Rakotoarimalala** (Miangaly); **Hugues Delamarlière**  
(Bernard Huissens); **Sophie Guillemin** (Mrs. Guedj);  
**David Serero** (Mr. Guedj)

"We want to remain worthy of our great elders, those of Algeria, Indochina and African Chad. Heirs to so much glory, our flags are heavy with history." Slipped in almost anecdotally at the heart of Red Island, the new feature film by Robin Campillo (Eastern Boys, BPM (Beats Per Minute), this song by the 8th Marine Infantry Parachute Regiment says a lot about the very fine picture of decolonisation painted by the director through a multitude of small sensory touches. Rather than tackle the subject head-on by plunging into Madagascar in the early 1970s, a decade or so after the island's independence, the director chose to collect snippets of military and personal memory, patching them together and stitching them together to create an original, refined structure based on the eyes of an eight-year-old child, stealthily observing his environment and capturing fragments of reality with a sensitivity heightened by imagination.

"You've just landed in the most beautiful place in the world, base 181, the place of all pleasures, a real little Gallic village, a family..." Warrant Officer Robert Lopez (Spaniard Quim Gutiérrez), his wife Colette (Nadia Tereszkiewicz) and their friends the Guedjs (Sophie Guillemin and David Serero) have prepared a festive lunch in the sunshine to welcome Bernard

(Hugues Delamarlière) who has just been transferred from France. This is a French air force base where everyone lives within the military compound. Garrison life in a little jewel case of earthly paradise, as if cut off from the world, where people invite each other in to kill time, where they dance in the heat, but where cracks also surface underground, those of couples and those of a twilight nostalgia for the colonial grip. The youngest of the three Lopez sons, Thomas (Charlie Vauselle), picks up on these fragmentary clues. He loves nothing more than to hide and spy on the world of adults, interweaving his perceptions with his imagination nourished by reading the Fantômette novels. And it's all much more complex than it seems...

Weaving a highly sophisticated film that works on the unspeakable, Robin Campillo weaves a tale with two sides and two echoes, gradually bringing out a portrait of a cracking couple, a very precise picture of the indolent daily life of expatriates in their bubble of happiness, a distillation of the atmosphere between nostalgia and geostrategy of the post-colonial French military presence. Extremely rich in suggestive detail and beautifully wrapped up by Jeanne Lapoirie's cinematography and Arnaud Rebotini's music, the film perfectly recreates the padded, enveloping atmosphere of the lost paradise of the French colonialists, but also that of a childhood whose conscience is awakening to the ambiguities of a world that is far less simple and idyllic than it appears. A world of white people whose point of view is abruptly reversed in Red Island, bringing to a close a film that is very bold in its intention of masked intelligence and very successful in its approach to the perception of the imperceptible.

**Fabien Lemercier**, *Cineuropa*, 30 May 2023 (abridged)

(Translated from French by Margaux Comte)

### Coming soon....

Monday 1<sup>st</sup> April: *Perfect Days* (12A)

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April: *Four Daughters* (15)

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