

= Rififi =

Rififi ( French : Du rififi chez les hommes ) is a 1955 French crime film adaptation of Auguste Le Breton 's novel of the same name . Directed by American blacklisted filmmaker Jules Dassin , the film stars Jean Servais as the aging gangster Tony " le Stéphanois " , Carl Möhner as Jo " le Suédois " , Robert Manuel as Mario Farrati , and Jules Dassin as César " le Milanais " . The foursome band together to commit an almost impossible theft , the burglary of an exclusive jewelry shop on the Rue de Rivoli . The centerpiece of the film is an intricate half @-@ hour heist scene depicting the crime in detail , shot in near silence , without dialogue or music . The fictional burglary has been mimicked by criminals in actual crimes around the world .

After he was blacklisted from Hollywood , Dassin found work in France where he was asked to direct Rififi . Despite his distaste for parts of the original novel , Dassin agreed to direct the film . He shot Rififi while working with a low budget , without a star cast , and with the production staff working for low wages .

Upon the initial release of the film , it received positive reactions from audiences and critics in France , the United States , and the United Kingdom . The film earned Dassin the award for Best Director at the 1955 Cannes Film Festival . Rififi was nominated by the National Board of Review for Best Foreign Film . Rififi was re @-@ released theatrically in both 2000 and 2015 and is still highly acclaimed by modern film critics as one of the greatest works in French film noir .

= = Plot = =

Tony " le Stéphanois " has served a five @-@ year prison term for a jewel heist and is out on the street and down on his luck . His friend Jo approaches him about a smash @-@ and @-@ grab proposed by mutual friend Mario in which the threesome would cut the glass on a Parisian jeweler 's front window in broad daylight and snatch some gems . Tony declines . He then learns that his old girlfriend , Mado , took up in his absence with gangster Parisian nightclub owner Pierre Grutter . Finding Mado working at Grutter 's , Tony invites her back to his rundown flat . She is obviously well @-@ kept , and Tony savagely beats her for being so deeply involved with Grutter . Tony changes his mind about the heist ; he now accepts on the condition that they rob the jeweler 's safe instead of the window . Mario suggests they employ the services of Italian compatriot César , a safecracker . The four devise and rehearse an ingenious plan to break into the store and disarm its sophisticated alarm system .

The caper begins with the group chiseling through a cement ceiling from an upstairs flat on a Sunday night . The suspenseful break @-@ in completed , the criminals appear to escape without leaving any trace of their identities . However , without the others ' knowledge , César pocketed a diamond ring as a bauble for his lover Viviane , a chanteuse at Grutter 's club . The four men arrange to fence the loot with a London contact . Meanwhile , Grutter has seen Mado and her injuries , who breaks off their relationship . Infuriated at Tony 's interference in his life , he gives heroin to his drug @-@ addicted brother Remi and tells him to murder Tony . Grutter sees the diamond César gave to Viviane and realizes that César , Mario , and Tony were responsible for the jewel theft . Grutter forces César to confess . Forsaking a 10 million franc police reward , Grutter decides to steal the jewels from Tony 's gang , his brother Remi brutally murdering Mario and his wife Ida when they refuse to reveal where the loot is hidden . Tony retrieves it from the couple 's apartment and anonymously pays for a splendid funeral for them . He then goes looking for Grutter and stumbles onto the captive César , who confesses having squealed . Citing " the rules , " Tony ruefully kills him .

Meanwhile , seeking to force their adversaries ' hand , Grutter 's thugs kidnap Jo 's five @-@ year @-@ old son Tonio and hold him ransom . The London fence arrives with the payoff , after which Tony leaves to single @-@ handedly rescue the child by force , advising Jo it is the only way they will see him alive . With Mado 's help he tracks Tonio down at Grutter 's country house and kills Grutter 's brothers Rémi and Louis while rescuing him . On the way back to Paris , Tony learns Jo has cracked under the pressure and agreed to meet Grutter at his house with the money . When he

arrives Grutter tells him Tony has already snatched the child and kills Jo . Seconds too late to save his friend , Tony is mortally wounded by Grutter before killing him as he tries to flee with the loot . Bleeding profusely , Tony drives maniacally back to Paris and delivers Tonio home safely before dying at the wheel as police and bystanders close in on him and a suitcase filled with 120 million francs in cash .

= = Cast = =

Jean Servais as Tony " le Stéphanois " : A gangster who recently returned from serving five years in prison for jewel theft . The eldest member in on the heist , Tony is godfather of namesake Tonio , son of Jo " le Suédois " .

Carl Möhner as Jo " le Suédois " : A young Swedish gangster Tony took the five year rap for . Jo invites Tony in on the heist .

Robert Manuel as Mario Ferrati : A happy @-@ go @-@ lucky Italian gangster who came up with the original idea for a jewel heist .

Jules Dassin as César " le Milanais " : An expert safecracker hired by Tony with a weakness for women . Dassin played the role under the pseudonym of Perlo Vita .

Magali Noel as Viviane : a night @-@ club singer who gets involved with César " le Milanais " ; she sings the film 's title song .

Claude Sylvain as Ida : Mario Ferrati 's wife

Marcel Lupovici as Pierre Grutter : Leader of the Grutter gang and owner of the night @-@ club L 'Âge d 'Or . He is the first to figure out Tony 's responsibility for the diamond heist .

Robert Hossein as Remi Grutter : A member of the Grutter gang addicted to heroin .

Pierre Grasset as Louis Grutter : A member of the Grutter gang .

Marie Sabouret as Mado : The former lover of Tony " le Stéphanois " .

Dominique Maurin as Tonio , the young son of Jo " le Suédois " . Towards the end of the film , Tonio is kidnapped by the Grutter gang and is rescued by Tony " le Stéphanois " .

Janine Darcey as Louise , Jo 's wife and the mother of Tonio .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

The film Rififi was originally to be directed by Jean @-@ Pierre Melville , a later luminary of the heist film genre . Melville gave his blessing to American director Jules Dassin when the latter asked for his permission to take the helm . It was Dassin 's first film in five years ; he had been blacklisted by the House Committee on Un @-@ American Activities after fellow director Edward Dmytryk named him a communist in April 1951 . Subsequently , Dassin attempted to rebuild his career in Europe . Several such film projects were stopped through long @-@ distance efforts by the US government . Dassin attempted a film L 'Ennemi public numero un , which was halted after stars Fernandel and Zsa Zsa Gabor withdrew under American pressure . An attempt to film an adaptation of Giovanni Verga 's Mastro don Gesualdo in Rome was halted by the US Embassy . Dassin received an offer from an agent in Paris , France where he met producer Henri Bérard who had acquired the rights to Auguste Le Breton 's popular crime novel Du Rififi chez les hommes . Bérard chose Dassin due to the major success in France of Dassin 's previous film The Naked City .

Using his native English , Dassin wrote the screenplay to Rififi in six days with the help of screenwriter René Wheeler , who subsequently took the material and translated it to French . Dassin hated the novel ; he was repelled by the story 's racist theme in which the rival gangsters were dark Arabs and North Africans pitted against light @-@ skinned Europeans . As well , the book portrayed disquieting events such as necrophilia ? scenes that Dassin did not know how to bring to the big screen . For the rival gang , the producer suggested making them Americans , assuming Dassin would approve . Dassin was against this idea as he didn 't want to be accused of taking oblique

revenge on screen . Dassin downplayed the rival gangsters ' ethnicity in his screenplay , simply electing the Germanic " Grutter " as surname . The greatest change from the book was the heist scene , which spanned but ten pages of the 250 @-@ page novel . Dassin focused his screenplay on it to get past other events he did not know what to do with . As produced , the scene takes a quarter of the film 's running time and is shot with only natural sound , sans spoken words or music .

= = = Filming = = =

Working with a budget of \$ 200 @,@ 000 , Dassin could not afford top stars for the film . To carry the lead role , Dassin selected Jean Servais , an actor whose career had slumped due to alcoholism . For Italian gangster Mario Ferrati , Dassin cast Robert Manuel after seeing him perform a comic role as a member of Comédie @-@ Française . After a suggestion made by the wife of the film 's producer , Dassin cast Carl Möhner as Jo the Swede . Dassin would use Möhner again in his next film He Who Must Die . Dassin himself played the role of the Italian safecracker César the Milanese . Dassin explained in an interview that he " had cast a very good actor in Italy , whose name escapes me , but he never got the contract ! ... So I had to put on the mustache and do the part myself " .

Rififi was filmed during the wintertime in Paris and used real locations rather than studio sets . Due to the low budget , the locations were scouted by Dassin himself . Dassin 's fee for writing , directing , and acting was US \$ 8 @,@ 000 . Dassin 's production designer , to whom he referred as " one of the greatest men in the history of cinema " was Alexandre Trauner . Out of friendship for Dassin , Trauner did the film for very little money . Dassin argued with his producer Henri Bérard on two points : Dassin refused to shoot the film when there was sunlight claiming that he " just wanted grey " ; and that there were to be no fist fights in the film . Such fight scenes had been important to the popular success in France of the Lemmy Caution film series .

Rififi 's heist scene was based on an actual burglary that took place in 1899 along Marseille 's cours St @-@ Louis . A gang broke into the first floor offices of a travel agency , cutting a hole in the floor and using an umbrella to catch the debris in order to make off with the contents of the jeweler 's shop below . The scene where Tony regretfully chooses to kill César for his betrayal of the thieves ' code of silence was filmed as an allusion to how Dassin and others felt after finding their contemporaries willing to name names in front of the House Un @-@ American Activities Committee . This act was not in the original novel .

= = = Music and title = = =

Georges Auric was hired as the composer for the film . Dassin and Auric originally could not agree about scoring the half @-@ hour caper scene . After Dassin told Auric he did not want music , Auric claimed he would " protect [ him ] . I 'm going to write the music for the scene anyways , because you need to be protected " . After filming was finished , Dassin showed the film to Auric once with music and once without . Afterward , Auric agreed the scene should be unscored .

In 2001 , Dassin admitted that he somewhat regretted the Rififi theme song , utilized only to explain the film 's title which is never mentioned by any other film characters . The title ( Word War I French military slang ) is almost un @-@ translatable into English ; the closest attempts have been " rough and tumble " and " pitched battle . " Dassin mistakenly thought the author had created the word himself to refer to Moroccan Berbers because of the Rif War . The song was written in two days by lyricist Jacques Larue and composer Philippe @-@ Gérard after Dassin turned down a proposal by Louiguy . Magali Noël was cast as Viviane , who sings the film 's theme song . Noël would later act for Italian director Federico Fellini , appearing in three of his films .

= = Release = =

Rififi debuted in France on 13 April 1955 . The film was banned in some countries due to its heist

scene , referred to by the Los Angeles Times reviewer as a " master class in breaking and entering as well as filmmaking " . The Mexican interior ministry banned the film because of a series of burglaries mimicking its heist scene . Rififi was banned in Finland in the late 1950s . In answer to critics who saw the film as an educational process that taught people how to commit burglary , Dassin claimed the film showed how difficult it was to actually carry out a crime .

Rififi was a popular success in France which led to several other Rififi films based on le Breton 's stories . These films include Du rififi chez les femmes ( 1959 ) , Du rififi à Tokyo ( 1961 ) , and Du rififi à Paname ( 1965 ) . On its United Kingdom release , Rififi was paired with the British science fiction film The Quatermass Xperiment as a double bill ; this went on to be the most successful double @-@ bill release in UK cinemas in all of 1955 . The film was offered distribution in the United States on the condition that Dassin renounce his past , declaring that he was duped into subversive associations . Otherwise , his name would be removed from the film as the writer and director . Dassin refused and the film was released by United Artists who set up a dummy corporation as the distributing company . The film was distributed successfully in America with Dassin listed in the credits ; in this way he was the first to break the Hollywood blacklist . Rififi was released in the United States first with subtitles and then later with an English dub under the title Rififi ... Means Trouble ! . The film caused controversy on its release from The Roman Catholic Legion of Decency . The film endured three brief cuts in it and opened with a title card quoting the Book of Proverbs stating " When the wicked are multiplied , crime shall be multiplied : but the just shall see their downfall " . After this change , the film passed with a B rating . In 2005 , Variety announced that Stone Village Pictures had acquired the remake rights to Rififi , the producers intending to place the film in a modern setting with Al Pacino taking the lead role .

= = = Home media = = =

In North America , Rififi has been released on both VHS and DVD . The VHS print has been reviewed negatively by critics . Roger Ebert referred to it as " shabby " while Bill Hunt and Todd Doogan , the authors of The Digital Bits Insider 's Guide to DVD , referred to the VHS version as " horrible " and with " crappy subtitles " . The Criterion Collection released a DVD version of the film on 24 April 2001 . In the United Kingdom , Rififi was released on DVD by Arrow Films on 21 April 2003 , and on Region B Blu @-@ ray by the same publisher on 9 May 2011 . The film was released to Blu @-@ Ray in Region 1 by Criterion on 14 January 2014 .

= = Critical reception = =

Upon its original release , film critic and future director François Truffaut praised the film , stating that " Out of the worst crime novels I ever read , Jules Dassin has made the best crime film I 've ever seen " and " Everything in Le Rififi is intelligent : screenplay , dialogue , sets , music , choice of actors . Jean Servais , Robert Manuel , and Jules Dassin are perfect . " French critic André Bazin said that Rififi brought the genre a " sincerity and humanity that break with the conventions of a crime film , and manage to touch our hearts " . In the February 1956 issue of the French film magazine Cahiers du cinéma , the film was listed as number thirteen in the top twenty films of 1955 . The film was well received by British critics who noted the film 's violence on its initial release . The Daily Mirror referred to the film as " brilliant and brutal " while the Daily Herald made note that Rififi would " make American attempts at screen brutality look like a tea party in cathedral city " . The American release of the film also received acclaim . Bosley Crowther of The New York Times referred to the film as " perhaps the keenest crime film that ever came from France , including " Pepe le Moko " and some of the best of Louis Jouvet and Jean Gabin . " The National Board of Review nominated the film as the Best Foreign Film in 1956 .

Rififi was re @-@ released for a limited run within America on 21 July 2000 in a new 35 mm print containing new , more explicit subtitles that were enhanced in collaboration with Dassin . The film was received very well by American critics on its re @-@ release . The film ranking website Rotten Tomatoes reported that 93 % of critics had given the film positive reviews , based upon a sample of

41 . At Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream critics , the film has received an average score of 97 , based on 13 reviews . Kenneth Turan of the Los Angeles Times wrote the film was the " benchmark all succeeding heist films have been measured against ... It 's a film whose influence is hard to overstate , one that proves for not the last time that it 's easier to break into a safe than fathom the mysteries of the human heart . " Lucia Bozzola of the online database Allmovie gave the film the highest possible rating of five stars , calling it " The pinnacle of heist movies " and " not only one of the best French noirs , but one of the top movies in the genre . " In 2002 , critic Roger Ebert added the film to his list of " Great Movies " stating " echoes of [ Rififi ] can be found from Kubrick 's " The Killing " to Tarantino 's " Reservoir Dogs . " They both owe something to John Huston 's " The Asphalt Jungle " ( 1950 ) , which has the general idea but not the attention to detail . " Among negative reviews of the film , Dave Kehr of the Chicago Reader felt that " the film turns moralistic and sour in the last half , when the thieves fall out . " Rififi placed at number 90 on Empire 's list of The 100 Best Films Of World Cinema . Critic and director Jean @-@ Luc Godard regarded the film negatively in comparison to other French crime films of the era , noting in 1986 that " today it can 't hold a candle to Touchez pas au grisbi which paved the way for it , let alone Bob le flambeur which it paved the way for . "