



THE PRO- DUCER'S NOTE

The Odd-Job Men is a documentary film structured like fiction—in other words, a hybrid film. The film is an original comedy that engages with prejudices intelligently and incisively. Its core narrative mechanism are fleeting relationships between a team of handymen and their customers. The moment these workers step into the private worlds of the customers is an ideal environment for prejudices to surface. This film aims to explore of the way people judge others before really knowing them, and the consequences this bares for us all. And it is all recounted through an outsider's gaze, that of a Moroccan immigrant who helps us distil Western conventions that we take for granted and which are also quite clearly weighted with prejudices.

From the plumber protagonists to their diverse clients, the film paints a colourful and at times eccentric picture of reality but never strays from the realist precision of its director, Neus Ballús, who is trained in the creative documentary tradition. With carefully crafted mise-en-scènes, she aims to capture her characters' truths. Drawing on her studies in documentary filmmaking, Ballús' films stand out for the extensive project-development period required. In this case, she has been working with the three protagonists for three years, through improvisational sessions and other coaching exercises. With this method, she is able to examine their real gestures and conflicts in order to incorporate these elements into the film, adapting the narrative structure along the way. Given her experience



as an editor, Ballús' works stand out for their precision, her mastery of cinematographic language and her visual sensibility.

These two core abilities—that of documentary filmmaker and editor—provide us a guarantee the director will take particular care throughout the creative process, from its extensive preparation through post-production, resulting in a film that will undoubtedly reflect this creator's unique vision.

The Odd-Job Men is a co-production between Distinto Films (80% Spain) and Slot Machine (20% France). Considering the documentary nature of the film (having no actors), cooperation at the level of casting is not possible, but there will be effective collaboration with creative and technical elements from France, such as the musical composition, the DOP and post-production.

We've all had to call a plumber for repairs, and it's these everyday slices of life that will make this story engaging to a broad audience. Just the same, when we ask ourselves if *The Odd-Job Men* will appeal to an international audience, our conclusion is that it will no doubt connect with a very wide range of viewers. Considering the category of film and its positioning for easy export, we believe firmly in the benefits of collaborating with France, a country that is quite receptive to European arthouse films. In pursuit of this goal, we were quite fortunate to connect with Slot Machine, who liked the project right away and who firmly believes in the

director's potential. Their arthouse sensibilities and interests, as well as their extensive experience with international co-productions, made plain the value of this collaboration. Slot Machine was the French producer on the recent *Woman at War* (Benedikt Erlingsson) in collaboration with Iceland, as well as co-producer on all of Von Trier's films since *Breaking the Waves*. Distinto Films has some experience with international co-productions as well, although essentially made-for-television fiction projects.

Neus Ballús' debut feature, *The Plague*, was also created through the hybridisation of documentary and fiction and had a solid run at international festivals, premiering in Berlin and picking up nominations for a LUX Prize and at the European Film Awards. Additionally, the debut feature earned multiple national awards and nominations.

More and more cinemas and international festivals around the world recognize and acclaim films that blur the line between documentary and fiction. Examples include *Party Girl* (Cannes, Un Certain Regard winner, 2014) or *An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker* (Berlinale, Grand Jury Prize, 2013).

Considering the good reception of Ballús' earlier film and other examples of hybrid films earning international awards, we believe *The Odd-Job Men* can have an outstanding festival run. We have our sights on a world premiere in 2020 in Un Certain Regard at Cannes, as that section tends to program works offering originality in both approach and visual style.

As for international distribution, where the *The Odd-Job Men* project has already garnered great interest, Beta Cinema will manage international sales. Their bet on this project by committing a 75,000 euro minimum guarantee convinces us they will be an excellent partner. Their trajectory and experience with this type of film further inspires our confidence.

As for the production budget, both producers are mindful that this is not typical for a documentary. The costs are a reflection of the fictional structure outlined above, with the (particularly extensive) preparation time required for the project and with the challenges inherent to the shooting schedule: Our protagonists cannot take six consecutive weeks off work, so we must shoot every other week. This working plan makes contracting a continuous technical crew quite challenging, forcing production to compensate them for standby time (the weeks we are not shooting).

In terms of funding, the Spanish side has already picked up two feature-documentary production grants (ICAA and ICEC) and has sold broadcasting rights to TV3 (Televisió de Catalunya). We are awaiting confirmation of the sale of broadcasting rights to RTVE and Movistar Plus. Distribution in Spain will be handled by Filmax, a highly solvent company with extensive experience.

In France, national distribution will be handled by Jour2fête, a company that Slot Machine has already worked with, and with quite good results. Additionally, the State



broadcaster France 3 has shown a high level of interest and we are currently finalising an agreement. We have also applied to the CNC's 'Cinemas du monde' world cinema support fund.

Both Distinto Films and Slot Machine are thrilled to be able to accompany Neus Ballús on this beautiful film project. We believe *The Odd-Job Men*'s themes, production structure and target audience make it a good fit for Eurimages co-production support.

Miriam Porté, producer Distinto Films

Carine Leblanc, producer Slot Machine

