

## HADEWIJCH

**Bruno Dumont**

**Country:** France

**Year:** 2009

**Language:** French

**Runtime:** 100 minutes

**Format:** Colour/35mm

**Rating:** 14A

### Description

Bruno Dumont has never been afraid to explore the extremes of behaviour, whether through the analytical study of a homicide in *L'Humanité* or the dark side of sexual passion in *Twentynine Palms*. His timely and magnificent new film *Hadewijch* initially appears to be a portrait of a deeply religious young girl, intensely devoted to Christ and Christian values. But in Dumont's hands, this complete commitment gradually takes a fascinating turn – with dire results.

Céline is not only a theology student. She *believes*. Her single-minded devotion arouses the concern and suspicion of her Mother Superior, who decides to expel the intense young woman, sending her out into the world to discover her true self. Céline is young and impressionable, and her sacrifices are extreme. Her family is haute bourgeois – her father is a minister in the government – and their lifestyle is lavish and refined. But Céline is eager to explore her surroundings. She meets a young man named Yassine, an Arab from the projects, and is soon attending concerts and whizzing around Paris on the back of his scooter. Céline doesn't want sex, however, and when she resists Yassine's advances, he is hopelessly confused. The young man has a brother, Nassir, who is a fervent fundamentalist believer in his own religion. It is when Nassir meets Céline that Dumont lets the drama begin.

**In Dumont's hands, *Hadewijch* becomes an entirely hypnotic study of the possibilities and consequences that arise from an absolute belief in the love of God.** As Nassir and Céline find that they share considerable common ground, despite the fact that one is Christian and the other Muslim, a fascinating dynamic emerges. A trip to the Middle East sets the two down the road of action. Yet in this remarkable film, not even this journey provides the climax. Beautifully conceived and rigorously developed, *Hadewijch* speaks to the present with care and insight. n Piers Handling

**Bruno Dumont** was born in Bailleul, France. He has taught philosophy and directed more than forty commercials, shorts and documentaries. He is the director of *La Vie de Jésus* (99), *L'Humanité* (99), *Twentynine Palms* (03) and *Flandres* (06), all of which played at the Festival. *L'Humanité* and *Flandres* were both awarded the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival. *Hadewijch* (09) is his latest film.