

# DHEEPAN

France (2015) 110 minutes

**Director:** Jacques Audiard

**Cast:** Jesuthasan Antonythasan (Dheepan), Kalieaswari Srinivasan (Yalini), Claudine Vinasithamby (Illayaal), Vincent Rottiers (Brahim)



**Screening 19 September 2018 at Swindon Arts Centre**

## Synopsis

Winner of the *Palme d'Or* at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival, this film from acclaimed director Jacques Audiard (*A Prophet*) is a gripping, human tale of survival. On the losing side of the civil war in Sri Lanka, a Tamil Tiger soldier poses as the husband and father of two other refugees in order to escape their ravaged homeland. Arriving in France, the makeshift "family" sets about establishing a new life - only to find themselves once again embroiled in violence on the mean streets of Paris. A heart-rending saga of three strangers united by circumstance and struggle, *Dheepan* is both a tour-de-force thriller and a powerful depiction of the immigrant experience.

## Reviews



*Dheepan* is the story of a traumatised Tamil soldier, a young woman and a child who pose as a family so they can flee the civil war in Sri Lanka and find asylum in Europe.

They end up in a crime ridden housing estate in Paris. Dheepan gets a job as a caretaker and his "wife" works as a cook and cleaner for an infirm old man, one of whose closest relatives, Brahim, is a young and charismatic gangster boss, fresh out of prison.

Against the odds, they seem to "integrate" and even to build their own makeshift version of a new family. It is obvious, though, that Dheepan can't escape his past. As he roams around the estate with his mop and bucket, he seems a humble and even comic figure but there is a rage within him. The French *banlieue* turns out to be as much of a war zone as civil war torn Sri Lanka itself. A searing and brilliant film.

*Geoffrey Macnab, The Independent*

The living, the dying and the dead populate this superb French thriller balancing gang violence, refugee plight and family drama. You never know where director Jacques Audiard will take you. Sometimes you may be shocked; other times delighted.

A Sri Lankan man, woman and 9-year-old girl pose as a family to flee its civil war with a deceased man's passport. In Paris they maintain their lie to avoid deportation. As the caretaker of a housing complex, Dheepan hopes to erase the scars of his military past. His pretend wife, Yalini, finds work caretaking an elderly man whose apartment hosts commanders of the area's drug trade.

When a turf war between rival mobs re-creates the chaos that chased them from their homeland, Audiard tells the harrowing tale without a wasted shot or scene. The finale may recall the climax of *Taxi Driver*, but the wonderfully reloaded postscript feels unlike anything else: it's life going on.

*Colin Covert, Minnesota Star Tribune*

## Film Facts

- Jesuthasan Antonythasan (Dheepan) actually was a Tamil Tiger soldier who fled from Sri Lanka and became a refugee in France, at first working in various menial jobs - he only began his acting career in 2011.
- Jacques Audiard started making the film with the intent to make a variation of Sam Peckinpah's thriller *Straw Dogs*. But he wanted to set it in a community that no one in France knew much about, so he decided on the Tamils.
- **Spoiler alert:** the film does have a happy ending!!