

cristian mungiu presents

Tales from the Golden Age



FESTIVAL DE CANNES

SÉLECTION OFFICIELLE

UN CERTAIN REGARD





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A MOBRA FILMS PRODUCTION

Tales from the Golden Age

(AMINTIRI DIN EPOCA DE AUR)

A film by

Cristian Mungiu, Ioana Uricaru, Hanno Höffer, Razvan Marculescu, Constantin Popescu

Produced by

Oleg Mutu et Cristian Mungiu

Romania – 2009 – color – 35mm – 1.85 – dolby digital – 134 min

GENERAL SYNOPSIS:

TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE - from the creators of 4 MONTHS, 3 WEEKS AND 2 DAYS

The final 15 years of the Ceausescu regime were the worst in Romania's history. Nonetheless, the propaganda machine of that time referred without fail to that period as "The golden age"...

TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE adapts for the screen the most popular urban myths of the period. These comic, bizarre, surprising stories drew on the often surreal events of everyday life under the communist regime.

Humor is what kept Romanians alive, and TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE aims to re-capture that mood, portraying the survival of a nation having to face every day the twisted logic of a dictatorship.

On the occasion of Ceausescu's working visits, countryside mayors ended up hanging fruit in trees to make sure their villages would be noticed, obeying even the strangest orders from the ferocious Party activists. Communist Party secret regulations stated that in official pictures President Ceausescu couldn't take his hat off in front of the representatives of the rotten capitalistic world, President d'Estaing included. A professional driver decides to open his sealed truck for the first time in his career and discovers the connection between eggs, Easter and marital love. A policeman gets a live pig as gift before Christmas and decides that gas poisoning would be the best way to kill the animal silently amongst his hungry neighbors. In 1980s Romania, Bughi and Crina play Bonnie and Clyde, robbing people of bottled air.

TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE combines several true stories to portray an era during which food was more important than money, freedom more important than love and survival more important than principles.

TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE is made of episodes:

THE LEGEND OF THE OFFICIAL VISIT
THE LEGEND OF THE PARTY PHOTOGRAPHER
THE LEGEND OF THE CHICKEN DRIVER
THE LEGEND OF THE GREEDY POLICEMAN
THE LEGEND OF THE AIR SELLERS

THE LEGEND OF THE OFFICIAL VISIT

Context: Official Party visits were spectacular events. Often, the official motorcade would cross numerous villages and towns to reach its final destination. In each of these towns, officials would mobilize the inhabitants to demonstrate wild enthusiasm. The most bizarre Party orders would be obeyed blindly and absolutely.

Story: In the small village of Vizuresti, the Mayor and his assistant were preparing for an official Party visit. The road was paved, trees painted, cows scrubbed and paraded. Every villager was set to work: the visit had to be a success. Contradictory updates arrived constantly from Party headquarters. It was announced that the day before the visit, there was to be a general rehearsal in all the villages that would be crossed by the motorcade. Since Vizuresti was the last in line, it was assumed that the Party delegation would stop for dinner, and the Mayor and his team set about making preparations. The officials duly arrived, instantly ordering the removal of a merry-go-round at the entrance of the village. Dinner was served and, after a long day, the booze flowed freely. The Mayor laid on an orchestra for the entertainment of the delegation and the official dinner turned into a joyful feast — interrupted only by a late night call from Party HQ cancelling the impending visit. With the pressure off, the officials decided to celebrate their freedom with a ride on the merry-go-round. . . in the middle of the night. Perhaps blindly following Party directives was not the best idea after all.

THE LEGEND OF THE PARTY PHOTOGRAPHER

Context: The Party's daily paper, "Scinteia", was Romania's most censored publication. All articles and pictures had to follow strict Party directives if they were to be approved and published in the paper.

Story: President Giscard D'Estaing's visit to meet Ceausescu was a huge event. Many "Scinteia" journalists covered the occasion, but pictures were the most important issue since the articles were pre-written anyway. Everything went well until somebody from the censor's office discovered that in every photograph, Giscard D'Estaing was wearing his hat while Ceausescu was holding his. Some bright spark of a Party official considered that the working classes could interpret this as the communists showing deference before Capitalism. This simply wasn't possible - so, with the deadline looming, the debate began. Should they remove the French premier's hat or airbrush one on to Ceausescu? What happened led to the first time in its history that "Scinteia" wasn't printed in time to reach its working class readership the following day.

THE LEGEND OF THE CHICKEN DRIVER

Context: Love and food were connected in subtle ways in that era when even if you had cash, there was no food to buy. The idols of the day were vendors in state markets, waiters, drivers of food trucks and others like them.

Story: Grigore drove a truck for a poultry farm. For years, his job was to transport a truck full of hens for export from northern Romania to the southern port of Constanta. Strict regulations forbade him to stop on the way although the journey was a very long one. Grigore never questioned this prohibition until the day his wheels were stolen and he had to spend the night at an inn.

Next morning, when he opened his sealed truck for the first time in his driving career, he discovered he had become a much more interesting man for the beautiful blonde hotel manager than he had been the night before.

THE LEGEND OF THE GREEDY POLICEMAN

Context: By the end of the Communist era, famine was overtaking Romania. Food was more valuable than money and meat more precious than gold.

Story: Danut was the son of a policeman, living in a small apartment in a block of flats in a small town. The local tradition was to eat pig for Christmas but stores are empty. Therefore, when a distant country relative decided to bring pork for the celebration, everyone was more than happy. The only problem was that he brought the pig alive, to show that the meat was fresh. How do you slaughter a pig in the middle of the night without making any noise and thus alerting your hungry neighbors, not to mention the police? Danut came up with a brilliant solution: gassing the hapless beast using the kitchen stove.

THE LEGEND OF THE AIR SELLERS

Context: There was no private initiative during the communist times. Everything belonged to the State and everybody worked for the State. People wanting to buy a car usually had to eat only yoghurt and bread for two or three years to pay the deposit.

Story: 18-year-old Crina was disappointed that her parents wouldn't let her go to spring camp with her school friends as they were saving to buy a local-make Dacia car. Then Bughi, a handsome student, rang at her door and asked for a sample of water. Having noticed people's respect for - and fear of - the authorities, he'd devised an ingenious moneymaking scam. He would pretend to be from the Ministry of Environment checking the quality of the water inside people's apartments and ask permission to take a sample of water in a bottle. By selling these bottles, he was able to earn a fair amount of money. Bughi soon convinced Crina to join him. For her, the money wasn't important. Together, they are like Bonnie and Clyde against the whole world.

«TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE»

WRITER AND PRODUCER'S NOTE BY CRISTIAN MUNGIU

ABOUT THE CONCEPT

TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE aims to provide an unconventional subjective history of the late Communist times in Romania, told through its urban myths from the perspective of ordinary people. Romanians consider urban legends to be true stories that were passed from mouth to mouth. They were the main topic of gossip and debate in the long food lines. Humor is what kept Romanians alive and TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE aims to re-capture that mood.

The project re-creates in a nostalgic and evocative way the times of our youth during the eighties, through music, language, objects and stereotypes of that age.

The film offers an overview of the survival of a nation having to face every day the particular logic of a dictatorship — revealing the comic aspects of an ideology that was taking itself too seriously.

STRUCTURE

TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE is composed of several stories connected by the mood, narrative pattern and the details of the historical period: the only car you can see on the streets is DACIA, the local version of Renault 12; the daily TV program is just two hours long; everybody steals from the State; food is more important than money; you have to obey party orders no matter how illogical. The people wear a grim expression yet still, deep inside, they are alive, they aim to love and to be loved.

CREATIVE APPROACH

After a screening of 4 MONTHS, 3 WEEKS AND 2 DAYS a spectator told me he had the feeling we are more and more making films for the festivals and less and less for the audience and asked me if we can do anything to change this. I said yes. I decided to open up the rest of the project TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE to different Romanian directors, enlisting filmmakers old enough to remember the period. I chose the stories, wrote the screenplays, got involved in the casting and editing, ensuring that finally there is just one film, but each director was free to use his own cinematic language.

A Film with variable geometry, TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE will screen different numbers of episodes every time: in Cannes five episodes will be shown at the first two screenings. The third screening in Cannes will include a different episode than the first two: THE LEGEND OF THE ZEALOUS ACTIVIST.

In Romania, four episodes will be screened as TALES OF AUTHORITY and two episodes as TALES OF LOVE.

TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE has for me the feeling of the Italian films of the sixties or seventies, popular, direct and funny, revisiting cinema as a popular art.

CRISTIAN MUNGIU

DIRECTOR / WRITER

Born in Iasi, Romania in 1968.

Degree in English and American Literature, University of Iasi, 1993.

Degree in Film, University of Film and Theatre, Bucharest, 1998.

Before becoming a filmmaker, he worked as a journalist for print, radio and television.

2006 / 2007

4 MONTHS, 3 WEEKS AND 2 DAYS – Writer, Director, Producer.

Cannes Film Festival - PALME D'OR

2005

LOST AND FOUND – Co-Writer, Co-director.

Berlin Film Festival.

2003

OCCIDENT – Writer, Director.

IOANA MARIA URICARU

DIRECTOR / EDITOR / WRITER

Born in Romania in 1971.

Degrees in Biology and in Film and Television Directing. Before directing films, she worked as editor, journalist and teacher.

2009

MALPENSA – Director, short, script by Cristian Mungiu, in pre-production, Mobrafilms

THE WITNESS – Writer and Director, short, in pre-production.

SELF COMES TO MIND – May 2009, video performance with music performed live by Yo Yo Ma.

2007

THE SUN AND THE MOON – Writer and Director, short

OUTSKIRTS – feature, co-written with Cristian Mungiu, in pre-production.

HAPPINESS – Writer, feature, in development.

HANNO HÖFER

DIRECTOR / SCRIPTWRITER

Born in 1967 in Timisoara, Romania.

Degree in film, University of Film and Theatre, Bucharest, Romania, 1998

Degree in South-East European History, Berlin, 1993

Member of two important Romanian jazz and blues groups: Nightlosers and Harry Tavitian's Orient Express

2007

"Nadia" – Director documentary

2006 / 2007

Coordinator of the Roma antidiscrimination project "Chiar diferiti-aceiasi sange" direction of TV and radio campaign

2001

HUMANITARIAN AID (17 min, 35mm, colour) – Director

1998

DINCOLO / ON THE OTHER SIDE (18 min, super16 mm, colour) – Director

1997

THE INTERNATIONAL PHONECALL (8 min, 35 mm, b/w) – Director

2000 / 2009

Director music videos, commercials

RAZVAN MARCULESCU

DIRECTOR / EDITOR

Born in Romania in 1976.

Degree in Film, University of Film and Theatre, Bucharest, 1998

2000

DARK ASYLUM — short, Editor

1998

BUS — short, Director and Writer

1997

CRISTI AND VERA — short, Director and Writer

TV Commercials

CONSTANTIN POPESCU

DIRECTOR / WRITER

Born in Romania in 1973.

Degree in Spanish / English and Master in British Cultural Studies.

Literary debut in 2002. Since then he has published texts in several important literary papers and a novel which won the prize for debut awarded by the Writers' Association of Bucharest in 2002.

Before becoming a filmmaker, he worked as translator, and production and director's assistant.

2009

THE PORTRAIT OF THE FIGHTER IN HIS YOUTH — in production Director and Writer

TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE — Director

2008

Smiling Yellow Face — short, Director

Locarno International Film Festival, 2008.

2007

Water — short, Director and Writer

Namur Film Festival 2007, Special Jury Prize

2006

Drezina — TV drama documentary, Director and script Writer

A Lineman's Cabin — script by Cristian Mungiu, short, Director

The Appartment — Short, Writer and Director.

MAIN CAST

THE LEGEND OF THE OFFICIAL VISIT

The Secretary	Alexandru Potocean
The Mayor	Teo Corban
The Party Inspector	Emanuel Pirvu

THE LEGEND OF THE OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPHER

Photographer	Avram Birau
Photographer's assistant	Paul Dunca
Party Secretary	Viorel Comanici

THE LEGEND OF THE CHICKEN DRIVER

Grigore	Vlad Ivanov
Camelia	Tania Popa
Marusia	Liliana Mocanu

THE LEGEND OF THE GREEDY POLICEMAN

Policeman Alexa	Ion Sapdaru
Policeman's wife	Virginia Mirea
Policeman's Neighbour	Gabriel Spahiu

THE LEGEND OF THE AIR SELLERS

Crina	Diana Cavalioti
Bughi	Radu Iacoban

CREW

DIRECTORS:

IOANA URICARU

HANNO HÖFFER

RAZVAN MARCULESCU

CONSTANTIN POPESCU

CRISTIAN MUNGIU

CINEMATOGRAPHERS:

OLEG MUTU

ALEX STERIAN

LIVIU MARGHIDAN

SCREENPLAY:

CRISTIAN MUNGIU

EDITORS

DANA BUNESCU

THEODORA PENCIU

IOANA URICARU

SOUND DESIGN AND MIX:

DANA BUNESCU

CRISTINEL SIRLI

ORIGINAL MUSIC:

HANNO HÖFER

LACO JIMI

PRODUCTION DESIGNERS:

CEZARA ARMASU

MIHAELA POENARU

DANA ISTRATE

SIMONA PADURETU

COSTUMES:

DANA ISTRATE

BRÂNDUSA IOAN

LUMINITA MIHAI

ANA IONECI

LINE PRODUCERS:

CATALIN NEAGU

RAZVAN CLIZA

FLORENTINA ONEA

ADRIAN SMARANDACHE

ADRIAN MOROCA

PRODUCERS:

OLEG MUTU

CRISTIAN MUNGIU

Duration: 134 minute

The films have been produced with the support of Romanian National Centre of Cinematography and with the contribution of BV McCann Erickson Romania, of Romania National TV, of Zenith Media, of Mindshare Media, of ZIUA Newspaper, of GMP Advertising, with the help of City Cinema Management and of Anonimul Foundation and co-financed by SEE Cinema Network and Why Not Productions.

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PRODUCED WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE SEE CINEMA NETWORK CO-PRODUCER WHY NOT PRODUCTIONS A MOBRA FILMS PRODUCTION WRITTEN BY CRISTIAN MUNGIU
DIRECTED BY: IOANA URICARU, HANNO HÖFER, RAZVAN MARCULESCU, CONSTANTIN POPESCU, CRISTIAN MUNGIU DIRECTORS OF PHOTOGRAPHY: OLEG MUTU, ALEX STERIAN, LIVIU MARGHIDAN
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www.talesfromthegoldenage.com

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