

WHEN
EVENING
FALLS
ON
BUCHAREST
OR
METABOLISM



AFTER POLICE, ADJECTIVE
AND 12:08 EAST OF BUCHAREST
THE NEW FILM BY
CORNELIU PORUMBOIU



Festival del film Locarno
Concorso internazionale

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film festival®
OFFICIAL SELECTION 2013

When Evening Falls on Bucharest *or* Metabolism

SYNOPSIS & CONTACT

It's the middle of a film shoot and Paul, the director, is having an affair with Alina, an actress playing a supporting role. With Alina's last day on set imminent, Paul decides to re-write the script in order to shoot a nude scene with her. But tomorrow is always another day. Paul wakes up in the morning and decides not to shoot the scene after all. Instead, he calls the producer and tells her he's having problems with his ulcer...

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89min Cinemascope Dolby Digital 2013

INTERVIEW

Interview
Porumboiu

with

Corneliu

WHAT WAS THE STARTING POINT
OF YOUR FILM?

At the time I was writing, a bill was proposed that would have changed film financing in Romania: to get a grant I would have had to present a much more detailed screenplay than before. I was against this law, but it reminded me of my training as a filmmaker. I grew up with the limitations of 35mm. The necessity of planning each shot. Thanks to these restrictions, I also developed a taste for rehearsal and long sequence shots. So I wanted to talk about the birth of a film and its constraints.

IS THIS FILM INFORMED BY
PERSONAL EXPERIENCES?

Let's say by other people's nightmares. I was inspired by the experience of a filmmaker friend who put all his money into producing his film, which began ten years ago and stopped in the middle of shooting. I was inspired by the idea of a shoot with no end. I especially wanted to turn the camera on the job of director, to show how we work, our methods, how a project is realized; a look behind the scenes.

WHAT INTRIGUED YOU MOST ABOUT A FILMMAKER IN CRISIS?

Paul, the director, feels unhealthy. He is lugging around this fear - an irrational fear maybe - of a hidden disease. It turns out to be an ulcer, which becomes a real obsession. He stops making contact with others and withdraws inside himself. He absolutely wants to prove his disease is real, so he undergoes a video endoscopy. These inner images become very personal and intimate for him, in contrast with the 'great' political film he is shooting.

8 DOES THIS DIRECTOR EMBODY FOR YOU THE IDEA OF A CINEMA OF REALISM?

Yes, because he is obsessed with the desire to be objective in his work, like the mirror Stendhal speaks of in his theory of the realistic novel: "... a mirror carried along a high road. At one moment it reflects to your vision the azure skies, at another the mire of the puddles at your feet." But we understand that something inside this director is broken, maybe his self-confidence, or his sense of conviction.

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF DOUBT? IS THIS A FILM ABOUT INDECISION?

Yes, it is the case for this director: he cannot make a decision. I like to work on this timeframe, this hole in time... My movies are not spectacular revelations but I like to show these little moments of life that eventually change a bit. Here I decided to dive right into the middle of a film shoot, as into a microorganism. The film moves forward through details, reflections... The director goes crazy but his actions and doubts say something about the whole: his body, his life and his city all in one.

ARE YOUR FILMS CHARACTERIZED BY A REFUSAL OF CLASSIC NARRATIVE, ALWAYS PUTTING YOUR PROFESSION INTO QUESTION?

I decided to tell a rather abstract story, but I like its tragicomic side too. It somehow shows the absurdity of my profession. When one is driven by high expectations it is important, in the end, to understand the silly side of filming. Cinema is a way of looking at things. Looking behind the scenes and showing the long pauses, the waiting-around, seemed more important than really telling a story.

I think all my films are about this in-between state. In 12:08 East of Bucharest, the characters are suspended between past and present. In Police, Adjective, the protagonist is suspended between his career, the law he is supposed to enforce, and his own beliefs and desires.

WE DON'T GET TO KNOW THE MAIN CHARACTER; WE LEARN NOTHING OF HIS LIFE.

We follow this character through his body language. I also wanted him to exist only in present time. He is not characterized by his actions but by situations and dialogues. Then we understand that he is constantly torn - between his film and his relationship with the actress, between his cinematic ambitions and his real life, between Eastern and Western cuisine. My film reflects the director's schizophrenia: his diseased body as part of an even bigger body, the world that surrounds him. The character does not aspire to be heroic.

HOW DO YOU WORK OUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH REALITY?

The long dialogues in my films provide a kind of tension. But I don't like the idea of a movie based on exceptional characters in an exceptional

situation. All my films tell stories of people in intermediate situations. My films play with this frustration. In Police, Adjective, a certain outcome is expected, as in a thriller, but it ends with a discussion and not with an action scene.

THE CRISIS IS COMPOUNDED BY A REAL ENCOUNTER: AN AFFAIR BEGINS BETWEEN THE DIRECTOR AND HIS ACTRESS...

I'm interested in how the professional and the private mix - right up to the final scene of the film. I describe a particular day, an ambiguous period in the shoot, where the director starts losing his direction. He wants to expand the role of his actress Alina by shooting her in a nude scene, but in the end he changes his mind. I like stretching out these moments of doubt and indecision within one day of shooting.

HENCE THE COMIC SIDE TO THE REHEARSAL SCENES?

Yes, I find it fun to have an outside look at these rehearsals that loop forever. Before the shoot, we see the director and actress tirelessly repeating the same motions and gestures until it becomes funny and incongruous.

HOW DID YOU FIND YOUR ACTOR FOR THE ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR, WHO SOMEWHAT EMBODIES YOUR ALTER EGO?

I've known Bogdan Dumitrache for 10 years because he tried out for several of my films. I knew he was a cerebral guy. Originally I wrote the script for someone who looked too much like me. Fortunately, Bogdan brought me other things: mobility, fragility and the dissolution between mind and body that very much personifies his character.

AND YOUR ALINA?

Diana Avrămuț comes from theater and dance. She lived in France for two years and corresponded well with the role of an actress who dreams of going to France to do theater. This is her first feature film - for her character and in real life - so her way of constantly seeking the approval of Paul, her director, felt just right.

HOW DID YOU DIRECT THE ACTORS?

With this film I tried to change my method a little. Previously I've been very precise, in my screenwriting... in the dialogues. This time tried to be freer with

the actors. We rehearsed a lot, and I revised the script frequently. I expected a lot from them.

HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THE RATHER ENIGMATIC TITLE?

My film is about a vacuum, an absence. The phrase "When Evening Falls on Bucharest or Metabolism" describes for me this feeling of always being "between" things, in an intermediate state, searching. At the same time, I never show a single picture to illustrate that title. This lack of specific reference makes my film more abstract but also more absurd.

WHY SHOOT ONLY IN LONG TAKES?

By making sequence shots, I'm interested in a kind of objectivity, a particular energy between the actors. I want to show relationships between bodies without focusing solely on the dialogue. I don't want the editing to guide the viewer too much, just to show time passing, to get closer to real time. With sequence shots I can step back and work with raw material.

YOU FOCUS ON THE COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DIRECTOR AND HIS ACTRESS BUT YOU NEVER SHOW THEIR MOMENTS OF PRIVACY. WHY DO YOU SHUT THE DOOR ON THEIR SEX SCENE?

Originally I shot the sex scene with the door open, but I found it showed too much. This scene would have shifted the center of gravity of my film. It would have focused too much attention on it. So now we just hear what's happening behind the door.

THE CAMERA NEVER MOVES, EXCEPT FOR THE IMAGES OF AN ENDOSCOPY. WHY DO YOU CONFRONT THE VIEWER WITH THIS CRUDE FOOTAGE? DO YOU LIKE BRUTAL MOOD SHIFTS?

It's digital, it's another point of view, a different and necessary way of imagining... These images are disturbing and they form a contrast with the rest, shot in 35mm. We feel we are going somewhere new. Cinema for me is full of gaps that allow us to reconstruct a character's path.

WHEN APPROACHING THE IDEA OF A FILM WITHIN A FILM, WE THINK OF TRUFFAUT, FELLINI, GODARD... WHAT ARE YOUR OTHER REFERENCES?

I did not use those films as a starting point, but I've seen a lot of Hong Sang-Soo. I love this cinema, people before a shoot starts, or during the breaks... This inspired me. Of course I saw Fellini's 8-1/2 but my film is different, it's more like Blow Up, a zoom in on the microscopic details of a shoot. I was also inspired by Godard's Contempt, by the scenes between Bardot and Piccoli in the apartment, and even more so by Ed Wood. Tim Burton shows the passion and absurdity of filmmaking so well!

HOW DO YOU INTEGRATE YOUR CINEMATIC INFLUENCES?

Sometimes I like lightness, cruelty and poetry, such as Eric Rohmer's dialogues and direction, or Hong Sang-Soo's universe. These directors form part of my cultural make-up. As a Romanian I am between East and West. In Romania we still have identity problems: where do we belong?



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IN THE FILM, THE ACTRESS RESISTS THE DIRECTOR'S INDICATIONS AND SEARCHES FOR MEANING. ARE YOU A PATIENT DIRECTOR?

A director can never tell his actor he can go wherever he or she wants. It's impossible! But here the actress wants to take control, because the director imagines her naked in this scene without giving her clear directions.

YOUR DIRECTOR SEEMS TO LIVE ONLY FOR HIS WORK. DO YOU DEVOTE YOURSELF BODY AND SOUL TO YOUR PROJECTS AS A FILMMAKER?

Before, I was pretty single-minded. I never laughed during the shooting of my first film. It's a little lighter now. I like to work a lot but I've also come to understand that there are more important things in life than cinema.

DO YOU RECOGNIZE YOURSELF IN THE CHARACTER OF THIS DIRECTOR?

Fortunately, I've never had a day of shooting like his!

Interview: Marcus Rothe

BIOGRAPHIES

CORNELIU PORUMBOIU - WRITER / DIRECTOR



Corneliu Porumboiu was born in 1975, in Vaslui, Romania. He graduated from the National University of Theatre and Cinematography, where he studied Film Directing. His short films, made while he attended the University, won awards at major film festivals including Cannes and Montpellier.

In 2005 Porumboiu entered the residency program Cinéfondation in Cannes. In 2006 he made his first feature - 12:08 East of Bucharest - which was selected in the Quinzaine des Réalistes and won the Camera d'Or for debut and the Label Europe, the film distributors' award. The film received many other prizes at film festivals all over the world.

In 2009, Porumboiu's Police, Adjective won the FIPRESCI and Jury prizes at the Cannes Film Festival, where it screened in the Un Certain Regard section. The film has been further honoured with numerous national and international awards.

BOGDAN DUMITRACHE/ PAUL



Bogdan Dumitrache was born in May 1977, in Bucharest. He graduated from the National University of Theatre and Cinematography in 1999 and made his debut as an actor on the stage of Constantin Nottara Theatre in 2000, but swiftly abandoned the theatre in favor of film.

His silver screen career took off quickly, with starring roles in highly acclaimed, prize-winning films such as *Traffic*, directed by Cătălin Mitulescu, *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu*, directed by Cristi Puiu, *Andreea's Tram*, directed by Alex Iordăchescu, *The Way I Spent the End of the World*, directed by Cătălin Mitulescu, *The Boxing Lesson*, directed by Alexandru Mavrodineanu, *The Portrait of the Fighter as a Young Man*, directed by Constantin Popescu, *Stuck on Christmas*, directed by Iulia Rugină, *Best*

Intentions, directed by Adrian Sitaru, and *Child's Pose*, directed by Călin Peter Netzer.

Bogdan earned the critical plaudits for the role of Laurian Hașiu "Leu" in *The Portrait of the Fighter as a Young Man*, which brought him the Gopo award for Best Actor in a Supporting Role, while his performance as Alex in *Best Intentions* (2011) brought him the Golden Leopard for Best Actor at the 2011 Locarno International Film Festival.

DIANA AVRĂMUȚ/

ALINA



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Diana Avrămuț was born in August 1987 in Oradea. In 2009 she graduated from the Târgu-Mureș University of Arts with a BA in Acting, and later obtained a MA in the same subject. In 2011 she graduated from Târgu-Mureș Petru Maior University, where obtained her professional teaching certificate. In 2013 she graduated from the Târgu-Mureș Arts School canto and pop music section.

Diana Avrămuț has collaborated on numerous performance projects with theaters in Târgu-Mureș and Oradea, and is currently at the Târgu-Mureș National Theater.

In 2006 she appeared in the short film Reflexions, directed by Emil Sauciuc and produced by Oradea EcoArt Company.

The role of Alina in Corneliu Porumboiu's Metabolism or When Night Falls over Bucharest marks her feature film debut.

MIHAELA SÎRBU/

MAGDA



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Mihaela Sîrbu graduated from Bucharest University with a BA in German Philology and from the National University of Theatre and Cinematography with a BA in the Theatrical Arts – the Art of Acting. She recently got her PhD in Theatre Studies.

Mihaela Sîrbu has worked as an actress at the Jewish Theater and as an independent actress in Romania, Switzerland and Germany; she teaches acting at the Drama Department of the National University of Theatre and Cinematography and has taught in Germany, at the Athanor Akademie. In 1996, she founded the independent theatre group Teatrul fără Frontiere, where she is both manager and director.

Her film credits include various short films directed by Hanno Höfer, Paul Negoescu, Radu Jude, Emanuel Vasiliu

and Ciprian Alexandrescu. After two supporting roles in *The Other Irina* by Andrei Gruzsniczki and *The Medal of Honor* by Călin Peter Netzer, the feature film *The Phantom Father*, by Lucian Georgescu, marked her lead debut. It was followed by another lead role, in *Everybody in Our Family*, directed by Radu Jude.

In 2012 Mihaela Sîrbu received the Best Actress Award from the Romanian Filmmakers Union for the role of Tanya in *The Phantom Father*, while in 2013 she won the Prix d'Interpretation "Janine Bazin" at Entrevues International Film Festival Belfort, France, the Gopo award for Best Actress and the Best Actress Award from the Romanian Filmmakers' Union for her performance as Otilia in *Everybody in Our Family*.

ALEXANDRU PAPADOPOL/ LAUR



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Alexandru Papadopol was born in April 1975 in Râmnicu Vâlcea, and graduated from the National University of Theatre and Cinematography in 2002.

As a student, he participated twice consecutively in the Directors' Fortnight section of the Cannes Film Festival. In 2001, he won the Best Actor award for the role of Ovidiu in *Stuff and Dough*, directed by Cristi Puiu. In 2003, he received the same Best Actor award from the Romanian Filmmakers' Union for the role of Luci in *Occident*, directed by Cristian Mungiu.

CREW LIST & CAST LIST

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY
Corneliu Porumboiu

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Diana Avrămuț

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Paul
Bogdan Dumitrache

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The End