

42 Km Film, Les Films du Worso and Rouge International
present



OFFICIAL SELECTION
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FESTIVAL DE CANNES

the treasure

A FILM BY
CORNELIU PORUMBOIU

CUZIN TOMA ADRIAN PURCARESCU CORNELIU COZMEI AND CRISTINA TOMA

wildbunch

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Starring
Cuzin Toma, Adrian Purcareaescu,
Corneliu Cozmei and Cristina Toma

89 min - France/Romania - 2.39 - 5.1 - 2015

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SYNOPSIS

Costi leads a peaceful life. At night he likes to read his 6-year-old son stories, to help him sleep. Their favourite is Robin Hood. Costi sees himself as the hero - righter of wrongs and defender of the oppressed.

One evening, his neighbour pays him an unexpected visit and shares a secret: there's treasure buried in his grandparents' garden, he's sure of it. If Costi will hire a metal detector to help locate it, he'll give him half of whatever they get. Sceptical at first, in the end Costi can't resist. He's on board. The two accomplices have one weekend to locate the loot. Despite every obstacle in their path, Costi refuses to be discouraged. For his wife and son, he's a real hero - nothing and no one are going to stop him.

CORNELIU PORUMBOIU

INTERVIEW

How did the film come about?

Initially I'd planned to do a documentary about a director friend, Adrian Purcarescu, who was never able to finish a film he'd begun ten years earlier for lack of funding. I filmed an interview with him in which he told me about the film's missing scenes. It occurred to me that together, we'd manage to finish his incomplete film, but I wasn't satisfied with the result. He could have finished it on his own. I wanted to pursue the project with a different approach. Then I picked up on another story that Adrian told me, a local legend.

A legend about buried treasure?

Adrian's great-grandfather is said to have buried his entire fortune on his property before Romania was nationalised. My first thought was that it made for good material to enrich my documentary. So the two of us set out with a film crew and a metal-detection specialist. In his great-grandfather's garden, we started prospecting with two metal detectors, one using a sound operating system and the other 3D imaging. As I listened to my friend during our search, I realized we weren't simply looking for treasure. We were on a quest for 'mementos' of the human lives that made up his family. And despite our efforts, we found no trace of the famous treasure. I decided to turn our misadventure into a fiction, to avenge myself in a way for our failure, and to turn it into a farce - the only way to make it bearable!

How much of the film is documentary?

While editing the original project, I was intrigued by the garden and house where we were searching for the treasure. Our situation sparked a number of questions: what is our present? How do we experience it? How do we relate to history? During World War II, two German army officers occupied the house. Then, in 1947, the communists nationalised it. My friend's great-grandfather, his grandfather, his grandmother and his mother were all deported to Caracal, in the southern part of the country. Four years later, they returned to the village but never lived in their house again. They built another one. Later, the first house became a pharmacy, then a stables and a nursery school, up until the Revolution. After 1989, it re-opened as a striptease joint. In 1997, after a lawsuit that lasted years, my friend's family finally got the house back. The previous 'tenants' had left it in a shambles. I love to work on the kind of buried stories that film can unearth. I film in the present. On the surface, we access the world as it is, but behind appearances there lie hidden several surprising levels, great grounds for a fiction film.

To enrich the fiction, you wrote the real-life experiences of your actors into it?

For the screenplay, I took what I'd done for the documentary and arranged it around a fictional character named Costi, a young father living precariously in Bucharest. To play him, I cast Cuzin Toma, who was a miner before becoming an actor. I also wanted him to play the role with his own six-year-old son and his wife, who is a painter. I liked the free way he moved around the garden looking for treasure. He's got great instincts and vitality. I also wanted to capture on film the way he relates to his son, who is very different from him. The second actor is my friend Adrian Purcarescu; the third role is played by Corneliu Cozmei, a non-professional and ex-soldier who now works detecting metal. I find that somehow he's both at ease with and overwhelmed by his machines.

Does the film's title play with audience expectations?

The title evokes our fascination with gold. Symbolically, it's like we're looking for the sun in the earth. Later on in the film we discover that light plays a key role.

In the end, what are the two men, so different from each other, seeking in the mysterious garden?

Adrian's primary motivation is clear from the start. He needs money so he won't lose his house. At the same time, he also wants to get to grips with history and his family heritage. What drives Costi, a young father and civil servant, to get involved in his neighbour's adventure is less clear. Throughout his comings and goings in the garden, he uncovers the story of Adrian's family, which little by little becomes his own: he too will be swallowed up by the 'pit of history'. Deep down, he is seeking freedom. He feels trapped in his own life, his relationship and his work. He is motivated by a sort of faith, and he begins this symbolic and 'heroic' quest as a way to confirm and prove something to his son. In short, by digging a hole, the two heroes crawl out of the pit.

Treasure hunters dig a hole and almost fall into it. You've played up the slapstick side of their enterprise.

For me, the garden is like a hole in history. Using long shots, I convey the feeling that they're lost, that their paths are labyrinthine. We're never able to pin them down. They circle around a tree that's been struck by lightning, cut in two by light, in a way. Three characters seeking something in the dirt... It's desperate and comic at the same time. The metal detection 'expert' is overwhelmed by his technology. The wait becomes such that between the three men, tension mounts...

You put the treasure hunt at the heart of the film and then play with stretching time and the tragic/comic aspects of the story. How did you imagine the pacing of the film, which is composed of two tableaux?

For the first part, in town, I framed closely with lots of shot/counter-shots to emphasize the interaction between the characters, and their limits. For the second

part, the treasure hunt, I wanted to focus on Costi's point of view. The viewer enters the garden with him and follows as he wanders through it. I wanted to give the impression that Costi is lost in an endless garden and, I hope, to take the viewer along with him.

Why does the boy play such a central role, giving the film an almost fairytale-like dimension?

The relationship between Costi and his six-year-old son, and the story of Robin Hood, which he reads to him every night, help us understand the tension that underlies the character and the way he relates to the world. The boy helps the story move forward chapter by chapter, toward the final revelation. In Romania, children occupy a very particular place in society because people project far too much on them, hoping they'll do better than their parents and that the next generation will achieve 'the good life'. That's why each generation considers itself to be the one of compromise and sacrifice. My grandparents lived through war, my parents through Communism, and my generation has to find its own place after the Revolution.

Was it your intention to use elements from Westerns to roll out alternative narratives?

I love genre films like THE TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE or John Ford's movies, but I was more inspired by Rohmer's FULL MOON IN PARIS.

Why is the theme of violence so prevalent throughout the film?

The film revolves around the notion of property: what is found or not found in the garden, what is left to one's children, the fear of being accused of theft, etc. That's what the story of Robin Hood, which the father reads to his son, is all about. The garden and house in the film have changed owner often, being a playground under Communism and later a striptease bar after the Revolution, before belonging once again to Adrian's family. I portray Romania's specific form of violence, related to property, through an allusion to Westerns where men are constantly fighting over ownership of land, people or objects.

Your characters often find themselves in situations that go over their heads. You must like (family) stories rooted in history...

I often try to develop my stories based on real events, for instance in this film the vicissitudes of Adrian's family and Costi's relationship with his son. I like to layer these little stories, which in the end reflect aspects of our society. To a certain extent, we are all 'products' of history. We shot the treasure hunt in Islaz, the village where the Revolution of 1848 was declared. It's symbolic, because Romanian history has known so many changes! What would Adrian's life have been like if there had been no Communism? If, at the end of the film, they find his grandparents' treasure, will history make sense? Reality is often absurd. My characters find something other than what they are looking for: surprise and the unexpected.

Did you play up the sound and image of the metal detector to show the absurdity of the dialogue between Man and machine?

I see the expert who juggles his sonar and 3D detectors as a sort of alter ego for me as a director. You venture as best you can into unknown territory by trying to control image and sound!

Your alter ego in WHEN EVENING FALLS ON BUCHAREST OR METABOLISM (2013), the director, advocated the end of film stock and a certain type of cinema. Why did you shoot in digital for the first time?

I made several tests and ended up shooting in CinemaScope, which is better adapted for filming three characters in nature. I liked working in digital for aesthetic reasons. I could control the light precisely and make better use of the set. Digital also enabled me to spend more time with the actors, especially the non-professionals like the child, Cornel, and Costi's wife. For a long time, I swore by film but from now on I'll shoot everything in digital.

What drew you to characters like Costi and Adrian who are trying to get around the law?

Their marginal position gave me the possibility of recounting more details about the heroes and creating a certain tension. In all my films, people confront the law and question issues of freedom. But it's kind of like in my previous film, THE SECOND GAME: there are the rules and then there is the game. Everyone is his own referee.

Do you try to get around the rules?

I'm always afraid of following formulas. When I write a screenplay, I like to change a lot, from casting to shooting, etc. My films appear to be fairly conceptual but I want to be sure to have the time and freedom to improvise. For me, a film only comes into being during the shoot. For this film, the challenge was to find the right tone. By filming the treasure hunt in too realistic a fashion I could have fallen into a situation comedy or caricature. But I freed myself up while working. Now my characters are fairly streamlined, almost archetypal, with faces that are expressive enough that - I hope - they'll embody their own stories without too much explanation.

Why does your tale have such an unexpected, almost dazzling ending?

I wanted an ambiguous happy ending that would give the viewer pause for thought.

Interview by Marcus Rothe, April 2015.

CORNELIU PORUMBOIU

BIOGRAPHY

Corneliu Porumboiu, born in 1975, became known in 2006 for his first feature, 12:08 EAST OF BUCHAREST, which won the Caméra d'Or award at the Cannes Film Festival where it was shown in Directors' Fortnight. His next film confirmed his talent as a storyteller and director. He is noted for his focus on precise framing and humoristic, intelligent dialogue, as witnessed by POLICE, ADJECTIVE (2009) - Un Certain Regard, Cannes FF 2009 and WHEN EVENING FALLS ON BUCHAREST OR METABOLISM (2013). He is also the inventor of cinematographic devices, as seen in his recent THE SECOND GAME, which garnered attention at the 2014 Berlin International Film Festival.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2015 **THE TREASURE**
Official Selection - Cannes FF
Un Certain Regard
- 2014 **THE SECOND GAME**
Berlinale Forum
- 2013 **WHEN EVENING FALLS ON BUCHAREST OR METABOLISM**
Locarno
- 2009 **POLICE, ADJECTIVE**
FIPRESCI Prize and Jury Prize
Official Selection - Cannes FF
Un Certain Regard
- 2006 **12:08 EAST OF BUCHAREST**
Caméra d'Or, Directors' Fortnight - Cannes FF
- 2004 **LIVIU'S DREAM** (short)
- 2003 **A TRIP TO THE CITY**
- 2002 **GONE WITH THE WINE**

CUZIN TOMA

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- 2015 **THE TREASURE** by Corneliu PORUMBOIU
Official Selection - Cannes FF
Un Certain Regard
- AFERIM !** by Radu JUDE
In Competition Berlin FF
- 2013 **THE JAPANESE DOG** by Tudor Cristian JURGIU
- 2012 **OF SNAILS AND MEN** by Tudor GIURGIU
- 2008 **ASHES AND BLOOD** by Fanny ARDANT

CAST & CREW

COSTI Cuzin Toma

ADRIAN Adrian Purcarescu

CORNEL Corneliu Cozmei

RALUCA Cristina Toma

ALIN Nicodim Toma

CREW

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY Corneliu Porumboiu

DP Tudor Mircea RSC

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR Arantxa Etcheverria

EDITOR Roxana Szel

SOUND Sebastian Zsemlye, Alexandru Dragomir,
Mirel Cristea, Thierry Delor

PRODUCTION MANAGER Claudiu Boboc

COORDINATOR Irina Malcea

1ST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR Constantin Donici

CASTING Bogdan Dumitrache

PRODUCTION DESIGNER Mihaela Poenaru

COSTUMES DESIGNER Monica Florescu

PRODUCERS Marcela Ursu for 42KM FILM,
Sylvie Pialat for LES FILMS DU WORSO,
Nadia Turincev, Julie Gayet for ROUGE INTERNATIONAL

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