

AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF AN IRON PICKER

(Epizoda u Životu Berača Željeza)

a film by

Danis Tanović



Silver Bear: Jury Grand Prix Berlin Film Festival 2013

Silver Bear: Best Actor Nazif Mujić Berlin Film Festival 2013

Bosnia and Herzegovina / France / Slovenia / 74 min / Bosnian with English subtitles / Cert TBC

Opens April 25 2014

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SYNOPSIS

A Roma family lives far from the urban centres of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The father Nazif salvages metal from old cars that he sells to a scrap-dealer. The mother Senada keeps the house tidy, cooks, bakes and cares for their two small daughters. A third baby is on the way. One day, she feels a sharp pain in her abdomen. At the hospital, she is told that there is something wrong with the baby she is carrying. She is at risk of septicemia and must undergo surgery immediately. Because she does not have a state-provided health insurance card, the hospital requests that Senada pay 980 Bosnian marks (500 euros), which a fortune for Nazif.

Despite Nazif's pleading for help, Senada is denied the crucial surgery and forced to return home to their village. For the next 10 days, Nazif will do everything he can to try and save Senada's life - desperately searching for more scrap metal, and seeking help from state institutions.

It's a race against time together with a mounting sense of hopelessness, played by a cast of non-professional actors re-enacting an episode from their own lives.

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Photos at <http://www.newwavefilms.co.uk/press.html>



CREW

Written and directed by
Director of Photography
Editor
Sound Designer and Mixer
Sound Recordist
Unit Manager
Production Coordinator
Assistant Editor

Danis Tanović
Erol Zubčević
Timur Makarević
Samir Fočo
Tarik Bešlija
Emir Džino
Malka Alić
Redžinald Šimek

Producers
Co-producer
Line Producers

Amra Bakšić Čamo, Čedomir Kolar
Danijel Hočevar
Adis Đapo, Adnan Beširović

Format: DCP / HD / 16:9 / 5.1 audio mix

Length: 74 min

Original Language: Bosnian

CAST

Senada
Nazif
Sandra
Šemsa

Senada Alimanović
Nazif Mujić
Sandra Mujić
Šemsa Mujić

DANIS TANOVIĆ

Danis Tanović was born in Zenica , (Bosnia & Herzegovina), in 1969. After qualifying as a civil engineer and a musician, he began studying film-directing at the Sarajevo Academy of Performing Arts. His studies were interrupted, however, by the outbreak of the Bosnian War. He accompanied the Bosnian army with his camera – the material that he and his colleagues produced has been seen in many films and news items about the Bosnian war. In 1994 he moved to Brussels to resume his film studies.

His feature debut, *No Man's Land* (2001), won over 40 awards, including Best Script at Cannes in 2001, and an Oscar and Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film.

He made two more films about war and its consequences: *Cirkus Columbia* (2010) is set in the period just before the conflict reaches his native Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the English-language *Triage* (2009), starring Colin Farrell, deals with post-war trauma. In 2005, Tanović made the French-language film *Hell* (*L'Enfer*, 2005), from a script written by Krzysztof Piesiewicz and Krzysztof Kieślowski.

An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker is his latest film. It won the Jury Grand Prix Silver Bear at the 2013 Berlin Film Festival, where Nazif Mujić was also awarded a Silver Bear as Best Actor.

Filmography

2013 *An Episode In The Life of An Iron Picker* (*Epizoda u Život u Berača Željeza*)

2011 *Prtljag* (*short*)

2010 *Cirkus Columbia*

2009 *Triage*

2005 *L'enfer* (*Hell*)

2002 *11 09 01 September 11, Segment Bosnia-Herzegovina*

2001 *No Man's Land*

1999 *Buđenje*

1996 *L'Aube* (*short*)



Comments from Danis Tanović

The film is a reconstruction of real events and the intention behind it is to show the discrimination minorities have to deal with in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Roma communities in particular.

I think it is necessary for the story to be seen, not only to initiate discussions about the society and all sorts of alienations and discriminations, but also, through the emotional understanding of the victim's state, to reach the moment when we ask ourselves: What kind of people have we become?

Is it possible that fifteen years after the war – in which I witnessed unbelievable bravery and devotion on a daily basis, in which people risked their lives to help a stranger in need – we live, today, in a society that turns its head away from the socially unprivileged and behaves as if it could not see the horror that surrounds it. No system is inhumane as long as there are good people among us.

ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT

I read about Senada's case in the local newspapers, somewhere around Christmas 2011. I got really angry and immediately called Amra Bakšić, who is my friend and producer, and asked her if she had heard about it. We agreed to send someone to check the story and a few days later, after we got the confirmation, I went to the village myself. I met this couple and instantly felt their warmth and hospitality. They were a little bit scared when I told them that I would like to make some kind of movie about what happened... A few days later I went back and offered the couple, Nazif and Senada, to reconstruct the whole event and asked them if they would play themselves in the film.

First they were not sure about it, but I told them that even I had never done something like this and that in the worst-case scenario we wouldn't have to show the film to anyone. But I still wanted to try. After a few days we talked again and they agreed. I was not sure of the result I would get, but I felt I had to do it.

A TRUE STORY

This is a true story and I really tried to stay as close as I could to it. All the scenes were described to me by Nazif and we would then play them out as he remembered them. No screenplay. And I didn't feel any need to make it more dramatic than it was because it was already unbelievable.

Almost all the people in the film are the actual people who took part in the real event. Nazif's brothers, cousins, whole village... even one doctor is the one that checked Senada into the hospital. A change in character was the doctor who refuses to operate on Senada. For obvious reasons, I couldn't have him in the film, so I asked a friend of mine who is also a doctor if he would play the part. I also took another doctor friend to play the doctor who operated on Senada. This was done for practical reasons, as we shot this scene in Sarajevo and our budget was really tight.

Senada and Nazif live in Poljice, a village you see in the film. It is a Roma village and I was very grateful for all the help they gave us. Most of the film was shot in the actual locations of the real event: Tuzla region, Poljice village, and two scenes in the Sarajevo hospital.

DISCRIMINATION

I guess discriminatory acts against people like the Roma are a common practice everywhere in Europe these days. In my country there are many people discriminated against. In fact, I would say that most of the population in my country is discriminated against in one way or another. I have travelled a lot and I don't think that this is a worldwide problem. There are countries that care about their citizens, never minding the colour of their skin.

BACK TO MY ROOTS

I shot the film in nine days on a Canon 5D Mark II. I was a documentary filmmaker during the war and I actually learned to film in similar conditions to how I filmed *An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker*, so this was not strange to me. I was kind of happy to go back to my roots and work this way. The hardest part was working with children. Nazif and Senada were very natural in the first takes, so we rarely made more than three takes.

