



NEITHER BUSINESS NOR PLEASURE.

Locarno Festival
Official selection



HIER

BY BÁLINT KENYERES

HIER / TEGNAP

a film by Bálint Kenyeres

2018, Hungary – France – The Netherlands – Sweden – Morocco – Germany

1h59'01"23, 24 fps, 1:1,85 (flat), DCP

World Premiere:

2018 Locarno Festival – Cineasti del presente Competition

Written and directed by **BÁLINT KENYERES** - in competition with shorts in Cannes, Venice, Sundance and 200 other film festivals, winner of the European Film Award for Best Short and 60 other international awards

INTERNATIONAL TITLE: HIER
ORIGINAL TITLE: TEGNAP

PRODUCERS: ANDREA TASCHLER
JAMILA WENSKE

CO-PRODUCERS: FRANCOIS D'ARTEMARE
DIRK RIJNEKE
MILDRED VAN LEEUWAARDEN
LAMIA CHRAIBI
MICHEL MERKT
FREDRIK ZANDNER
SIMON PERRY
KATARINA KRAVE
BÁLINT KENYERES
SOL BONDY

PRODUCTION COMPANY: MIRAGE FILM (HUNGARY)

IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH LES FILMS DE L'APRÉS-MIDI (FRANCE)
ROTTERDAM FILMS (THE NETHERLANDS)
ONE TWO FILMS (GERMANY)
CHIMNEY (SWEDEN)
FILM I VÄST (SWEDEN)
LA PROD (MOROCCO)
SAARLÄNDISCHER RUNDFUNK (GERMANY)
EYE-LITE (FRANCE)
TRAVISS FILM (HUNGARY)

WITH THE SUPPORT OF HUNGARIAN NATIONAL FILM FUND
HUNGARIAN FILM INCENTIVE
CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINÉMA ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMÉE
ARTE
NETHERLANDS FILM FUND
NETHERLANDS FILM PRODUCTION INCENTIVE
CREATIVE EUROPE

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FESTIVALS: marta.benyei@filmalap.hu; kati.vajda@filmalap.hu

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CAST: VLAD IVANOV
DJEMEL BAREK
JACQUES WEBER
GAMIL RATIB
JOHANNA TER STEEGE
TOULOU KIKI
FEODOR ATKINE
JO PRESTIA
ISAKA SAWADOGO

SCREENPLAY: BÁLINT KENYERES
MATTHIEU TAPONIER
TAMÁS BEREGI
ÉVA ZABEZSINSZKIJ
ANDRÁS FORGÁCH

CINEMATOGRAPHER: ÁDÁM FILLENZ
EDITOR: VANDA ARÁNYI
PRODUCTION DESIGNER: MÁRTON ÁGH
COSTUME DESIGNER: GYÖRGYI SZAKÁCS
SOUND DESIGNER: JAN SCHERMER

GENRE: DRAMA
RUNNING TIME: 118 MIN
SHOOTING FORMAT: 16 MM, COLOR
ORIGIN: HUNGARY
LANGUAGE: FRENCH, ENGLISH, ARABIC
SUBTITLES: ENGLISH
BUDGET: 2.6 M €



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SHORT SYNOPSIS

The central character, 50-year-old Victor Ganz owns a thriving building and civil engineering company that operates worldwide. Some very costly problems on a building site in North Africa mean he has to go there (he hates traveling), to a country where he is confronted with memories of his youth, which have been carefully buried in the depths of his mind. Meetings in ministries, disinformation, the reappearance of a past love who had mysteriously disappeared, an investigation in the local underground to find her: Victor Ganz slowly plunges into a labyrinthine world where present and past intertwine.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

HIER combines a film noir-style investigation played out in broad daylight with an exploration of altered states of consciousness. It is a film of contradictions about a European man in North Africa, where an everyday business deal gradually turns into an existential crisis. It is the chronicle of an altered state of consciousness embedded in an ordinary state of mind; an oedipal labyrinth, which is more difficult to delve into than flee from; a love story in which the couple do not know one another. And where a few days turn into an eternity, literally.

BÁLINT KENYERES writer-director

Bálint Kenyeres was born in 1976 in Budapest.

After studying philosophy, film history and film theory, he graduated as a film director at the University of Theatre and Film Arts (Budapest) in 2006.

His short film 'Zárás' (Closing Time) was premiered in competition at the Venice Film Festival and got selected for more than 30 other film festivals, won a dozen awards.

His previous short 'Before Dawn' was in competition at the Cannes Film Festival in 2005, won a jury prize at Sundance and got the European Film Academy Prix UIP for Best European Short Film in 2006. It was selected at 140 festivals, won 30 awards.

His latest short 'The History of Aviation' was premiered at Cannes Quinzaine des Réalisateurs in 2009 and has been selected for 50 film festivals.

Short films

The History of Aviation (2009)

<https://vimeo.com/82321895>

passw: hiermovie

Before Dawn (2005)

<https://vimeo.com/82321896>

passw: hiermovie

Closing Time (1999)

<https://vimeo.com/82294634>

passw: hiermovie

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VLAD IVANOV actor

Winner of the LA Critics Award for his brilliant portrayal of abortionist “Dr. Bebe” in Cristian Mungiu's Palme d'Or winning ‘4 Months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days’, Vlad Ivanov's versatility has established him as one of Europe's great character actors, working extensively in five different languages. It's his ability to portray both the kindly neighbour-next-door character alongside the creepy, evil one that marks him out as a truly remarkable actor. As well as his film work, Vlad Ivanov is an accomplished stage actor and has received many domestic awards in Romania for his work in both stage and screen.

Most recently Vlad starred in ‘Sunset’, directed by Oscar, Golden Globe and BAFTA winning director László Nemes (‘Son of Saul’), and ‘Ana, mon amour’ which was nominated for the Golden Bear at the Berlinale. He played the role of “Samir” in ‘Dogs’, which was the FIPRESCI Prize winner at Cannes Film Festival. He also played the role of “Iliescu” in the critically acclaimed, and Academy Award nominated film ‘Toni Erdmann’.

He starred in Christian Mungiu’s ‘Graduation’, which won the Best Director award at Cannes Film Festival. In 2018, Vlad won the Gopo Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role for his performance in ‘One Step Behind the Seraphim’, directed by Daniel Sandu, which marks his fifth Gopo Award win to date.

Other notable films include ‘Snowpiercer’ directed by Bong Joon-Ho; Sergei Loznitsa's ‘Into the Fog’; Alexandros Avranas’s ‘Dark Crimes, alongside Jim Carrey’; ‘Child's Pose’, which won the Golden Bear at the Berlinale; ‘Police, Adjective’ directed by Corneliu Porombiou, which won Best Film at Un Certain Regard in Cannes 2009 (and for which Vlad won Best Supporting Actor at the Romanian Gopo Awards); ‘Tales from the Golden Age’ by Hanno Hofer; ‘The Concert’ by Radu Mihaileanu, which was nominated for a Golden Globe; ‘The Whistleblower’ by Larysa Kondracki; and Emilian Velicanu’s ‘Principles of Life’, for which he received rave reviews.

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ÁDÁM FILLENZ cinematographer

Shot several award winning feature films including 'Adrienn Pal' (dir. by: Ágnes Kocsis), a Hungarian-Dutch-Austrian-French co-production that won FIPRESCI Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 2010. His previous film also directed by Agnes Kocsis 'Fresh Air' was premiered at Cannes Critics' Week in 2006 and was nominated for the Best First Feature at the European Film Awards. Shot the film 'Milky Way' partly (directed by Benedek Fliegauf) awarded Golden Leopard of the Filmmakers of the Present Competition in Locarno in 2007. His filmography includes two Hungarian box office hits 'Poligamy' and 'Coming Out' directed by Dénes Orosz.

As camera operator, worked on 'Hercules' in both main and 2nd unit, in the TV-series 'The Borgias' as camera operator and VFX cinematographer. Worked in the 2nd unit of 'Blade Runner 2049', in TV series as 'Marco Polo Season 2', 'The Alienist', 'The Terror'.

Also works on commercials and music videos as director/DoP.

Winner of Balázs Béla Prize (2012), Hungarian Film Critics' Best Cinematographer Award (for 'Adrienn Pal', 2010), Manaki Brothers International Cinematographers Film Festival Artistic Achievement Award (for 'Adrienn Pal', 2010). Member of the H.S.C. and the European Film Academy.

<http://www.adamfillenz.com>

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INTERVIEW with BÁLINT KENYERES

“Nothing is in the shadows”

Bálint Kenyeres' short film, 'Before Dawn' was in competition in Cannes in 2005, and went on to win the European Film Award. His follow-up, the 2009 'The History of Aviation' debuted in the Directors' Fortnight at the festival, and also won accolades all over the world. In spite of all this success, it took him about nine years to get his first feature made, but the film called 'Hier' is finally ready and will debut in the 'Cineasti del Presente' competition of the Locarno Festival. We talked to the director about the difficult birth of the movie, a film noir without real mysteries, and the brilliance of Vlad Ivanov.

In an old interview you said you would like to complete your first feature before your hair turned grey – you didn't really manage to do that.

True enough, this was a long procedure that required my blood, sweat and tears, and back when I started I wasn't quite able to assess neither the level of outside interest in a film like this, nor the needs of the story. We've also been highly unlucky at every turn, sometimes it made me laugh it was so unbelievable. It's my personal responsibility that we have never given up, but it always felt like going into production is just around the corner, there was no one turning point where it would have been obvious that we should just give up.



During preproduction you described the movie as a sunny film noir. Please tell me more about the visual concept of Heir.

The North African setting was a given, I had chosen it because it's only half an hour away from Europe, but it's totally foreign to a European, who can get lost there in a way it would not be possible in Europe. This environment lends itself to visual clichés and romanticizing, but I had always been sure that I did not want this, that there would be no camels and no orange-colored sand dunes in the sunset in this movie.

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If we only focus on the story and its ending, we can say that this is a banal story with all the sadness this banality carries, and the visuals of the movie had to reflect this. It's terribly simple really: nothing is in the shadows, nothing is in the dark, everything is out there in the blazing sun. The source of the mystery is not some external entity, but the protagonist himself. The solution cannot be found in the long shadows and dark corners, instead it is revealed by the way we get to know the story through an unreliable narrator. The film is also a journey back to the era 15 to 20 years before the film's present, so we tried to evoke the visual atmosphere of movies from the 90s without creating a retro feel. This is one of the reasons why it was very important to me to shoot on film, which meant Super 16 in our case, because that's what we could afford.

Did you have any previous connection to North Africa?

None whatsoever. By the way I had thought the movie could be made there inexpensively, which turned out to be one of the biggest miscalculations of my life. I traveled to Morocco for the first time after I had completed the first draft of the script, and the reality I witnessed there was uncannily close to what I had written. I went back many times, and in the later drafts I included locations, moments, experiences that my colleagues and I lived through there.

The lead actor has changed several times through the years.

Vlad Ivanov had always been part of the cast in another role, and he had always been in the back of my mind as a possible option for the lead role, but we wrote the script for a Western European character, and Vlad has a very distinct Eastern European flavor. In the end we went with Vlad and chose to mold the character to his personality instead. But if Vlad takes on a role, it molds itself to him anyway. I think he is one of the greatest European movie actors, and he is also a lovely person.



Did you enjoy working with him?

Terribly. He really carried this project on his shoulders. He has an amazing heart and soul, but at the same time he is as precise and focused as a Swiss watch. And he has a director's mind, he instinctively directs the situations from the inside. We only had 32 shooting days and we worked with a lot of amateur actors, and he was brilliant at extinguishing fires. It happened many times that I was about to

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give instructions to Vlad's partner, but by the time I got from the monitor to the camera he had already taken care of it.

The past of the character is only hinted at, and the whole film plays with how many things are left ambiguous. How did you decide on how closely to guide the audience?

This fine-tuning is the key to whether the film works or not, and the way we handle it also determines the possible audience for the film. We wrote many versions of the script, and they differed mostly from this respect, but we didn't have a version which would have told the story in a mainstream, audience-friendly way. We knew that this film was only for a discerning audience. But we aimed at providing information at a rate that would keep the suspense alive.

Weren't you worried that the viewer wouldn't be able to emotionally connect to this character?

This was an experiment, and the point was exactly not to build a story on the usual emotional identification with the protagonist, I didn't want this to happen. The casting and the direction also goes against this form of identification: the protagonist is basically an unlikeable guy. The driving force is more to do with the mysteries and the questions that keep arising, which make the viewer realize that even though there is no emotional identification in the traditional sense, the thoughts and feelings that arise in the viewer are very much alike the ones the protagonist has. This was a pretty arrogant experiment on my part, but if I am proud of anything, I am proud of the fact that it seemed to have worked, based on the feedback I got. We seem to be watching someone going through a midlife crisis, but beneath that we are examining a fundamental human issue. However banal and simple this guy's story might be, his experiences and his tragedies are special and unique – just like everyone else's. Whether these experiences can be shared with others, whether real connection and identification are possible is a different matter. This is one of the main themes of the movie, and we chose our narrative strategy to serve this.

by Bori Bujdosó
July 2018

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