



QUINZAINÉ
DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT
CANNES

THE LOAD

BY
OGNJEN GLAVONIĆ

SYNOPSIS

Vlada works as a truck driver during the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999. Tasked with transporting a mysterious load from Kosovo to Belgrade, he drives through unfamiliar territory, trying to make his way in a country scarred by the war. He knows that once the job is over, he will need to return home and face the consequences of his actions.



INTERVIEW WITH OGNJEN GLAVONIĆ

by Marta Bałaga

Marta Bałaga: With its focus on a mysterious cargo at the back of the truck, *The Load* reminded me of Henri-Georges Clouzot's *The Wages of Fear*.

Ognjen Glavonić: I also liked its American remake, *Sorcerer* directed by William Friedkin. Maybe it influenced me in some way, because as soon as I started working on this film, which was almost 8 years ago, people would always bring it up. But, I didn't want the audience to know what's in this character's truck. Some people thought he was transporting weapons, others that it was connected to some shady business. I wanted to keep them guessing for as long as I could.

Even though you can often hear explosions in the background, *Vlada*, played by Leon Lučev, doesn't seem very worried. Why is he so indifferent?

That's based on my memory. I was 14 years old when the bombing started and after a week, it became our everyday reality. You are afraid only until you realise there is nothing you can do. Although the whole country was bombed by NATO, in Kosovo Serbian state forces were fighting Albanian separatists and civilians were being killed on a horrific scale.

I wanted people to get this feeling of a war being fought in the background and overwhelming danger looming somewhere nearby, always around the corner.

Throughout the whole film, we rarely leave the inside of the truck. Is there a reason for that?

Except for the short sideways stories – I didn't want to leave Vlada. The camera is never outside; it's always in the cabin, with him. This truck is like a cocoon: it shields him from the rest of the world, but at the same time he is left all alone with his thoughts. It's hard to understand what is really happening if you don't have any outside perspective.

I didn't want to make an action movie. I didn't want to have hundreds of different shots and camera angles, as it was more important to spend that time with him and the sound of the truck, to see what he sees and to feel what he feels. This film is defined by two words: isolation and occupation. When he steps out of the truck cabin, he steps into a territory that's occupied by war: the bombs, gunshots, noise, but also the fear and paranoia, which has already awakened in people. Which is why Vlada always goes back to that truck.

His long journey is punctuated by little encounters.

I wanted to show how my country looked at that time. Without explaining the context too much or pushing any drama and information. I wanted to show a metaphysical, inner journey of my character, but also a society at a very specific moment of its decay. It was always supposed to be



a story where he discovers not only what's in the truck, but also some truths about himself as a human being.

During his trip, he encounters numerous characters, but I was especially interested in the kids. Almost every one of these storylines is directed towards the younger generation, and almost always without getting a clear resolution. Maybe it's because I was a kid at that time too, and I felt there was a no way out.

By showing derelict buildings or forgotten monuments dedicated to the victims of World War II, you keep referring to your country's past. Why was that important?

Because *The Load* is mostly a film about what one generation leaves to the other. In the film I speak about the previous generation, about what they inherited from their parents, but mostly about what they have left us, their children.

My parents' generation was brought up on the stories about the anti-fascist struggle, so I needed these references: the postcards, old photos and monuments to the revolution. They remind Vlada about his childhood, about Yugoslavia and about his father. On the other hand, my generation inherited the stories our parents didn't want to talk about – stories that were never told. About the bridges they burnt, the blood they spilled and the responsibility they never took for it. So maybe I wanted to say that sometime soon, young people will be finally able to talk about things their parents couldn't.

You mentioned you have been working on the film for almost 8 years. What took you so long?

Writing was easy – financing was the problem. The script was finished in 2012, but in my country (and in the whole region actually), people rarely tell stories like these. You stumble upon too many obstacles. Even though I am talking about something that's true and has really happened, I was refused any help. Ultimately, I had to find the money somewhere else, even though the film obviously had to be shot in Serbia, with Serbian crew and actors. That's why it took so long. In the meantime, I found out so much more about this crime that in 2015, I decided to make a documentary about it. *Depth Two* was more about the context, the organization and the silence surrounding it – you could hear witnesses talking about it and see the locations where these stories took place. It was shown at the Berlinale and in the end, it helped me finish this movie. We even ended up getting small support from the Serbian Film Center for *The Load*.

What shocked you the most about that crime?

You can't be emotional when you are making this kind of film, because when you are emotional, you end up taking sides or censoring yourself. You try to explain too much, and I didn't want to explain. Maybe what shocked me is that in my country, even today, almost nobody believes this really happened. And a lot of people haven't heard about it to this day – I myself only found out about it 10 years after it took place. Maybe that motivates me to talk about

it. Also, this crime was very meticulously organized. It was committed by the police, the military and by civilians: it was a huge enterprise and a lot of people did it for some kind of personal gain, a flat in the city or a lot of money. Of course there were also those who were afraid to say no or got involved without knowing what they were getting themselves into. Just like Vlada.

Why did you decide to cast Leon Lučev? He is not afraid of controversial subjects, as proven by his recent film The Miner.

I chose Leon after I saw him portray very different characters in several good films. We started working on the film three years before we started shooting and the experience he brought not only to his own character and the film itself, but also to the actual shoot, gave me, a distracted young director, a sense of security. Thanks to him, I started to believe that perhaps everything would be fine in the end.

You mention your hometown Pančevo in the film. Why?

Even though I personally don't know any drivers from Pančevo, my hometown, who did something like that, the idea is that it could be anyone. The idea was also that these people who took part in big crimes are around us. I thought: That could be my father or my best friend's father. It was important for me to make it personal. There are so many things from that time that I remember. All those experiences and childhood memories, fears and dreams I used to have still haunt me, and they are all part of the film.

Whoever chooses to be a filmmaker in my country – or any other country without a big, prosperous film industry – decides to do it out of love. There was not a lot of space for the kind of cinema we love, so we decided to fill this gap by founding a film festival in Pančevo with Tatjana Krstevski, who is the cinematographer of the film, and Stefan Ivančić, who is the producer. The mission of the festival is to educate young people, to offer them something different. People are born curious, and, with time, that gets crushed and narrowed down to what suits them best. But we are still full of enthusiasm, because without it, you couldn't go far in my country. It's always easy to find reasons not to do something and I am trying to fight that logic. A few years ago I made a documentary *Živan Makes a Punk Festival* about a guy who is kind of crazy, and dedicates his life to organising this event in his village. He shows you how to fight and not let yourself be defeated by a system like ours. That really inspired me.



CAST & CREW



OGNJEN GLAVONIĆ
DIRECTOR

Ognjen Glavonić was born in 1985 in Pančevo, SFR Yugoslavia. His short films have been selected for more than 50 international film festivals. *Zivan Makes a Punk Festival*, (2014), his first documentary, had its premiere at Cinéma du Réel and has been screened at International Film Festival Rotterdam, CPH:DOX, and IndieLisboa, among others. Ognjen's documentary *Depth Two* (2016) had its premiere in the Forum section at the Berlinale, and was named best film at Festival dei Popoli, DokuFest, Message to Man, Open City Docs Fest, ZagrebDox and Kassel Dokfest. He is the founder of Pančevo Film Festival. *The Load* is his first feature film.

DIRECTOR



LEON LUČEV
ACTOR

Leon Lučev was born in Šibenik, Croatia in 1970. In 1991 he participated in the homeland war as a member of the Croatian army. He graduated from the Academy of Dramatic Art and became a part of the ensemble of the ITD Theatre. During the 1997-2003 period he worked with top theatre directors such as Tomi Janežić, Damir Zlatar Fray and Lukas Nola, and attended workshops according to Michael Chekhov's method under the guidance of Scott Fielding and Joanna Merlin. He has worked with European and regional film artists such as: Hans-Christian Schmidt, Jasmila Žbanić, Hrvoje Hribar, Srdan Golubović, Vinko Brešan, Lukas Nola, Angelina Jolie, Zrinko Ogresta, Branko Schmidt, Janez Burger and others. From 2006 to 2014 he also had his own production company, Živa produkcija. His films have won awards in Pula, Berlin, Sundance, Sarajevo, Brussels, Los Angeles and Jerusalem. He as an actor has won awards in Pula, Sarajevo, Priština, Kazan (Russia) and Germany.

ACTOR

PRODUCERS NON-ALIGNED FILMS

Non-Aligned Films is a production company based in Belgrade, Serbia, founded by young directors Ognjen Glavonić and Stefan Ivančić, together with producer Dragana Jovović. The idea behind Non-Aligned Films is to function as a platform for producing the films of an upcoming generation of Serbian filmmakers. Non-Aligned Films' first production was the documentary *Živan makes a punk festival* (2014) directed by Ognjen Glavonić. In addition to this, Non-Aligned Films produced three short films in 2014 – Stefan Ivančić's documentary *1973* (33 min., Visions du Réel) and his fiction film *Moonless summer* (31 min., Festival de Cannes, Cinéfondation) and the experimental documentary *Heavens* (19 min., CPH:DOX), directed by Jelena Maksimović and Ivan Salatić. *Depth Two*, a documentary by Ognjen Glavonic, had its world premiere at the Berlinale Forum 2016.

CINÉMA DEFACTO

Cinéma Defacto is a production company at human scale based in Paris, France. The company's catalogue includes 36 features, almost all of which premiered at A-Class festivals. Two partners from two generations run the company: Tom Dercourt, ACE member, and Sophie Erbs, EAVE member. The company's most noticeable titles include *The Page Turner* (Un Certain Regard 2010) by Denis Dercourt, *Laya Fourie* by Pia Marais (Berlinale Competition 2013), *The Summer of Flying Fish* by Marcela Said (Director's Fortnight 2013), *As We Were Dreaming* by Andreas Dresen (Berlinale Competition 2015), *The Here After* by Magnus von Horn (Director's Fortnight 2015), *Apprentice* by Boo Junfeng (Un Certain Regard 2016), *Los Perros* (Cannes Critic's Week 2017) by Marcela Said, *Dopo la Guerra* by Annarita Zambrano (Un Certain Regard 2017).

KINORAMA

Founded in Zagreb (Croatia) in 2003, Kinorama is a production company specialized in feature film production. Kinorama has produced so far 19 feature-length films, many of them co-productions, 23 shorts and two TV series. Kinorama's latest films are *The Reaper* (2014) by Zvonimir Jurić, *Zvizdan / The High Sun* (2015) by Dalibor Matanić and *Quit Staring At My Plate* (2016) by Hana Jušić. Zvizdan was included in the official competition programme Un Certain Regard of the 68th Cannes Film Festival 2015, winning the Jury Prize. Kinorama is headed by Ankica Jurić Tilić, member of ACE, graduate of EAVE, and member of Producers on the Move and the European Film Academy.

THREE GARDENS FILM

Pouria Heidary Oureh was born in 1984 in Iran. He is a young producer and director who graduated from SAe institute of Digital Film in Dubai. His short films as director has screened in many festivals around the world and since 2 years he started also producing independent short and feature films. He is also providing sound and technical support for independent films.

PRODUCERS

THE LOAD

FESTIVALS

World Premiere: Directors'
Fortnight – Cannes 2018

FILM INFORMATION

Original Title: Teret
English Title: The Load
Genre: Drama
Country: Serbia, France,
Croatia, Iran, Qatar
Language: Serbian
Year: 2018
Duration: 98 min.
Picture: Color
Aspect Ratio: 1.85 : 1
Sound: 5.1
Available Format: DCP

CAST

Leon Lučev
Pavle Čamerikić
Tamara Krcunović
Ivan Lučev
Igor Beñčina
Radoje Čupić
Jovo Maksić
Stefan Trifunović
Tanja Pjevac
Ljubiša Miličić
Branko Perišić
Novak Bilbija

CREW

Director: Ognjen Glavonić
Screenplay: Ognjen Glavonić
Cinematography: Tatjana Krstevski
Editing: Jelena Maksimović
Production Design: Zorana Petrov
Sound Design: Jakov Munižaba
Sound Mix: Gilles Bénardeau
Production Company: Non-Aligned Films
Co-Production Companies: Cinéma Defacto,
Kinorama,
Three Gardens Film
With support of: Aide aux cinémas
du monde – CNC,
Eurimages, Croatian
Audiovisual Centre,
Visions Sud Est,
Film Center Serbia,
Hubert Bals Fund,
Doha Film Institute,
Autonomous Province
of Vojvodina

Producers: Dragana Jovović,
Stefan Ivančić,
Ognjen Glavonić,
Sophie Erbs

Co-Producers: Ankica Jurić Tilić,
Pouria Heidary Oureh,
Tom Dercourt

Associate Producer: Vladimir Vidić

PRODUCER'S CONTACT

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