

BAD LUCK BANGING OR LOONY PORN

a film by Radu Jude



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Romania, Luxembourg, Czech Republic, Croatia
2021 | 106 min | Romanian

Synopsis

Emi, a school teacher, finds her career and reputation under threat after a personal sex tape is leaked on the Internet. Forced to meet the parents demanding her dismissal, Emi refuses to surrender to their pressure. Radu Jude (*Aferim!*) delivers an incendiary mix of unconventional form, irreverent humour and scathing commentary on hypocrisy and prejudice in our societies.

Radu Jude on Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn



Origins

The film first appeared out of long discussions with friends. On a few occasions we discussed real-life stories from Romania and other countries, of teachers being expelled from schools where they were teaching because of what they were doing in their private lives: live-cam sex chat or posting amateur porn recordings on the internet. The discussions were so heated, it made me think that although the topic seems trivial and shallow, there must be a lot more behind it if reactions to it are so powerful. Then I decided to make a film – so now I have the last word in front of my friends, they cannot come up with something like that.

The film has three parts which engage each other in poetic ways – understanding “poetic” according to Malraux’s definition: “Without doubt all true poetry is irrational in that it substitutes, for the ‘established’ relation of things, a new system of relations.”

While the film title is mostly self-explanatory, its subtitle, 'a sketch for a popular film', could benefit from an explanation. Malraux once noted that “Delacroix, though affirming the superiority of the finished painting over the sketch, kept many of his sketches, whose quality as works of art he considered equal to that of his best paintings.” The idea struck me as relevant and I decided to apply it in filmmaking and try to see what a film would look like if its form was left open, unfinished, like a sketch. And yes, “popular”, since I believe the film could be easy like a summer breeze and because of its tabloid-like topic. But it is not a real popular film. Only a sketch of a possible one.

Shooting in COVID Times

The first lockdown ended in Romania at the end of May and we were supposed to film in October and November. When we saw that the second wave of Covid-19 was coming (at the beginning of July), me and the producer Ada Solomon had to decide: either we stick to the plan (which meant also applying for extra funding), with the risk of postponing the shooting in case the crisis worsens, or we film sooner with the money we have. We opted for the latter and started to prepare the film. The number of cases was rising, so I had also to decide how to interact with people. I strongly believe that, as a director, you have a certain responsibility towards the cast and crew.

When I was young, I really admired all the crazy shoots I read about: *Way Down East*, *Aguirre*, *Apocalypse Now* etc. I still admire them, but I am too weak: I try not to risk the life or health of anybody when it comes to shooting. I don't think any film in the world is worth someone contracting even a common cold, and my bad films - even less. With these in mind, I did all the casting, and all the rehearsals on Zoom and decided to have the crew wearing masks. And also, even the cast. Firstly, because the film was supposed to be contemporary and the masks were part of our daily life and I wanted to capture this moment, to find the anthropological aspect of the mask-wearing. Secondly, because I cared about the health of the people involved. You know, many of them are in the film at my invitation. I was the host and I felt responsible. Most of the people agreed with these safety regulations. Some of them, more vulnerable, agreed to do the film only because I promised them that the rules of social distancing and protection will be severely respected. We all tested for Covid-19 before shooting and two times more.

If you went down on the street during this time, the signs that remained — posters for concerts, empty restaurants, and so on and so forth — were already signs of a non-existent reality. Cinema has this possibility to capture things, to capture the signs of the time passing, to make a capsule of the moment in many ways.

In the first shooting day, Ada Solomon, our producer, explained to everyone that wearing the mask is mandatory on set for the whole film, that we must change it every 4 hours (they were provided free by the production), that we have only sandwiches as catering (for obvious reasons). Everybody (literally: everybody) agreed. And most of us respected the rules, although it was exhausting, and wearing a mask in severe heat for 12 hours a day can be horrible. Then, there were some crew or cast members sometimes not respecting the rules, which made our shoot more challenging than it could have been. I am not against people who break the rules, on the contrary, if it involves only their bodies. I am against breaking the rules when you endanger or harm others. The great thing on a film set (or on my sets, anyway) is that everyone has the same rights as everyone else: the same working

hours (apart from special situations, like a more time consuming make-up etc.), the same food, the same accommodation or transport. So, it was quite disappointing to have a few people every day taking off the mask whenever they could. I see it as a lack of respect for their colleagues, a kind of “Fuck you, I don’t care about anyone else, I want to feel good even if I can infect you.” This sometimes made the atmosphere on the set tense, but that’s it. I felt relieved when the shooting ended, and we were all healthy.



Themes

What is obscene and how do we define it? We are used to acts which are much more obscene, in a way, than small acts like the one that set off the uproar we see in the film.

This was my idea — to clash these two types of obscenity, and to see that the one so-called obscenity in the porn video is nothing compared with what is around us, but that we don't pay attention to.

The film tells a contemporary story, a small one, a little story. If history and politics are part of the film, that is because the story itself has a deeper meaning if we see it in a historical, societal and political context.

Obscenity is the theme of this film and the viewers are constantly invited to compare the so-called obscenity of a banal amateur porn video with the obscenity around us and the obscenity we can find in recent history, whose traces are all around. So, the viewers should make this montage operation. Georges Didi Huberman wrote something very important regarding montage and it could apply to our film as well:

“Le montage sera précisément l’une des réponses fondamentales à ce problème de construction de l’historicité. Parce qu’il n’est pas orienté simplement, le montage échappe aux théologies, rend visibles les survivances, les anachronismes, les rencontres de temporalités contradictoires qui affectent chaque objet, chaque événement, chaque personne, chaque geste. Alors, l’historien renonce à raconter ‘une histoire’ mais, ce faisant, il réussit à montrer que l’histoire ne va pas sans toutes les complexités du temps, toutes les strates de l’archéologie, tous les pointillés du destin.” *

* “Montage will be precisely one of the fundamental responses to this problem of constructing historicity. Because it is not oriented towards simplicity, Montage escapes theologies, and has the power to make visible the legacies, anachronisms, contradictory intersections of temporalities that affect each object, each event, each person, each movement. Thus, the historian renounces telling ‘a story’, but in doing so, succeeds in showing that history cannot be, without all of the complexities of time, all the archaeological strata, all of the perforated fragments of destiny.”

Director's Biography



Radu Jude is a Romanian director and screenwriter. He studied filmmaking in Bucharest and started his career as an assistant director. In 2006, he made the short film *The Tube with a Hat*, winner of more than 50 international awards. Jude's feature debut *The Happiest Girl in the World* (2009) was selected for more than 50 international film festivals. Titles such as *Aferim!*, *Scarred Hearts* and *Everybody in Our Family* followed and won multiple awards: Silver Bear for Best Director in Berlinale 2015, Special Jury Prize in Locarno 2016 and an EFA nomination for Best Scriptwriter. The international premiere of *The Dead Nation* in Locarno 2017 marked his debut in documentary film. "*I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians*" (2018) won the Crystal Globe for Best Film and Label Europa Cinema Prize in Karlovy Vary in 2018. His latest films, *Uppercase Print* and *The Exit of the Trains* (co-directed with Adrian Cioflâncă), premiered in Berlinale Forum 2020.

Director's Filmography

2020 – The Exit of the Trains

2020 – Uppercase Print

2018 - I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians

2017 - The Dead Nation

2016 - Scarred Hearts

2015 - Aferim!

2012 - "Everybody in Our Family"

2009 - "The Happiest Girl in the World"

Cast & Crew

Written and Directed by Radu Jude

Cast | Katia Pascariu (Emi), Claudia Ieremia (The Headmistress), Olimpia Mălai (Mrs. Lucia), Nicodim Ungureanu (Lt. Gheorghescu), Alexandru Potocean (Marius Buzdrugovici), Andi Vasluianu (Mr. Otopeanu)

Produced by | microFILM Romania

Co-produced by | Paul Thiltges Distributions (Luxembourg), endorfilm (Czech Republic), Kinorama (Croatia)

In association with | Bord Cadre Films (Switzerland), Sovereign Films (UK)

Producers | Ada Solomon

Co-producers | Paul Thiltges, Adrien Chef, Jiří Konečný, Ankica Jurić Tilić

Associate Producers | Dan Wechsler, Jamal Zeinal-Zade, Andreas Roald

Countries of production | Romania, Luxembourg, Czech Republic, Croatia

Cinematography | Marius Panduru, RSC

Editing | Cătălin Cristuțiu

Production design | Cristian Niculescu

Costumes | Cireșica Cuciuc

Make-up | Bianca Boeroiu

Music | Jura Ferina, Pavao Miholjević

Assistant director | Isabela von Tent

Sound | Hrvoje Radnic (sound on set), Dana Bunescu (sound design)

Sound mix | Michel Schillings, Philophon

Line producer | Valentino Rudolf

VFX | Raoul Nadalet, Espera Productions

Contacts

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