

EDWARD HOGG

ALEXANDRA MARIA LARA

IMAGINE

DIRECTED BY: ANDRZEJ JAKIMOWSKI



ZJEDNOCZENIE ARTYSTÓW I RZEMIEŚNIKÓW SP. Z O.O. IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH KIMBO PRODUCTION AND FILMES DO TEJO II MULTIMEDIA LDA
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EDITOR: CEZARY GRZESIAK, DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: ADAM BAJERSKI, PRODUCED BY: ANDRZEJ JAKIMOWSKI,
VLADIMIR KOKH AND FRANCOIS D'ARTEMARE, DIRECTED BY: ANDRZEJ JAKIMOWSKI

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Featuring
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Alexandra Maria Lara as Eva
Melchior Derouet as Serrano
Francis Frappat as Doctor

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Logline

Ian arrives at a Lisbon clinic for the visually impaired to teach blind patients navigational skills. The clinic's international community greet his unorthodox methods with both anticipation and scepticism. For Ian, orientation flows from the mind and imagination - then sensory perception follows. His methods, though effective, are not without risk...

Synopsis

Ian, a spatial orientation instructor, arrives at a world-renowned Lisbon clinic for the visually impaired to work with blind patients. It will be his task to help them become more confident and allow them to explore their surroundings without feeling vulnerable or afraid. The doctor in charge of the clinic hires Ian on condition that the patients won't be exposed to danger as they learn to move around by themselves. During spatial orientation sessions, Ian quickly wins the trust of his patients: a small group of children and young adults of various nationalities. They've come to the clinic, often travelling long distances, in the hope that their blindness will be cured or their progressive loss of sight arrested. Ian's techniques intrigue the children and embolden them to explore their surroundings. Ian, however, pushes them to attempt challenges with an element of risk, much to the dismay of the medical staff. Ian's sessions take place right under the window of Eva, an adult patient who never leaves her room and doesn't speak to anybody. She is most intrigued by the newcomer and his ideas. Unexpectedly, she becomes one of his most eager students. She's determined to master his techniques and move around with freedom. With Ian, she ventures beyond the boundaries of the clinic without her cane and experiences the world outside the clinic. Sitting at a table outside a local bar, they take in the life of the nearby port. Soon after, Ian is dismissed by the doctor for what he considers unprofessional behaviour, in order not to put the patients at any further risk. Ian's pleas to remain at the clinic fall on deaf ears. Serrano, Ian's boldest student, has reason to doubt whether the image of the surrounding world that Ian is gradually creating in his students' imagination is real. There is much to suggest Ian is simply a liar. In order to test the truth, Eva and Serrano will have to set out alone and will finally have to apply what they have been struggling to learn from Ian.



ANDRZEJ JAKIMOWSKI

Andrzej Jakimowski, was born in Warsaw in 1963: director, screenwriter and producer. He studied philosophy at Warsaw University and film directing at the Krzysztof Kieslowski Katowice Film School.

His debut feature *SQUINT YOUR EYES* (2003) won the Main Prize at **San Francisco IFF**, 2004; the Main Prize at **Sochi IFF**, 2004; FIPRESCI special mention at **Mannheim-Heidelberg IF**, 2002. *SQUINT YOUR EYES* also received four **Polish Academy Awards - Golden Eagles** 2004: for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Screenplay and Best Actor.

Jakimowski's second feature film *TRICKS* (2007) won over 30 prizes at international film festivals, including: Europa Cinemas Label for the **Best European Film, Venice**, 2007 (Giornate degli Autori); Lanterna Magica Award, **Venice**, 2007; Special Jury Award, **Mannheim-Heidelberg IF**, 2007; Award for Best Actor, **Tokyo IFF**, 2007; Special Jury Award, **São Paulo IFF**, 2007; FIPRESCI award, **Bratislava IFF**, 2007; Grand Jury Prize, **Tbilisi IFF**, 2007, 2007; Special Jury Award, Audience Award, Premiers Plans, Angers 2008; Grand Jury Prize, **Miami IFF**, 2008; Grand Jury Prize, **Kiev/Odessa FF**, 2008; The Golden Lions for the best film, **Gdynia**, 2007; The Eagle for Best Direction, Polish Academy Awards, **Warsaw**, 2008. The film was 2009 **Polish Oscar entry**.

IMAGINE - director's statement.

I found the methods used by blind people to find their way around in the world to be both poetic and absolutely cinematic.

It was only after several months' research into spatial orientation techniques that I decided to write the screenplay for Imagine.

Andrzej Jakimowski



ALEXANDRA MARIA LARA

Alexandra Maria Lara (born Alexandra Plătăreanu on November 12, 1978) is a Romanian-German actress. She performs predominantly in leading roles in a variety of historical and crime films. Lara is best known for her roles in *THE DOWNFALL* (2005) and *YOUTH WITHOUT YOUTH* (2007).

Born in Bucharest, Lara is the only child of Valentin Plătăreanu, a famous Bucharest actor. At the age of four (in 1983) her family decided to flee to West Germany to escape from the Nicolae Ceaușescu regime in Communist Romania. Although the family had originally planned to emigrate to Canada, they settled down in Freiburg im Breisgau, Baden-Württemberg, before eventually moving to Berlin. After graduating at the Französisches Gymnasium Berlin in 1997, Lara started studying acting under the management of her father, co-founder of the Theaterwerkstatt Charlottenburg, until 2000. By the age of 16 she was already playing leading roles in various television dramas. Since then her career has developed and she has become a respected film actress worldwide. Her most famous role to date, which has resulted in international recognition, is as Traudl Junge, Adolf Hitler's secretary in the Oscar Nominated 2004 film *THE DOWNFALL*. Due to her convincing performance in *THE DOWNFALL* (2004), Francis Ford Coppola wrote her a letter and gave her a leading role in *YOUTH WITHOUT YOUTH* (2007).

In 2008 she took part in the German productions *THE BAADER MEINHOF COMPLEX* (an Eichinger production) and in *KAIFECK MURDERS* next to Benno Fürmann. Aside from her roles in various films in that year, she was member of the feature film jury at the Cannes Filmfestival 2008.

Several international films followed, like *THE COMPANY*, *THE CITY OF FINAL DESTINATION*, Anton Corbijn's film about JOY DIVISION leadsinger Ian Curtis *CONTROL*, Spike Lee's

MIRACLE IN ST. ANNA and Stephen Daldry's *THE READER*. At the End of 2009 Alexandra Maria Lara played the leading role in Sam Garbaski's film *QUARTIER LOINTAIN*.

One year later she was on camera with the leading female part in Bruno Chiches *SMALL WORLD* beside Gerard Depardieu. The film based on the same titled novel by Martin Suter. 2011 three cinema productions followed: First Alexandra Maria Lara acted in Detlev Buck's *RUBBELDIEKATZ* side by side with German actor Matthias Schweighöfer. After that she played the leading role in *IMAGINE* under direction of Andrzej Jakimowski. In autumn 2011 she acted in Christoph Staub's film *NACHTLÄRM*, the second time she played in a film based on a Script of Martin Suter. In 2012 the international production *33 DAYS - BORN TO BE WILD* followed, with Alexandra Maria Lara as Marlene Knaus (the wife of Niki Lauda), playing side by side with Daniel Brühl.

Awards:

2012	„Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres“ of the French ministry of culture
2007	Award of the British Independent Film festival as Best Film for <i>CONTROL</i> Critic's Prize of the Hamburg Filmfestival for <i>CONTROL</i> Palme d'Or as Best European Film and Camera d'or-Mention spéciale for <i>CONTROL</i>
2006	Oscar-Nomination for Best Foreign Film for <i>THE DOWNFALL</i>
2005	Goldene Kamera for Alexandra Maria Lara as Best Actress Undine Award for Alexandra Maria Lara as Best Actress in a comedy Diva-Award as Best German Actress Jupiter-Filmpreis as Best German Actress
2004	Maxim-Woman of the year and Super woman of the year Style-Ikon of Bunte. T-Online.de
2001	New Faces Award
1992	Els-Adrian-Preis





EDWARD HOGG

Edward graduated from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in 2002 and was immediately cast in the inaugural RSC Academy production of *KING LEAR*, directed by Declan Donnellan, in which he played The Fool to fellow rising star Nonso Anozie's Lear. Edward has gone on to become one of the most exciting young actors of his generation. His performance as the eponymous *WOYZECK* at the Gate Theatre in London and the St. Anne's Warehouse in New York City had reviewers calling him 'extraordinary', 'mesmerising' and 'the most gifted young actor seen in years' and also earned him an Ian Charleson Award Nomination in 2006.

2009 was a turning point and a bumper year for Edward. September saw the release of *WHITE LIGHTNIN'*, directed by Dominic Murphy, in which Edward played the lead role of Jesco White, an Appalachian dancing outlaw. The film had its American and European premieres at the Sundance and Berlin Film Festivals respectively, and won the Hitchcock d'Or Award at the Dinard Festival of British Films for Best Film. Sundance and Berlin reviews said 'Edward Hogg stars as Jesco, in a star-making performance of remarkable range and quicksilver agility' (LA Times); 'British actor Edward Hogg throws himself bravely and unreservedly into the insanity of his character' (Vanity Fair); and 'Edward Hogg is magnificent as a glue-sniffing antichrist hillbilly called Jesco White who keeps his violent urges in check by performing on stage' (The Guardian). Edward won Best Actor Awards at the Monterrey International Film Festival and the 11th Mumbai Film Festival. He was also nominated for a British Independent Film Award for Most Promising Newcomer.

2009 also saw the UK release of his second lead role in a film called *BUNNY AND THE BULL*. Produced by Warp Films and directed by *THE*

MIGHTY BOOSH director Paul King, the film had its world premiere at the Toronto Film Festival and was screened at the 2009 London Film Festival.

In the same year Edward shot his third major feature called *OLLIE KEPLER'S EXPANDING PURPLE WORLD* in which he played the eponymous Ollie alongside Jodie Whittaker. The film was the directorial debut by writer/producer Viv Fongenie.

In 2007 Edward was included in Screen International's 'Stars of Tomorrow' feature, which is an annual showcase of promising up-and-coming talent. That year's group included Tom Hiddleston, Michelle Dockery, Aaron Johnson, Gugu Mbatha-Raw and Carey Mulligan, amongst others. He was also chosen as the UK's SHOOTING STAR at the 2010 Berlin Film Festival.

In 2011 Edward was seen in Roland Emmerich's *ANONYMOUS* alongside an all-star cast, including Rhys Ifans, Vanessa Redgrave, Mark Rylance and Joely Richardson.

This year will also see the release of *THE COMEDIAN*, the debut feature by acclaimed new director Tom Shkolnik, in which Edward plays the lead role. The film, which was largely improvised, required Edward to attend stand-up school and appear in front of live audiences as a stand-up comic, an experience he has described as 'terrifying'.

He recently completed shooting the role of James Stewart, Earl of Moray, in *MARY'S RIDE*, a film about Mary Queen of Scots, starring rising French star Camille Rutherford as Mary. The film was directed by the award-winning Swiss director Thomas Imbach

Alejandro Navas commentary

I started using echolocation spontaneously as a child. Mobility instructors don't teach it, because continually clicking your tongue or snapping your fingers looks unnatural to sighted people. I worked with Edward in two phases. First by giving him an idea of the feeling of echolocating things in different environments, e.g. trying to catch a hand close to his face, walking along corridors and finally moving through open spaces like parks and streets, and later, working directly on the movie scenes, checking and testing all the tricks that Ian uses in his daily life. We also gave him a cane to move independently and without being guided in open spaces. The noise of the cane itself is useful for echolocation.

We worked hard and after the whole training was over Edward was able to guide us through narrow paths across gardens and parks, deciding when to cross or not to cross a street, etc. He got to be very popular, very quickly, with shopkeepers. Edward's understanding of the character was simply amazing and helped us a lot to progress quickly with his "blind skills".

He also wanted to watch me in daily living situations, so some of the time I was just acting naturally: eating, walking in the street, etc, showing my most typical gestures. The main idea was to make the character as real as possible.



Edward Hogg on his echolocation training with Alejandro Navas

Putting the opaque contact lenses in really helped me. Even though I still had some vision it was a sense of being on the other side of sight, behind the wall of the prosthetic. Alejandro had told me he could use anything to hand to help him echolocate. He showed me how even the brushing of the denim on the inside of his jeans could help him establish the environment around him. I was so taken aback at his speed and how direct he was when he decided to move.

Any knock or contact he made with an object he hadn't located didn't deter him in any way. He simply re-adjusted and set off again, head up and chest out. In life - blind or not - obstacles are sometimes hidden. The ability to re-adjust and set off again both physically and mentally were qualities I thought Ian should inhabit entirely.



Spatial orientation among blind people, the factual background to *Imagine*

THE FILM'S WORLD

The film's central character, Ian, a spatial orientation instructor, begins work in a clinic which treats blind children from various parts of the world free of charge. He is not a typical instructor. Indeed, his strange mode of walking in heavy hobnailed boots gives him an air of eccentricity, though it is difficult to guess that Ian has no eyes. He refuses to use a white cane, neither in the hospital nor during his evening visits to bars in the town.

Typically, sighted people teach blind people to move around in space. The lessons mainly concern how to use a white cane. Ian - who is himself unusual - runs his lessons using his own methods. He tries not only to activate the senses, but especially to stimulate the curiosity and imaginations of his patients, in order to teach them to live in a world they will never see.

For blind people, previously enclosed within the clinic's walls, a trip into ordinary, prosaic reality, such as playing in the courtyard, a walk in the town, or a visit to a café on the corner becomes something like a journey into an unknown universe. A universe which represents a puzzle and a mystery to solve. Is a huge ship really docked in the harbour or is it only a figment of Ian's imagination, or a clever trick? Are the blind children capable of getting to the truth? What are the boundaries of knowing for them? Ian makes his students aware that faced with the question of what the world is really like, blind people are not actually in a more difficult position than sighted people. In his opinion, finding out of the truth is a challenge for the mind, and the lack of visual stimuli doesn't represent a fundamental obstacle.

Ian teaches them how to substitute one set of sensory data with another - visual information

is replaced by auditory information - and how to use other people's - even animals' - senses. His uncompromising stance is characterised by his independence of judgement and refusal to submit to cognitive schema. In addition, he considers every single way of gaining information about one's surroundings to be valid. He is a master of echolocation, but isn't worried about carrying around an ultrasound gadget for measuring distances.

THE FACTS ABOUT ECHOLOCATION

Echolocation is a system of defining the position and size of surrounding objects by using acoustic echoes. The expression was introduced in 1944 by Donald R. Griffin, an American zoologist who studied bats¹. The principle of echolocation is simple: the "transmitter" creates a sound of high frequency, after which they receive waves reflected off various obstacles. According to the time taken for the sound to return and its direction and intensity one can describe the size, position and distance - and occasionally the character - of the localized objects. The precision of the image of the world achieved in this way varies, however, and is dependent on the length of the emitted sound wave. The shorter it is, the more distinct an image of the surrounding space is created in the brain of receiver, and the greater its resolution. Dolphins are best adapted to echolocation, as they can create and receive sounds with a frequency of 212 kHz². Despite the potential of human beings in this regard being much more modest (the limits of audible sounds only fall in the range of 16 Hz to 20 kHz³), the phenomenon of echolocation has been observed in people. The inspiration for the character of Ian were authentic blind echolocators; people whose rare abilities always evoke fascination or disbelief, and are currently the object of scientific research.

Similarly, Ian moves around in space in such a way that it is difficult to believe he cannot see - so his perplexed students test this by stretching a fishing line across the corridor. Serrano goes so far as to demand that Ian remove his artificial eyes. Ian localises obstacles by using various kinds of noises: he wears boots with heel and toe plates, snaps his fingers, and clicks his tongue on the roof of his mouth. He also listens to sounds which occur naturally in the surroundings and "describe" space with their echoes: the ringing of bells, the flapping of pigeons' wings in flight, car horns sounding or the splashing of stones into water. In preparing for the role of Ian, Edward Hogg learned echolocation from a contemporary blind echolocator, **Alejandro Navas**. Navas mainly uses clicking and tapping objects with his cane as sources of sound.

The inspiration for the character were also the recollections of other famous echolocators: the film is dedicated to the memory of the late **Ben Underwood**⁴, an American boy who brought the art of echolocation to perfection; he dispensed with a cane in childhood and lived like a normal teenager. A documentary film - *The Boy Who Sees Without Eyes* - was made about him and shows him skateboarding and cycling down the street, avoiding obstacles with ease, playing basketball, computer games etc.

The second important individual is **Daniel Kish** - the first professional echolocation instructor in the United States and in the world. Both Ben Underwood and Daniel Kish acquired their incredible abilities in childhood. They both recall (independent of each other) how even as young boys they spontaneously discovered the use of clicking by pulling their tongue off the roofs of their mouths and hearing the echo of the sound thus created. In an interview for the magazine *New Scientist*⁵ Daniel Kish recalls how - while still only two-and-a-half years old - he climbed onto a neighbour's fence and tongue-clicked to create an image of what was on the other side.

FROM THE WORLD OF SCIENCE BACK TO THE FILM AND BEYOND

During the extensive documentation carried out in connection with the film in Poland (in the Centre for the Blind in Laski and the Academy of Special Pedagogy in Warsaw), many blind students told similar stories of how in childhood they spontaneously tongue-clicked or snapped their fingers in order not to bump into a wall or people standing or walking nearby. However, their self-discovered methods for dealing with obstacles in their surroundings was held back in those times by a hostile environment, both at home and school, and tongue-clicking was thought of as “rude” or “unreliable”. The pressure of society made these young people limited to - and as a consequence dependent on - their white canes.

During the documentation and casting carried out in Europe (UK, Portugal, and France) the makers of the film happened upon children who spontaneously used echolocation methods, which they developed thanks to the support of their families, or at least without their opposition. Sixteen blind and visually impaired young people - seven from UK, seven from Portugal and two from France - played the roles of the clinic’s patients and one professional actor - the French actor Melchior Derouet - played the role of Serrano. Two of the children (Denilson Gomes and Tiago Oliveira) use echolocation by tongue-clicking and finger snapping, which was made use of during the shooting.

What kind of reality emerges from an echo for people like Ian? Daniel Kish, in the interview mentioned, compares the moment of the sound being reflected to a camera flash which suddenly illuminates the dark and shows the details of the surrounding space. A tree might be “narrow” and “dense” at the bottom, but “wider” and much more “thinned out” at the top. Trees with or without leaves give different echoes. In effect a three-dimensional image of the surroundings

is created in the imagination of the echolocator with many details which locate objects in space along with their size and shape.

Their accounts correspond to scientific research into the phenomenon of echolocation. Canadian research into the reception of sounds by blind people (at the Center for Brain and Mind at the University of Western Ontario and Canada Research Chair in Visual Neuroscience), conducted using the method of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) revealed that the reflected sound is initially processed in the auditory cortex, after which it is “converted” into a spatial image in the visual cortex. The research also demonstrated the greater activation of the visual cortex in the blind than in sighted people who were blindfolded while listening to an echo. The conclusion is that blind people create quite a precise image in the brain of the surroundings; they literally “see” with the help of reflected sound⁶.

It explains why in the comments of echolocators metaphors from the areas of visual or tactile perception occur so frequently (sound can be “hard” or “soft”, “empty” or “holey”, “solid” or “springy”).

The hero of *Imagine* paints a picture of the inaccessible surroundings in the minds of his blind friends, Eva and Serrano: the harbour with the catches of crabs on the quayside, full of motorboats nervously scooting over the water, and a huge cruise liner moored by the quay.

Ian doesn’t limit himself, after all, to listening to echoes: he uses smells and interprets all kinds of sensory stimuli, makes his own conclusions and - finally - sets in motion his free, poetic imagination, understanding that to know the world one first has to create it. He tells his story, encouraging his friends to open themselves to their own stories, to abandon their passivity and set out on a fascinating but dangerous adventure. It isn’t possible without an emotional commitment, seen in his relationships with



his two most advanced students. In Serrano’s case this is friendship, and in Eva’s possibly something more... For perceiving the world isn’t only one or other cognitive technique: the world becomes multi-dimensional because of sensory stimuli, acquired knowledge and understanding, but also because of poetry, which is inevitably accompanied by feelings.

THE CONTROVERSY ABOUT ECHOLOCATION

Martinez’s experiments⁷ concerning sighted people demonstrate why teaching echolocation to blind people makes so much sense. It is essentially a development of their natural abilities. In spite of that, echolocation as a spatial orientation technique is still a controversial method and insufficiently understood. Blind echolocators remain its chief proponents.

Ben Underwood talked about his orientation methods at talks in schools and churches and with the media. Daniel Kish founded a non-profit organisation in 2001 called *World Access for the Blind*⁸ - with the aim of promoting echolocation,

and has already trained many blind people. Thanks to him even very young children - for example four-year-olds - can acquire the ability to move around comparable to their sighted peers (games requiring manual skill, running freely, etc.)

Another passionate advocate of echolocation training for the blind is a Pole, **Henryk Wereda**, the author of a book about echolocation (*Let Hearing Lead You*) and also a consultant on the film. Wereda is critical about the model of how the blind are expected to adapt to society. He thinks it begins with the stigmatisation of blind people, and continues by giving them social welfare. In this sense, the ability to echolocate challenges that stereotype by turning a blind “invalid” into an independent individual, who in addition is more proficient in their skills than sighted people. This also represents a challenge to society, which rather than activate blind people to participate on equal terms, leads to the passive use of help.

In Wereda’s opinion - in spite of stereotypical attitudes - the art of moving around in space ought to be taught to the blind by blind people who have already mastered the skill and not - as is usually the case - by sighted individuals.

INDEPENDENCE - OR FREEDOM - COMES AT A PRICE

The central character of the film is just like that. He tries to teach his patients - step by step - independence in movement and in thought, stimulate their interest in the world and lead them beyond the walls of the clinic.

It cannot occur without risk: sometimes that only means getting a bump or being scratched by rose bushes. As the techniques of moving freely around one's surroundings are gradually mastered the risk actually grows - and Ian is actually playing with fire when he crosses a busy street or explores a deserted harbour.

One of the controversial issues in the assessment of echolocation is whether to permit risk-taking of this kind. From childhood Ben Underwood functioned without a white cane, rode a skateboard and crossed busy road junctions. Daniel Kish himself was critical of Ben Underwood's approach. His view was that blind people shouldn't give up using their white canes and that Underwood was taking unnecessary risks.

The controversies are not without their foundation: the use of an echo for free movement

carries the risk of error. A mistake like that happened to Ian himself, who during the course of locating a motorcycle standing in the courtyard falls into a coal chute. Can the young patients be exposed to the same risk?

Ian seems to consider that that's an inevitable price one has to pay for freedom and independence. The doctor who is responsible for the patients has a different opinion. Ian's methods once again prove to be too radical: they first evoke astonishment and then protests from the clinic's staff. This leads to an open conflict with the doctor. The result of this is that Ian has to leave his job once more. It is difficult to say who's right: those who consider echolocation too risky or the blind instructor rebelling against limitations.

Perhaps his methods are no more risky than life itself.

- 1 Griffin, Donald R. (1944) Echolocation by blind men, bats, and radar. *Science* 100:589-590
- 2 Popov V.V., Kishin V.O. (1998) EEG study of hearing in the common dolphin, *Delphinus delphis*, *Aquatic Mammals*, 24.1, 13-20
- 3 Sebastian Haskel and David Sygoda (1996) *Biology, A contemporary Approach*. New York: Amco.
- 4 www.benunderwood.com
- 5 Kish, Daniel (14.01.2009) Echo vision: The man who sees with sound. *New Scientist*, 2703.
- 6 Thaler L, Arnott SR, Goodale MA (2011) Neural Correlates of Natural Human Echolocation in Early and Late Blind Echolocation Experts. *PLoS ONE* 6(5): e20162. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0020162
- 7 Juan Antonio Martínez Rojas, Jesús Alpuente Hermsilla, Pablo Luis López Espí y Rocío Sánchez Montero. "Physical Analysis of Several Organic Signals for Human Echolocation: Oral Vacuum Pulses". *Acta Acustica united with Acustica* 95 (2): 325-330, 2009.
- 8 www.worldaccessfortheblind.org



NOTES

BETA CINEMA - WORLD SALES

Beta Cinema has established itself as a "boutique-operation" for independent feature films with strong theatrical potential. Beta Cinema's philosophy is to keep its selective acquisition policy of 10 to 12 titles per year in order to fully develop the theatrical potential of each title according to its individual character.

Beta Cinema's portfolio includes outstanding productions like Academy Award 2011-nominated *IN DARKNESS*, multiple African Academy Award 2011-winning *VIVA RIVA*, multiple Spanish Goya Awards 2011-winning *BLACK BREAD*, German Film Award-winning *VINCENT WANTS TO SEA* (2011), *ALMANYA* (2011), *JOHN RABE* (2009) and *FOUR MINUTES* (2007), Cannes 2008 Jury Prize-winning and Academy Award-nominated *IL DIVO*, Academy Award 2007-winning *THE COUNTERFEITERS*, Academy Award 2007 nominated *MONGOL*, Academy Award 2006-winning *THE LIVES OF OTHERS* and the Academy Award 2004-nominated *DOWNFALL*.

ZAIR - ZJEDNOCZENIE ARTYSTÓW I RZEMIEŚLNIKÓW

The company was founded in 2002 by a group of independent filmmakers in order to produce the film *ZMRUZ OCZY* (*SQUINT YOUR EYES*), directed by Andrzej Jakimowski. The company's name means Associated Artists and Artisans.

The company established a solid base to its activities as an independent film studio after the success of the film *SQUINT YOUR EYES* in 2003. In 2008 it consolidated its financial independence with the successful distribution in Poland and later abroad of the film *SZTUCZKI* (*TRICKS*). The film was sold to 70 countries, in over 40 released theatrically.

Planning its production the Studio focus on one well-prepared project which they choose according to its artistic value.

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