

# Romanian Cinema: A Journey

16 – 21 November at Ciné lumière

The double win this year at Cannes for *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (Palme d'Or) and *California Dreamin' (endless)* (the 'Un certain regard' main prize) has confirmed Romanian cinema as among Europe's most exciting. In acknowledgement of this, Ciné lumière, in partnership with the Romanian Cultural Institute and with thanks to the Romanian film critic Alex Leo Serban and Romania's National Centre for Cinematography, will screen these and other recognised recent triumphs alongside one earlier Romanian film often cited as influential on the new generation of directors.

To launch the season on Friday 16 November, director **Cristian Mungiu** and actresses **Anamaria Marinca** and **Laura Vasiliu** will join the audience for a Q&A after the preview of his Palme d'or winning film. Over following days, many further screenings will be supplemented by Q&As: editor **Catalin Cristutiu** and actress **Maria Dinulescu** will be present for the 17 November preview of *California Dreamin' (Endless)*; scriptwriter **Andreana Valean** for *The Way I Spent the End of the World* (18 November); director **Tudor Giurgiu** for his film *Love Sick* (20 November) and scriptwriter **Razvan Radulescu** (TBC) for *The Paper Will Be Blue* on 21 November. And finally, on Monday 19 November The Romanian Cultural Institute will host 'The Story Inside Out', a talk on the Transylvania International Film Festival by film critic & festival director **Mihai Chirilov**.

## Timetable

### ***4 months, 3 weeks, 2 days***

Romania | 2007 | col | 113 mins | dir. Cristian Mungiu | cert. 18

fri 16 nov | 7.30pm | **preview screening (courtesy of Artificial Eye) | preceded by a complementary glass of wine for each ticket purchased | followed by a Q&A with dir. Cristian Mungiu and actress Anamaria Marinca and Laura Vasiliu**

### ***12:80 East of Bucharest***

Romania | 2007 | col | 89 mins | dir. Corneliu Porumboiu | cert. 15

sat 17 nov | 6.30pm | tue 20 nov | 6.30pm

### ***California Dreamin' (Endless)***

Romania | 2007 | col | 155 mins | dir. Cristian Nemescu | cert. 15 sat 17 nov | 8.30pm | **preview screening | followed by a Q&A with editor Catalin Cristutiu and actress Maria Dinulescu**

### ***Reconstruction***

Romania | 1968 | b&w | 100 mins | dir. Lucian Pintile

sun 18 nov | 5.00pm | video screening: £5, conc. £4

### ***The Way I Spent the End of the World***

Romania/France | 2006 | col | 106 mins | dir. Catalin Mitulescu | cert. 15

sun 18 nov | 7.15pm | **followed by a Q&A with scriptwriter Andreana Valean**

### ***The Story Inside Out***

Talk on the Transylvania International Festival by film critic and festival director **Mihai Chirilov**.

mon 19 nov | 7.00pm | at the Romanian Cultural Institute

### ***Love Sick***

Romania | 2006 | col | 86 mins | dir. Tudor Giurgiu | cert. 18

tue 20 nov | 8.30pm | **followed by a Q&A with dir. Tudor Giurgiu**

### ***The Death of Mr Lazarescu***

Romania | 2005 | col | 153 mins | dir. Cristi Puiu | cert. 15

wed 21 nov | 6.00pm

### ***The Paper Will Be Blue***

Romania | 2007 | col | 96 mins | dir. Radu Muntean | cert. 15

wed 21 nov | 8.45pm | **followed by a Q&A with scriptwriter Razvan Radulescu (TBC)**

## Prices

4 months, 3 weeks, 2 days: £10, conc. £8

Reconstruction: £5, conc. £4

All other films:

Single bill: £7, conc. £5

Double bill (two consecutive films on the same day): £9, conc. £7

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The 'History of Romanian Cinema' would never make a feature – a short, rather. Only the day before yesterday (that is two years ago, when Cristi Puiu won the 'Un certain regard' in Cannes with *The Death of Mr Lazarescu*), we were not even 'on the map.' It happened so fast most Romanians are still bewildered: in 2006, Corneliu Porumboiu won the Golden Camera with his irresistible *12.08 East of Bucharest*. This year, it was a double win: Cristian Mungiu with *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (Palme d'Or) and the late Cristian Nemescu with *California Dreamin' (endless)* (the 'Un certain regard' main prize).

We have to go as far back as 1965 (when Liviu Ciulei won the Best Director Prize in Cannes with his adaptation of Liviu Rebreanu's classic novel *The Forest of the Hanged*) to find something slightly comparable. The Romanian participation in Cannes (Venice or Berlin...) had been scarce: Lucian Pintilie – the most influential Romanian filmmaker, to whom most young directors owe a huge debt – was present *out* of competition with his energy-filled *The Oak* (back in 1991) and in competition with his two subsequent efforts (*An Unforgettable Summer* and *Too Late*) – which didn't win the favours of the jury. What proved to be 'too late' for the unofficially recognized 'father' of Romanian cinema was too early for aspiring directors: the late 90s were more or less lost for them.

But then, immediately after, tiny lights seemed to blink at the end of the tunnel. Films made on a shoe-string or very limited budget (Cristi Puiu's *Stuff & Dough* in 2001 and Cristian Mungiu's *Occident* in 2002) were shown in the 'Director's Fortnight' in Cannes and received critical accolades. The former – constantly derailed during its production and very badly distributed locally – was never allowed to become a hit, whereas the latter opened in Romania to wide public success. These two titles mirror – as in a fable – the two facets of current Romanian cinema. It is torn, symbolically and effectively, between the need for commercial success and the necessity of finding a specific, hopefully personal, way of telling stories.

Acknowledging the resurgence of Romanian cinema, and the change in subject-matter and style of Romanian films, critics started to speak of a 'New Wave'. Yet it is inaccurate to suggest there is only *one* trend in Romanian cinema: if Puiu definitely put his mark on this cinema with his vibrant mix of handheld, ciné-vérité 'slice of life' drama, there are few similitudes between this harrowing minimalism and Radu Muntean's more detached brand of the same (in his haunting, truth-perfect *The Paper Will Be Blue*, a chilling re-enactment of individual drama during the revolution) or Mungiu's own variant in *432* (emotionally precise, flat-out suspenseful and 'classically' controlled).

And nor is everybody working in a 'minimalist' mode. In the five shorts and one full-length feature he made before his untimely death, Cristian Nemescu became known for his fresh and playful blend of comedy, drama and teenage fantasies, maturing in his final film (*California Dreamin' (endless)*) into a kind of 'magical neorealism' notable for its unprecedented (for Romanian cinema) combination of solid script, good acting, ciné-verité and childlike day-dreaming.

Close – to a certain extent – to Nemescu's vision is Catalin Mitulescu's coproduction (with France) *How I Spent the End of the World* which premiered last year in 'Un certain regard'. A depiction of the last year of Ceausescu's reign as seen by a young boy, the film is similar in tone to the recent German hit *Good-Bye, Lenin* as well as the work of Yugoslavian director Emir Kusturica.

Adapted from the article 'Stuff and Dough: Young Romanian Cinema' by Alex Leo Serban, from *European Alternatives: A European Journal of New Transnational Thought and Culture*, Issue 1, Volume 1, Summer 2007

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