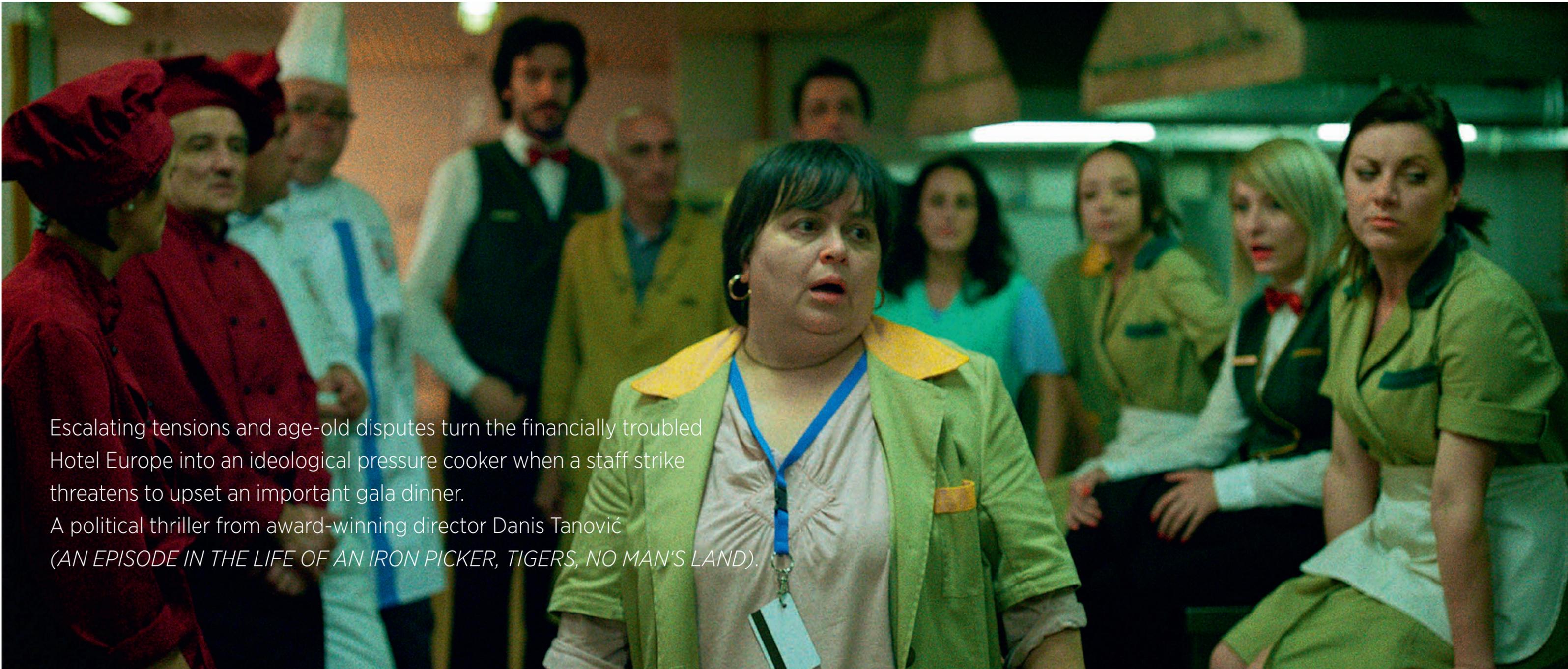


Berlinale
 66 Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Competition



DEATH
IN SARAJEVO

A FILM BY DANIS TANOVIĆ



Escalating tensions and age-old disputes turn the financially troubled Hotel Europe into an ideological pressure cooker when a staff strike threatens to upset an important gala dinner.

A political thriller from award-winning director Danis Tanović
(AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF AN IRON PICKER, TIGERS, NO MAN'S LAND).

SYNOPSIS

Sarajevo's Hotel Europe is bustling in preparation for tonight's European Union gala for the centennial of Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination. But the disgruntled staff plans to strike because they haven't been paid for two months. If this prestigious political dinner fails, the already mortgaged hotel will be shut down by the bank. With no time to lose to stop the strike, hotel manager Omer must turn to tough guy Enzo, who runs the cellar strip club. The staff union rep soon goes missing.

Dedicated and pretty chief receptionist Lamija does her absolute best to keep everything running smoothly toward the big event. But things get tricky when her mother Hatidza, of the laundry room, is elected strike leader.

The VIP keynote speaker doesn't have much time to prepare, and he stumbles through complex details and names. The French guest's rehearsals in his room are secretly recorded in B&W. Surveillance is high (literally) due to a nose-happy video security guy.

On the hotel roof, TV journalist Vedrana conducts interviews for a centennial special. Among her guests is Gavrilo Princip, the namesake descendant of the Archduke's assassin. Firm political stances quickly lead to age-old arguments. From the hotel roof to the cellar club, via the reception, laundry room and kitchen, increasing tensions turn the Hotel Europe into an ideological pressure cooker.

COMMENTS FROM DANIS TANOVIĆ

HOTEL EUROPE

The origin of this project is Bernard-Henri Lévy's play "Hotel Europe" which premiered at Sarajevo's National Theater in June 2014. The play is a monologue of a man in his Sarajevo hotel room, rehearsing a speech on the 100th anniversary of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. I was approached about filming this, and after attending some rehearsals, I was inspired to make an entire film around the play, encompassing its spirit and expanding its ideas. The French VIP speaker's dialogue is directly from Lévy's original play. We see him arrive at the hotel, rehearsing in his room, and then at the end of the film we see actual footage from the Sarajevo premiere. Every-



thing else that happens outside of his hotel room is my construction. It's a Bosnian, a contemporary perspective on the bloodiest century in our history. It's about

our inability to move beyond this tragedy and create new models, new heroes, new history. In Sarajevo, almost no one ever talks about the future.

THE FRENCH VIP

Jacques Weber is one of the greatest French actors of film and theater. There was never any doubt that Jacques should reprise the role in DEATH IN SARAJEVO, especially considering that he created the character in the stage productions. The French VIP is pretty much an alter ego of Lévy in the sense of remembering experiences and thoughts about Bosnia. Lévy is a longtime friend of Bosnia and I really appreciate his self-inflicted humor like when the French VIP character has problems getting

right the name of Gavrilo Princip. It's a playful reminder of how foreigners deal with our difficult-to-pronounce names and our complicated identity.

THE HOTEL

This is actually my first film shot in Sarajevo. I don't know how it happened as I've even shot films in India (TIGERS) and Ireland and Spain (TRIAGE). But I'm really in love with Sarajevo and now I can't wait to do another film here.

We actually shot the film in Sarajevo's former Holiday Inn. The iconic hotel opened for the 1984 Winter Olympics, which was a big deal in our modern history. I was a teenager and I remember it well. I grew up not far from the hotel and I walked past it to go to school, so I had a sentimental connection to it. The hotel is mythic, a real symbol of our town. Ironically, the first sniper



sniper shots in 1992 were fired from the windows of the same hotel. During the siege of Sarajevo, the hotel was used as a base for reporters and it was regularly

fired on. Today, 30 years later, it has obviously seen better days. During the shoot, I was surprised to see life imitating fiction. We had to stop shooting for a day. The police came and arrested the manager for tax evasion or something like that, and the hotel was temporary closed. The workers started protesting, trying to fight for their jobs.

MOVEMENT

There are obvious logistical advantages to shooting a film in the same location, especially a hotel. But it was a challenge to try and make things interesting visually.

I spent a lot of time inside there while I was writing and I made adjustments to the script with the hotel in mind.

I also love trying new things, even if it contradicts the given circumstances. I really wanted this film to move considering the location limitations. I had never worked with gimbal camera support before. It has the same freedom as handheld, but without the shakiness. It doesn't have that dizzy sensation that can occur from using Steadicam. We put the camera on the gimbal and I loved it. This was helpful in using three different levels of the hotel to correspond to various storylines. The TV program is on the roof, the official hotel business takes place in the middle and the underworld thugs reign in the cellar strip club. The hotel staff are almost invisible, but they connect all the levels and keep things working, so we move along with them.

REAL TIME

I didn't highlight any watches or clocks in the hotel, but if you look closely you'll be able to notice approximately what time the film's action starts and what time it ends. It's around 4:40 when the French VIP checks in and then 85 minutes later when it ends. The film unfolds in a real time. This isn't something that I wanted the audience to think about while watching the film, but I think they'll be able to feel it. It gives the film a certain urgency.



THE STRIKE

Lamija and her mother Hatidža end up on opposing sides when the hotel workers decide to strike. In Bosnia, and other countries in the region, the older generation of Hatidža got lost after the war and has been forced to stay quiet since. From time to time, they tried to fight back feebly and failed, and now they are forced to survive on small monthly pensions. They accept this in a way which is difficult for me to understand. Lamija's younger generation appears much more energetic

and ambitious. We assume that they are real fighters, but they really aren't, it seems they fight for themselves, individually. Opportunism prevails in Bosnia today. Most of the intellectuals have gone silent or disappeared. Many have resigned to say only things that the leading clique wants to hear. We have been stuck in a quicksand of transition for 25 years, and it feels that every move is pulling us down deeper and deeper. Both generations of the hotel staff are trying to survive.

They could care less about the French VIP's speech or going to the Philharmonic. The Arts and Culture are almost non-existent in Bosnia. It's a problem of modern society. We become poisoned by subjects that don't really matter. The labor issue storyline was born out of our meaningless old social debate. It always seems to overcome the things which are meaningful, but end up being left behind.





GAVRILO PRINCIP

In Sarajevo, 102 years ago, 18-year-old Gavrilo Princip killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand which led to World War I. What really makes me angry is the whole discussion of whether Gavrilo Princip was a Serbian nationalist terrorist or heroic freedom fighter. This heated debate still goes on today more than 100 years later! In Sarajevo, there was once a wonderful avant-garde memorial monument made from the imprint of Princip's shoes. It was actually removed and stolen during

the war. To this day, we don't know what happened to it. In the Balkan region, we all speak the same language, no matter what we call it. We share history, we share culture. Our cities, even today, feel the same, and our urban identity is defined in a similar way. But for the last 25-30 years, the emphasis has been on how different we are. National identity has become the most important. Should I stop admiring Nikola Tesla simply because he was a Serb born in Croatia?

LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP

The debate between TV journalist Vedrana and modern-day Gavrilo Princip descendant (fictional, by the way) are the history of all of us, Bosnians and our neighbors. We have our opinions, we argue and hate each other. We make compromises, but then feel guilty about betrayals. More often than not, we are even attracted to one another.

In the end, Vedrana and Gavrilo are just an attractive man and woman who could have met and fallen in love. It's hard to admit but I think this love-hate relationship comes from looking in the mirror. We see the others and hate them because we basically hate ourselves.

The missing Gavrilo Princip memorial





TRANSITIONS AND METAPHORS

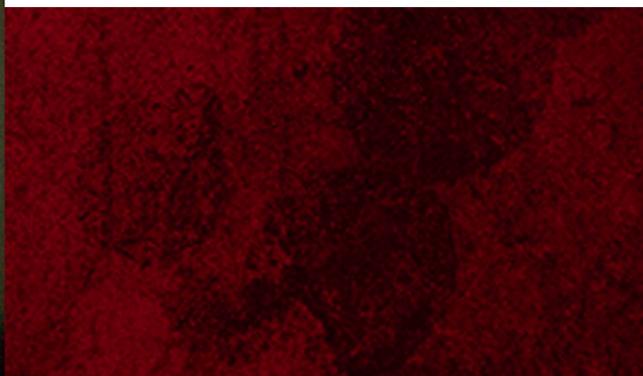
DEATH IN SARAJEVO is a very Bosnian, Balkan story about our “transition”. But I can’t help wondering: how long will we be transitioning? It has been 30 years. I think similar stories and situations are also happening in European countries. As exotic as we might seem, we’re only a few hours away from Munich.

I remember for NO MAN’S LAND, when the guy stands on the mine at the end, everyone was convinced that he stood for Bosnia itself. Now 30 years later, I guess

we could interpret that as a metaphor for the world. I don’t write stories as metaphors, but more from the human level. If the audience sees metaphors, why not. I leave interpretation of my films to them. I try not to give any answers. I want the audience to think. If people tell me they went for a drink and talked for three hours after seeing one of my films, then I feel I’ve done something right.

TICKING BOMBS

The dream of the European project was to stop wars and allow everyone to move around freely, live and work together despite past problems. But Europe today is very much a Christian club, taken over by the technocrats. Plus, the extreme rightwing is rising and if that idea takes over then we’re done! I hope that I’ll laugh at my bleakness in a couple of years. After all, nothing is written in stone. History is constantly being made. Some generations fair better than others. Each time people become fed up and change things. I do think that the world is a better place than before. But there are a lot of ticking bombs.



DANIS TANOVIĆ

(WRITER/DIRECTOR)

DEATH IN SARAJEVO is Danis Tanovic's seventh feature film, and actually his first shot entirely in his hometown of Sarajevo.

Danis last feature, TIGERS, was shot in India with Bollywood superstar Emraan Hamshi as a salesman who begins a dangerous battle against his company when he discovers that their baby formula is killing children. The tense drama made its world premiere at the 2014 Toronto Film Festival.

His previous feature, AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF AN IRON PICKER, won two Silver Bears at the 2013 Berlin Film Festival, including Best Actor for Nazif

Mujic, who made his debut re-enacting his own story in the film. The film was shortlisted for the Oscars in the Academy's 9 Best Foreign Films group.

Tanovic's 2001 debut feature NO MAN'S LAND won the Oscar and Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film. Set in the midst of the Bosnian war in 1993, NO MAN'S LAND also won Best Script prizes at the Cannes Film Festival and European Film Awards. The film received over 40 international awards, making it one of the most awarded first feature films in history.

FEATURE FILMS

2016 - DEATH IN SARAJEVO

2014 - TIGERS

2013 - AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF AN IRON PICKER

2010 - CIRKUS COLUMBIA

2009 - TRIAGE aka SHELL SHOCK

2005 - L'ENFER (HELL)

2001 - NO MAN'S LAND



DEATH IN SARAJEVO (SMRT U SARAJEVU / MORT À SARAJEVO)

A FILM BY DANIS TANOVIĆ

2016 - France/Bosnia and Herzegovina - 85 minutes - Dolby Surround 5.1 - ratio 1:2,35 - in Bosnian, French

MAIN CAST

JACQUES WEBER	Jacques (VIP guest speaker)
SNEŽANA VIDOVIĆ	Lamija (receptionist)
IZUDIN BAJROVIC	Omer (manager)
VEDRANA SEKSAN	Vedrana (TV Journalist)
MUHAMED HADŽOVIĆ	Gavrilo Princip
FAKETA SALIHBEGOVIĆ-AVDAGIĆ	Hatidza (Lamija's Mother)
EDIN AVDAGIĆ	Edo Husabasic (Surveillance Guard)
ALEKSANDAR SEKSAN	Enco (strip club owner)
RIJAD GVOZDEN	Rijad (Kitchen Worker lover)

MAIN CREW

director	DANIS TANOVIĆ
screenplay	DANIS TANOVIĆ
	based on the theatre play "Hotel Europe" by Bernard-Henri Lévy
director of photography	EROL ZUBČEVIĆ
editor	REDŽINALD ŠIMEK
production designer	MIRNA LER
sound design	SAMIR FOČO
original score	MIRZA TAHIROVIĆ
costumes	INA ARNAUTALIĆ, HATIDŽA NUHIĆ
hair & make-up	LAMIJA HADŽIHASANOVIĆ HOMARAC
production manager	AMIRA LEKIĆ
producers	FRANCOIS MARGOLIN, AMRA BAKŠIĆ ČAMO
co-producer	ADIS ĐAPO

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