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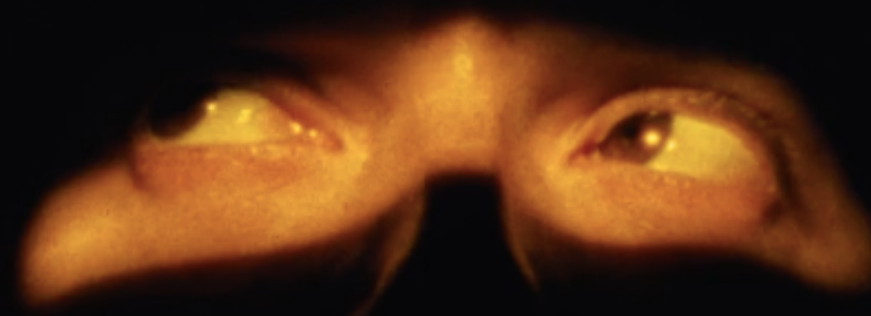
Locarno Film Festival

CONCORSO INTERNAZIONALE
OFFICIAL SELECTION



SORELLA DI CLAUSURA

a film by Ivana Mladenović





ROMANIA - SERBIA - ITALY - SPAIN
2025 | 107 | ROMANIAN, ENGLISH, SERBIAN

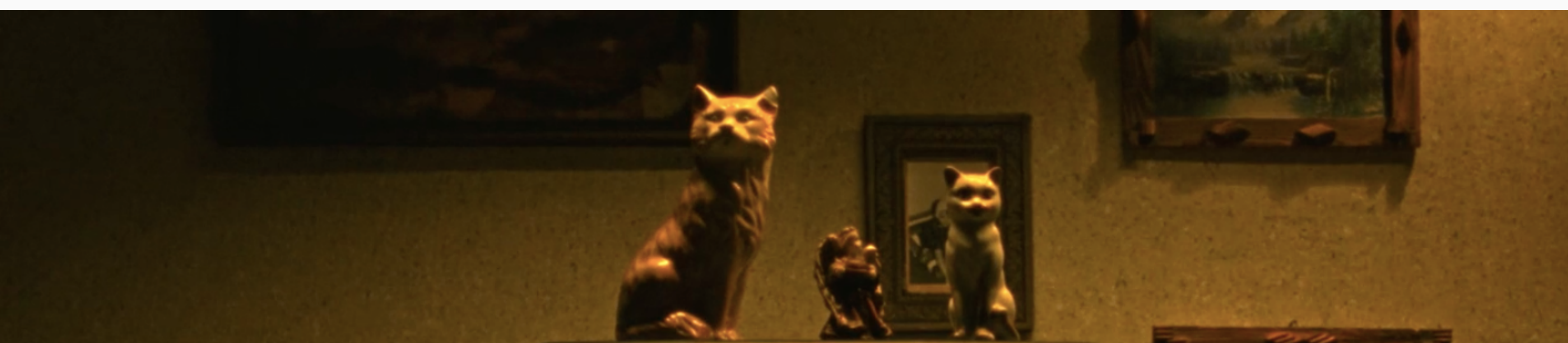
SYNOPSIS

If you wish for something hard enough, the whole Universe will work in your favor, right? Stela, educated but unable to hold down a job, fell in love with a famous Balkan musician after seeing him on TV. This passion transformed into obsession is taking over her life and now she must meet him. One of the musician's supposed mistresses, Vera, a starlet-musician, promises to help Stela meet her idol and, even more, to take her away from her poverty-stricken rural life. Their two worlds collide when Vera brings Stela to Bucharest, where she runs a company that sells sexual products and lubricants.

IVANA MLADENović ON SORELLA DI CLAUSURA

“Sorella di Clausura” is based on real people, and it is a story about the game between reality and dreams. Although tragic at its core, inspired by the story of a singer and friend who lost her life prematurely, the film is primarily an empathetic parody of romantic melodramas. Set in the Balkan margins at the beginning of the 2008 economic crisis, the film explores how much magic and fiction a cutting-edge universe can take in. It plays on this ambiguity and suggests that there is no place for magic in this reality and that the only way to keep dreaming without being expelled from the universe is to go on dreaming, knowing that you're dreaming.

Otherwise, “Sorella di Clausura” is a bittersweet comedy of manners about people's beliefs around sex in a country at the outskirts of the European Union. The film looks at the relation between sex and capital – or more specifically, whether sex can be a substitute for money, whether it can stop hunger or inflation.





ADA SOLOMON ON SORELLA DI CLAUSURA

It is a punk, bittersweet comedy about two women who embody very different forms of femininity and who, despite their clashes, ultimately long for the same thing: to be seen for who they truly are, not for how well they conform to social norms. But the film goes far beyond a simple virgin-and-whore narrative. It's a timely reflection on how we build idols and Gods through digital content, a story of survival and material illusions, a journey into the life of an outcast fighting to find her place in a world in transition – much like her own life. All these layers are delivered with humor and empathy, in a colorful style that contrasts with the grey reality underneath.

KATIA PASCARIU ON SORELLA DI CLAUSURA

Living with Stela wasn't the easiest, but I don't think I've ever missed a character the way I missed her after we finished filming. Stela is much braver and more passionate than I am - she just had a lot less luck. I couldn't give her the justice she deserves, and maybe that's what our film is partly about: the glaring absence of justice, the completely senseless, random blows that some of us get - harder, worse, more absurd, more perverse, more ridiculous. There's no use looking for explanations or hiding behind vague theoretical or mystical ideas about the inequality and injustice we're born into; and that the system not only fails to help us escape, but actually kicks and slaps us around from time to time. Stela's intensity is too much, too overwhelming for the people around her. And in the end, it hits her the hardest. And unfortunately, I couldn't save her; I could only tell her that it's okay not to be a winner, it's okay to be among the losers of this world, it's okay not to care anymore, not to believe, not to want anything except to be left alone!





DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

2012 - Turn Off the Lights (documentary)

- Tribeca International Film Festival
- Sarajevo International Film Festival (Best Documentary Award)
- Ji.hlava Documentary Film Festival
- Transilvania International Film Festival

2017 - Soldiers. Story from Ferentari (feature fiction)

- Toronto International Film Festival
- San Sebastian IFF (Premios Sebastian Special Jury Mention)
- Rotterdam International Film Festival
- Namur International Film Festival (Prix Decouverte)
- CPH:PIX (Special Jury Mention)

2019 - Ivana the Terrible (feature fiction)

- Locarno International Film Festival (Special jury Award)
- AFI FEST
- Reykjavík International Film Festival
- Busan International Film Festival
- Thessaloniki International Film Festival

IVANA MLADENOVIĆ

Ivana Mladenović is a Serbian-Romanian film director born in 1984 in Kladovo, Serbia. After studying law in Belgrade, she moved to Romania to study film directing at UNATC in Bucharest. Her debut documentary, “Turn Off the Lights” (2012), premiered at Tribeca and won the Heart of Sarajevo and Romanian National Gopo Awards, explored the lives of three young ex convicts just released from prison. Her first feature, “Soldiers. Story from Ferentari” (2017), co-written and based on an autobiographical novel by Adrian Schiop, in which he also plays himself, explores the relationship between an anthropologist and a former inmate in a marginalized Roma community. It premiered in Toronto and San Sebastián and screened at over 50 festivals. In “Ivana the Terrible” (2019), she turned the camera on herself in a humorous, autofictional portrait shot in her hometown of Kladovo, starring her family and friends. The film premiered in Locarno where it won Cine+ Jury Award, later screening at numerous festivals across Europe and beyond.

Watch “Ivana the Terrible” here:

<https://vimeo.com/352008326> password
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CREW

Director: Ivana Mladenovic

Scriptwriters: Ivana Mladenovic, Adrian Schiop, Momir Milosević

Producers: Ada Solomon (microFILM, Romania), Ivana Mladenovic (Dunav 84, Serbia)

Co-producers: Ines Vasiljevic & Stefano Sardo (Nightswim, Italy), Bernat Manzano (Boogaloo Films, Spain)

Executive Producers: Diana Caravia, Marija Lero, Montse Pujol Solà

Associate Producer: Theo Nissim

Director of Photography: Marius Panduru RSC

Editor: Vanja Kovačević

Production Designer: Mălina Ionescu

Costume Designer: Dana Păpăruz

Hair Stylist: Margareta Ștefan

Make Up Artists: Bianca Boeroiu, Olimpia Stoicea

Sound Engineer: Dejan Kragulj

Sound Designer: Oriol Campi

Composer: Toni Cutrone

Original Songs: Andrei Dinescu

CAST

Katia Pascariu – **Stela**

Cendana Trifan – **Vera**

Miodrag Mladenovic – **Boban**

Arnold Kelsch – **Charlie**

Cătălin Dordea – **Mr. X**

Adrian Radu – **Gabi**

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“SEX IS NO LONGER A SPACE OF LIBERATION”: IVANA MLADENović SPEAKS ABOUT “SORELLA DI CLAUSURA”

WRITTEN BY CHRISTOPHER SMALL

I’m curious about Liliana Pelici, whose manuscript inspired the film. Where did you first encounter it? And how much was she involved in your adaptation? I’m afraid I don’t know anything about her!

Back in 2016, I met a singer – Anca Pop – who became a friend and starred in *Ivana the Terrible*. She was deeply committed to helping publish [an autobiographical] manuscript by Liliana, who was a very poor young woman from Timsioara obsessed with this one singer-songwriter – she followed him to concerts and stalked him online. The day after we met, Anca urged me to read her book. She told me that maybe, one day, I could make a film and help Liliana share her story. What drew me in was the intensity of the narrative voice: a punk, edgy humor with merciless self-irony. But I put it aside to finish the film I was working on. Then, near the end of shooting *Ivana the Terrible*, Anca tragically died in a terrible car accident. The shock of her death led me back to Liliana’s manuscript and to reflect on their friendship: Anca – beautiful, outgoing, somewhat successful; Liliana – withdrawn, unnoticed by men, emotionally fragile. I kept wondering what bonded them so strongly.

Some months after that, I found Liliana standing in front of my building, needing someone to talk to. We had never met before. I asked her to write about what happened after the manuscript ended – about their friendship and life in general. Gradually, I realized that what united them was a kind of maladjustment. Both, in their own way, were like Don Quixote: Anca with her talk of sexual liberation and hippie energy; Liliana with her fixation on this one singer. This “Donquixotism”, I came to see, was their way of coping with a world that couldn’t truly accept them.

***Sorella di Clausura* has a very unusual energy and rhythm. Can you speak a little about the process of turning this woman’s life, as filtered through this text, into cinema?**

When you make a film even loosely based on those you’ve known, the usual advice is to move away from reality, to fictionalize it, because you’ll never find the “proper” structure. Adding in forceful constructions eventually made me feel stupid and dishonest – as if you could ever expect someone’s life to deliver a clear moral.

I’m a huge fan of the Yugoslav Black Wave of the ’60s and ’70s, especially [Želimir] Žilnik and [Dusan] Makavejev. From Žilnik, I borrowed methods for working with and casting non-professional actors: in this film there are more nonprofessional actors than professional ones. What fascinates me about Makavejev, on the other hand, is the way he mixed political essay, the grotesque, and the spirit of sexual revolution into a wonderfully chaotic blend, where sexual liberation functioned as a form of resistance against totalitarianism and traditional norms. But today, sex is no longer a space of liberation: it’s often a space of alienation, marketing, or relational failure. In *Sorella*, even though there’s endless chatter about sex, sexuality doesn’t heal neuroses or set anyone free: the sex scenes are deliberately mechanical, awkward, comedic.

What fascinated me in Liliana's account was this layering of two types of resistance. Vera sells herself as a revolutionary icon of sexual freedom – but her rebellion gets absorbed by the system. Stela, on the other hand, offers a more radical resistance: she doesn't fit into either the traditional model, with a husband and kids, nor the urban one, the model of the "Sexually Liberated Human". In a society of compulsory orgasms, her lack of libido is automatically seen as a trauma. But beneath the mask of a conservative woman, Stela is a post-sexual figure: she simply wants to step out of the game. That, to me, is the ultimate form of resistance.

“[In Romania] we don't wrap the vulgar jokes in layers of post-ironic sophistication – we leave them as they are: warm, direct, imperfect, alive.”

What was the significance for you in setting the film during this precise period? It's a very meticulous, near-historical recreation.

I was lucky! Liliana's autobiography happened to coincide with an important historical moment – the brief bubble of prosperity before the 2008 crisis, when Romania, freshly admitted to the EU, was riding high on the euphoria of "ID-only" loans and European funds spent on absurd projects. The 2008 crisis burst the illusion of this fragile prosperity. We understood that money, in a society with no social safety nets, is more real than reality itself. If in 2008 the crisis hit like an earthquake, now it creeps into Europe like a slow erosion... As [co-writer] Adi Schiop likes to say: "As Eliot believed his Western world would end with a whimper, our film tries to capture, through a pop, the prolonged whimper we're living through now."

Several recent Romanian films draw power from vulgarity as a weapon against social niceties – and both this film and Ivana, in different ways, are beautiful crystallizations of that approach.

You're right – many recent Romanian films use this type of humor called "de autobază", Romanian lads' humor, to provoke the refined sensibilities of elites. What sets us apart, I think, is that we don't wrap the vulgar jokes in layers of post-ironic sophistication – we leave them as they are: warm, direct, imperfect, alive. In more marginal environments, this kind of humor is often better equipped to create solidarity or resist alienation. And just as the jokes aren't sugarcoated with irony, the film doesn't pretend to any meta-distance either. I wanted it to be exactly what it looks like: a full-on empathetic comedy, like Muriel's Wedding (1994) – only with a Muriel who's bitter and foul-mouthed, and couldn't care less about the wedding.





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