



CINEMA KOMUNISTO

WHEN REALITY HAS A DIFFERENT SCRIPT
FROM THE ONE IN YOUR FILMS,
WHO WOULDN'T INVENT A COUNTRY
TO FOOL THEMSELVES?

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NETWORK, in association with ERT Greece
presents

CINEMA KOMUNISTO

a film by Mila Turajlic

Doc. | 101 mins | 2010 | Serbia |
HDCam | 16:9 | Color and b&w | Stereo |

[SYNOPSIS]

"Can cinema forge a country? This quirky doc cracks open the vaults at Avala Film Studios, the deserted state-owned facility that once churned out star-studded propaganda fostering the myths behind the rise -- and eventual collapse -- of Yugoslavia."
HotDocs Fest

TAGLINE: When reality has a different script from the one in your films, who wouldn't invent a country to fool themselves?

SHORT SYNOPSIS: CINEMA KOMUNISTO explores the myth that created Yugoslavia, President Tito, the man who directed this fictional story, and how image and reality diverged until it all collapsed, leaving behind rotting sets and film clips from a country that no longer exists.

MEDIUM-LENGTH SYNOPSIS: CINEMA KOMUNISTO takes us on a journey through the crumbling remains of Tito's film industry exploring the rise and fall of the cinematic illusion called Yugoslavia. Using rare footage from dozens of forgotten Yugoslav films, as well as never-seen-before archive from film sets and Tito's private screenings, the documentary recreates the narrative of a country, the stories told on screen and the ones hidden behind it. Stars such as Richard Burton, Sofia Loren and Orson Welles add a touch of glamour to the national effort, appearing in super-productions financed by the state. Tito's personal projectionist who showed him films every night for 30 years, his favorite film director, the most famous actor of partisan films, and the boss of the central film studios with secret police links – all tell how the history of Yugoslavia was constructed on the screen.

LONG SYNOPSIS: Leka Konstantinovic was the personal film projectionist of Yugoslavia's President Josip Broz Tito for 32 years. In that period he showed Tito a total of 8801 films. Along with Yugoslav directors, film stars and studio bosses he tells the story of how Marshal Tito (1892-1980) gave form to the post-war federal state of Yugoslavia, while at the same time using the film industry to create the narrative of the new country. Using footage from dozens of forgotten Yugoslav films, CINEMA KOMUNISTO tells the story of Yugoslavia – the way it was never told on screen. Pulling together exclusive behind-the-scenes archive the documentary recreates the story of a country that may itself have been a fiction. From the collapsing film sets of the ghost town that remains of the massive communist state-run studios, to the privacy of Tito's screening room, we meet a man who obsessively watched a film every night, and spent his days reading, even editing scripts while also running a country. Stars such as Richard Burton, Sofia Loren and Orson Welles add a touch of glamour to the national effort, appearing in super-productions financed by the state. "No problem" was the standard answer for whatever a director needed – with soldiers serving their entire tour of duty as extras on war films, and even the blowing up of a real bridge to create an Oscar-nominated film. CINEMA KOMUNISTO is told with clips from over 60 feature films, mixed with the bittersweet memories of the storytellers, with plenty of funny anecdotes and remarkable details. With Tito's death, the entire Yugoslav film industry crumbled, and a decade later, the rest of the country followed suit. Today, nothing remains but the old studio complexes, which are rotting away, and the filmed memories of a country that no longer exists.



[DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT]

How does a country choose the story to tell about itself?

If I had to choose one word to describe growing up in a country that has changed names 4 times in the past fifteen years, it would be discontinuity. Destroying the past in the name of a new beginning has become the hallmark of our history, and each new break with the past requires it's re-writing.

From the end of the Second World War the Story of Yugoslavia was given a visual form in the creation of Yugoslav cinema. In a sense the Avala Film studios are the birthplace of the Yugoslav illusion. For me they represent a promising point of departure - that collapsing film sets can reveal something about the collapse of the scenography we were living in.

I first went into the Avala Film studios when I was a student in film school. Sent there to get equipment for a student film, I found myself overwhelmed by the atmosphere of the place. It was immense, a ghost town of abandoned and rotting sets, out-of-date equipment, empty film lots and unemployed technicians. And nobody had ever told me anything about it.

I wanted to make a film about how films were used to write and re-write a story, to provide visuals for a narrative that became the unifying call of Yugoslavia. About the use of our filmmakers' tools, - smoke-and-mirrors - to create the Official National Dream. The cinematic image remains as a testimony, a doorway to another time. But it is also a deception, a construct, to be analysed, and looked through.

How do we explain Yugoslavia, a country whose existence fits into a half century, book-ended by un-civil wars on either end? Yugoslavs have a passion for their cinema, perhaps founded in our passion for those same myths that have led us marching into battle too many times.

The old fortress in the heart of Belgrade houses the War Museum. Today, only a small part of it is open to the public. For those who wander in looking to spend a Sunday afternoon browsing through Serbian history, the exhibition will take them from medieval battles and kingdoms through the 1930s. The rest is closed, indefinitely. The government has asked the museum to revise the exhibition covering the Second World War, declaring it 'over-dimensional and biased from a communist perspective'. At a loss for official instructions on how to re-write history, its director could only shut it down. (Not to mention the fact that he doesn't know whether to mount an exhibition on war actions and losses from the 1990s, as Serbia was never officially involved in war in Bosnia.) And so he waits for us as a society to yet again agree on our new narrative.

This became an urgent film, a response to the discontinuity all around me, a way to preserve a world that is being erased from official memory. When I look around for my childhood, every trace of it is gone, the street names changed, my school's name changed, the neighbourhood reshaped with new office blocks. Fourteen cinemas in the heart of Belgrade have been sold and turned into cafes. Avala Films is also up for sale - and will most likely be torn down to build an elite business complex. As they disappear, I am not convinced that the best way to move forward is to pretend the past never happened.

I enter this story as a member of a new generation of Yugoslav filmmakers, one that has hazy memories of a country that no longer exists. We come of age surrounded by the ruins of something that is nostalgically referred to as a golden era, but no one has yet offered me a satisfactory insight into how it was all thrown away. We were born too late, and missed that party, but we arrived in time to pay the bill for it.



[PRODUCTION DETAILS]

making the film

At the beginning I set out to explore the Avala Film Studios, aiming to discover and film every hidden corner. The spell of the place was strong - old costumes, rooms full of old posters, screening rooms used as storage space, scripts and production stills littering the floors. I began to interview dozens of old Yugoslav filmworkers, talking to them about the old days, but also looking for clues at to how cinema played a role in shaping Yugoslav society.

In writing the script, my focus was on tying the stories of the movies and their making to the wider history of Yugoslavia, and a quote from Jacques Ranciere sums up that guiding idea: "The history of cinema is the history of the power to make history,"

The particular way I wanted to structure the film was to rely on feature films as a tool to tell the story, rather than relying on the traditional approach of using archive in an illustrative fashion.

I started gathering old Yugoslav films. It took over a year to gather some 300 films, and catalogue their content. There were archetypes that appear from film to film, particularly in the partisan films, but also whole sub-genres giving a picture of life in the new Yugoslavia - films about the youth brigades rebuilding the country, about worker's meetings at the collectively managed factories, etc. I made a database of film clips indexed by the types of scenes and dialogue, which we used in the editing process, and that was definitely one of the most challenging parts of the process.

The concept of the visual construction of the film was to tell the history of Yugoslavia using clips from Yugoslav feature films, but also bring these clips into direct communication with the characters in our doc, creating a sort of dialogue between the films and 'reality'.

It became clear that I couldn't find one central character to tell the story from beginning to end, so I decided to choose those who could be our guides through each sequence of the film. They were marvelous storytellers, coming from different parts of the film industry, with different perspectives and comments on how we came to be where we are today, and my favorite moments in the film are when their stories intertwine. I avoided a voiceover from the beginning because it went against the whole nature of the story, so it was essential that their accounts could be stitched together.

The project was selected for ARCHIDOC, and then the Discovery Campus Masterschool, and with some amazing mentorship and support the concept was pushed a lot further. At this point it became clear that for Western audiences the story of filmmaking in Yugoslavia could provide a new and unusual insight into what the country was and how it collapsed from an angle that had never been done before.

A constant theme that kept coming up in my research was Tito's role in the cinema industry. It's a widely known anecdote in the former Yugoslavia that Tito was a huge film fan, and as I researched the real role he played behind the scenes, the story gained another layer - the man writing the destiny of a country was also directing its films.

That's when I met Leka Konstantovic - Tito's personal projectionist for 32 years. Leka had given only one interview in his life, and was at first very reticent about talking on camera, mainly because he felt that Tito and Yugoslavia had been wrongly disowned even by those who were closest to Tito during his lifetime. His participation in the film provided it's emotional center, the intimate, up-close view that really ties together the big historical events with a key-hole view of the man shaping them.

I spent weeks in the Yugoslav Newsreels, looking for material that would flesh out the behind-the-scenes of the 'official narrative' we were piecing together from feature film clips. I found some absolute gems there, which gave me the ideal opportunity to show the direct involvement of Tito and our characters, but also decided to cast the net much wider. I looked in all principal archives in the former Yugoslav republics (television stations and cinemateques) as well as archives in England, France, Germany and Italy. My favorite discovery was the material showing involvement of ordinary people in the film shoots - like the interviews with young men serving in the army who don't like having to play the Germans, as well as people who have come from all over Yugoslavia to be extras in films. The jewel in the crown was definitely the footage of Tito on the film set, watching Richard Burton play him, squinting into the camera, checking the shot.

In Tito's private archive we found evidence of his passion and involvement in filmmaking that has never been publicly shown. From copies of film scripts where he wrote his notes in the margins, to telegrams film directors sent him from film labs reporting on the first print of a film. Letters from Carlo Ponti offering him copies of films to watch. Photos of Sophia Loren and Tito in the kitchen, cooking!? Transcripts of his conversations with filmmakers following screenings of rough cuts. Often the research had the thrill of a detective story, finding links in various archives, tracking down things people mention in anecdotes.

Having developed deep relationships with our characters, we decided to take the film beyond the Avala Film Studios to other important places which form the 'remaining sets' of the Yugoslav film story. With the support of my producer Iva Plemić we filmed on Tito's private residence of Brioni, even going to the camp for political prisoners on Goli Otok where we also found a cinema. A special moment was the shoot on the Neretva river in Bosnia, where we found ourselves in the middle of a pilgrimage of both veterans from the actual historical battle and extras from the recreation of the battle on film. In a kind of bizarre double world, reality was turned into fiction, and fiction back into reality,

Even though the bridge on the Neretva is famous both as a location of a heroic battle in WWII and as the set of Bulajić's Academy-Award nominated film, very few people realise it's still there today. Yet the image of the bridge lying in the river was so iconic, it was even on the front of New Year's greeting cards Tito used to send out.

Our shoots were often fun and entertaining, but on occasion they were quite poignant. The whole crew was aware that we were documenting the last moments of a disappearing story. In some cases, such as that of Vlasta Gavrić, we were the last people to interview him before he died. And in the case of Avala, we are probably the last people to go through the studios and film them.

The project was selected for the IDFAcademy Summer School 2008, where the first rough cut was worked on with a tutor. Dragan Pesikan took over the producing of the film and I was lucky to find the right companion on what turned out to be a year-long edit. My editor Aleksandra Milovanović made the concept work, creating the interaction between film and our material that I had hoped for. Putting together the material was definitely the biggest challenge, to tell the story coherently and interestingly, while managing to have it work on every layer - the anecdotal, the emotional, and philosophical, and making the play between fiction film and present-day interviews work.

The final challenge was in creating a film of HD technical quality. In an unprecedented move, we obtained permission from the Yugoslav Newsreels to take dozens of reels out of their vault for digital scanning. The result is that Tito and Yugoslavia pop on the big screen like never before, which really helps integrate the past and present.

The archive was scanned, and the film was blown up to High Definition size and color corrected at the CineLabs in Belgrade.

[CHARACTERS]



STEVA PETROVIC

Avala's films contact with the world. He was in charge of 'escorting' all foreigners who came to Yugoslavia to shoot their films -picking them up at the border, fulfilling their every request, and once engaging the Yugoslav secret police to stop a train on which a kidnapped Broderick Crawford was being smuggled.

"Never let them notice they are not in Hollywood."



Dragisa GILE DJURIC

A template resume of a Communist party operator - from leader of youth brigades in building 'public works', to director of (among other things) the airport, the municipal authority, local government, and finally the national film studio. He was chased out of Avala for thinking that 'the bad parts of communism should also be addressed in our films'.



Aleksandar LEKA KONSTATINOVIC

The longest-serving member on Tito's personal staff, Leka spent every night of his 32-year career as Tito's projectionist standing behind 'the Marshal's' head in the dark, showing films that he gathered during the day. Leka was the silent observer of daily life around Tito, an invisible witness of the political discussions that took place in the screening room, picking tangerine's in Tito's orchard in his free time.



VELJKO BULAJIC

Bulajic's films are the best examples of the authentic partisan genre that represents the most megalomaniacal days of Yugoslav cinema. For him Tito's Yugoslavia truly was a golden age - he had at his disposal army units, villagers, whatever was required. His contribution was to give the founding myth of Yugoslavia its filmic narrative, stock characters, and most memorable quotes.



Velimir BATA ZIVOJINOVIC

How did a Yugoslav actor become the most popular film star in China, and so lay claim to having over 1 billion fans? By playing in over 300 Yugoslav films, Bata IS the face of Yugoslav cinema. Reportedly, in his films he killed more Germans than Paton did. Bata is the personification of the Yugoslav partisan hero, who carried the myth of their noble struggle from film to film.

"What's the last thing Hitler said before he died?"

-Kill Bata Zivojinovic!"



Dan TANA

Seduced by Hollywood films at a young age, Dan Tana fled Yugoslavia as a young football star, to end up proprietor of the legendary LA restaurant that bears his name. Upon meeting Tito who confessed to him that he too would have run away from Yugoslavia, Dan Tana returned to the film studios, producing several award-winning films.

[CREDITS]

Written & Directed by MILA TURAJLIC
Produced by DRAGAN PEŠIKAN
Producers DRAGAN PEŠIKAN, MILA TURAJLIC,
IVA PLEMIC, DEJAN PETROVIC, GORAN JEŠIC
Edited by ALEKSANDRA MILOVANOVIC
Director of Photography GORAN KOVACEVIC
Original Music NEMANJA MOSUROVIC
Sound design ALEKSANDAR PROTIC
Graphic design JELENA SANADER
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ARCHIDOC
EDN WORKSHOP - DOCS AT THESSALONIKI

SERBIA | 2010 | 101 mins | TV: 2 x 52 mins, single 56 mins
Color | HDCam and DigiBETA | 16:9
in Serbian with English or French subtitles

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[CREW BIOS]

MILA TURAJLIC writer/director/producer

Dribbling Pictures

Mila graduated from the London School of Economics with a degree in Politics and International Relations, and completed a degree in Film Production at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade. During her studies she set up an NGO that introduced parliamentary debating at the University of Belgrade, and competed in many debate tournaments, winning Best Speaker Award at the European Universities Debating Championships in 2001. Faced with the political reality of post-revolutionary Serbia, she converted to filmmaking in the belief that art will always be more subversive than politics. She received the Michael Peacock scholarship to continue her master studies in Media and Communications at the LSE, and specialised in documentary filmmaking at La Femis in Paris.

Mila was invited to intern with two-time Academy Award winner for Short Documentary Tony Schwartz in New York. In 2004, she worked at Wilton Films in London, as a production assistant and researcher on series for Discovery Europe/Discovery Times and ARTE France. Since then she gathered experience on feature films as AD and production co-ordinator (APOCALYPTO dir. Mel Gibson, FADE TO BLACK dir. Oliver Parker, BROTHERS BLOOM dir. Rian Johnson, HUMAN ZOO prod. Luc Besson). With the aim to bring quality documentaries to Serbian audiences, in 2005 she co-founded the MAGNIFICENT 7 FESTIVAL of European Feature Documentary Films, which takes place in Belgrade every January.

CINEMA KOMUNISTO is her first feature documentary. Four years in the making, it was selected for ARCHIDOC, developed in the Discovery Campus Masterschool 2006, Docu Talents of the East at Karlovy Vary in 2008, IDFA Academy Summer School in 2008 and Berlin Talent Campus 2009.

DRAGAN PESIKAN producer

Dragan is a media executive and producer with over 10 years of experience in television. Following several years working as a journalist for print and radio, he joined the sports department of Channel 3 (3K) of Radio-Television Serbia, the national public broadcaster, as journalist and commentator. From there he moved to the film department, where he created the TV magazine SHORT CUTS covering international film events. From October 2000 to May 2006 he was Deputy Channel Director of 3K overseeing development and production of various broadcast programmes. Currently he is the production manager and Head of commentators at Eurosport. In 2009 he conceived and set-up operations, programming and technology for the first HD TV station in the region, Arena TV. In recent years he has specialised in film production, executive producing the feature film JELENA, KATARINA, MARIJA which was shot entirely on location in New York. He set up his own production company 3K PRODUCTION and is overseeing the script development and production of several feature film projects.

ALEKSANDRA MILOVANOVIC editor

Aleksandra graduated from the Faculty of Dramatic Arts, Department of Film and TV Editing. She completed her Master's studies at the Faculty, and is currently working on her PhD. She is also a teaching assistant in film history and theory at the Faculty. She has extensive experience editing documentary films and programs, for independent productions as well as TV B92. Among these are feature documentaries SRBIJA U KONTEJNERU, and VUKOVAR, POSLEDNJI REZ (Human Rights Award, Sarajevo Film Festival; IDFA 2006). For her editing of VUKOVAR, POSLEDNJI REZ she won TV B92's in-house production award for contribution to documentary film. She was the 2nd editor on the highly-rated docu series for TV B92 including KO JE UBIO ANTU MARKOVICA (10-part series) and SAV TAJ FOLK (8-part series) and regularly edits the most successful political investigative program on Serbian television INSAJDER.



[FESTIVALS]

a selection

IDFA – First Appearance (world premiere)

Trieste Film Festival, Italy

Magnificent 7 – European Feature Documentary Film Festival, Belgrade

Views of the World Int'l Documentary Film Festival, Cyprus

Sofia International Film Festival, Bulgaria

Ljubljana Documentary Film Festival, Slovenia

It's All True Festival, Brazil

Festival Cinematográfico Internacional del Uruguay, Uruguay

Tribeca Film Festival, USA (North American premiere)

San Francisco International Film Festival, USA

HotDocs Toronto, Canada

DOC.Fest, Munich, Germany

UnderhillFest, Montenegro

Doc Aviv, Israel

DocumentarIST, Istanbul, Turkey

Transylvania International Film Festival, Romania

Festival International du cinéma d'Alger, Algeria

Il Cinema Ritrovato, Italy

MakeDox, Macedonia

Festival International du Cinéma d'Auteur de Rabat, Morocco

Pula Film Festival, Croatia

Indianapolis International Film Festival, USA

Sarajevo Film Festival, Bosnia & Herzegovina

Dokufest, Prizren

Kerala International Documentary & Short Film Festival, India

Kratkofil, Banjaluka

Pristina International Film Festival

Vancouver International Film Festival, Canada

Chicago International Film Festival, USA

Bergen International Film Festival, Norway

Docslisboa, Lisbon, Portugal

Cinemed - Montpellier, France

UNAFF - United Nations Association Film Festival, USA

Eastern Neighbors Film Festival, Utrecht, Netherlands

Brisbane International Film Festival, Australia

Canberra International Film Festival, Australia

Bratislava International Film Festival, Slovakia

Sevilla International Film Festival, Spain

European Film Panorama, Cairo, Egypt

Brighton International Film Festival, UK

Goteborg International Film Festival, Goteborg, Sweden

Tempo Documentary Film Festival, Stockholm, Sweden

Cape Winelands Film Festival, Cape Town, South Africa

BAFICI, Buenos Aires, Argentina

London Archive Film Festival, London, UK

Midnight Sun Film Festival, Lapland, Finland

Festival Al Este de Lima, Lima, Peru

[AWARDS]



Gold Hugo for Best Documentary at Chicago International Film Festival, USA

Alpe Adria Cinema Award for Best Documentary Film at Trieste Film Festival, Italy

FOCAL International Award for Best Use of Archive Footage in an Arts Production

FIPRESCI Serbia Best Documentary Film in 2011

Grand Prix du Jury Festival International du cinéma d'Alger, Algeria

Best Balkan Newcomer Dokufest, Prizren

Best Debutant Director Makedox, Macedonia

Best Editing Award Cinema City, Serbia

Audience Award Views of the World, Cyprus

Audience Award UnderhillFest, Montenegro

Audience Award Cinema City Festival, Serbia

Honourable Mention of the Jury It's All True Festival, Brazil

Honourable Mention of the Jury Uruguay International Film Festival, Uruguay

Honorable Mention of the Jury Cape Winelands Film Festival, South Africa

Honourable Mention of the Jury UnderhillFest, Montenegro

Special Jury Award Balkan Film Festival in Podgradec, Albania





[CINEMA RELEASES]

Cinema Komunisto had a cinema release in
 Serbia
 Croatia
 Slovenia
 Bosnia & Herzegovina
 UK & Ireland

France (under the title: Il était une fois en Yougoslavie: Cinema Komunisto)





[PRESS REVIEWS]

[critic's pick] '...a documentary collage of 60 years of Yugoslavian film under Communist rule.'

- Wall Street Journal

'...a challenge that could have stumped even the most seasoned filmmaker: create a movie about a country that no longer exists.'

- New York Times

"The fascinating and absorbing documentary *Cinema Komunisto* is a must for film fans.. quite wonderfully tracks the history of former Yugoslavia through its cinema."

- Screen International

"*Cinema Komunisto*" is still one of the most riveting, well-researched, elegantly-rendered chronicles of a fallen era to ever be captured on film—and a must-see for film aficionados.."

- Screen Comment

★★★★ - "this exhaustively researched and elegantly edited documentary explores the cinematic legacy of the former Yugoslavia"

- The London Times

'Yugoslavia no longer exists, but its story still does. Who will tell it? Turajlic begins the conversation with this beautiful film.'

- Capital New York

What makes this film important is the dialogue between past and present, the fact that a story about a country has been told in a new way, which opens the communication between myth and competing truths, between history and the people who made it, between lies that our parents were fed of "socialist paradise" and the lies that certain states poison us with today, and above all, between the illusion that our parents lived in and the price we are paying for it today."

- Vladan Petkovic, e-novine



WIDE ANGLE INTERVIEW

WAS YUGOSLAVIA A FILM STUDIO?

Mila Turajlic's documentary 'Cinema Komunisto' explores the rich cinema culture of Tito's Yugoslavia

By Michael Brooke

The most entertaining and consistently surprising documentary about the cinema of the former Communist bloc since Dana Ranga and Andrew Horn's socialist-musicals paean *East Side Story* (1997), Mila Turajlic's extraordinary *Cinema Komunisto* presents a history of Yugoslav cinema from the 1940s to the 1990s, paying particular attention to the dictator Josip Broz Tito's often decidedly hands-on involvement.

It started as a portrait of Belgrade's Avala Film Studios, a regular destination for international stars like Richard Burton, Sophia Loren and Orson Welles half a century ago, since fallen into neglect and disrepair. "I was aware that this place has a real emotional, historical value that is going to disappear," Turajlic says. "I kept wanting to explore, to go behind doors that hadn't been opened in 20 years. But there was definitely a point where I had gone far enough in my research to be able to say, 'OK, what do these studios actually stand for?' The turning point for me was to say: 'How fascinating would it be to try to make a film in which we say that Yugoslavia itself was a film studio? How far would this metaphor get us in understanding Yugoslavia?'"

Under Tito (an obsessive film buff whose personal projectionist screened 8,801 films for him over a 32-year career), Yugoslavia's film output was both prolific and hugely popular. "It's not a statistic I can verify," Turajlic says, "but we were told in film school that Yugoslavia was second only to France for being a [European] country in which domestic films were more watched than foreign films. So there was a real, real love of cinema, and so many quotes from Yugoslav films have found their way into our daily language and into daily conversation. There's a sense of communal property over these films, regardless of the degree of their propaganda."

This is doubly impressive because, unlike almost anywhere else behind the old Iron Curtain, Western films were widely distributed. "There's this one Hollywood film that absolutely changed everything," Turajlic says. "Esther Williams's *Bathing Beauty* [1944] became the most watched American film in Serbia in the 50s. It sparked a whole genre of light summer comedies. It definitely influenced Yugoslav filmmakers, much in the way that the French New Wave influenced Yugoslav filmmakers in the 60s."

Talking of which, one glaring absence from

During the 90s there was so little talk of Tito's Yugoslavia, so the film is really filling a big hole in our public memory



Magic lantern: directed by Mila Turajlic, below, 'Cinema Komunisto' engages with 'Yugonostalgia'



Roll it: Tito's projectionist Leka Konstantinovic

Cinema Komunisto is the work of internationally fêted Yugoslav auteurs such as Dusan Makavejev, Emir Kusturica or (barring a brief namecheck) Aleksandar Petrovic. "This is definitely not a compendium of the best that Yugoslav cinema has to offer," Turajlic says. "In fact, the best Yugoslav films aren't even mentioned. I was more interested in following how consistently the government had worked on creating an official narrative through using cinema, and in talking to the figures themselves about how they placed themselves within that goal. The auteur films really don't fit within that."

Did she set out to attract both international and domestic audiences? "Yes, definitely, and that was the tricky part of the editing, which took a year. I started from the premise that this film would

potentially be seen by people who would not even be able to tell you where Yugoslavia had been on a map. But at the same time I really hoped it would have a career in the Balkans. And there, very often parents went to see it with their children. During the 90s there was so little talk of Tito's Yugoslavia, so it's really filling a big hole in our public memory. And I was really surprised by the deep emotion that this film stirs within an audience. There's a lot of 'Yugonostalgia' afoot. My personal interpretation is that it has a lot more to do with the economic uncertainty people in the Balkans are faced with at the moment. They don't wish to return to communism, but I just think it's really telling of how little people feel positioned within the narrative that's being offered today, particularly in Bosnia."

Turajlic's flawless English derives from many years abroad, including studies in London. "It gave me the distance I needed to be able to come back to Serbia and say, 'I feel a strong need to explore some of this stuff.' There's a real tradition of erasing the past in present-day Serbia. I felt a really strong motivation for this to be part of the first film I made."

She's currently pitching her next film, a similarly era-traversing doc. "It'll only sound cryptic if I tell you what it's about, but it's about a door in an apartment in Belgrade that's been locked for 55 years and – through that, again – we're trying to tell a much larger story."

i 'Cinema Komunisto' is released in the UK on 23 November, and is reviewed on page 89





Cinema Komunisto

de Mila Turajlic. À retrouver prochainement sur Ciné+



Le cinéma a follement aimé les dictateurs, et les dictateurs le lui ont bien rendu. Surtout Tito, qui, dans sa salle de projection privée, a vu presque autant de films qu'il s'est fait d'ennemis en URSS.

Le tête à Tito

Josip Broz Tito, maréchal de Yougoslavie, unique chef du pays pendant 40 ans, a vu un film par jour, chaque jour de sa vie. Et il a supervisé le tournage de dizaines d'entre eux, depuis le scénario jusqu'au montage. *Cinema Komunisto*, le documentaire de Mila Turajlic, jeune cinéaste serbe, raconte cette histoire de politique cinéphilie et revient sur une machine à brouiller les frontières entre fiction cinématographique et réalité politique. On a beaucoup parlé de Kim Jong-il et de sa passion pour les films d'action américains, la série des Rambo et Elizabeth Taylor. Moins de Tito. Le même, pourtant, en moins trash : personne, en Yougoslavie, ne s'est encore plaint d'avoir été kidnappé pour faire un film. Mais Tito était passionné de cinéma et n'avait rien d'envier aux 20 000 vidéos de son homologue asiatique puisqu'il ne possédait rien moins qu'une salle de cinéma privée occupée par un projectionniste à plein temps.

Depuis sa prise de pouvoir en 1943 jusqu'à sa mort, en 1980, il a passé l'essentiel de son temps libre à regarder des films et lire des scénarios. En plus de ses deux autres hobbies, tout de même : la photographie, ce qui est cohérent, et la chasse. Ce qui est cohérent aussi puisqu'il nourrissait une passion toute particulière pour les films de guerre. « Il aimait les westerns, Kirk Douglas, John Wayne... », raconte Leka Konstantinovic, projectionniste personnel de Tito, l'œil humide face à une statue deux fois plus haute que lui de son regretté chef. Tous les soirs, à 18h, Tito exigeait un film. Si Tito n'avait pas eu le temps, il lui arrivait de vouloir se rattraper en pleine nuit. Son projectionniste devait alors fouiller tout Belgrade pour trouver le chef d'œuvre réclamé. « C'est impossible de trouver un bon film par jour ! Parfois j'en pleurais : il n'y avait tout simplement plus de bons films ! » D'après son journal personnel, Tito a vu pas moins de

8 801 films en 32 ans de collaboration. Soit une bonne moyenne de 275 par an. Assez vite, Tito s'est mis à encourager sérieusement la production de films yougoslaves. Simple conséquence de sa folle cinéphilie ? L'un des plus grands chefs décorateurs de l'époque, Veljko Despotovic, met les pieds dans le plat : « On a tout simplement appris de Lénine et des Russes que le cinéma était un excellent outil pour promouvoir le pays et le Parti Communiste. » Pour commencer, il a fallu construire des studios. Alors est sorti de terre l'un des plus grands ensembles d'Europe dédiés au cinéma : Avala Films. « L'idée était d'en faire le centre de la production cinématographique yougoslave et d'y tourner 30 à 50 films par an », explique Stevan Petrovic, assistant réalisateur de l'époque. « L'idée du socialisme, comme celle de Jésus Christ, ce sont de grandes idées, qui nécessitent beaucoup de ressources. »

-Cahier critique-

La mégalomanie socialiste n'épargna donc pas ce projet : seul un des trois ensembles de bâtiments prévus voit le jour, mais le pays s'est lancé dans la production de centaines de films. Ainsi débute « l'âge d'or du cinéma yougoslave ». Et Tito ne s'est pas contenté de signer un décret. « Il passait un temps incroyable à annoter des scénarios, et pas seulement lui : l'armée aussi », raconte Mila Turajlic. Exemples d'annotations : « Arranger le script de sorte que je puisse regarder ce film chez moi », ou encore : « ça ne se passait pas comme ça dans la réalité ». Tito était particulièrement regardant sur les films traitant des batailles qu'il avait vécues. Résultat : des dizaines, voire des centaines de films de propagande hyperréalistes. Il arrive même qu'un carton soit nécessaire pour préciser que la scène projetée relève de la fiction. Et pour cause : toute l'armée était réquisitionnée, de vrais soldats jouent les figurants, sous la direction de leurs vrais supérieurs hiérarchiques. Ils jouent leur propre rôle ou celui de leurs ennemis... Ce qui n'est pas sans inconvénient. Il arrive parfois que certains militaires désertent le groupe d'Allemands qu'ils devaient jouer pour rejoindre en douce celui partisans yougoslaves. Le cinéma, oui, mais le patriotisme avant tout.

« La cinéphilie de Tito a façonné la Yougoslavie »

Changement d'ambiance dans les années 60. Tito a depuis quelques années pris ses distances avec le soviétisme. Le premier Américain à poser officiellement un pied sur le sol yougoslave n'est autre que le président de la toute-puissante Motion Picture Association of America, qui réunit les six plus grands studios américains. C'est le début d'une collaboration fructueuse, autour d'une passion commune : les films à gros budgets. Anthony Hopkins, David Swift, Alain Delon, Anthony Quinn, Kirk Douglas, Sophia Loren, Carlo Ponti... Avala Films voit défiler des dizaines de stars venues chercher à Belgrade les décors de leurs films, et beaucoup d'argent. Alfred Hitchcock lui-même y fera un passage éclair. Mais surtout : Orson Welles. Acteur-star d'un des plus grands films de l'histoire du cinéma yougoslave, *La Bataille de la Neretva*, le cinéaste américain a largement apprécié le pays, ses coutumes et... son dictateur. « Puisqu'on juge habituellement la grandeur d'un

homme à son leadership, le plus grand homme du monde, aujourd'hui, est incontestablement le président Tito. » Et le dictateur le lui a bien rendu. Il déblique des moyens jamais vus pour le tournage du film de Veljko Bulajic. Bata Zivojinovic, star du cinéma yougoslave, explique : « Les Américains n'auraient jamais pu faire un film comme *La Bataille de la Neretva*. Impossible d'avoir autant de tanks, de canons et d'armes à jeter intégralement dans le fleuve. Et vous pouvez voir ça dans le film. »

Tito lui-même est présent sur le tournage : il raconte aux acteurs ses faits d'armes. Mais il y a mieux. Lors de la vraie bataille de la Neretva, en 1943, les partisans ont dû se résoudre à faire sauter un pont pour empêcher les Allemands d'avancer. Le pont a depuis été reconstruit au-dessus de ce fleuve qui compte parmi les plus importants de Bosnie. Mais, sur ordre de Tito, la construction est dynamitée une seconde

“Les Américains n'auraient jamais pu faire un film comme *La Bataille de la Neretva*. Impossible d'avoir autant de tanks, de canons et d'armes à jeter intégralement dans le fleuve. Et vous pouvez voir ça dans le film.”

fois pour le besoin du tournage. *La Bataille de la Neretva* reste l'un des plus grands succès de l'histoire du cinéma yougoslave : nommé pour l'Oscar du meilleur film étranger en 1969, il ne l'a pas gagné mais reste dans les mémoires comme un immense film populaire. Il y a quelques semaines, le film est repassé à la télévision serbe : meilleure audience de l'année. Conséquence de ce mémorable succès, Tito commande un biopic sur sa personne. Le film s'appellera *Sutjeska*, toujours d'après la bataille du même nom. Il sortira en 1972. Tito choisit lui-même Kirk Douglas pour l'incarner, mais l'acteur refuse. Ce sera donc Richard Burton. La ressemblance physique n'est visiblement pas le premier critère.

Tous ces films tournés... il fallait trouver le moyen de les diffuser pour éclairer le peuple de leurs lumières. Tito crée donc son festival, le Yugoslav Feature Film Festival. Des écrans géants, une foule en délire à peine contenue par de monumentales arènes. Le maréchal regarde tous les films en avance, donne son avis et boucle généralement à lui tout seul le palmarès. Pure propagande ? Les avis sont mitigés. L'acteur-star Bata Zivojinovic rappelle combien Tito était sérieux dans l'intérêt qu'il portait aux films : « Ce n'était pas un simple amateur à qui on montrait le résultat. Il était impliqué dans le moindre détail, ce qui était fatal pour ceux d'entre nous qui faisaient les films. »

Aujourd'hui, les tonnes de costumes créés pour Avala Films dans les années 60 ont été récupérées pour des pubs. Il est devenu plus difficile de faire du cinéma ; les caisses sont vides. On ne regrette certes pas Tito lui-même, mais la fiction qu'il avait créée. « La cinéphilie de Tito a façonné la Yougoslavie. C'était un peu le réalisateur du grand film yougoslave. Les gens vivaient dans une fiction, mais la fiction d'un pays qui fonctionnait. » Tito avait coutume de dire que la Yougoslavie avait « six Républiques, cinq nations, quatre langues, trois religions, deux alphabets et un seul parti ». Tito n'a-t-il jamais lui-même confondu cinéma et réalité ? L'ironie du sort a voulu qu'il meure au cinéma, ou presque : sa jambe, touchée par une thrombose, le lance en plein milieu d'une projection. Il est évacué vers l'hôpital de Ljubljana, où il mourra quelques semaines plus tard. ■ Anne Brouillet

Sofil

Mars 2013

Mars 2013

Sofil

“Cinema Komunisto tells this history of cinephilia and politics, retracing a smoke machine, that clouded the boundaries between cinematic fiction and political reality.”

[INTERVIEW with Mila Turajlic]



Tell us a little about *Cinema Komunisto*, in your own words.

Cinema Komunisto is a trip through the fiction and reality of a country that no longer exists, and may never have existed, except in movies. Using films and the stories behind-the-scenes to reconstruct the rise and fall of Yugoslavia, it takes you through the silver screen into the time of communist Yugoslavia. Under President Tito, who was a huge film lover, the film industry was given the task of creating a narrative for a new country, and they did it in the most megalomaniacal way—creating one of the largest film studios in Europe, bringing stars like Orson Welles and Sophia Loren to star in the films, and in one case even destroying a real bridge to re-create a famous episode from the war. Through the stories of Tito's personal projectionist, who showed him a film every night for 32 years, we begin to see Tito's role in a new light—as Chief Illusionist, at once both director and biggest fan of the story taking shape on the screen.

In your film, you really tell a 50+-year history of, as you say, “a country that no longer exists.” As someone so young, what inspired you to tell this story?

I was born into Tito's Yugoslavia, and many aspects of the personality cult and the communist system shaped my childhood—like being inducted into the ‘pionir’ movement, and swearing my loyalty to Tito (who at that point had been dead for 7 years). I vividly remember the day his picture was taken down from our classroom wall, and the portrait of Milosevic that replaced it. Tito's Yugoslavia was so emphatically erased during the 90s that by 2000, very few traces of it existed. And then in the last ten years, a lot has been done to erase Milosevic and all we went through in the 90s from official memory.

So, my motivation was a revolt against this pattern of erasing things and starting from zero, because I really think that's the origin of most of the problems Serbia today faces.

What did your research entail? How did you find your subjects?

Researching this film was a lot like detective work. My main source were old film workers who know better what you can find in archives than the people working in them today, and they would give me leads on things that maybe still existed, which I would then chase. A lot of stuff disappeared or was burned in the bombing in the 90s, so often there was no way of knowing what was in a box or vault, and I just persuaded them to let me look at everything—that's how we found some incredible archive no one's ever seen before.

Gathering 320 old Yugoslav films took over a year, and I had to go and barter them with these intense collectors who wouldn't give me films unless I could offer them something they didn't have. I then wrote time-coded notes while I watched the films and pulled scenes from them that I thought were good illustrations of life in Yugoslavia, the ideology, or just plain fun.

In the end, we had a database of around 1500 clips from feature films, which I indexed so that in the edit room I could find things quickly—for example, if we decided to do a montage of ‘funny deaths from partisan films,’ I could just enter those search words and I'd get 50-60 such scenes.

I talked to around 50 people before I settled on my characters, and for the most part they turned me down when I asked them to take part. It took some time to find the right argument to persuade them to participate—I think they realised that I was just going to keep coming back, with new pieces of archive that I found or new questions, and that I was incredibly passionate (obsessed is probably more accurate) about making this film.

This was clearly an ambitious project, on a huge scale. How were you able to make it so personal?

For me, it's always been a personal story. The idea to use clips from feature films came because I saw these films as a family photo album, a place where I could find images from my childhood.



The sight of the film studios today, the run-down state they're in, drives me to rage and tears, because it's a personification of what has happened to the entire idea of the country I was born in. Going to the film studios always felt like I was entering my own secret garden, and I just wanted the freedom to explore it and record what I saw.

What's the craziest thing (or "lightning strikes" moment) that happened during production?

The whole shoot was pretty intense, because in most cases we knew we were the last people who were going to be filming in that particular place, or talking to that character, as many of them are quite old. Actually, several of them died after we interviewed them (which is when my crew members announced they would never let me interview them). So there was a sense of historical importance in what we were doing.

The biggest turning points in the film were getting access to Tito's personal archive (which took a year of lobbying), where I discovered the extent to which Tito had been involved in the making of the films, and discovering that his personal projectionist was still alive. That's when I realised that we could take the story to a whole new level.

As this is your first feature-length film, what's your advice for aspiring filmmakers? And for women, in particular?

I think the biggest lesson I learned is that having time is almost more important than having money, because time is what allows you to build relationships with your characters and collaborators. Something else I would advise is: don't be afraid of having people think you are crazy—I went back to the archives so often to look for things, and insisted so much on being shown outtakes and discarded reels, that all the employees there looked at me as if I was some lunatic who just wouldn't go away.

Who are some of the documentary filmmakers who influenced you?

Agnes Varda stands out in terms of her sense of play in approaching documentary form—and form to me is as important as content. For me, the biggest challenge was to make a historical documentary that feels fresh, and to make archival material feel relevant and alive, and in this I was very inspired by documentary filmmakers who have really played with using archive—particularly Errol Morris and the work of Erik Gandini and his editor Johan Soderberg. Oliver Stone's JFK also had good examples of how a lot of factual information and paperwork could be made visually stimulating.

What are your hopes for Cinema Komunisto at Tribeca? Do you think New York audiences will be surprised by it?

I definitely think people are about to discover a story they've never dreamed of—because the combination of Hollywood film stars and Tito's Yugoslavia is so bizarre. And while I think they will love the anecdotes and be surprised by this coming together of reality and fiction, I also think that it offers another way into understanding the whole nature of Yugoslavia and why it collapsed.

If you could have dinner with any filmmaker (alive or dead), who would it be?

I wouldn't be that interested in having dinner with a filmmaker as much as having a chance to shadow them while they work—just to see them in action for a moment—like Errol Morris in the cutting room, or Agnes Varda on the night before a shoot, or Paul Greengrass planning his shot list with his DP, or Fellini and Nino Rota trying out ideas at the piano.

What makes Cinema Komunisto a Tribeca must-see?

You haven't been surprised or moved to both laughter and tears by a historical documentary like this in a long time. And you'll be boring your friends by re-telling them all the anecdotes you heard, so it's better if you bring them along as well.

[TIMELINE]

Yugoslavia between fact and film



1944. TITO'S FIRST APPEARANCE ON FILM

Captured by the camera of the visiting British mission in Drvar, days before his 52nd birthday. The scene is later re-created in the 1963 partisan film 'DESCENT ON DRVAR'

1946. IN THE MOUNTAINS OF YUGOSLAVIA

At the end of WWII the victorious Communist government seeks help from Russian comrades in setting up the new country's film industry. The first post-war film is shot by Eduard Tisse (Eisenstein's assistant). Controversial parade scene with big photos of Stalin and small ones of Tito.

1947. AVALA FILM CREATED

Tito signs directive creating the Central Film Studios - later known as Avala Film. The film city is built by youth volunteers and film-workers. The intention is to create a Hollywood of the East on the Kosutnjak hill outside Belgrade, which was expected to make 100 films a year (it never succeeded in making more than 13).

1947. SLAVICA

First Yugoslav film. Directed by Vjekoslav Afric. (He would later fall out of favour for an overly populist anti-authority film.) Film celebrates partisan fight, creating authentic Yugoslav 'partisan' genre. Part of technical crew are German POWs.

1948. BREAK WITH STALIN

Yugoslav rejection of the Cannes festival in solidarity with socialist bloc fest in Marjanske Lazny. During the festival, Stalin parts

ways with Tito, and expels Yugoslavia from Eastern Bloc. Yugoslav films are dropped from the program, as Tito's image appears in them, and the Yugoslav delegation leaves in protest. The next year they go to Cannes.

1949. LEKA STARTS DIARY

Leka Konstantinovic starts working as Tito's projectionist, keeping a daily diary of the films he shows. On average Tito will watch 275 films a year.

1952. BATHING BEAUTY

With Soviet films gone from cinemas, Hollywood arrives to fill the repertoire. Esther Williams' Technicolor aqua-musical captivated Belgrade audiences becoming a box office topper. Belgrade's love affair with 'Esther' is re-told in a 1985 Yugoslav film 'HEJ BABU RIBA'.

1953. LAST BRIDGE

First international co-production. Love story between partisan commander (Bernard Wicki) and German nurse (Maria Schell) was so controversial Tito had a private screening to determine if film should be released.



1954. PULA FILM FESTIVAL CREATED

Annual gathering of Yugoslav film production. Viewing of 'collective reality' in the ancient Roman Coliseum on the Adriatic Coast. Tito's private island resort, Brioni, was a short boat ride away, and by next year he was the patron of the festival. All films screened at Pula were first brought to him for a private screening, and his 'opinion' was reported by Leka, the projectionist, to the festival jury.

1958. THE TEMPEST

Dino de Laurentiis' historical epic, shot north of Belgrade. LIFE magazine reports its the biggest film set in Europe at the time.

1962. PREKOBROJNA

Yugoslav blockbuster about young people in the youth brigades, creates two superstars of Yugoslav cinema - Milena Dravic and Ljubisa Samardzic.



1962. 'NEMA PROBLEMA' = NO PROBLEM

Ratko Drazevic, veteran partisan and State Security officer, appointed Head of Avala Film. Rumour has it he has 'slept with 2000 women, and killed 2000 men.' His job is to open channels to West, and bring in Hollywood co-productions and their US dollars.

1962. THE LONG SHIPS

The provocative statements of right-wing actor Richard Widmark cause a stir in Belgrade. Vikingmania in Belgrade - young party members grow hair long in wish to play extras in film, risking penalties from Communist Youth orderlies in charge of hygiene.



1963. LICEM U LICE

Considered to be the first Yugoslav political film, the story analyses the problems of Yugoslavia's policy of worker's self-management of industry. Inspired by Lumet's 'Twelve Angry Men', the entire film takes place during a communist cell meeting in a factory.

1964. MARCO POLO

Film stars in Belgrade: Alain Delon, Omar Sharif, Anthony Quinn, Orson Welles. Ratko Drazevic tries to persuade Nicholas Ray (who is living in Belgrade at the time) to take over

the making of the film. Avala Film accounts for about half of the feature films being produced annually in Yugoslavia, with the facilities now including an artificial lake and a stable of 500 horses.

1967. THE BRIONI CONNECTION

During the Pula Festival, Tito invites a large delegation of Yugoslav film workers for a visit on Brioni. Directors and actors vie for his attention arranging future film productions, mostly covering partisan war exploits in the war. Others, like Purisa Djordjevic, who suggests to Tito the making of a film about the 1948 split with Russians, is told 'don't mess with that'.

1968. STUDENT 'SPRING'

Student protests rock Yugoslavia - and a new generation of socially and politically engaged filmmakers emerge. Known as authors of the 'black wave' filmmakers like Zivojin Pavlovic, Dusan Makavejev, Zelimir Zilnik see their films banned from distribution, and some leave the country out of fear of persecution.



1969. BATTLE ON THE NERETVA

Academy Award nomination for most famous partisan epic: 5 tons of artillery and weapons thrown into the Neretva river, culminating in the destruction of a real bridge. Starring Yul Brynner, Franco Nero, Hardy Kruger, Orson Welles. Music by Bernard Herman. Poster designed by Pablo Picasso. The film played in cinemas in Italy for over half a year, and even won favorable reviews from Jean-Paul Sartre.

1970. PULLING BACK

In his New Year's speech in 1970, Tito launches the 'counteroffensive' - an official campaign against political and cultural corruption as a way to 'repair the course' of the 1960s. As part of the reversal of a too liberal approach, a new wave of films is banned, and Lazar Stojanovic is sent to prison for his graduation film PLASTIC JESUS, in which he mocks Tito.



1973. SUTJESKA

Finally giving permission to have someone play him on screen, Tito casts Richard Burton to play him. Burton spends time with Tito, requesting the use of the Marshal's pipe. Burton's wife, Elisabeth Taylor, is present for the shoot, but turns down an offer to play a partisan nurse in the film.

1974. TITO ELECTED PRESIDENT FOR LIFE

Fidel Castro comes to visit, and is shown both NERETVA and SUTJESKA. He is so impressed, the next night he asks to see them again.



1976. WALTER DEFENDS SARAJEVO

Partisan films become an exported Yugoslav brand. 'Walter' is shown on Chinese national TV every New Year's Eve for 30 years, making it the most watched film in the world, and it's star Bata Zivojinovic the most famous actor in China. Bata has acted in over 300 films, and been in 35 partisan films.

1980. TITO DIES

1985. O TEMPO DOS LEOPARDOS

The newly-independent country of Mozambique commissions Yugoslav filmmakers to help make their first feature film, about the struggle of their communist guerillas to win independence. The first African partisan film is made.

1987. ESCAPE FROM SOBIBOR

Produced by Dan Tana, starring Rutger Hauer. The last time the Yugoslav Army gave tanks and other technical support for a film shoot.

1991. PULA FILM FESTIVAL CANCELLED

The Pula festival is cancelled, the flag coming down down in the arena, the organisers calling on 'people of reason to resist the coming violence'. War breaks out days later.

2000. OCTOBER 5TH REVOLUTION

Having survived the 90s war and embargo by making coffins and children's toys, Avala produces it's last independent film. From 1945 to 2000 more than a quarter of all films in the former Yugoslavia were produced by Avala Film - 200 feature films, 400 documentary films and around 120 foreign co-productions.

2002. BATA ZIVOJINOVIC RUNS FOR PRESIDENT

Bata makes the decision to run for president as the candidate of the Socialist Party of Serbia, in place of Slobodan Milosevic who is on trial for war crimes in the Hague. Bata's campaign slogan 'You know me.'

2005. AVALA FILM PUT UP FOR SALE

The new constitution of Serbia no longer recognizes the category of 'socially-owned' property and Avala film is put up for auction.

2007. BELGRADE CINEMAS DISAPPEAR

14 government-owned cinemas in the center of Belgrade are sold at auction, with the stipulation that the new owner has to keep them operating as cinemas. Today, not a single one of them is open.



PRESENT DAY

Avala Film remains unsold. The famous Studio 1, the second-largest studio in Europe, is today used for the production of a glitzy weekly entertainment show. The future is uncertain for the 100 workers who are still employed there.

[STILLS]



During his 35 years in power communist president Tito watched a film almost every night. His projectionist, Leka Konstantinovic (standing in the back), showed him a total of 8801 films. ©Dribbling Pictures



State-owned Avala Film in Belgrade, former Yugoslavia's Central Film Studio, home to Hollywood stars and super productions in the 1960s, today is on the selling-block. ©Dribbling Pictures



The bridge on the Neretva river (Bosnia), scene of a famous WWII battle and an infamous film shoot, for which Tito gave permission to blow the bridge up to re-create the scene. ©Dribbling Pictures



Yugoslav film director Veljko Bulajic shows off the poster for his Academy-Award nominated WWII epic "Battle of Neretva" - one of only two film posters Pablo Picasso ever designed. ©Dribbling Pictures



Leka Konstantinovic, Tito's personal projectionist for 32 years, was the longest-serving member of the personal staff. ©Dribbling Pictures



Forgotten stars - uniforms gathering dust in the costume storage of Avala Film studios. ©Dribbling Pictures



Steva Petrovic, Avala Film producer proudly presents the work Avala did for the big costume epics in the 1960s. ©Dribbling Pictures



Bata Zivojinovic, the face of Yugoslav cinema, and most popular actor in China, looks at Tito's personal things in the War Museum in Belgrade. ©Dribbling Pictures

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