DEBLOKADA PRESENTS
A FILM BY JASMILA ŻBANIĆ

FOR THOSE WHO CAN TELL NO TALES

KYM VERCOE, BORIS ISAKOVIĆ, SIMON MCBURNEY, BRANKO CVEJIĆ, LEON LUČEV, JASNA ĐURIĆIĆ, PAMELA RABE, DAMIR KUSTURA, SAŠA ORUČEVIĆ, SUVAD VELETANLIĆ

Director: JASMILA ŻBANIĆ Screenplay: KYM VERCOE, JASMILA ŻBANIĆ, ZORAN SOLOMUN
Director of Photography: CHRISTINE A. MAIER Editor: YANN DEDET (F.S.B.) Production Designer: ŽELJKA BURIĆ
Costume Designer: LEJLA HODŽIĆ Make-up: LAMIJA HADŽIHASANOVIĆ HOMARAC Sound Designer: IGOR ČAMO
Producers: DAMIR IBRAHIMOVIĆ, JASMILA ŻBANIĆ Co-Producers: REBEKKA GARIDO, MICHAEL REUTER
Kym, an Australian tourist, decides to travel to Bosnia. Her guidebook leads her to Višegrad, a small town steeped in history, on the border of Bosnia and Serbia. After a night of insomnia in the 'romantic' Hotel Vilina Vlas, Kym discovers what happened there during the war. She can no longer be an ordinary tourist and her life will never be the same again.
COMMENTS FROM THE DIRECTOR

ORIGIN OF THE STORY
The film is based on the true story of Kym Vercoe who plays herself in the film. At her friend’s suggestion, she decided to visit Bosnia as a tourist. She was going to a country which had emerged from a war fifteen years earlier, and she did her best to find out as much as she could before going there. Her journey took her to Višegrad. She saw no traces of demolition and no memorials and she thought to herself: here’s a town which luckily escaped the destruction. What she didn’t know was that 1785 people were brutally murdered there in 1992. 200 women were raped and killed in the Vilina Vlas hotel. Her guidebook recommended the hotel as a place to stay. Her experience of that journey was so intense that it would change the course of her life.

ORIGIN OF THE FILM
Kym is a professional actress and a playwright. After her trip to Bosnia, she produced the play SEVEN KILOMETRES NORTH-EAST. I saw her play on DVD and was completely taken aback by the power of her emotion and her poetics which instilled hope in humanity, despite the horror of the events which had inspired her. I was so touched and encouraged by the play that I immediately wrote her an email. I told her that I would like to make a film about it, but that I did not have the funds to do it at that point. Kym replied from Sydney: I’m coming to Sarajevo. That was crazy, as was everything else that followed.
POETRY OF REALITY

We filmed in four phases. We started filming in the summer with the intention of making a documentary film. We soon realized that this would not be possible and that we needed a different approach. We would be using real situations, but with professional actors and filming to a written script. For instance, the scene where Kym meets a young man from Višegrad at a concert: the concert was a part of a festival which takes place in Višegrad every summer. We went in with a camera and used the actual setting of the festival to film a scene written from Kym’s recollection of the meeting with the man from Višegrad. An actor was saying lines that Kym had heard in that same town at a concert just like that one. A number of exterior scenes were filmed in this way. We allowed things to happen of their own accord, but always within control. We had a small crew and we were flexible, and this gave us the freedom to film scenes outside the planned schedule. That was a new experience for me and it has confirmed my appreciation for film as a living organism which should be followed.

A HORROR OF PEACE

As in the aftermath of any war, the people who led the war in Bosnia are still part of the police, judiciary, educational institutions, and politics. These people protect war criminals and are closely connected. We were warned that making a film like this could be very dangerous and that we were not safe in Višegrad. But the film had to be shot in Višegrad and we decided to take that risk, while doing everything in our power to minimize the actual risk. For example, we did not tell the people from Višegrad what kind of film we were making. We made that choice so as to protect them from any unpleasant consequences. My friend from Serbia introduced himself as the film director, so that we would not attract attention.

All of this – the topic of the film, and then the atmosphere of Višegrad where the horror of war crimes is felt at every step – made filming difficult. Every night I would wake up with nightmares. There are many people who do not want the Višegrad events to be talked about. Peace in post-war countries is anything but romantic.

FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT SPEAK

This film is a memorial “for those who can tell no tales” [a quote from Ivo Andrić], for the women to whom no memorial was ever dedicated. Those who cannot speak are also people who deny the crimes. They too are dead in some way. Denial is not endemic to the Bosnian war, it is a universally human story. This film, however, is not about the war. This film is about Kym, the woman who asked herself what one can do when it appears that nothing can be done. Kym gives us hope that even the smallest act of humanity is capable of changing the world.
INNOCENT TOURIST
When I first came to Bosnia I felt I knew a bit about the war. I had read some books and I was aware that an extraordinary level of violence had been done to women. But when I came to Bosnia I was not on a tour of its dark past, rather I was keen to experience the Bosnia of today – its people, its music and culture. It didn’t occur to me that I could get such easy access to sites where atrocities had happened. Naively, I had imagined that they would all be pulled down or had become memorials.

THEATRE PERFORMANCE
I can still remember clicking on the Wikipedia link for Hotel Vilina Vlas. As I read about the atrocities that occurred there I couldn’t breathe and the ground beneath me fell away. The story of Vilina Vlas stayed with me. Somehow I would find myself thinking on it and I couldn’t seem to let it go – I wanted to do something. This need to do something became stronger and I finally resolved what to do – make a theatre show about it. I sat down with some books, some emails I’d sent and transcripts from the ICTY tribunal and wondered if it could be done. The further I dug the more I felt like I was on the right track and I found myself booking a return flight to Bosnia. This is the story that became the performance SEVEN KILOMETRES NORTH-EAST.

MY FIRST FILM EXPERIENCE
When I got the invitation to turn my story into a film, my first thought was, that’s great but it will never happen. Films usually take a long time to be made, so the idea of getting on a plane in a few weeks and beginning straight away seemed crazy to me. But we all made the commitment to making it happen and so it did. My theatre show is very intimate, it’s like I have invited the audience in to my lounge-room for a coffee and to tell a story. I knew that a film version would have to take a very different approach. We needed to find a way to let the cinema audience in so that they would come on the journey with me. I was also interested in the difference between performing on stage and acting for camera. On the first day of rehearsals Jasmila said that I had given her 2 kilograms of acting and she only needed 200 grams. I began to realize that film has its own intimacy and that through my eyes the audience has access to my thoughts.
HIDDEN HISTORIES

It took me a long time to distil the anger I felt after I discovered the history of Vilina Vlas and Višegrad. I was angry about the atrocities carried out there and I was angry with myself for being so misinformed and misguided. But when I got to the heart of it, I was angry at the lack of memorials in Višegrad. There was no place to go and remember the victims. It was this lack of acknowledgement and accountability that fuelled my desire to do something. Many nations and communities across the world have hidden histories, histories they don’t wish to acknowledge or find too difficult to talk about. In Australia we still struggle with discussion around our colonial past, the damage done to Indigenous Australians and the fall out that is still present today. I hope the story we are telling in our film will start an important discussion that can allow for acknowledgement and the opportunity to move forward.

AN AUSTRALIAN

Australians have a particular experience of space. Living on such a huge continent at the bottom of the world means everything is a long way away. This isolation creates a strange buffer, where we can disconnect from the world opening out to our north and beyond. I’ve met many Bosnians who are happily shocked that an Australian has become connected with their story, their history. There’s a vast distance between my two homes, Australia and Bosnia - 15 862 kilometres. When we engage with this distance, geographically and emotionally, that link carries a great power.
Born in Sarajevo in 1974, Jasmila is a graduate of her native city's Academy of Dramatic Arts, Theatre and Film Directing Department. Before filmmaking, she also worked as a puppeteer in the Vermont-based Bread and Puppet Theater and as a clown in a Lee Delong workshop. Her feature debut GRBAVICA won the 2006 Berlinale Golden Bear (as well as the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury and the Peace Prize), the AFI (American Film Institute) Fest Grand Jury Prize, Grand Prix Odyssey of the European Council and was sold to 40 territories with great success. ON THE PATH, Jasmila's second feature film, premiered at the 2010 Berlinale, in the Competition section. The film had worldwide distribution on 25 territories and won numerous awards (The German Cinema Award for Peace 2010, Golden Apricot IFF Yerevan – FIPRESCI Prize, Nomination – European Film Award for Best Actress...) All her films were produced through Deblokada, an artists' association that she founded. Her fourth feature film, the romantic comedy LOVE ISLAND co-written with Bosnian-American author Aleksandar Hemon is currently in postproduction.

Jasmila's films and video works have been displayed at dozens of art exhibitions worldwide such as Manifesta 3, the Istanbul Biennial, Museum Fridericianum Kassel, Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation, New Museum in New York...

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY
- 2013 FOR THOSE WHO CAN TELL NO TALES
- 2009 ON THE PATH / NA PUTU
- 2008 PARTICIPATION (short, part of the omnibus STORIES ON HUMAN RIGHTS)
- 2007 BUILDER'S DIARY (documentary)
- 2006 GRBAVICA
- 2004 BIRTHDAY (short, part of the omnibus LOST AND FOUND)
- 2003 IMAGES FROM THE CORNER (documentary)

JASMILA ŽBANIĆ

Kym Vercoe is a Company Artist with the multi-award winning theatre company version 1.0. Based in Sydney, the company’s main focus is to shed light on important social and political issues. With version 1.0, Kym has devised and performed in the Peace Trust Award winning SEVEN KILOMETRES NORTH-EAST, the Helpmann Award winning THIS KIND OF RUCKUS, the Drover Award winning DEEPLY OFFENSIVE AND UTTERLY UNTRUE, THE WAGES OF SPIN, THE MAJOR MINOR PARTY and THE TABLE OF KNOWLEDGE. Born in Sydney, Australia, Kym studied acting at the University of Western Sydney – Theatre Nepean. An ex-gymnast, after graduation Kym went on to become a core member of Company Theatre Physical – devising and performing in their major works. Alongside her work with version 1.0, Kym continues to work with a number of companies including Theatre Kantanka. Her solo performance for version 1.0, SEVEN KILOMETRES NORTH-EAST, inspired the feature film FOR THOSE WHO CAN TELL NO TALES, directed by Golden Bear Award winning Bosnian filmmaker Jasmila Žbanić.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY
- 2013 FOR THOSE WHO CAN TELL NO TALES (dir. Jasmila Žbanić)
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