

wide  
PRESENTS

# COWBOYS



KABINET PRESENTS A FILM BY TOMISLAV MRŠIĆ

CAST: SAŠA ANOČIĆ, ŽIVKO ANOČIĆ, MATIJA ANTOLIĆ, HRVOJE BARIŠIĆ, KRUNO KLABUČAR, RAKAN RUSHADAT, IVANA RUSHADAT, RADOVAN RUŽDŽAK

MAKEUP BY: TINA JESENKOVIĆ COSTUME DESIGN BY: ŽELJKA FRANULOVIĆ PRODUCTION DESIGN BY: TANJA LACKO

MUSIC BY: DAMIR MARTINOVIĆ MRLE, IVANKA MAZURKIJEVIĆ

CINEMATOGRAPHY BY: PREDRAŠ DUBRAVIĆ EDITING BY: HRVOJE MRŠIĆ PRODUCED BY: SUZANA PANDEK

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY: TOMISLAV MRŠIĆ



EYE ON FILMS





# SYNOPSIS

(Short version)

Sasha, a relatively successful theater director returns from the big city to his home town. He left behind a career, and carried with him a disappointment, healed disease and a couple of suitcases.

His decision to return coincided with an offer to re-start the neglected local theater. A problem is that city does not have any actors or anyone who would know anything about the theater business.

Although he assumes that interest would not be very big, the turnout was even beyond his darkest thoughts. Only five candidates show up.

The new candidates are not very well educated, so the only where that they could find a common ground are - Westerns.





(Long version)

Sasha, a relatively successful theater director returns from the big city to his home town without a clear notion of what that change might bring. He left behind a career, and carried with him a disappointment, together with just healed disease and a couple of suitcases.

Soon we learn that his decision to return coincided with an offer to re-start the neglected local theater. The call came from the mayor and Saša's school colleague. A problem is that city does not have any actors or anyone who would know anything about the theater business.



Saša gets a space in the city hall culture dept. where a term "culture" exists only in a title of the place.

Sasa's first task is to get the actors. Although he assumes that interest would not be very big, the turnout was even beyond his darkest thoughts. Only five candidates show up.

Soon, six of them start to work a play but at the very beginning they face a big problem. It is a choice of "dramatic content" The new candidates are not very well educated, so the only where that they could find a common ground are - Westerns. Although Sasa had a little more ambitious plan, the decision falls to work a Cowboys play.



After the first rehearsals, Sasa, full of a patience, starts to realize that his struggle is probably in vain. His small theater troupe has hardly no predisposition for a success.

In parallel with work on the play, we follow the lives of main characters. Javor is an older youngster, a postal service employee and a hostage of his too possessive mother. Miodrag the Gypsy, husband and father of three children. From when he left village he pays a compensation to a village Elder. Domagoj is somewhere between confusion and autism, and since his girlfriend died seems to have a problem with women. Bruno is a worker at the refinery, ex husband, father of a girl and a potential homosexual. The "potential" refers to the inability to realize any kind of a true love in such a small town. Ivan is the biggest mystery and sometimes it is not clear why someone so uninteresting even appear at the audition.

The development of the story develops and complicates relations between the characters. Sasa deals with the play, and with all the clearer signs of his old sickness relapse at the same time. On the other hand, Ivan wholeheartedly tries to make problems with his peers even more difficult. Soon, the mayor decides to cancel the play because it is definitely not what he imagined.

The play seems even more impossible to finish when Sasa finds out that his malignant disease recovered and that his life is about to end very soon. After the initial shock, and contrary to expectations, Sasa continues to work on his last project. In fact, it seems that especially now he is really into it properly.



# ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

## TOMISLAV MRSIC



Tomislav Mrcic was born in Zagreb in 1972. He became involved in film while studying at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Zagreb, which he graduated from in 1998. He is the author of numerous documentaries and television shows. His documentary films won several awards and acclaims, which include Film Critics Award Oktavijan for the best documentary films in 2002 and 2008 (*Rio Bravar* and *Slucajni sin*). He also received the best debutant award at the Days of Croatian Film Festival in 2002 for his film *Sala nije na liniji 310*. His documentaries were screened at all major film festivals in the region. Along with documentaries, he directs short feature films and promotional videos, and also assists directors on television series and feature films. He directs *Posebni dodaci/Bonus tracks*, a TV show about film on Croatian National Television. He is one of the founding members of MUF, Film Art Museum association.



# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The film «Cowboys» is a comedy based on a Croatian hit theatre play. It is a story of eight outsiders trying to create a play while breaking every rule of theatre craft. Genre-wise "Cowboys" is between social drama and comedy (dramedy) which emphasis on clear stories and functionally profiled characters. The story takes place in a little industrial town, small and claustrophobic enough to make life in it impossible, and yet big and diverse enough to make the story and the characters convincing.

Atmosphere and the emotion is something "Cowboys" share with British social drama (Full Monty, Brassed off, Billy Eliot...) where co-text is subtlety outlined.

Also "Cowboys" closely lean on recent American indies (Juno, Lars Big importance is attributed to the background music which often refers to western. The soundtrack includes original or well-known tracks, and does not hold back from parody or comedy.

In short "Cowboys" is not an explicit western, but in its own way the film is an ode to western which celebrates the valor of antiheroes.

On top of this western as the genre above all genres is an excellent starting point for universal humor which helps "Cowboys" in their efforts to battle clichés of the genre itself, as well as the trends of the modern society, especially of the "high" and mostly labelled arts.

# DIRECTOR'S INTERVIEW

The comedy about ourselves. These are the words that the director Tomislav Mršić used to describe the movie 'Cowboys' to potential viewers to get them see the movie. 'Anyone willing to laugh at his or her own defaults is more than welcome. But the others are free to join as well,' said Mršić with a smile inviting viewers to see his movie based on the popular theatre play that won the Audience Award at the Pula Film Festival.



*PULA Film Festival Premiere.*

**Where did the idea for the movie come from? Did you know that this was a potential movie hit as you were watching the play?**

- The thing with ideas is they come when you least expect them, which was the case here. Not in a million years would I have thought of finding an idea for a movie in the theatre. What is more, I was a bit skeptical before watching the play although everything I had

heard about it was very promising. At that time I was working on the movie ''72 hours'' with Živko Anović who motivated me to see the play that everyone was so excited about. Anyhow, I went to see the play with Suzana Pandek who was to become the producer of my film. After only few scenes we realized ''Cowboys'' were not only a great play but an excellent excerpt for a movie.

**You and Saša Anović, the author of the play, supposedly made the arrangements for the movie in only ten minutes?**

- This is where Živko stepped in once more. Suzana called him three days after the play and asked him to introduce us to his brother Saša who is the author and the director of the play. Meeting him happened very quickly and even quicker we made all the plans, it really took us ten minutes to arrange all the details.

**Has Anović already had offers to make a movie out of the play?**

- I remember he mentioned once that some people had been asking around; he even told me he was thinking of directing the movie, but that's something he will tell you more about.

**Were you surprised by the recent attack from Anović when he lamented selling movie rights to you and accused you of cutting him out of the project and not signing him as a screenwriter?**

- I didn't perceive this as something huge, it's only one article and I'm not even sure that those were Saša's exact words. I am very grateful to Saša for selling the movie rights to us and even more for his contribution to the movie as an actor. Although it was my great wish to have Saša work on the screenplay, due to his other projects he was unfortunately not able to work with us. Nevertheless, he is signed as the author of the text, i.e. of the play that the movie is based on and that's something we had agreed on before we started shooting the movie. Besides, anyone who saw the movie saw that Saša played the leading role so in my opinion there is no word about casting someone out. Saša, unfortunately, still hasn't seen the movie so I think this topic would be really inappropriate once he sees it.

**I heard that you made the movie in only 28 days although this is your first feature film as well as the producer's , director of photography, of Ivana Rushaidat.. Were you a bit afraid?**

- Ha-ha, not 28 but 25 days. There were other firsttimers besides these that you mentioned but I can say they are firsttimers with great experience. They all had a chance to try and succeed at what they do which made me trust them completely. Besides, I am not a fan of these stories about debutants or debutant films. There are good



and bad movies, and are they debutant or veteran movies shouldn't have a saying when judging their quality.

**This is your feature movie debut, but you assisted making documentaries and movies. How did that experience help you and what's the difference between being the director and the assistant?**

- Well, every experience helps, even the bad one. I was lucky to have worked on documentaries as a director and on movies as an assistant and I can say, especially after working on "'Cowboys'", that working as a director is much easier. It may not seem logical, but I was really calm and never left the set feeling anxious. This is surely because of my associates and maybe because as a director I can only screw myself while as an assistant there is a possibility of screwing someone else.

» On several occasions you emphasized that the actors, i.e. their energy, were the crucial thing for the movie and that you wanted to have as many actors as possible on the screen.

- Yes, that energy was precisely what made me turn the play into a movie, which is a more permanent form. I knew that if the energy was successfully transformed into a movie, the movie would probably be successful as well. This is where the style of the movie came from, especially framing- give the actors space to show what they can and know, and they know a lot.

**So, close-ups were not really an option?**

- Close-ups are slowly introduced and intimation with the characters begins towards the end of the movie. Framing is like Maths - if you have eight excellent actors, using close-ups can emphasize the expression of one actor but you are losing the expressions of the other seven. All this was thoroughly discussed and decided between the cameraman Predrag Dubravčić and me and I think that the editor Hrvoje Mršić did a great job.

**To what extent has it all remained in the form of the play, without using the close-ups?**

- He-he, a very brave question which actually classifies all westerns as theatre plays. Our main focus with framing was to get the most out of all actors and, in a way, we wanted to pay respect to western movies.

**What's the difference between film and theatre as media?**

- It's like you asked me what's the difference between salt and pepper as spices. As salt and pepper spice up our food, movie and theatre spice up our lives and it is up to us to choose which one we prefer. I am not a teatrologist nor filmologist so I wouldn't dare to go into deeper analysis.

**The actors were already familiar with their characters; to what extent is that an advantage and to what extent is it a downside?**

- It is absolutely an advantage although we gave it an extra effort to upgrade the characters. I hope that play's social context contributed to the actors' brilliant performances.

**To what extent is the movie true to the play or has it brought some new ideas?**

- If I were to compare 'Cowboys' to some other movies based on already famous theatre plays, I would say we are somewhere in the middle. We didn't strictly follow the play but we tried to respect main characteristics and features of the play. The key difference is that the movie is based on the first of two parts of the play: we kept the main characters but we also added another ten; the play was set only in the theatre hall whereas the movie takes it outside. I hope we brought some new elements as it wouldn't be fair to the audience if we did everything the same.

**They say the play is a comedy with a hint of drama and that the movie is a drama with a hint of comedy. Can a movie be simultaneously a funny drama and a sad comedy?**

-Or viceversa, haha. I would say the movie is a bitter sweet comedy, a subgenre that I personally prefer. The movie is shaped like a drama but the story is told through humour. The play probably seems lighter and more relaxing as it is partly a musical and actors are dancing and singing but I think that the play is basically a drama. All I did in the movie was that I tried to stress the emotions so that in the most dramatic scene, a viewer can find something funny and in the same time, in the funniest scene there is something to make you wonder. I am absolutely convinced that a mixture of these bitter sweet emotions is the winning combination.

**A British company, Working Title Films, is interested in making a 'Cowboys' remake. Is there any other international company showing interest in the movie?**

- Concerning Working Title, all I know is that one of their associates liked the movie when he saw it at the Pula Film Festival and they asked us to send the movie to them. We have just signed the contract with international sales agent, prestigious company Wide Management. We are really happy about it because it is a confirmation that the movie functions outside Croatia and Croatian speaking countries, and we've been told that it is hard for a comedy to cross borders.

## **Work with actors**

### **What was it like directing the spouses Rushaidat?**

I actually can't tell you that because I never perceived Ivana and Rakan as a couple while we were shooting the movie. What is more, they didn't have a single scene together. But if you ask me what was it like to work with Ivana and Rakan as actors then I can tell you it was an extremely pleasant experience. This goes for the rest of the cast as well. Hopefully, I won't come out sounding pathetic, but I am so grateful to Saša, Živko, Matija, Radovan, Kruno and Hrvoje for everything they have given me.

### **Ivanka and Mrle**

Soundtrack by Ivanka Mazurkijević and Damir Martinović Mrle fits perfectly with the movie. How did you know this was going to be a success?

- I didn't know but I had a good feeling about it. In everything I do, I mostly rely on my intuition. What I did know was they are both excellent musicians whose music I personally listen to. Ivanka and me go way back so I was familiar with her sensibility and I have always liked that Mrle is no stranger to experimenting. However, the final outcome went beyond my expectations so I believe that everyone who sees the movie, will hear new Ivanka and new Mrle.

### **Expected ratings**

Some say that 8210 viewers in the first weekend is way below expectations considering the largest possible distribution of the movie. What do you think?

- I can't speak for others, but this goes along with what I have hoped for. A number of approximately 10000 people is something I would have immediately signed up for two or three years ago.

# THE CAST

## SASA ANOČIĆ - SASHA



Born in Osijek, Croatia in 1968. Graduated from the Academy of Drama Arts in Zagreb in 1998. He first started working as an actor at Croatian National Theater in Osijek, then moved on to ZKM Zagreb Youth Theater, and since 2003 he has been working with Tresnja Theater where he excels as the Scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz*, Father in *Mum as a Story*, Lumiere in *Beauty and*

*the Beast* and Fagin in *Oliver Twist*.

He is also active as a theater director in several Croatian theaters, among which EXIT Theater where he directed the play *Cowboys* for which he received the Croatian Actor's Guild Award for the best director. For Tresnja Theater he directed: *Alice* (based on Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*), *Pinocchio* and *Frankenstein*.

## RAKAN RUSHAJDAT - MIODRAG



Born in Irbid, Jordan in 1977. He started studied acting in Zagreb Youth Theater Acting Studio and in 2000 he graduated from the Academy of Drama Arts in Zagreb. He has been working as a professional actor since 1998. He has received numerous Croatian acting awards, and some of his theater productions had over



300 runs. He has acted in some 20 feature films and received the best actor award at Sarajevo Film Festival for his role in Antonio Nuic's *All for Free*.

## RADOVAN RUZDJAK - IVAN



Born in Zagreb, Croatia in 1977. Graduated from the Academy of Drama Arts in Zagreb in 2001, since 2002 he is a member of Tresnja Theater ensemble. He also worked as an actor in Croatian National Theater in Zagreb, Zagreb Youth Theater and the theater festivals in Dubrovnik and Split. He composed music for the popular children's play *Hedgehog's House* and

choreographed for *Alice* (based on Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*) in Tresnja Theater and *Cowboys* in EXIT Theater. He received the Croatian Actor's Guild Award for best actor in a musical for his role of Gaston in *Beauty and the Beast*.

## KRUNOSLAV KLABUCAR - BRUNO



Born in Zagreb, Croatia in 1975. He first started studying acting in Zagreb Youth Theater's Acting Studio. He graduated from the Academy of Drama Arts in Zagreb in 2000 and immediately joined the Tresnja Theater ensemble. He has worked with several other Croatian theaters and with Montazstroj for a Eurokaz production. In Tresnja he

acts in *Beauty and the Beast* (as Dindon), *Alice* (based on Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*), *Oliver Twist* and popular Croatian children's plays *A Dog's Day* and *Apprentice Hlapic*.

## MATIJA ANTOLIC - JURIJA



Born in Zagreb, Croatia in 1988. He first started working in Tresnja Theater on *Oliver Twist*, later he worked with Sasa Anocic on EXIT Theater's *Cowboys*, the play. He has continued to work with Sasa Anocic on several other theater projects. He composed music for theater plays and has worked with numerous Croatian theater directors. He was awarded for best music

in 2012 theater play *Veli Joze* at PIF, International Puppet Theater Festival in Zagreb. He is also a member of a gospel choir and a blues musician. He plays a harmonica, piano, ukulele and loves world music.

## HRVOJE BARISIC - JAVOR



Born in Osijek, Croatia in 1971. Graduated from the Academy of Drama Arts in 2002. He worked in Croatian National Theater in Osijek from 1995, and in 2003 he joined Tresnja Theater ensemble. He also works in Kerempuh and EXIT theaters. In 2003 he was awarded at Actor's Festival in Vinkovci. Currently he is playing roles in *Apprentice Hlapic* and *Alice* (based on

Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*).

## ZIVKO ANOCIC - DOMAGOJ



Born in Osijek, Croatia in 1981. Graduated from the Academy of Drama Arts in Zagreb. As an acting student he participated in many successful theater productions. Since 2006 he has been a member of Tresnja Theater ensemble. He had roles in *Beauty and the Beast*, *Oliver Twist*, *Apprentice Hlapic*.. Since 2011 he is a member of Gavella

Theater ensemble.

## IVANA RUSHAJDAT - MARICA



Born in Zagreb, Croatia in 1984. She started singing when she was 16 and had several bands. Currently she is a singer in her band Little Drop of Poison, in a duet with Maja Posavec and a backing vocalist in Mayales. She started acting when she was 18 and her first roles were in theater musicals *Hair*, *Aida*, *Beauty and the Beast*. In 2005 she had her

first lead role in Croatian National Theater in Rijeka. Since 2008 she has played the role of Marica in *Cowboys* theater play over 300 times, the same role she plays in the movie.

# THE CREW

## KABINET- SUZANA PANDEK



(Producer)

Kabinet Production was established in Zagreb in 2007. It is the most awarded Croatian production company in the sphere of commercials and the recipient of the international Epica Award for Tomato TV commercial in 2009.

Suzana Pandek is the founder of Kabinet. She holds an MA degree in journalism and is a member of Croatian Association of Producers since 2008. She has been working as a producer for the last 15 years. She is also a presiding member of MUF, Film Art Museum association.

## ZELJKA FRANULOVIC

(Costume design)

Born in Zagreb, Croatia in 1967. She graduated from the Faculty of Textile Technology at Zagreb University. She has worked in costume and wardrobe department on many Croatian feature films, among which *Metastasis*, *72 Days*, *Max Schmeling*, *Vegetarian Cannibal*, *The Priest's Children* and *Cowboys*. She received two Golden Arenas for costume design at the national Pula Film Festival.

## TANJA LACKO

(Set design)

Tanja holds an MA in architecture and she has worked as set designer on many Croatian feature films and TV series: *What Is a Man Without a Moustache?*, *Sing me a Lovesong*, *Behind the Glass*, *Room 304*, *Sonja and the Bull*... She has received several awards for set and



costume design. Since 2012 she has been teaching set design at the Academy of Drama Arts in Zagreb.

## **JELENA DANKO**

(Set design)

Born in Pola, Croatia in 1980. She graduated from Venice's Accademia di Belle Arti set design department. She has worked as a set assistant in a couple of Croatian films and the *Oliver Twist* theater play. She was also a co-set designer for Croatian National Television's TV show *Briljanteen*.

## **PREDRAG DUBRAVCIĆ**

(Cinematography)

Graduated from the Academy of Drama Arts cinematography department. He worked as a photographer in New York for some time. In Croatia he mostly works on commercials and shorts. He has worked on a couple of music videos. *Cowboys* is his first feature length film. For more info see [www.predrag.net](http://www.predrag.net).

## **IVANKA MAZURKIJEVIĆ & DAMIR MARTINOVIĆ**

## **MRLE**

(Music)

Ivanka holds an MA in Czech and museology and works as a musician, actress, TV presenter, and composer. She has composed music for many theater shows, feature films and her band Stampedo.

Damir Martinović is a musician, author and member of a famous Croatian band LET3. He has worked as a composer and a performer on various music and theater shows and feature films. He is one of the founding members of Hartera Festival.

Both have received numerous Croatian music and film awards.

## **HRVOJE MRŠIĆ**

Born in Zagreb, Croatia in 1977. He studied law and started working in editing in 1994. He has edited five Croatian feature films and several dozen documentaries, many of which have been screened at festivals all over Croatia and abroad. He has also worked as an assistant editor on feature films. He was awarded Golden Arena for best editing at the national Pula Film Festival in 2012, and previously three times for best editing at Days of Croatian Film Festival.

# TECHNICAL DETAILS

TITLE : COWBOYS

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY: TOMISLAV MRŠIĆ

BASED ON : KAUBOJI

CAST : SAŠA ANOČIĆ, ŽIVKO ANOČIĆ,  
MATIJA ANTOLIĆ, KRUNO  
KLABUČAR, HRVOJE BARIŠIĆ,  
IVANA RUSH AidAT, RAKAN  
RUSH AidAT

PRODUCED BY : KABINET

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: PREDRAG DUBRAVCIC

MUSIC: IVANKA MAZRUKIJEVIĆ & DAMIR  
MARTINOVIĆ MRLE

EDITING: HRVOJE MRŠIĆ

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE: CROATIAN

RUNNING TIME & FORMAT: 104MIN / HD-DCP

YEAR OF PRODUCTION: 2013



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## THE END