



Z U D

A FILM BY
MARTA MINOROWICZ

cast Batsaikhan Budee, Sukhbat Batsaikhan, Bayasgalan Batsaikhan, Bayajikh Batsaikhan, Baljinyam Nyam-Ochir
director Marta Minorowicz script Marta Minorowicz, Kenneth McBride
cinematography Paweł Chórzepa editor Beata Walentowska
sound Tomasz Kochan production manager Tumen Budaunov, Malgorzata Zacharko, Anna Kuchta
producer Ann Carolin Ranning, Anna Wydra, Thomas Kufus
coproduction Polish Film Institute, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, FFA, MEDIA, German-Polish Co-Development Fund, Eximages
archive producer IM Films producer zero one film, Otter Films website Slingshot Films



FESTIVAL SCREENINGS

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March 2016

Mar 29, 5 pm

Apr 1, 5.15 pm

Mar 31, 9.45 pm

Apr, 3, 11.30 am





ZUD (Mongolian: зүд) - the unforgiving forces of nature taking their toll on humans and animals.

ZUD SHORT SYNOPSIS

On the frozen steppe of Mongolia people's lives are at the mercy of the seasons and unexpected events, while nature dictates the rules of their nomadic lifestyles. After winter kills hoards of his parents' livestock, 11-year old Sukhbat has to leave school, move back home and support the family. When given the responsibility by his father to tame a wild horse in a bid to win a regional race, he has to face a life ruled by unforgiving nature and tradition. No one remains unscathed after being confronted by the power of the steppe.

ZUD LONG SYNOPSIS

11-year old Sukhbat lives on the vast Mongolian steppe together with his nomadic family and their livestock. When Sukhbat isn't helping his parents on their ranch he spends time either playing in the desolate landscapes or attending school in the nearby city.

Life is harsh and the increasingly unrelenting winters have killed off huge hoards of the family's livestock. Sukhbat's father Batsaikhan has no other choice than to look for other ways to survive. Victory in the regional horse races would bring wealth and prestige to the family. He trains Sukhbat to tame and ride a wild horse in a bid to win the race, putting the family's hopes and future into the child's hands.

For Sukhbat, this new responsibility means facing a life dictated by unforgiving traditions and nature. No one remains unscathed after being confronted by the power of the Mongolian steppe.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I'm interested in exploring the situation where humans and animals are challenged by the unpredictable spirit of nature. I want to tell a story where all protagonists – man, animal, nature – have a strong influence on each other. That's why my story is situated on the steppe. Location becomes a metaphor rather than a place. Contrary to how it is often described, I found the steppe not to be a place of 'big skies', but an almost claustrophobic environment for those who live there. It is a place of symbiosis, but also of an eternal struggle with nature, which determines human life from the earliest years by forcing people to make choices about their future.

It has always been critical for me to maintain the authenticity and roughness of the story, characters and place. I couldn't imagine making this film with professional actors. From the very beginning I was looking for and working with non-actor nomads who would convey the story I wanted to tell but also enhance it with their flesh and soul to achieve the realism I was aiming for. Without them and their personal experience, real emotions and moreover their collective memory of the steppe they shared with me, the film wouldn't happen.

MARTA MINOROWICZ



BIO-FILMOGRAPHY

Marta is author and director of the award winning film, „A Piece of Summer“ (Kawałek Lata). Awards include: Grand Prix, Clermont-Ferrand Filmfest; Golden Dove, DOK Festival, Leipzig and Grand Prix, Lodz, Poland.

She made the documentary film „Descrescendo“ that was awarded and screened at a number of festivals and the film „Aniol Smierci“ (Angel of Death). Marta graduated from the Andrzej Wajda Film School and Jagiellonian University (Theatre studies).

A PIECE OF SUMMER, 2010 – documentary, 23:02

Grand Prix at Int. Short Film Festival Clermont-Ferrand, 2011

Golden Dove at DOK Leipzig, Germany, 2010

Second Prize at Curt.doc Short Documentary Festival, 2011

Grand Prix White Cobra Prize at 20th Media Festival, 2010

DESCRESCENDO, 2011 – documentary, 26:00

Special Jury Mention – Zagrebdox, 2012

Special Jury Mention – Krakow Film Festival, 2011

Honorary Diploma – International Film Festival Etiuda and Anima, Krakow

ANGEL OF DEATH, 2008 – documentary, 45:00



CONVERSATION WITH
MARTA MINOROWICZ

How did you first decide to tell this story and how did you approach the subject?

I wanted nature to be ingrained in the film, I wanted it to have a similar equivalence of character as humans. This was my starting point. I then built on this idea, wrapping it into layers of possibilities, until I came across the story of children participating in Naadam, the horse races that take place throughout Mongolia. I had never been to Central Asia but I intuitively knew that this was worth exploring; it was something that could provide my ideas with a proper body.

Nature and wilderness are important elements also of your previous shorts: what is your cinematic approach to that?

In my shorts nature has always taken on the part of the Greek choir, to comment on the character's emotions or actions. In ZUD I wanted to develop this further, to depict nature as important as the human characters and to show how the magic triangle that exists between humans, animals and nature works. All decisions derive from this initial goal. My cinematic approach to nature is linked to the fact that I consider nature to be a spirit, a divine force that dictates the rules. That's where the condition of dependence came from – where the family depends on a wild horse for its livelihood. In the wider context the taming of the wild horse is a taming of nature itself. It fully reveals this eternal struggle and misery we as humans find ourselves in when nature says "No". In this way nature is not just a character but a hyper-character.





I was concerned about how to coherently depict this cinematically. That's why the location with its vast, unlimited space is actually a paradox: the steppe feels acutely claustrophobic because you can't escape from it. And most important, the steppe has the kind of harshness that reduces the human experience to bare essence.

A lot of situations depicted in the film are the result of mere observation. I spent a lot of time observing with my director of photography, Paweł Chorzepa. This is now the third film we're making together and I know we have the same taste. We understand each other without talking, even in difficult situations. He just knows how to catch the atmosphere of a place and render it through stunning imagery.

How did you choose the protagonists of your film and then work with them?

I collaborated closely with our Mongolian production manager before travelling there. Then we organised a journey through the provinces where we visited primary schools and met with many children. This is how I came to know Sukhbat and his family and Baljaa, Sukhbat's friend.

At first we were just getting to know each other, getting a feel for one another. We also didn't have a full time translator with us so we had to communicate using body language. As much as this was a source of frustration, it also provoked humorous situations, which brought us closer with every funny misunderstanding. After this first trip I knew which aspects of reality could serve as the narrative frame of the film and what would need to be rearranged. This process of elimination shows you what you don't want and what's not interesting to you as a filmmaker.

When I returned to Poland with more developed ideas and research footage, I was lucky to find producers who made it possible for me to return to Mongolia regularly over the next two years to continue working on the film. At home in Poland I worked on the direction of the film with my writing partner while shaping the script, so that when I returned to my family on the steppe I knew what I wanted. Sometimes it was rearranging scenes that I had previously observed, other times it was provoking new situations. Finally, I asked them to take on the challenge of acting and following the written script. This is how they became my actors. Although even while following the script, they were allowed the freedom to express the meaning of the scene in the way that felt most comfortable and appropriate to them.



ZUD has a naturalistic approach, and there are scenes of great intimacy with the protagonist of your film: how did you reach this closeness?

Well over the few years of my small team going back and forth we managed to build a strong bond of trust and friendship with the actors. Partly this came about naturally since during the shooting we faced their real life troubles with them, for example, when they fell ill or had problems with animals. Such difficult experiences always forms bonds between people. But regardless of what we did and how we worked – acting, rearranging scenes or just observation – I always tried to stay close to the authentic identity, or even a super-naturalism, of my actors in an effort to remain true to those who experience the steppe every day.

Who are your masters or films that inspired you?

This has always been a problem for me, even during the process of financing the film. I find it difficult to point to sources of inspirations or refer to films and film directors that reflected what I wanted to do. Undoubtedly I take a lot from my documentary film experience stylistically. My master of film is Tarkovsky because he managed to transcend the materiality of film and turn it into something immaterial so that the viewer has a ritualistic, spiritual experience.

How did you first react when you heard the film was selected at the Berlinale in the Generation section?

At first we were all surprised. I always thought that I made a film with children but not for children. The film is dark and brutal, without compromises. However, the film depicts a key moment in the life of an 11-year old and I do understand that this is something younger audiences can relate to.

This film is the child of three countries: Germany and Poland as production countries and for cinematographic tradition as well as Mongolia for the story, the location and the spirit. So I am quite happy to discover that this mix of roots has given life to a film which can reach a mix of audiences, both older and younger.

CREDITS



CREW

Director	Marta Minorowicz
Screenplay	Marta Minorowicz
	Kenneth McBride
DOP	Paweł Chorzępa
Editor	Beata Walentowska
Sound Design	Daniel Weis
Sound	Tomasz Kochan
Production Coordinator	Anna Kuchta
Production Managers	Małgorzata Zacharko
	Tumen Budsuren

CAST

Father	Batsaikhan Budee
Son	Sukhbat Batsaikhan
Mother	Bayasgalan Batsaikhan
Little Brother	Bayajikh Batsaikhan
Friend	Baljinnayam Nyam-ochir
Vet	Sosorbaram Mungunsan
Bank Teller	Battsengel Nyam
Horse Catcher	Munkhjargal Oyuntsogt
Horse Healer	Batmunkh Tsend
Cashmere Broker	Khalman Barambai

PRODUCED BY

zero one film	Ann Carolin Renninger, Thomas Kufus
Otter Films	Anna Wydra
In Association with	MM Films
With the support of	Polish Film Institute
	Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg
	Filmförderungsanstalt
	Eurimages

TECH SPECS

Lenght	85 min.
Year of Production	2016
Countries of Production	Poland, Germany
Language	Mongolian

zero one film is an independent film production company based in Berlin, producing cinema and TV documentaries as well as art house fiction for the German and International market.

Over the past 25 years the company produced more than 100 documentaries, documentary television series and feature films. Many of them won international awards, among these „The People Vs. Fritz Bauer“ by Lars Kraume, „More than Honey“ by Markus Imhoof, „West“ by Christian Schwochow, „The Flat“ by Arnon Goldfinger, „Gerhard Richter Painting“ by Corinna Belz, „Black Box Germany“ by Andres Veiel, or „Echoes of Home“ by Stefan Schwietert. The collaboration with Alexander Sokurov on films like „Moloch“ or „Father and Son“ was highly acclaimed and awarded in Cannes. „Francofonia“ that premiered at the Venice Film Festival 2015 is their latest collaboration.

In 2009 the tv-production „24h Berlin“ by Volker Heise broke new ground, provoking broadcasters to cast aside the traditional slot structure for the duration of 24h allowing for a so far unprecedented 24hours documentary. In 2010, „24h Berlin“ won the Bavarian TV Award as well as the German TV award. The follow-up „24h Jerusalem“ (2013) won the German TV Award.

Ann Carolin Renninger works for zero one film as a producer since 2008. Together with Otter Films she already produced the award-winning documentary DOMINO EFFECT by Elwira Niewiera und Piotr Rosołowski. She is an EAVE (2013) and Eurodoc (2009) Alumni.

Thomas Kufus is the CEO of zero one film, actively involved in film politics on a national and international level promoting the role of cinema documentaries and the importance of co-production treaties. He is member of the European and the German Film Academy and from November 2009 until early 2015 Thomas Kufus had been its chairman.

The company has about 15 full-time employees in the areas of development, research and production.

OTTER FILMS – Warsaw-based production company established by Anna Wydra, focused on art-house fiction and documentary films for cinema and TV, with an emphasis on the international market. Otter Films is a creative team of people devoted to good stories and artistic qualities. Most of our projects are national or international co-productions, and we shoot our films in many places all over the world (including Haiti, USA, Mexico, Abkhazia, Morocco, Mongolia). We are very proud that we work on projects with great filmmakers. With Bartek Konopka and Piotr Rosołowski we have completed as a team 2 documentaries „Rabbit à la Berlin“ / 2009 (Oscar nomination) and „The Art of Disappearing“ / 2013. Lately we premiered „Deep Love“ by Jan P. Matuszyński (co-produced with Cor Leonis Production and HBO / 2013), „6 Degrees“ by Bartosz Dombrowski (co-produced with HBO and East Pictures / 2014) and „Domino Effect“ by Elwira Niewiera and Piotr Rosołowski (co-produced with zero one film and RBB/ARTE / 2014).

We are currently in production of Bartek Konopka’s second feature „The Mute“ (co-produced with Samson Films/ IRL), a documentary essay „And there was Love in the Ghetto“ by Jolanta Dylewska, Andrzej Wajda and Agnieszka Holland (co-produced with Pallas Film), new feature of Sergey Dvortsevov „Ayka“ (co-produced with Kinodvor/ RU, Pallas Film/ DE, Eurasia/ KZ) and documentaries: „Noiselessly“ by MML Collective (co-produced with Haut Lesmains/ FR), „Reporter“ by Magda Szymków (co-produced with Vezfilm/ UK).

Anna Wydra is a producer and production manager of many awarded films – both documentaries and fiction. The Academy Award nominated producer for documentary „Rabbit à la Berlin“. Awarded the Prize for the Best Producer at the Cracow Film Festival. Nominated for Polish Film Institute Award in the Best Foreign Promotion category. Participant of many international workshops including: Discovery Campus Masterschool 2006, EKRAN Programme 2007, ExOriente 2008 and EAVE 2011. For 3 years she was a Head of Production and 2010-15 a tutor at „Creative Producer Course“ at Wajda School.



PRESS CONTACT

Brigitta Portier

Alibi Communications

brigittaportier@alibicomunications.be

+32 4779825 84

www.alibicomunications.be

www.facebook.com/alibicomunications

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http://bit.ly/zud_press

TRAILER

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FACEBOOK

<https://www.facebook.com/zudthemovie/>

PRODUCTION

zero one film

<http://www.zeroone.de>

Otter Films

<http://www.otterfilms.pl>

INTERNATIONAL SALES

Slingshot Films

Manuela Buono

manuela@slingshotfilms.it

Michela Pascolo

festivals@slingshotfilms.it

www.slingshotfilms.it