

Focus on Her Job

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Already boasting a good track-record on the short films circuit, **Nikos Labôt** has also directed three shorts in the past few years, with his latest offering, *The Dog*, winning awards at numerous international film festivals. His first attempt in feature-length filmmaking was the creative documentary, *The Immortals at the Southern Point of Europe*, which premiered in 2013 at the Thessaloniki International Film Festival. *Her Job* is Labôt's debut feature film which world premiered in the Discovery section of the 43rd Toronto International Film Festival.

At the centre of the story is 37-year-old housewife, Panayiota (**Marisha Triantafyllidou**). She lives with her husband, Kostas (**Dimitris Imellos**), and their two children in a petit bourgeois neighbourhood in Athens. The financial recession has hit the family hard and Kostas has been unemployed for some time. The extreme pressure that is created within the household forces Panayiota to abandon the theoretical security of domesticity and to look for a job for the very first time in her life. When she succeeds and finds work as a cleaner in a local shopping mall, she soon realizes that her priorities have changed. As well as contending with the ruthless exploitation she experiences in the workplace, Panayiota must also battle against those who would hold her back at home. Slowly, Panayiota will evolve, forced, under the circumstances, to forge a new identity for herself.

Labôt delivers a strong and demanding social drama which depicts in austere but realistic fashion the aftermath of the ongoing financial and social crisis that has engulfed contemporary Greece. As this middle-class, nuclear family falls apart - having seen itself for years as part of the bourgeoisie, only very recently returning to working-class status - their issues, once buried deep down, are fast exposed. And once again, the women will be the first to suffer from this exposure. Panayiota, who is the archetypical mother/wife/working woman and "example", must constantly prove to her family, her employees and to herself that she deserves to be

respected on an equal footing, especially when she's taken for granted.

Unfortunately, this is still the case today in a deeply rooted, patriarchal society where female exploitation is commonplace and where verbal abuse and domestic violence haven't just always been present but have actually increased as a result of the crisis. This exploitation also takes place in work environments, where the average wage is less than €500/month and where employee rights aren't recognized. On top of this, in most cases, women find themselves having to demand and then find a social position for themselves, which is often anything other than equal to that of men.

The heroine is forced to withstand it all. Thanks to Marisha Triantafyllidou's organic and absorbing performance, Panayiota is able to shed new light on the struggle for female empowerment in a toxic environment. Of course, the change in Panayiota doesn't happen overnight. Labôt, who co-penned the script with **Katerina Kleitsioti**, offers up fragments of this evolution in small everyday details that slowly but surely alter Panayiota's character and give new form to her personality. When her initial feeling of financial "independence" threatens to cause gender roles within the family to be swapped, the balance in the former pseudo-tranquil household is undone. At this point, the fight for personal autonomy becomes a battle for survival. A survival that can only be achieved through self-liberation.

Her Job is a Greek-French-Serbian co-production by Maria Drandaki (Homemade Films), **Julie Paratian** (Sister Productions) and **Milan Stojanovi?** (Sense Production). The film is supported by the Greek Film Centre, ERT SA, the CNC, the Film Center Serbia and Cineventure. It was developed with the support of the SEE Cinema Network, and participated in the first edition of the First Films First training program. World sales are handled by French company, Jour2Fête.

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