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05-07-2015



It's 1991 and we're in Dalmatia, on the edge of a paradisiacal lake with the summer sun beating down. The young *Jelena* and *Ivan* love each other and are going to leave to try their luck in Zagreb the next day. But this beautiful green countryside is already being trampled by lines of jeeps full of men in uniforms. Although the lovebirds are from neighbouring villages, one is Serbian and the other is Croatian, and their relationship is deeply frowned upon by the two communities in this tense atmosphere. The countdown to war is started and our Romeo and Juliet are going to face serious problems...

By broaching the subject of hate through the prism of love in *The High Sun*, unveiled in the Un Certain Regard section of the 68th Cannes Film Festival, Croatian director **Dalibor Matanic** sinks his teeth into a topic which is very difficult to reinvent, with a number of films of varying genres already having delved into the dramatic events of the Balkan Wars. But this director (who also wrote the storyline) has managed to find an interesting angle with three different love stories set in the same bucolic context in 1991, 2001 and 2011. A concept which allows him to accurately depict, through a microcosm, the consequences of deadly conflict on people's mentalities. Three paintings which follow on from one another all the better as the two actors starring in the three stories are the same (**Tihana Lazovic** and **Goran Markovic**).

As the film opens we see the rise of chaos, fear and violence, leading into the second part (*Natacha and Ante*) which shows a country that has been destroyed and in need of being rebuilt, in which the wounds of the past are still too fresh for a romantic relationship to really blossom between the two sides, even though reconciliation does take place, and there are

attempts to help one another and find common ground. Finally the third part (*Marja et Luka*), portrays the exit of a long tunnel via collective rituals which give new life to a youth that dares to free itself from the shackles of the past and its cemeteries, of guilt, of things left unsaid, and of hate built up over time.

Much more than the narrative, it is the mature talent and poise of Dalibor Matanic (aged 40, he has already made eight feature films) that asserts itself here. Usually working in close-ups with his characters, paying attention to small details, the director takes great care to use a variety of high quality shots (with **Marko Brdar** in charge of photography), which lightens his story by making good use of magnificent shots of the surrounding landscape. The didacticism of the subject matter is well balanced thanks to the freshness of the actors and a well-judged alternation of rhythms (the quick pace and aggression of the first story, the sexual tension behind closed doors of the second, and the audio immersion of the third with an excellent techno sequence). All in all an optimistic vision of the future after the fighting has stopped and the rubble been swept away that shows faith in cyclical renewal.

Produced by Kinorama, *The High Sun* will be distributed in France by Bac Films and international sales will be managed by Cercamon (the newly-created company of Sébastien Chesneau).

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