**SVIŇA / SCUMBAG**

**Thriller inspired by life. And death.**

**Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal.**

**Produced by** In Film, Magic Seven, CinemArt, Slovak Republic, 2020

**Story and novel by:** Arpád Soltész

**Written, directed and produced by:** Mariana Čengel Solčanská and Rudolf Biermann

**Cast:** Jozef Vajda, Marko Igonda, Dano Heriban, Gabriela Marcinková, Diana Mórová, Braňo Bystriansky, Szidi Tobiasz, Jakub Rybárik, Mária Schumerová, Dana Droppová, Petra Dubayová, Andrej Remeník and others.

**Cinematography:** Ivan Finta

**Sound:** Miloš Hanzély, Lukáš Kasprzyk

**Production design:** Martin Hájek

**Make-up:** Alica Dvorská

**Costume designer:** Valéria Ducko Kelecsényi

**Score:** Vladimír Martinka

**Editing:** Ondrej Azor

**Film Studios:** In Film, Magic Seven, CinemArt

**Film supported by:** Audiovisual Fund

**Distributed by:** CinemArt SK

**Premiere:** 6. 2. 2020

**Genre:** thriller

**Duration:** 98 minutes

**Format:** 2D DCP, 5.1 sound

**Rating:** PG-15

**ABOUT THE FILM**

An eye-opening story of a small, picturesque country controlled by high-ranking criminals, whose tentacles span all the way to the politicians, the judiciary, the police and the mafia.

A teenager Broňa (Dana Droppová), a supposed drug addict treated in a national resocialization centre, disappears under peculiar circumstances. Nobody misses her. Her roomate, Naďa (Petra Dubayová) tries to alarm the police, explaining how they were both forced into drug taking and sex with politicians but is turned away. She finds a journalist Ondro (Andrej Remeník), who starts to unravel a long-standing unthinkable web of crime, blackmailing and extortion in connection to the prime minister Bobo (Marko Igonda), his political party and a black marketeer, Lolo Wagner (Jozef Vajda) who acquires power through manipulation and for whom blackmailing is just another kind of business. An evil force which openly destroys the nation. But can the truth prevail amongst those who only heed for money and power? Does God turn a blind eye to murder and greed?

Mariana Čengel Solčanská and Rudolf Biermann have worked together on this film as screenwriters, directors and producers. How did it happen? *“I wanted to make a film with Mr. Biermann based on a different script that I was writing. But he came up with the topic of abuse of power by representatives of the financial and political elite of the state, so I offered him to have a read of Arpád's novel “Scumbag”, which I was reading at the time. A week later already, we met up with the author and we felt great trust for each other,”* says Mariana Čengel Solčanská.

Why did they choose this topic?

Mariana Čengel Solčanská: *“I followed my inner need to replace evil with good. Art may not have the power to change the world, but we still have the freedom to laugh at peoples' folly.”*

Rudolf Biermann: *“Scumbag is a film whose aim is not to judge or unveil some classified facts, but to bring a good movie experience to its viewers. We have gripped an action film with great acting performances, excellent and rude dialogues inspired by real life: all this on the big screen will draw you in - and I strongly believe - will give you goose bumps and leave you speechless.”*

**FILMMAKERS AND INTERVIEWS**

**RUDOLF BIERMANN (1958), producer, screenwriter and director**

*Rudolf Biermann has produced over 35 successful and award-winning films. Most known are his cooperations with directors Jiří Menzl (I Served the King of England), Agnieszka Holland (Jánošík), Martin Šulík (Everything I Like, The Garden, Orbis Pictus), Matej Mináč (All My Loved Ones), Jan Hřebejk (Kawasaki’s Rose, Shameless, Innocence) and number of films based on novels written by acclaimed Czech author Michal Viewegh. In recent years he has produced several successful films, such as Revival (directed by Alice Nellis), including English speaking films The Prominent Patient and The Glass Room (both directed by Július Ševčík) and German/Slovak speaking film The Interpreter (directed by Martin Šulík).*

**MARIANA ČENGEL SOLČANSKÁ (1978), producer, screenwriter and director**

*One of the most distinctive Slovak directors and screenwriters, studied political science and culturology at the University of Konštantín Filozof in Nitra and movie directing at the University of Performing Arts in Bratislava. She wrote three novels, latest one being the appraised biographical work General telling the story of Milan Rastislav Štefánik. Her latest film Kidnapping inspired massive social movement, which led to demonstrations and annulment of Mečiar's amnesties in Slovakia.*

**Interview by Martin Kasarda with Rudolf Biermann and Mariana Čengel Solčanská**

**How did your mutual cooperation on this film project came about?**

**M.Č.S.:** I wanted to make a film with Mr. Biermann based on a different script that I was writing - a historical drama from the World War Two which now has a working title Proces (Trial) and which I've been working on for many years. But he came up with the topic of abuse of power by representatives of the financial and political elite of the state, so I offered him to have a read of Arpád's novel “Scumbag”, which I was reading at the time. A week later already, we met up with the author and we felt great trust for each other.

**R.B.:** The intention to make a different movie than the one under discussion, *Scumbag,* brought us together. At first, we talked about a possibility to produce a biographical movie about Tiso. Then I saw a Croatian produced television series about corruption, and I recommended Ms. Čengel Solčanská, as a very successful director of the thriller *Kidnapping,* which are strikingly resembling events during Mečiar's era - to to watch the series and and consider making something similar in this country. White collars mafia, abuse of power, connection of the judiciary, police, politicians, violence and abuse of young girls.

**Several characters in Soltész's book resemble real people from the world of Slovakian „jet set“, criminal underworld or the world of big and not always legal money.**

**M.Č.S:** Those who will accidentally see themselves in some characters can report themselves to police authorities and take a toothbrush with them. It is the author's advice on the first page of his book.

**R.B.:** We don't talk about particular people, but about the mechanism of power. Scumbags are always after a gravy train and power. Our characters are the archetypes of villains, who don't detest abusing underage girls, who are hungry for power, disrespect the law and justice, and in the name of God and money have no scruples to kill.

**Why did you choose this particular topic? Was the reason also the actual societal climate in Slovakia?**

**M.C.S:** I followed my inner need to replace evil with good. Art may not have the power to change the world, but we still have the freedom to laugh at peoples' folly.

**R.B.:** Scumbag is a film whose aim is not to judge or unveil some classified facts, but to bring a good movie experience to its viewers. We have gripped an action film with great acting performances, excellent and rude dialogues inspired by real life: all this on the big screen will draw you in - and I strongly believe - will give you goose bumps and leave you speechless.

**To what extent does the film copy the story of Soltész**'**s book? The bestseller contains situations, strikingly resembling events connected to corrective facility Čistý deň (Clean day), Kočner, connections of politicians to suspicious women with suspicious connections and the murder of Ján Kuciak. What about the film?**

**M.Č.S.:** Perhaps no film should copy any book. Novel and film use different way of narration and they use different language. Arpád's novel is full-blooded and filled with characters and many timelines. Our film follows one particular storyline of the book and develops it beyond the framework of literature.

**R.B.:** We decided to make a genre movie. Irrespective of the meaning of the offended people it is important to realise that this film is an audio-visual piece of work, which is a result of our creative intellectual work, while it was inspired by the literary work of Soltész's book. Our film is to be perceived as a work of art: it is in no way a documentary. We will surely be happy if it leaves certain imprint on the viewers and make them think about actual social themes, but it will always be just a made-up story, based on a hyperbola of certain negative human attributes.

**When you talk about genre film, can we talk about action thriller? Why this particular genre?**

R.B.: Suspense and action belong to elements most loved by audience. Film is not a mentor which has to share wisdom, it is the means that is using its own language. It has to be gripping, both its visuals and the story. And you can talk about very serious stuff, morality and peoples' characters. But you can't bore your audience, it would be a filmmaker's sin.

M.C.S: Because we draw on the book, which is a very brutal political thriller. Its author uses rude language, and much blood and tears are shed. But I would prefer to call it a shocking thriller.

**You decided to work together as scriptwriters, directors and even as producers. It is a bit non-traditional, but interesting combination. Why?**

**R.B.:** Because we both meddle in each other's work. Whilst we were writing the script we found out that we are able to reflect and complete each other's ideas. Ms. Čengel Solčanská also helped with some production matters and I added something to her directing. But filmmaking is always mainly a team work.

**M.C.S.:** Each film is a common work of several artistic components. Already at the beginning of this project, we agreed on co-parenting our common child, and it worked. If Mr. Biermann will continue to bring me coffee and chocolate cake into the editing room, it will work beyond the grave.

**You mentioned that the shooting went very quickly. Where did it take place?**

**R.B.:** I made a lot of movies and none of them was made so dynamically. I don't want to say it was hectic, but quick, the shooting took less than a month. It took place in utmost secrecy at well-known locations in Bratislava, Nitra, Trenčín, Šamorín and nearby surroundings.

**M.Č. S.:** I had a feeling of doing something meaningful, we put a lot of energy to the project which -I firmly believe - will transform into a meaningful piece of work. The crew consisted of great people to whom we are immensely grateful for their unbelievable effort and performance. Ivan Finta was the cinematographer, Ondrej Azor did the editing, and you can hear a score by Vladimír Martinka. The main characters are played by Jozef Vajda, Marko Igonda, Dano Heriban, Gabriela Marcinková, Diana Mórová, Braňo Bystriansky, Szidi Tobiasz or Jakub Rybárik.

**R.B.:** And let us not forget the young talented actors like Mária Schumerová, Dana Droppová, Petra Dubayová or Andrej Remeník, those are actors we will surely hear about in the future.

**M.Č.S.:** And I was very positively surprised by these young student actors recommended by their acting pedagogue Juraj Hrčka.

***Animal Farm*, the novel by George Orwell shows how privileged animals become something of “super animals”, who dominate the others. And who is the Pig in your film?**

**M.Č.S.:** You can fill in any name you want.

**R.B.:** That animal does not deserve to be likened to the characters of some people.

**JOZEF VAJDA as Lolo Wagner**

*Jozef Vajda has graduated acting school from the University of Performing Arts in 1977. Until 1980 he was a member of Nová scéna Theatre. Since then he has been playing at the Slovak National Theatre. He became very known also among television viewers since 2007 thanks to the TV series* Ordinácia v ružovej záhrade*. He also starred in Slovak historical film by Dušan Rapoš* Cinka Panna *about the artist of Roma origin from the past. In this film full of music Jozef Vajda finally portrayed a gypsy leader - vajda. He also provided many American actors with his voice in dubbing, for instance Michael Douglas, Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger and many others. For his outstanding dubbing performances he won Golden Reel in 2002. Two years later he was nominated for Crystal Wing and IGRIC Award.*

**Interview by Martin Kasarda with Jozef Vajda**

**Try to introduce your character.**

I want to use a thought of the author of the book *Sviňa* Arpád Soltész, who says that if anybody find themselves in this book, they should quickly take their ID and go to report themselves to the police. It is a truthful sentence, so you can probably guess what my character is like. The title says it all, but I wouldn't want to say that he is this one or that one… You could say that he's a mix of all villains, crooks and cheats of this country since the 90s till today. It is a cluster of these people, so I tried to act like that, to perceive the problems like that. These people continue doing it. It is as they grow after the rain over and over again. And not only in our country but in every country of the world. Simply evil. It exists. That is my view of my character. I believe that my performance and how I gave life to my character will capture you.

**When you were reading the script and the book, what were your feelings?**

I really liked reading both the book and the script. After finishing both, I immediately understood everything. This is because in the 90s, and actually till today, I have been very immersed in seeing bad situations and the problems that the film talks about. I feel that the story has many truthful moments to it and shows the truth. Although it's a work of fiction, of course. I found many real people in those fictitious characters. The book gave me great material to study and inspiration for my work. And I'm very glad that there is a man like Arpád Soltész who devotes himself to these problems and uses them for such a great piece of art.

**Why should we go and see this film?**

Because all these situations repeat themselves without end. As I said, these people grow and appear one after another, again and again. They simply exist. And that is why this film was made, for us to be warned, to protect ourselves, to prevent this evil happen again in the future. And I think we will succeed if we are honest to ourselves and admit that these things simply exist, expose them and point them out. That is the purpose of this film and I believe that when you'll see it, you'll understand what it is all about.

**CO-PRODUCER AND DISTRIBUTOR OF THE FILM**

**CINEMART SK**

Since 2016 the distribution company CinemArt SK, Co. Ltd. represents American studios 20th Century Fox International, DreamWorks Animation, Universal and Paramount Pictures in Slovakia, and since 2020 also Disney Studio.

Every year CinemArt brings over fifty movies to Slovakian cinemas - from blockbusters like The *Secret Life of Pets 2, X-Men: Dark Phoenix, Bohemian Rhapsody, Rocketman, MammaMia! Here We Go Again or* J*urassic World: Fallen Kingdom,* to movies appraised by viewers and film experts like *The Favourite, The Darkest Hour, BlacKkKlansman* or *The First Man*.

Besides the films of American studios CinemArt also brings films from European production, among them for example successful comedy trilogy *Suck Me Shakespeer* *1-3*, French comedies *Serial (Bad) Weddings, Christmas & Co.* and *With Open Arms*, Oscar nominated German drama Never Look Away, Award-winning Italian *Dogman*, German film *Balloon*, French-Finnish family movie *Ailo's Journey* or a film satire *The Death of Stalin*.

CinemArt is also a respected distributor of Czech films, a partner of renowned film producers and beginning filmmakers. Among succesfully distributed films of late there were the likes of comedies *What Men Long For* and *Women on the Run*, *Bear with Us* and critically acclaimed drama *Jan Palach,* but also critically acclaimed films like *The* *Hastrman*, *Domestique*, *Moments* and *Winter Flies*. CinemArt's Czech films in 2019 include for example a successful comedy *The Terrorist* by Radek Bajgar or a documentary J*iří Suchý - Tackling Life with Ease* by Olga Sommerová.

Besides film distribution CinemArt also focuses on co-producing of certain Czech films. The first of them was Oscar winning film by Jan Svěrák *Kolja*, followed by successful film by David Ondříček *Loners*. CinemArt was also a co-producer of *Patrimony* byJiří Vejdělek, *Stuck with a Perfect Woman* by Tomáš Hoffman, or *Lucky Four Serving the King* by Michal Žabka.

**PRODUCERS**

**IN FILM**

IN FILM was founded in 1993 by the experienced producer Rudolf Biermann. In Film produced artistically successful films such as Martin Šulík's *The Garden, Orbis Pictus*, *Gypsy* (premiered in Toronto 2011 and screened at BFI) and *The Interpreter*, and Ivan Fila's award-winning *King of Thieves*. In addition to critically acclaimed films, In Film also produced many box office hits such as *Jánošík* (dir. Agnieszka Holland), *From the Subway with Love* (dir. Filip Renč) and *The Holiday Makers* (dir. Jiří Vejdělek, screened at Tribeca IFF). In 2006 In Film co-produced Jiri Menzel's *I served the King of England*, which gained many awards in Czech Republic as well as abroad (Berlinale Competition). In Film also cooperates with a popular Czech director Jan Hřebejk, including titles *Shameless, Kawasaki´s Rose* (EFA 2010, Berlinale CICAE Award and Ecumenical Jury Award)and *Innocence*. All three films had gained success at international festivals, including Berlinale, Toronto and Karlovy Vary and were also distributed abroad (USA, France, Germany). Another director that In Film cooperates with is Alice Nellis, whose *Perfect Days* and *Revival* (KVIFF Audience Award 2013) were greatly successful internationally. Recently, IN FILM cooperated with the director Julius Ševčík, and produced two English speaking films *The Prominent Patient* (screened at Berlinale Panorama Special, IFF Montreal) and *The Glass Room*.

**MAGIC SEVEN**

Magic Seven company was founded in 1999 as an advertising agency. They worked on dozens of domestic and foreign advertising campaigns. In 2010 Magic Seven also produced their first feature film - a historical drama *Legend of Flying Cyprian*, which became the most visited Slovakian film of that year. Besides that, MagicSeven co-produced feature films *Love Me or Leave Me, Láska na vlásku* and *Kidnapping.*

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