



Past Imperfect, Future Continuous

**Romanian Film Festival - 4th edition, 26-29 April 2007
Curzon Mayfair, 38 Curzon Street, London W1J 7TY**

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Venue: Curzon Mayfair, 38 Curzon Street, W1J 7TY

Tickets: £10.00/£7.00 concessions

Booking: In person, online www.curzoncinemas.com or by phone 0870 756 4621 (a £1.25 booking fee applies to phone bookings only)

More details on www.romanianculturalcentre.org.uk

Programme:

Thursday 26 April

18.00

Gala night reception

followed by welcome speeches

19.00

Ion Ratiu - The Man Behind the Bow Tie

12:08 **East of Bucharest** (this film will be released by Artificial Eye in selected cinemas nationwide on 21 September 2007)

Q&A session (with the participation of film director Corneliu Porumboiu)

Friday 27 April

18.30

The Paper Will Be Blue

Q&A session (with the participation of film director Radu Muntean)

Saturday 28 April

16.00

The Tube with a Hat

Love Sick

Q&A session

18.30

Paul Neagu - Heart of the Tornado

preceded by a short introduction about artist Paul Neagu (with the participation of film directors Laurentiu & Agnieszka Garofeanu)

The Great Communist Bank Robbery

Q&A session

Sunday 29 April

16.10

Shorts programme:

Marilena from P7

C Block Story

preceded by a short introduction about director Cristian Nemescu

Tertium Non Datur

18.30

The Way I Spent the End of the World

Q&A session (with the participation of film director Catalin Mitulescu)

Closing night reception

Guests from Romania: film directors Corneliu Porumboiu, Radu Muntean and Catalin Mitulescu, CNC director Alina Salcudeanu, film journalist Anca Gradinariu, journalist and writer Liviu Antonesei

Q & A sessions will be hosted by Anca Gradinariu, Adina Bradeanu and Ramona Mitrica.

Organised by:



Romanian
Cultural Centre
London



THE RATIU FAMILY
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION



National Centre of Cinematography



Embassy of Romania in the UK



Past Imperfect, Future Continuous: Romanian Film Festival 2007

“Television fabricates forgetting, cinema creates memory”, said Godard in *Histoire(s) du cinema*. At the core of this year’s programme are a number of daring, irreverent, often hilarious takes on Romania’s past imperfect. Many of the film-makers included in the programme invite a meditation on the uses of image in the construction of an idea of history and historical consciousness. Some of them touch on the production of historical memory, and on the collisions and collusions among individual and collective memories.

The programme features the The Second World War, the Romanian Revolution, and a ‘communist bank robbery’ that happened in between. These are usually the stuff, or some would say the ‘stuffing’, of history. Still, neither of these films is a historical film per se. Rather, they are individual incursions into the domain of History, alternative stories rewritten from the present by overlapping public history with private memory and with individual imagination.

They are essentially private stories set in public times. They feature the mixture of poetry, harsh realism, and absurdist humour which have always been part and parcel of Romanian cinema. They are all rooted in the genuine need to re-situate the past in order to project a future.

The filmmakers present in the festival are an eclectic age mix, from veteran auteur Lucian Pintilie to greener names considered by some a Romanian New Wave of sorts. Beyond age or individual style, they share a gusto for life on the margins, be those margins the provincial community trying to forge some sense of history for itself, or the ‘sick’ love of the non-traditional couple striving against social taboos, or the minimal habitat conditions of the communist block of flats, or anything else that comes embedded with life on the periphery. Whether there can be History, Love, or for that matter Honour, at the margins, is among the questions posed by these films, which share a concern for the ‘micro’ and favour the individual over the collective, and the mundane over the heroic.

It remains to be proven by time whether there is indeed a Romanian New Wave. For the time being, there’s just a group of individuals who managed to prove that **there is a future in the past: Past Imperfect, Future Continuous** is an invitation to see some of the best Romanian films of the recent years in the company of those who started by talking about a revolution.

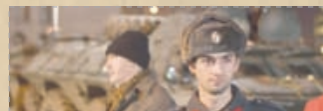
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Ion Ratiu - The Man Behind the Bow Tie



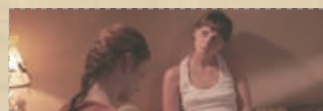
12:08 East of Bucharest



The Paper Will Be Blue



The Tube with a Hat



Love Sick



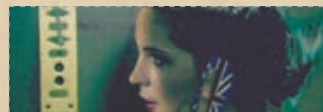
Paul Neagu - Heart of the Tornado



The Great Communist Bank Robbery



Marilena from P7



C Block Story



Tertium Non Datur



The Way I Spent the End of the World

GENERAȚIA DE PIONIERI A CONGRESULUI AL XIII-LEA

AL PARTIDULUI
COMUNIST
ROMÂN

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These days Romanians just love www.igu.ro/latrecut/ (latrecut - on the past). Although only one year old, the site has enjoyed a truly enviable traffic and popularity. "Igu", the man behind the site, confessed that he started **onthepast** because he was forgetting his childhood and felt that he needed a collective effort of remembrance. As he grew up in communist Romania, his site is all about that Romania. One can find virtually everything out there, from the 'Pitic' chocolate to school uniforms, from the nauseating 'adidasi' pig feet to memories of Bollywood screenings in the 1980s, from the syrupy paper glue 'Pelicanol', to absurdist communist jokes.

Several years ago, **Good-Bye, Lenin** (Wolfgang Becker, 2003) unleashed *östalgie* (the nostalgia for the East) in film. It made everybody laugh at East German communism while still allowing room for the humanity of the people who lived with it and subsequently carried it in their memories. At that time, Romanians were only shyly starting their own work of memory on their communist past. Rehabilitating that past within new semantic registers, other than the previously indistinct 'look back in anger', has become a growing phenomenon over the recent years. Today, **onthepast** is probably Romania's most vivid "Good-Bye, Ceausescu", with the added value provided by the democratic switch of medium from cinema to blogging.

The keyword is historical revisionism. For most of the 1990s, many Romanians preferred to forget about the colossal paradigm shift that was the fall of the Eastern Bloc, or were simply too busy to live through the changes brought by it. Until the early 2000s there was a relative absence of alternative engagements with a communist past that was indistinctly perceived as traumatic, and 'fixed' through prescriptively black and white accounts. Nae Caranfil's much praised **E Pericoloso Sporgersi** (1993), one of the very few nuanced cinematic perspectives on daily life in late communist Romania, was in many ways ahead of its time.

In the early 2000s, when three Romanian filmmakers took on Romania's past imperfect, their decision did not happen out of the blue. In the wake of December 1989, ethnologist Irina Nicolau came out with the first account of the events – an edited book which captured the temporary scripts and rhythms of the moment, from graffiti to oral history (*Vom muri si vom fi liberi / We Will Die But We Will Break Free*, 1990). In the early 1990s, Berlin-based Romanian filmmaker Andrei Ujica and video artist Harun Farocki took on the visual memory of the uprising in **Videogrames of a Revolution** (1992), a film essay built on the extensive footage gathered in December 1989 by both 'official' and private, nomadic cameras out in the streets. The film had an international arthouse career which added to the global memory of the 'first televised Revolution' in history – a much contested historical event within Romania. "If I were in charge of the Emmys, I would give one to those who staged the Romanian Revolution", wrote US-based Romanian Andrei Codrescu on what he

perceived as a staged play, a "revolution between quotation marks" (*The Hole in the Flag / Gaura din steag*, 1992).

Television was crucial for the Romanian revolution – the first event of its kind to be broadcast live across the world. The *mise-en-scene* of the trial of the Ceausescus was itself a sort of shock reality show. No wonder that past years have seen a growing concern for how the media produce, shape and document events. Ten years from December 1989, video artist Dan Mihaltianu's **Revolution dans le boudoir** (1999) opened up a new space for mixing the 'private' with the 'public' in the engagement with the received wisdom of history. Mihaltianu's aim was to ask questions about the way in which the 'average' man in the street experienced and memorialized History. To do that, he overlapped live audio recordings of December 1989 from the Romanian radio and television, with the morning ritual of a man grooming himself for a new day. In 2006, Chicago-based artist Irina Botea (*Auditions for a Revolution*, Chicago, 2006) explored notions of access to past historical events amongst layers of successive mediation and representation of those events. Botea employed performance as a way of engagement with an unknown and an essentially 'foreign' history. She selected a number of iconic moments captured by cameras in December 1989 and subsequently edited by Farocki and Ujica in their **Videogrames of a Revolution**, and invited a number of foreign students to restage some of those moments and voice some of the messages of the time, from "Vom muri si vom fi liberi" ("We will die but we will break free"), to "Armata e cu noi" ("The army is with us"), and to "Am învins" (We are victorious").

These works added to the constantly growing repertory of engagements with the recent past on various levels of society, and illuminated the discrete processes through which private, and previously unacceptable memories of the recent past are currently infiltrating the public domain. Since the beginning of 2007 alone, Romanians saw two exhibitions on the memory of the 'Ceausescu era': one was the 'public' memorial engagement organized by Romania's National Museum of History (and opened on January 26, the day when people used to 'celebrate' Ceausescu's birthday), while the other was an individual shock-therapy approach to the bloody shooting of the Ceausescus, hosted by a private gallery in Bucharest (Mircea Suci, H'Art Gallery, Bucharest).

The tendency to separate from a painful or inconvenient past is gone now, but the negotiation of the conflicting memories attached to that past will probably last for a while: choosing between different versions of the past is also a choice between various options for the future.

At the end of the day, quoting a character from **12: 08 East of Bucharest**, "One makes whatever revolution one can, each in their own way".

Adina Bradeanu
School of Media, Arts and Design
University of Westminster

Ion Ratiu - The Man Behind the Bow Tie

Ion Ratiu - Omul din spatele papionului

Gala Night

Thursday 26 April, 19.00
Followed by 12:08 East of Bucharest

Documentary / 2001 / 11 min / colour / English and Romanian with English subtitles

Director: Ivor Barladeanu

Synopsis

Ion Ratiu (6 June 1917 - 17 January 2000) was a lawyer, journalist, writer, politician, businessman and philanthropist. Exiled in England, he was simultaneously operating as a kind of Scarlet Pimpernel, assisting in the rescue of many dissidents from Ceausescu's dictatorship.

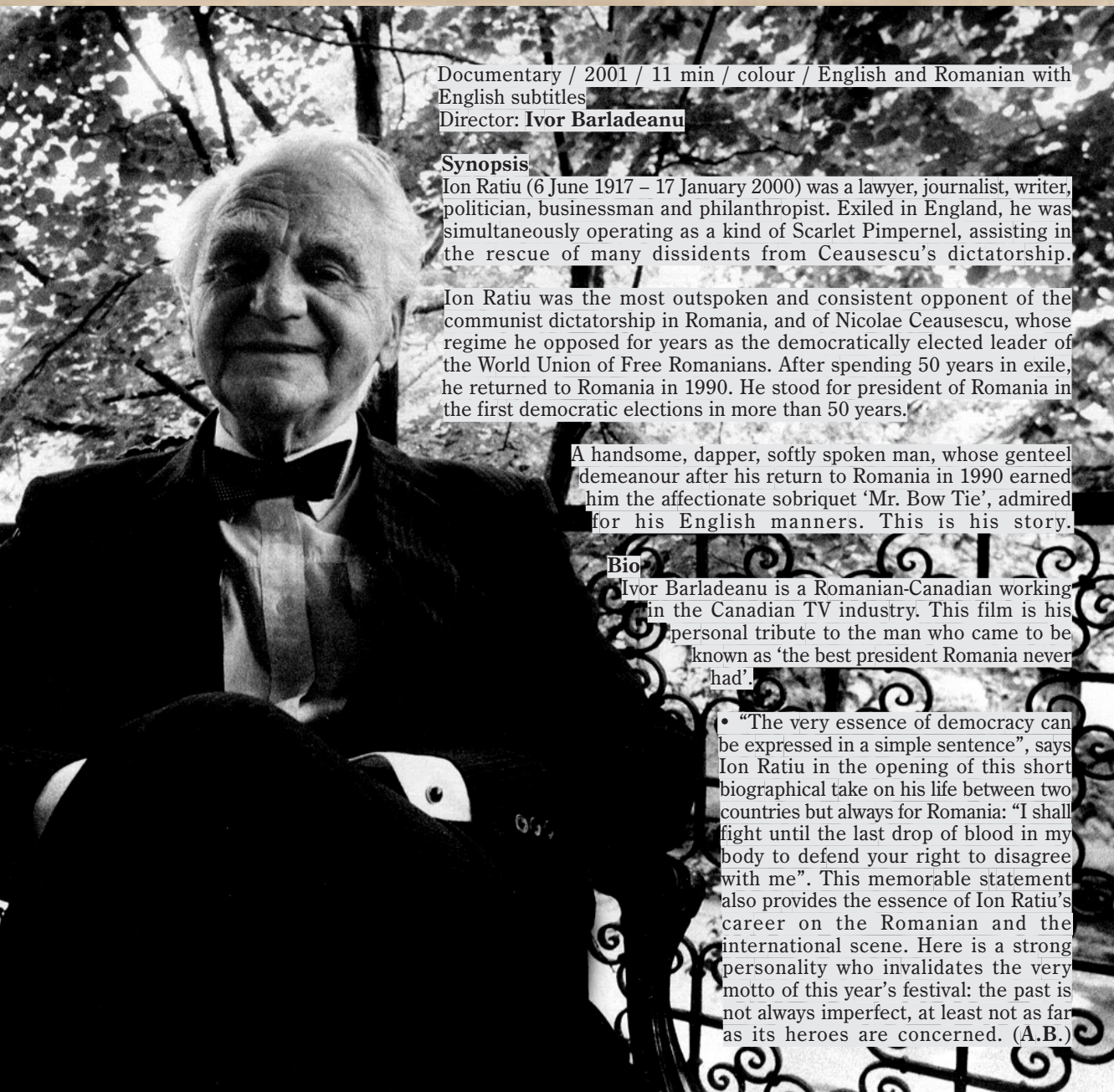
Ion Ratiu was the most outspoken and consistent opponent of the communist dictatorship in Romania, and of Nicolae Ceausescu, whose regime he opposed for years as the democratically elected leader of the World Union of Free Romanians. After spending 50 years in exile, he returned to Romania in 1990. He stood for president of Romania in the first democratic elections in more than 50 years.

A handsome, dapper, softly spoken man, whose genteel demeanour after his return to Romania in 1990 earned him the affectionate sobriquet 'Mr. Bow Tie', admired for his English manners. This is his story.

Bio

Ivor Barladeanu is a Romanian-Canadian working in the Canadian TV industry. This film is his personal tribute to the man who came to be known as 'the best president Romania never had'.

• "The very essence of democracy can be expressed in a simple sentence", says Ion Ratiu in the opening of this short biographical take on his life between two countries but always for Romania: "I shall fight until the last drop of blood in my body to defend your right to disagree with me". This memorable statement also provides the essence of Ion Ratiu's career on the Romanian and the international scene. Here is a strong personality who invalidates the very motto of this year's festival: the past is not always imperfect, at least not as far as its heroes are concerned. (A.B.)



Sigiliul lui Mihai Viteazul, sub a carui domnie ca
romanești, Moldova, Muntenia și Transilvania a fost
pentru prima oară, 1599-1602

Presă
Libera
Romana

17 23 1996

Seal of Michael the Brave, under whose reign
provinces, Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania
united for the first time, 1599-1602

Free
Romanian
Press

FOUNDED IN 1996

12:08 EAST OF BUCHAREST

A fost sau n-a fost?

Thursday 26 April, 19.00 GALA NIGHT
Preceded by Ion Ratiu - The Man Behind the Bow Tie

Feature film / Romania / 2006 / 89 min / colour / English subtitles

Director: **Corneliu Porumboiu**

This film will be released by Artificial Eye in selected cinemas nationwide on 21 September 2007

Cast: Ion Sapdaru, Mircea Andreescu, Teodor Corban

Synopsis

At 12:08 p.m. on December 22, 1989, Romanians were glued onto their TV sets watching Nicolae Ceausescu flee in a helicopter from his presidential palace. Now it's December 22 again, sixteen years after the Revolution. We are in a small provincial town and Christmas is coming. A retired old man and an alcoholic history teacher are brought together by the owner of the local TV station, to face History and answer a major question: Did they truly have a Revolution in their town, or rather, did they just watch it on TV while happening elsewhere, 'at the centre'?

Critics

"A deadpan comedy that evolves into a wry, politicized examination of truth, **12:08 East of Bucharest** reconfirms - on the heels of last year's *Death of Mister Lazarescu* - Romania's emergence as a budding cinematic Mecca". (Nick Schager, *SLANT Magazine*)

"This buoyant little comedy puts its finger on the problem in the best tradition of East European humour, savvy but concrete, gentle but sharp as a knife." (Deborah Young, *Variety*)



Director's Statement

"My film is about marginalisation and appearances. I was attracted to the idea of seeing what happened in December 1989 in the country's smaller towns. This is why I chose to shoot the film in my hometown. What you see in the film is the reality of where I grew up: Vaslui."

Prizes

Caméra d'Or and Label Europa Cinemas Award at Cannes 2006; Best Film at Transylvania International Film Festival 2006
2007 Independent Spirit Awards Nominee for Best Foreign Film

Bio

Born in 1975, Vaslui, Romania. Graduated in 2003 from The National University of Drama and Cinematography in Bucharest.

Selected Filmography

2006: *12:08 East of Bucharest*; feature film; 89 min, colour - writer and director
2003: *Liviu's Dream*; short film, 39 min, colour - writer and director
A Trip to the City; short film, 19 min, colour - writer and director
2001: *Love Sorry*; short film, 5 min, b/w - writer and director
2002: *Temporary Suspended Line*; short film, 14 min, b/w - writer and director

Gone with the wine; short film, 9 min, colour - writer and director

2000: *Graffiti*; short film, 7 min, colour - writer and director

• The literal translation of the original title is 'Was there or was there not?'.

12:08 East of Bucharest is one of the three films featured in this year's programme that multiply the perspectives on Romania's 'total event' from December 1989. Porumboiu's spicy film is a both genuine and concerned engagement with Romania's recent past. It plays on the border between bittersweet and absurdist humour, and was perceived by the international press as a sort of 'Charlie Rose as imagined by the Czech New Wave'. When History is written by a retired Santa Claus in a shabby provincial TV studio, there is no room left for grandiose statements. Here, the gap between the mythology of the Revolution and one's memories about it take hilarious but also deeply humane proportions.

European cinemas have always been largely low budget, as described by what a film scholar once called 'the aesthetics of almost-poverty'. In the case of Porumboiu's film, this translates into the decision (which is both aesthetic and economic), to stay stuck within the TV studio and settle for the TV-show format. **12:08** is part of a regional tradition of anti-spectacular cinema which uses a sparse mise-en-scene for maximum effect, and proves that 'one can be minimalist with panache', as one film journalist remarked.

Porumboiu's first career choice was Economics, and we can see traces of that in the imaginative funding scheme of his film, which matches the quirkiness of his style. **12:08** manages to 'skip' the national (i.e. Romania's main film funding body, The National Centre of Cinematography), and to bridge directly the 'regional' to the 'supra-national': The film's credits display the prestigious Cannes Cinéfondation (a competitive residence offered by the Cannes Film Festival to promising first-time filmmakers), next to a number of small local companies from the filmmaker's hometown that accepted to invest in the film.

Porumboiu was fourteen in December 1989. The idea of the film sprang out after he watched a real televised debate on the subject of the Revolution. By the way, the rumour goes that the local TV station used as location for the shooting of the film has decided to keep the background photo used as a prop. Which means that if we long for a sequel we can always tune in to the real thing. (A.B.)



THE PAPER WILL BE BLUE

Hartia va fi albastra

FRIDAY 27 APRIL 18.30

Feature film / Romania / 2006 / 95 min / colour / English subtitles

Director: **Radu Muntean**

Cast: Paul Ipate, Adi Carauleanu, Dragos Bucur, Tudor Aron Istodor, Alexandru Potocean, Andi Vasluianu

Synopsis

The Romanian revolution of 1989 finds Costi Andronesco three months away from his release from the army. The armoured vehicle unit he is part of is ordered to patrol Bucharest's neighbourhoods. Their radio barely works and all they can tell from it is that it seems the national TV station is under attack. Costi considers it is his duty to fight against the dictatorship, and he runs to fight the 'terrorists' at the TV headquarters. But before getting there, he is arrested as a terrorist himself...

It's a night of madness – soldiers receive orders via television from poets and actors, radios transmit garbled signals, arms are distributed to civilians and gypsies are arrested as Arab terrorists.

Director's Statement

"The Paper will be Blue doesn't offer a History Channel type of perspective, but wants to reconstitute the feel of those days from the point of view of the small actors of the events. It is the story of a generation losing its innocence, and of a popular revolt that revealed our best and our worst in an equal measure."

Prizes

Best Film at International Eurasia Film Festival, Turkey 2006

Bio



Born in 1971, Radu Muntean graduated in 1994 from The National University of Drama and Cinematography, Bucharest. Continued with a successful career in advertising and returned to cinema in 2002 with his debut feature film *The Rage* (Furia).

Selected Filmography

2006: *The Paper Will be Blue*; feature film, 95 min, colour – director, co-screenwriter

2002: *The Rage*; feature film, 90 min, colour – director, screenwriter

1996: *Life Is Elsewhere*; documentary, colour – director

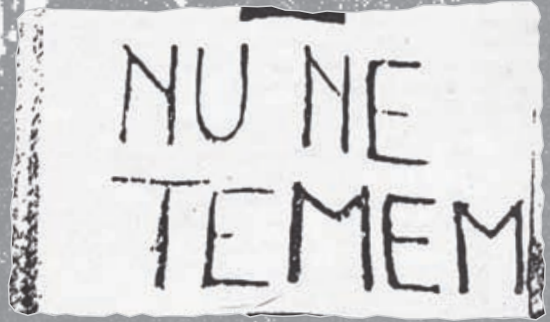
1996: *The Tragic Love Story of the Two*; short film, colour – director

1994: *She*; short film, colour – director

Lindenfeld 1994; documentary, colour – director

1992: *They Are Also of Our Kin*; documentary – director

a 'popular uprising', but also a coup d'etat, a 'revolution in quotation marks', a 'fake' or 'stolen' revolution - the idea being that the genuine mobilisation of the population was allegedly 'hijacked' by former apparatchiks with own agendas.



December 1989 was mythologized while still in the making: First, there was the myth of the omnipresent and omnipotent Political Police (Securitate), ready to intervene and re-install mass obedience. Then the myth of the 'terrorists' took shape, as an embodiment of the malign Ceausescu regime. Everything seemed credible in the state of excess and anticipation of the time, and the inflated casualty figures circulated in the media just added to the confusion.

Muntean's film captures in docudrama style the minimalist story of a group of youth folk caught in the midst of the events. *The Paper Will Be Blue* is a glimpse at the everyday life of a revolutionary moment. The film revisits some of the most significant 'sites of memory' attached by Romanians to the events in December 1989: from 'Television', to 'terrorists', to 'poisoned water'. It conveys the sense of a time of deep crisis, but also a sense of community and shared goals which is now lost.

Muntean was a soldier in December 1989, so there is a certain biographical seed at the heart of his film. His younger actors were children or teenagers at the time, so they had to learn from documents about the thrill and urgency of those days. A special mention for the film's dialogues, where one can sense the touch of screenwriter Razvan Radulescu (co-writer to Cristi Puiu's *Death of Mister Lazarescu*), alongside Radu Muntean and Alexandru Baciu. (A.B.)

• "Revolutions resting on mass mobilization and state breakdown tend to encompass both the swirl of the battle and the chaos of defeat", reads a recent book on December 1989. The violent transfer of power that took place in Romania at that time was called a 'revolution' and



The Tube with a Hat Lampa cu caciula

Saturday 28 April, 16.00

Followed by Love Sick

Short film / Romania / 2006 / 23 min / colour / English subtitles
Director: **Radu Jude**

Cast: Marian Bratu, Gabriel Spahiu, Natalia Calin, Alexandru Georgescu, Costica Draganescu

Synopsis

Very early in the morning, Marian, a 7 year-old boy from a small and isolated Romanian village, wakes up his father and persuades him to go to the city, in order to get their old TV set fixed. Despite the bad weather, the father finally agrees. Marian and his father start the trip, carrying the TV set, hoping that in the city they will find Bichescu, the only specialist who can fix their problem. A short road-movie about the father-and-son relationship and the importance of small things in life.

Selected filmography

2006: The Tube with a Hat; short film, 23 min, colour – director
2003: The Black Sea; short film, colour – director
Wrestling; short film
2001: The Problem; short film, colour – director
2000: Mr Popescu; documentary, colour – director

• We have learned to agonize over restricting our children's TV viewing time, for fear that television will absorb them, will eat their minds up, will inscribe them with unacceptable scenarios. But this is not an issue in The Tube with a Hat. Here the TV-set is a much praised connection to the world. When it breaks, it needs to be slavishly carried though mud and sludge, just to be fixed for the next show. The film resonates from afar with an iconic Romanian documentary of the 1980s, in which a group of men from a work colony would walk several miles every evening after work, just to get to the nearest town and watch Madonna perform in concert, on the unique video machine in the region. As Madonna did not make acceptable communist entertainment, the filmmaker was required to interfere a bit with the material. When the film was released, a bunch of workers from a colony walked several miles every evening after work, to watch 'Teleenciclopedia', a well-known popular science programme of the time. To say more about this would spoil the plot. Radu Jude's Sundance success proves that strong 'local' stories travel best. (A.B.)



Director's Statement

"Directing this film, my main concern was to tell the story as honestly as possible. I didn't make any moral judgment about the characters, their actions and the world they live in. I only wanted to understand them, and to reveal their humanity."

Prizes

Best short film, Sundance Film Festival
Best short film Montpellier, Cottbus, Bilbao, and Trieste

Bio

Born in 1977, in Bucharest. Graduated the MEDIA University Bucharest, Film Making section, in 2003. He worked as an assistant director for Amen by Costa Gavras, The Rage, by Radu Muntean, and The Death of Mr Lazarescu by Cristi Puiu. He also directed a television series, music videos and adverts



LOVE SICK *

legături bolnavicioase

Saturday 28 April, 16.00

Preceded by The Tube with a Hat

Feature film / Romania / 2006 / 84 min / colour / English subtitles

Director: **Tudor Giurgiu**

Cast: Maria Popistasu, Ioana Barbu, Tudor Chirila, Catalina Murgea, Mircea Diaconu

Synopsis

Love. It just happens. No rules. It may look sick, but it's deep and it hurts. For everyone, Alex and Kiki are just two good friends. They happen to be two girls experiencing another kind of love. For their family, Kiki and Sandu are sister and brother who sometimes fight. They happen to be lovers. Love Sick is about their stories...

Critics

"The dusty interiors of Bucharest reflect stale values, the sweet home-baked cakes purport to a strong sense of tradition, the open idyllic countryside suggests a love of freedom and the girls' unconventional relationship perhaps points to a need for change. Indeed, the film itself can be seen as a coming of age for both the girls, and for Romanian cinema." (Lucy Muss, The Guardian, 20 February 2006)

Bio

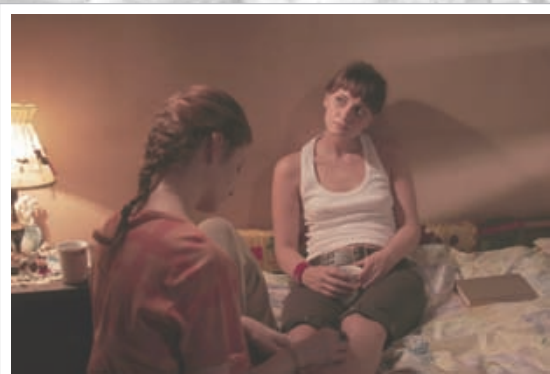


Born in 1972, Cluj, Romania. Graduated in 1995 from The National University of Drama and Cinematography, Bucharest. Former Director of the Transilvania International Film Festival (TIFF), Cluj. Currently Director General of the Romanian National Television, since July 2005.

Selected filmography

2006: Love Sick; feature film, 85 min, colour – director, co-screenwriter
2004: The Great Communist Bank Robbery (directed by Alexandru Solomon); documentary, 75 min, colour – producer
2001: Popcorn Story; short film, 15 min, colour – director, producer
2000: Hausmeister; documentary, 23 min, colour – director, producer
1996: Fiesta; short film – director
1995: (S)He's Alone in the World; short film, 15 min, colour – director
1994: No Traces; short film – director
1993: Neighbours; short film – director
1992: Fairy Tale; – director
Girls Morgana (Fetele morgana); short film – director

• **Love Sick** (literally "Sickly Liasons", a pun on de Laclos' novel) makes a singular figure in this festival as the only feature film which does not engage with Romania's past imperfect. It is a love story, a sick one according to some (or many), but still a story about the labour of love rather than the work of memory.



Giurgiu resists the pressure of history and puts it into brackets - although it still creeps in at times from behind the communist blocks of flats, the shabby rooms or the patriarchal mentalities. But he goes for the boiling point of teenage relationships, and for intensities of feeling conveyed in an understated approach which, as one journalist remarked, "make **Brokeback Mountain** look like gay porn by comparison". A lesbian cum incestuous story may not be the first thing one might expect from Romania. Still, Giurgiu's interest goes towards the tectonic shifts of emotional life rather than the physicality of the sexual encounter.

The film is based on the eponymous novel by Cecilia Stefanescu, who features as a co-screenwriter with Tudor Giurgiu. Some final touches were provided by Razvan Radulescu (screenwriter, with Cristi Puiu, of award winning **Death of Mister Lazarescu**). **Love Sick** ranked the first non-American title at the box office in Romania. (A.B.)



Paul Neagu - *Heart Of the Tornado*

Paul Neagu - Inima furtunii

Saturday 28 April, 18.30

Followed by *The Great Communist Bank Robbery*

Documentary / UK / 2004 / 26 min / colour
Directors: **Laurentiu & Agnieszka Garoceanu**
The film was produced with financial support offered by the Ratiu Foundation UK.

Synopsis

Paul Neagu (1938-2004): sculptor, painter, poet, larger-than-life character. Neagu settled in Britain in 1970 and embarked in a remarkable career as an artist and teacher. Laughing in the face of the Establishment, Neagu even formed a fictitious art group (Generative Art Group) which exhibited regularly. Influenced by Structuralism and philosophy, Neagu's art worked with the Word for an even deeper impact. But this great speaker is silenced one day, in 2001, by a cerebral attack that leaves him aphasic. The ones to speak for him now are his works, his friends, and his former pupils...

Directors' Statement

"Paul Neagu was a controversial figure in the British art scene, a teacher and inspiration to some of the most successful contemporary artists: Anish Kapoor, Anthony Gormley and Rachel Whiteread. We were lucky enough to meet and gain the trust of this mystifying man. This film is the record of the last year of his life and an emotional journey of filmmakers getting closer to the artist and the core of his work."



Bios

Laurentiu Garoceanu graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Bucharest, specializing in painting and photography. He is currently living and working in London.

Agnieszka Garoceanu is a Polish artist and graphic designer living and working in London.

Screenings

The film was screened at Gallery@49 in New York and Slade School of Fine Arts in London, and broadcast by the Cultural Channel of the Romanian Television.

- Every biographical documentary needs to find its own style, by attending not only to the intimate profile of the person portrayed, but also to the circumstances of the shooting, and to the type of relationship established by the filmmaker with the subject. In the case of the Garoceanus' film, those circumstances included the rapid deterioration of a flamboyant artist who was also a "difficult customer" (as former ICA director Bill McAllister describes him), and sadly, his passing away during the shooting. Due to that, Neagu's profile had to be composed mostly out of the accounts of those who had intersected paths with him at various moments in his career.

The presence of Paul Neagu in the film is sparse but intense and powerful. There are also moments in the film which testify to the close communication of the artist with the couple behind the camera. Every biopic is said to need a core scene that 'sums up' what actually cannot be summed up – the moving contours of human personality. In **Heart of the Tornado**, that scene could be the one in which Neagu walks followed by the camera, points at a road sign and says, "Asta vreau" ("This is what I want").

The sign reads DIVERSION. (A.B.)



The Great Communist Bank Robbery

Marele jaf comunist

Saturday 28 April, 18.30

Preceded by Paul Neagu - Heart of the Tornado



Documentary / Romania / 2004 / 75 min / colour & b/w / English subtitles

Director: Alexandru Solomon

Synopsis

One quiet morning in August 1959, a car belonging to the National Bank of Romania was robbed in front of a central office in Bucharest. Four armed and masked men and one woman ran away with a huge amount of money, high-jacking a taxi. Less than a year later, a one-hour film on the robbery was already fascinating audiences throughout Romania. After they were caught, only months after the attack, the 'gangsters' agreed to play their own parts in this would-be 'reconstruction' scripted by Romania's Political Police.

Critics

"Alexandru Solomon's film is both a bizarre recreation of a crime of which the motive is still difficult to fathom and an astonishing evocation of a lost world of Romanian Stalinism." (Nick Fraser, Storyville Series Editor, BBC)

Director's Statement

"This is a political detective story about a group of communists who lost their faith in the communist regime and decided to express their disillusionment through a public performance: a bank robbery. The crowning of their performance was the shooting of a film which apparently reconstructed the bank heist. But from that moment on, the 'gangsters' became part of another performance they could no longer control: they became puppets of propaganda."

Prizes

2004: Prix du Film d'Histoire, Festival du Film d'Histoire, Pessac, France;

2005: Prize for Social Values, Documenta Madrid Grand Prix, Mediawave Gyor, Hungary.

Best Director, Hungarian-Romanian Dok Festival, Sf. Gheorghe, Romania

Bio

Born in 1966, Alexandru Solomon graduated in 1991 from The National University of Drama and Cinematography, Bucharest, Camera and Cinematography section. While working on documentaries, Alexandru Solomon also worked as cinematographer for some of the best Romanian directors (Andrei Blaier, Mircea Daneliuc, Stere Gulea).

Selected filmography

2004: The Great Communist Bank Robbery; documentary, 75 min, colour & b/w – director, screenwriter

2002: The Bread of Exile; documentary, 26 min and 10 min – director

2001: The Man with Thousand Eyes; documentary, 52 min and 26 min – director

1999: A Dog's Life; 23 min – director

1997: Fortress Guard; documentary, 24 min – director

1996: Zurich Chronicle; art documentary, 40 min – director

1995: Via Regis; documentary, 62 min – director

1994: Duo for Paoloncello and Petronome; art documentary, 28 min – director

1993: Shriek into the Ear-Drum; documentary, 27 min – director. With Radu Igazsag

1993: 2 X 5; video-art, 4 min – director. With artist Geta Bratescu

1992: Earthcake; video-art, 7 min – director. With artist Geta Bratescu

• Bank-robbing apparatchiks are not really the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about communist Romania of the 1950s. In the popular imagination, committed communists wake up early in the morning, sing mobilizing songs and go to work in steel factories. They do not rob banks. Or do they? But were they truly committed communists in the first place? And actually, did they really rob that bank?

The title of this film points simultaneously to a classic of early cinema (E.S.Porter's **Great Train Robbery**) and to a clash of imaginary systems. This is, again, a story about individual memory vs. public history, and about trying to match the reverberations of a historical event in the public memory, with the shifting landscapes of individual remembrance.

But **The Great Communist Bank Robbery** is also about good quality cinema, where the fluid camerawork and elaborated shots bridge the Eastern European tradition of the 'artistic documentary' with the recent international interest in the flamboyant visibility of theatrical documentary.

This is a contemporary investigation built on the shoulders of a would-be documentary. A chilly story set in those times when it was easy to be transformed overnight into an 'enemy of the state', by a chilly voice-over saying "These people have nothing in common with the construction of socialism in Romania". The camera never lies. (A.B.)

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CUVÎNTAREA TOVARĂȘULUI



MARILENA FROM P7

MARILENA DE LA P7

SUNDAY 29 APRIL 16.10
FOLLOWED BY TERTIUM NON DATUR

Short film / Romania / 2006 / 45 min / colour / English subtitles

Director: **Cristian Nemescu**

Cast: Madalina Ghitescu, Gabriel Huian, Cristi Olesher, Gabriel Spahiu

Synopsis

Andrei, a 13 year old teenager, living in one of Bucharest's outskirts, decides one day to steal a trolleybus in order to impress Marilena, a prostitute he's fallen in love with. The things one does for love...



Prizes

Prix UIP Angers, European First Film Festival 2004; First Prize, International Student Film Festival, New York 2003; Special Mention, Berlin Interfilm Festival 2003

Bio

Born in 1979 in Bucharest. Graduated in 2003 from the National University of Drama and Cinematography in Bucharest. In August 2006, Nemescu (27) died in a car crash together with his sound engineer Andrei Toncu (28). Nemescu's producer started a short film festival in Bucharest, in memory of Nemescu and Toncu. More info on the NexT Festival at www.nextproject.ro/festival/

Selected filmography

2006: California Dreaming (post-production); feature film, colour – director

Marilena from P7; medium length feature, 45 min, colour – director, screenwriter, producer

2002: C Block Story; short film, 14 min, colour – director, screenwriter

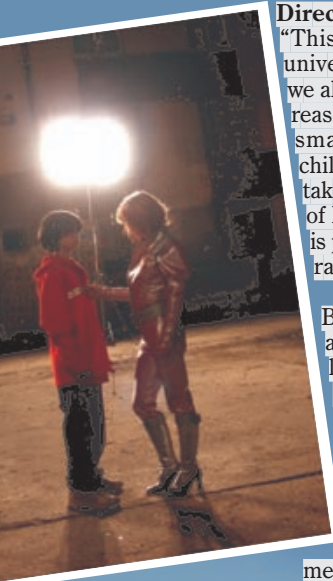
2001: Mihai and Cristina; short film, colour – director, screenwriter

2000: Kitsch Witches 2FM; documentary, colour – director

In Apartment Buildings People Are Crazy About Music; short film, colour – director

• Nemescu was young and interested in sexuality and cinematic language. He aimed to mix fantasy into social realism, and dreamed to walk out of the habitual realist aesthetic of Romanian cinema. Most of his films had a sexual intrigue: exploring sexuality was a way to break free from the harsh skin of the real, and to reach out to alternative human and cinematic realms. Nemescu was interested in stories about marginality and youth folk walking on the border between ages and struggling with the forbidden and the taboo.

Nemescu made a great team with Andrei Toncu, his sound engineer. They were creative, and they knew how to have fun while being creative. The car crash happened late at night when they were returning home after working on the post-production of Nemescu's debut feature, **California Dreaming**. Sadly, there is no 'future continuous' for them any more. (A.B.)



Director's Statement

"This film takes a plunge into the universe of teenage emotions that we all remember. It is a study on the reasons (sometimes big, sometimes small) that make us turn from children into teenagers. The story takes place in the 'exotic' outskirts of Bucharest, and the background is peopled with many authentically racy characters.

Besides telling the story, the film also shows a cross-section of the life in the suburbs of Bucharest at the beginning of the 21st century, with no intervention whatsoever on most of the locations and extras. It's a film about feelings, not about Romanian reality. It was important and innovative for me to concentrate on the feelings of a teenager, his problems and the way he understands the world around him."

Prizes

Best Romanian Film, Transylvania International Film Festival (TIFF), Cluj, 2006; Best Feature, Milan IFF 2006; Best Short Film and Best Actress, Molodist IFF, 2006.

C BLOCK STORY

POVESTE DE LA SCARA C

Short film / Romania / 2002 / 14 min / colour / English subtitles

Director: **Cristian Nemescu**

Cast: Catalina Mustata, Maria Dinulescu, Lucian Ciurariu

Synopsis

Andrei is madly in love with Monica, one of his neighbours. Andrei is a shy teenager, and he calls an erotic phone line to find out how he could seduce a girl in the lift. This is also going to spice up his parents' marriage. Love stories from a lift, in the outskirts of Bucharest...

TERTIUM NON DATUR

SUNDAY 29 APRIL, 16.10

PRECEDED BY MARILENA FROM P7
AND C BLOCK STORY

Short film / Romania / 2006 / 39 min / colour / Romanian, German, French, with English subtitles

Director: **Lucian Pintilie**

Cast: Victor Rebengiuc, Tudor Aron Istodor, Sorin Leoveanu

Synopsis

The Ukrainian steppe, towards the end of the Second World War. The German and Romanian troops are withdrawing. In a deserted school where a Romanian military unit has its headquarters, a visit from two high-ranking German officers is announced. They are there just for a meal and some company. Warmed up by champagne, the German major astonishes his hosts by showing off the most expensive stamp in the world, the famous Aurochs Head. But going round the table, the stamp disappears...

Director's Statement

"**Tertium Non Datur** is a tragicomic parable about the integration of the poorest of the poor, ridden by complexes, into the fiction which we provisionally call Europe."

Bio



Born in 1933 in Tarutino, Romania (now Ukraine). Graduated from the Institute of Theatre and Cinema, Bucharest, in 1956. One of the most influential Romanian directors, Lucian Pintilie worked in theatre, opera, television and film. Pintilie had an uneasy relationship with the Communist regime: his second film,

Reenactment, was banned shortly after its release in 1968; in 1972, after a series of warnings, his theatre show **The Inspector General** (Gogol) was banned as well; his third film, **Carnival Scenes** (1981) was only screened in public only after the change of political regime in Romania in 1989. From the 1970s on, Lucian Pintilie has lived between Romania and France. On his return to Romania in the early 1990s, he produced some of the most memorable Romanian films.

Selected filmography

2006: **Tertium Non Datur**; short film, 23 min, colour – director, screenwriter
2003: **Niki & Flo**; feature film, 95 min, colour – director
2001: **Afternoon of a Torturer**, feature film, 76 min, colour – director, screenwriter
1998: **Last Stop Paradise**; feature film, 108 min, colour – director, screenwriter
1996: **Too Late**; feature film, 104 min, colour – director, screenwriter
1994: **Unforgettable Summer**; feature film, 82 min, colour – director, screenwriter

1992: **The Oak**; feature film, 105 min, colour – director, screenwriter, producer

1981: **Carnival Scenes**; feature film, 132 min, colour – director, screenwriter

1973: **Ward Six**; feature film, 92 min, colour – director

1968: **The Reenactment**; feature film, 106 min, b/w – director, screenwriter

1965: **Sunday at Six**; feature film, 83 min, b/w – director

• Eastern European cinema used to have a passion for history and a predisposition to focus on the moral choices left to the individual placed in complex historical circumstances. This is also the domain of **Tertium Non Datur**, the only film in this programme signed by a senior filmmaker.

The film was inspired by a short story written by Romanian writer Vasile Voiculescu in 1945, immediately after the advent of communism in Romania, when it became clear that there was little room left for him in the new world. Voiculescu's piece was meant as a political allegory about survival in communism, when collaborationism or abandonment appeared like the only two options left to the individual by the new political rule.

Tertium Non Datur begins from Voiculescu and ends up as 100% Pintilie. In a sober, almost theatrical style, Pintilie comes up with a tragicomic parable about fate and coincidence, identity and pride, onto which he projects his usual gusto for larger meanings. His film touches on national identity at a time when the national paradigm has become slightly passé under pressure from larger, supra-national paradigms. What could one make today of the intersection of the 'national' with the 'individual' identity? And is it really outdated to talk about honour at the beginning of the 21st Century?

His love for, and exasperation with, his own country have always been central ingredients of Pintilie's work. They still are, and the way in which he negotiates between the ironical, the tragic and the grotesque is as memorable as ever. After all, Pintilie is the filmmaker whose main character in **The Oak** (1992) wished his unborn child to be an idiot or a genius, rather than 'normal' in the fashion of the day. Remember that when you hear another 'enormous' statement in this film. And listen to Ada Milea on the soundtrack. (A.B.)



The Way I spent the End of the World

Cum mi-am petrecut sfarsitul lumii

SUNDAY 29 APRIL, 18.30

Feature film / Romania-France / 2006 / 101 min / colour / English subtitles

Director: **Catalin Mitulescu**

Original music by: Alexander Balanescu

Cast: Dorotheea Petre, Timotei Duma, Marius Stan, Marian Stoica, Ionut Becheru

Synopsis

Bucharest 1989 – Last year of the Ceausescu regime. Eva, seventeen, lives with her parents and her 7 year-old brother Lalalilu. One day at school, Eva and her boyfriend Alex accidentally break a bust of Ceausescu. They are forced to confess their crime before a disciplinary committee. Alex is protected by his father, a Party officer, but Eva is expelled from school and transferred to a reformatory establishment. There, she meets Andrei, a boy from a family of dissidents, and decides to escape Romania with him by crossing the Danube. Lalalilu is more and more convinced that Ceausescu is the main reason for Eva's decision to leave. So, with his friends from school, he devises a plan to kill the dictator.

Director's Statement

"This film is a tragicomedy with a dash of absurd and sublime, which tries to communicate the feelings of those past times. (...) The film is based on my recollections, on my nostalgia. I made this film because I missed my kindergarten days, my high-school, my Romania." (www.liternet.ro)



Critics

"With its combination of wry satire and deadly hardship, it brings to mind the sixties Czech comedies of directors like Jiri Menzel, but with that extra dimension of political actuality". (Neil Young's Film Lounge)



Prizes

Best Actress for Dorotheea Petre, 'Un Certain Regard', Cannes 2006
2005 Sundance and NHK Award for Best European Project

Bio

Born in 1972, in Bucharest. Catalin Mitulescu studied Geology until 1993, then graduated from The National University of Drama and Cinematography in 2001.

Selected filmography

2006: The Way I spent the End of the World; feature film, 101 min, colour – director, producer
2005: Ryna (directed by Ruxandra Zenide) – producer
2004: Traffic; short film, 15 min, colour – director
2002: 17 Minutes Late (17 minute intarziera); short film, 10 min, colour – director
Gerone; short film, 5 min, colour – director

2000: Bucuresti-Wien, 8:15; short film, 13 min, b/w – director
As You Wish (Asa cum vrei tu); short film, 5 min, colour – director
1999: Adrian Wonder Kid (Adrian Copilul Minune); documentary, 10 min, colour – director
The Most Beautiful Is Ana (Cea mai frumoasa este Ana); short film, 3 min, b/w – director
1998: In the Afternoon (La amiaza); short film, 9 min, b/w – director
1997: Angels (Ingerii); short film, 7min, colour – director
A Thing Which Is Understood (Un lucru care vine de la sine); short film, 5 min, colour – director

• "I made this film because I missed my Romania", said Mitulescu in an interview. One Romanian journalist replied, "What I've seen in his film was not my Romania. In my Romania, the French children's magazine PIF was much more important to children than was Ceausescu". Welcome to the land of contested memories!

Narratives of childhood at the intersection with History have been a popular sub-genre in Eastern Central European cinema, particularly in the aftermath of communism. Childhood provided a colourful lens for retelling the past, as the world of the child was always presumed to be less tense than that of the adult. Mitulescu's aim is not to fashion himself as the chronicler of Romania's troubled history. He has a story to tell about a volatile past imperfect that needs to be tamed. That is why he's walking on a tightrope between nostalgia and recovery therapy (...with some support from Scorsese & Wenders). And that is why he invites Lalalilu, with his dreams and bubble-gum balloons, to enter the picture.

Mitulescu's film is probably the most sensorial and richly textured film of this year's festival. This is History seen from the margins, and gradually morphing into fairy-tale. Sit down and enjoy it. Had you been there for the real thing, it's most likely that you would have missed the fun side of it. (A.B.)



Organisers:

The Romanian Cultural Centre in London, The Ratiu Foundation UK, The National Centre of Cinematography (CNC) in Bucharest, Embassy of Romania in the UK, Curzon Cinemas

With the kind support of:

The Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Artificial Eye, RH Printing, Pro Patrimonio

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Special thanks:

Verena Stackelberg, Simon Howarth, Nadia Attia, Michael Pierce, Owen Armstrong, Sean Elstob, Zena Howard, Rob Kenny, Julie Nartey, Arthur Patching, Caroline Jones, Robert Beeson, Iulia Zamfirescu, Dan Florescu, Mihai Delcea, Eugen Serbanescu, Adrian Cherciu, Elisabeta Dumitru, Olivia Temple, Iosefin Florea, Serban Cantacuzino, Bill McAlister, Melanie Crawley, Alexandru Adam, Dan Mitrica, Laura Lazar, Eugen Androne, Ioana Draghici, Simona Deliu, Violeta Niculae, Gabriel Hanganu, David Webster, Marta Velasquez, Ivor Barladeanu

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Ramona Mitrica, Mihai Risnoveanu, Tudor Prisacariu, Adina Bradeanu, Raluca Borcea, Cristina Pantiru

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Poster & leaflet design: Tudor Prisacariu



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Present Progressive

2007 is a special and important year in the history of the Romanian Film Festival in London. The Festival has become a major event in the Romanian cultural network, which has, in one decade, achieved one of the most distinctive profiles in Europe. Such artists as Paul Neagu and Brancusi were already viewed as high priests of European modernism, but in the years since the restoration of democracy a broad coalition of Romanian artists and cultural figures has begun to create a buzz of excitement around the world about their practice and ideas.

By a happy coincidence 2007 is also the ninetieth anniversary of Ion Ratiu's birth. Ion Ratiu was founder of the Ratiu Family Foundation and the active guardian of Romanian democratic values during the most difficult years of Communist dictatorship; and an important part of his vision was concerned with the preservation and development of Romanian culture.

In 2007, seven years after Ion Ratiu passed on, Romanian artists have begun to come to terms with their new political and social environment, celebrating the country's new status within Europe by exploring and re-assessing the years of Communist rule, as well as the Revolution which brought them to an end.

Film makers have been at the forefront of this movement, and the Romanian Film Festival in London was the first event to play a role in presenting a variety of these works to the British market. For example, **The Death of Mr Lazarescu** (director Cristi Puiu – and distributed by Tartan Films) opened our 2006 Festival, and **12:08 East of Bucharest** (director Corneliu Porumboiu – distributor Artificial Eye) opens the 2007 Festival.

Following our successful championing of fictional features, the Ratiu Foundation UK is proud to announce the launch, during this year's Romanian Film Festival, of a new documentary programme, STEPdoc. The programme will consist of a mobility grant (worth £1500) which will allow a Romanian film maker, at an early stage of his/her career, one month of immersion in the UK documentary culture, towards the development of a documentary project with international potential. STEPdoc aims to help reinforce the development of a Romanian documentary culture, which has so far been restricted by historical restraints.

We are confident that, taken together, these commemorations and initiatives will establish 2007 as a benchmark year in the progress of Romanian art and culture abroad, and we are certain that this year's Romanian Film Festival in London will, therefore, stand out as the most notable and successful event of its kind in our cultural history.

Nicolae Ratiu
Chairman, Ratiu Foundation UK