

Great success of the Romanian film at the SEEFest Festival, Los Angeles

Talking with Vera Mijojlić, Andrei Zincă and Adrian Barbu

By Ileana Costea

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Ovidiu Schumacher

Susanne Bormann

LA DRUM CU TATA

Un Film de Anca Miruna Lăzărescu

DIN 3 FEBRUARIE ÎN CINEMATOGRAFE



STRADA FILM INTERNATIONAL PREZINTĂ O PRODUȚIE FILMĂLĂEE ÎN COPRODUȚIE CU STRADA FILM · MIRAGE FILM STUDIO · BAYERISCHER RUNDFUNK/ARTE · CHIMNEY · FILM VÄST · BER FILM & TV
CU ALEX MĂRGINEANU · RĂZVAN ENCIU · OVIDIU SCHUMACHER · SUSANNE BORMANN · MANUEL KLEIN · DORU ANA · MARCELA NISTOR · LUTZ BLOCHBERGER · ANA ULARU
SCENARIUL & REGIA ANCA MIRUNA LĂZĂRESCU · IMAGINE CHRISTIAN STANGASSINGER · MONTAJ DAN OLTEANU · HANS-JÖRG WEISSBRICH (BFS) · SCENOGRAFIE PETRA ALBERT · MUZICĂ FERENC DARVAS
COSTUME GYÖRGY SZAKÁCS · JULI SZLÁVIK · SUNET TAMÁS DÉVÉNYI · PRODUCĂTOR EXECUTIV GEORGE DAVID LINDNER LEPORDA · REGIZOR HUBERT VON SPRETI · NATALIE LAMSDORFF · MONIKA LOBKOWICZ
PRODUCĂTOR ASOCIAȚIE ANCA MIRUNA LĂZĂRESCU · PRODUCĂTOR EXECUTIV ROMÂNIA FLORENTINA ONEA · COPRODUCĂTORI MAXIMILIAN VETTER · FREDRIK ZANDER · JESSICA ASK · NÁNDOR LOVAS
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May 16, 2017

This year, the Romanian film had a great success. **The feature film, *The Trip We Took With Dad/La Drum cu Tata*** (a Romanian-Germany-Sweden-Hungary co-production that premiered in Romania on February 3, 2017), **received four awards at the SEEfest 2017 Festival** (<http://seefilmla.org/2017-festival-awards/>): **Special Jury Prize for Best Ensemble Cast** (best actors: Alex Mărgineanu, Răzvan Enciu, Ovidiu Schumacher, Susanne Bormann, Manuel Klein, Doru Ana, and Marcela Nistor); **Best Cinematography in a Feature Film (Cinematographer: Christian Stangassinger; ex aequo / shared with the Greek film Roza de Smyrna); Best First Feature (Director: Anca Miruna Lăzărescu); Audience Award – Feature** (handed by the director and founder of the festival, Vera Mijojić, based on the results of the voters' voting filled at the exit of the projection session). All the awards were received by the **director** and screenwriter of the film, Anca Miruna Lăzărescu.

“This was the first time in 12 years that one film won four awards, and we are truly happy for director Anca Lăzărescu and her debut feature, *That Trip We Took With Dad*. The film connected with the audience and charmed the Jury members as well, and writer/director Lăzărescu deserves all the praise she received at SEEfest 2017.” (Vera Mijojić - VM) I have heard (Ileana Costea) very good opinions from various viewers about this movie: "a good movie"; "no comparison with the violent movies made now"; "A movie with a theme that made us

Romanians live again the events of 1968"; "A movie that truly involves and touches you." "Anca Lăzărescu's film was one of the highlights of the festival, with its unique and timely story that resonated not only with the Romanian audience but with general art house audience and patrons of SEEFest. Ms. Lăzărescu had a great Q&A after the film, with conversations continued long after the movie ended. She is a talent to watch and we look forward to her sophomore picture!" (VM)

South East European Film Festival in Los Angeles (SEEFest) took place in Beverly Hills, California, from April 27 to May 4, 2017. The mission of SEEFest is to educate and promote cultural diversity of South East Europe through its annual presentations of films from this region and year-round screenings and programs. SEEFest organizes conferences and retrospectives, serves as the cultural hub and resource for scholars and filmmakers, and creates opportunities for cultural exchange between Southern California and South East Europe.

"SEEFest has always enjoyed very good collaboration with both the Viitorul Roman, and Union and League. In previous years, under the leadership of Ionela Kloes and subsequently with Virgil Adumitroaie and Adrian Barbu, Viitorul Roman has had presence at SEEFest. Daniela Istrate and Union and League have always been extremely supportive. All of us have an exemplary and mutually beneficial collaboration. " (VM)



Andrei Zincă and Anca Miruna Lăzărescu with three of the four awards received at SEEfest 2017 for *The Trip We Took With Dad*.



SEEFest

"SEEFest was one of the earliest champions of Romanian cinema in Los Angeles. We have promoted, presented, co-presented and supported countless Romanian showcases and screenings at SEEFest and at other L.A. festivals. For example, Back in June 2007 we sponsored the International Spotlight on Romanian New Wave at the L.A. Film Festival (please see related article I wrote for Cinema Without Borders, <http://cinemawithoutborders.com/festivals/1303-romanian-new-wave-international-spotlight-romania-at-laff-2007.html>) and that same year co-presented at AFI Fest in November the seminal "4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days" by Cristian Mungiu." (VM)

"It was a privilege to have such wonderful guests from Romania at SEEFest, and a real treat for our audience. Andrei Zinca was

instrumental in arranging their participation at the festival and we are very grateful to him for this support." (VM)





Scenes from the SEEfest 2017 richly awarded Romanian movie *The Trip We Took With Dad*,
<http://seefilmla.org>

The pride of this year's festival was pronounced by Denise Wakeman, Digital Marketing Strategist, SEEfest: "Of the 56 films presented, 26 were directed by a woman." In this way, the cinematography of South East Europe is reversing the international situation of the 'sex disadvantage' in this field. I personally participated in three SEEfest festivals and found them of high level quality through the films they present, the impressive "CVs" of the jurors, the fairness of their judgment, the interesting discussions of filmmakers with the public following the viewing sessions, and the

elegance of the opening and closing festivities. Heartfelt congratulations go to Vera Mijoljić, who, as always, was the soul of this event.



Vera Mijoljić, the director of the festival, and Anca Miruna Lăzărescu, the director of the richly awarded movie *The Trip We Took With Dad* at SEEfest, May 2017, Los Angeles.
Photo from Andrei Zinca collection.

The author of this article was pleased to note that there are several people originally from Romania in the lists of the festival's official website, who are involved in SEEFest activities (in the Board of Directors: Jacob Segal, Investors Research Group and Raoul Marinescu, Pluto TV; Director of the Romanian Film Program - Stefania Magidson, George Constantin Support Group in the Board of Advisors: Liana Grancea, Executive Director, UCLA Center for European and Russian Studies, Peter Gross, Mission Critical Systems / Bloomenergy and Stefania Magidson, Blue Heron Foundation, Los Angeles).

Andrei Zincă and his company, Double 4 Studios, with the support of the Romanian Cultural Institute in New York (IRC NY), had this year's leading role in bringing the movies and filmmakers from Romania to Los Angeles and SEEFest. Andrei Zincă has a rich experience in such events. He was the organizer of the 'Romanian Film Days' at Fort Lauderdale and Miami in Florida for two years (2014 and 2015). In turn, Andrei Zincă is himself a film director. One of his movies, Puzzle for a Blind Man, was presented at the end of the SEEFest 2014, where it won the 'Best Picture Award'.

The Romanian participation at SEEFest 2017 was coordinated by Andrei Zincă, in collaboration with SEEFest. The organizational expenses, the cost of the projection licenses, and the bringing of the filmmakers was possible by

the financial support of the Romanian Cultural Institute (ICR) in New York, the company of Andrei Zincă, Double 4 Studios and SEEfest.

This year, SEEfest had a large Romanian participation, with 3 films in the competition: a documentary feature film, I am pregnant in Romania - directed by Jesus del Cerro; 2 artistic feature films, The Fixer - directed by Adrian Sitaru; La Drum cu Tata - directed by Anca Miruna Lăzărescu; and a short, 3.5 minute, animation film, Flowers of Plastic, in its world premiere - directed by Claudia Ilea. Four Romanian filmmakers from Romania were invited to SEEfest, Los Angeles on this occasion. A 4th Romanian movie, the famous feature documentary, Chuck Norris vs. Communism was invited to SEEfest to be presented outside the competition (via an initiative and with the support of the Viitorul Român Society - VRS) the day before the official start of the Festival. This movie is about the illegal screening sessions of thousands of movies from 'the West side of the world, from the other side of the iron curtain' smuggled into Romania in the '80s by the courageous entrepreneur Teodor Zamfir. "Moreover, we brought four Romanian filmmakers to LA for SEEfest 2017: a feature film director (Anca Miruna Lăzărescu), a documentary filmmaker (Jesus del Cerro – a Spanish filmmaker who lives between Romania and Spain), an actor (Adrian Titieni, who has played in more than 50 films since 1985 and is "the most important contemporary Romanian actor, he also

played in my film Puzzle; and a film critic, Irina Margareta Nistor (the central figure of Chuck Norris vs. Communism, the translator of over 3000 films on video). “We wanted to have a variety of cinema people from different fields.”
(Andrei Zincă – AZ)

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



PRESENTS

AND THE SUPPORT OF



THE ROMANIAN SELECTION AT SEEFEST



with actor Adrian Titieni



THE FIXER

4.28.17 | 9:30pm



I'M PREGNANT IN ROMANIA

5.2.17 | 9:30pm



with director Jesus del



THE TRIP WE TOOK WITH DAD

5.3.17 | 7:30pm

The Flyer of Romanian Films Presented at
SEEFest 2017.

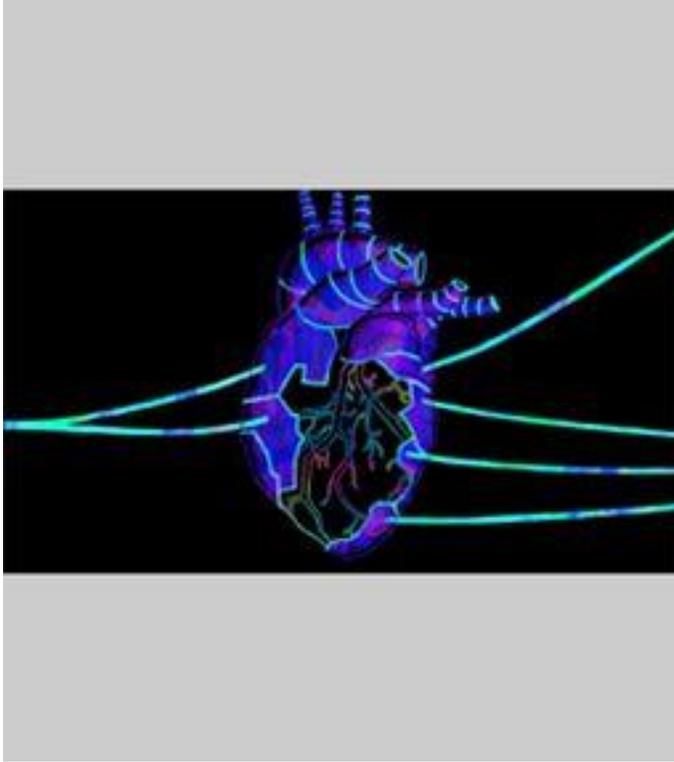


Image from the short, 3.5
minute documentary film,
Plastic Flowers, director
Claudia Ilea, HaHaHA

production; a world premiere at SEEFest 2017.

"My role in SEEFest this year was to propose Romanian films and filmmakers, to actively involve myself in promoting the events among the Romanian community, and to facilitate the presence of Romanian filmmakers in Los Angeles so that they could talk about their work, and offer direct support to their work here, at the festival. The filmmakers were housed in the Loews hotel in the heart of Hollywood and made a study program and visits to the field of cinema." (AZ)

A Romanian film festival also take place annually in North California, organized by Laura Toma with the participation of Stanford and Berkley universities. This year the San Francisco festival was held one week before the SEEFest in Los Angeles. The choice of films is made by each festival in the way that its leadership sees fit. Some organizers base their selection on the success the films have had at reputable festivals. "In our case, we have followed the SEEFest criterion, considering both the artistic quality of the films, and their commercial value, estimating the acceptance that the film can have get from the American audience in Los Angeles." (AZ)



Actors Adrian Titieni and Tünde Skovrán after a movie screening at SEEFest 2014. Photo by Ileana Costea.

The participants at SEEFest screenings are people from Southern California of various ethnicities, corresponding to the country where the films were made, as well as American filmmakers. Among the personalities who walked on the red carpet at the opening of the festival were producer Ron Yerxa (Nebraska Leftovers, etc.), actress Irina Maleeva (Satyricon, Jane the Virgin, Heroes, etc.), and, present in the theater hall, at the screening of documentary film I'm pregnant in Romania were actress Dina de Laurentis, and the director of photography Javier Aguirresarobe (Blue Jasmine, The Others, etc.) From the Romanian side, attending various events at SEEFest were: Cosmin Dumitrescu, the new Consul General of Romania in Los Angeles with his wife Mirela Dumitrescu, Consul in LA; Catalin Ghenea, the former Consul General of Romania in Los Angeles, and now the Consul General of Romania in Miami; Mr. Răzvan Dinu, Project Director IRC NY, Mrs. Simona Steriu, Consul for Economic Affairs, Consulate General of Romania in Los Angeles, leaders, and members of the two Romanian Societies in Los Angeles, Viitorul Roman Society and Liga and the Union, the Romanian community in LA, and the invited guests, filmmakers from Romania. The opening of SEEFest was made with the projection of the film The Constitution, a production in Croatia.

In previous years of SEEfest, the VRS contributed to the organizational effort by promoting the event in the Romanian Southern California community, as well as through various sponsorships and bringing a large audience from among their members. At the 2016 edition of the festival, VRS collaborated even more actively with the creation of a festival poster, and a visual presentation kiosk of the Romanian cinema history, much applauded by the participants. In the current year, 2017, VRS involvement at SEEfest has reached a remarkable level by inviting the distinguished Irina Nistor (well known by all Romanians of the 80s to Los Angeles for whom her voice was the most well known one after that of the President Ceausescu; she is the main protagonist of the famous feature documentary Chuck Norris versus Communism), and organizing a special screening session of this movie. "Irina Nistor's presence in the discussion session that followed the film projection gave the public the opportunity to ask questions about the events described in the documentary, and to find information unknown to the public so far." (Adrian Barbu - AB)



Adrian Barbu, Irina Margareta Nistor, and Bogdan Marcu at 'Question and Answers' with the audience session, following the presentation of the documentary *Chuck Norris vs. Communism*, in the preview of SEEfest, April 26, 2017. Photo by Kerstin Alm.



Maria Zamfir Bleyberg, saying, from the audience, a few words about her brother, Teodor Zamfir, on the evening of the presentation of the documentary film *Chuck Norris vs. Communism*.

Photo by Ileana Costea.

"The idea of organizing an event in Los Angeles with Irina Nistor started with a discussion initiated by Bogdan Marcu, the Cultural Director of the VRS, on the occasion of a VRS board meeting. Bogdan had contacted Irina Nistor as part of a research project for an article in preparation for Huffington Post. The plan of action suggested by Bogdan was to organize this event in the autumn of 2017. But the idea of making it on the occasion of the SEEfest 2017 caught on the spot and things quickly precipitated: two members of the VRS Board, Dana Moldovan and Virgil

Adumitroaie, who were already involved in the SEEFest organization, presented the project 'Chuck Norris vs Communism and Irina Nistor' to Andrei Zincă. Andrei immediately saw the possibility of this event joining SEEFest in the preview of the festival, with a screening on April 26, and the opportunity to ask for the financial support of the Romanian Cultural Institute in New York and his company Double 4 Studios. On this occasion, I must mention the perfect collaboration with all these three reputable cultural organizations (SEEFest, IRC NY, and Double 4 Studios). Our event enjoyed enormous success. The demand from the Romanian community to see the movie was so large that two days before the screening VRS had to initiate a change of the projection room to one with a larger capacity - in a last-minute discussion with the management In Laemmle. On this occasion I wish to thank Jacob Segal for suggesting to us the most appropriate theater hall, and facilitating our communication with the management of the Laemmle theater in Beverly Hills, the same place where all the other SEEFest movies were shown." (AB)

"Once the necessary approvals and arrangements have been established, the airplane tickets for Irina Nistor were bought, and the date of the projection set, VRS members entered an accelerated pace to kick this event. In less than a month, VRS located the ideal projection room, generated graphic art and posters in social media, email, and on paper, negotiated and obtained the projection rights, thus, this time running an unprecedented advertising campaign.

There are many people I wish to thank: For the poster, that has become the visual symbol of the SEEFest VRS event, I am grateful to the talented Daniel Druhora, Director of Communications and Marketing, and Digital Content at the Viterbi Engineering School of the USC. For the advertising campaign and the extraordinary efforts made in the feverish days before the show, I address a special recognition to the entire VRS Board: Virgil Adumitroaie (Vice President), Bogdan Marcu (Cultural Director), Ionela Kloes (Secretary, former VRS President), Ioan Totoiu (Treasurer), Mara Chindris (Member at large), Dana Moldovan, Aneta Hariton, Lili Totoiu, Gabi Mihăilescu and all the other members of the board." (AB)

VRS took over "hosting" Irina Margareta Nistor, organizing an evening in her honor, at the residence of the Mara Chindriș in Pasadena. I, Ileana Costea, was invited at this event to speak briefly about the documentary Chuck Norris vs. Communism, since I published two articles about the movie in 2016, after it was presented on PBSSoCAL. Also invited was Maria Zamfir Bleyberg, to say a few words about her brother, Teodor Zamfir - the brain of the video-smuggling action into 1980s Romania. A few people who participated in the "illegal evenings" of watching these films on video in Romania in the 80's step forward and told the story of their memories.

"The two Romanian societies in Los Angeles, the VRS, and the 'Union and the League of Romanian Societies' (Daniela Istrate, President) have been excellent working partners, and supported me with the same force and enthusiasm in making the Romanian events at SEEFest known to their members." (AZ and AB)



A small group of the participants, from the 30 people who attended the evening offered by the VRS in honor of Irina Margareta Nistor at the residence of Mrs. Mara Chindriș, Pasadena, California.

From left to right: Gabi Mihăilescu and Aneta Hariton (VRS members), Adrian Barbu (President, VRS), Bogdan Marcu (Cultural Director, VRS), and Ileana Costea, author of an article (2016) about the documentary *Chuck Norris vs. Communism* (<http://acum.tv/articol/76901>), invited to say a few words about the movie. Photo by Maria Zamfir Bleyberg.

"This year, the VRS had a special initiative. If the 'Union and the League' will come with an initiative for SEEfest next year, I will whole-heartily support it as much as I will can, as I did with the VRS this year." (AZ)

"I am very happy because our effort to involve the Romanian community in a deeper way was successful. Screening of the Romanian movies, scheduled both on weekends and during the week, at easily accessible time, or less accessible hours, always played with the theater hall almost full or full to the brim. Full-hall audiences are an invaluable gift to filmmakers, since they offer them a very important feedback, allowing them to observe the reaction of the public, offering a unique opportunity to communicate directly with the audience." (AZ)



Director Jesus del Cerro talking with the public, SEEfest 2017. Photo Andrei Zincă collection.

"I am happy that our effort has come to fruition: full halls, public interested in communicating with the filmmakers, the wonderful success of the four prizes won by the feature movie *The Trip We Took with Dad*. I am glad we could offer filmmakers from Romania a big opening here, facilitating contacts with the Hollywood world and exchanging valuable insights with the American audience and movie

world. " (AZ)

"The feedback from the audience was very positive. I felt that an opening towards 'more' was created... People were asking me, 'What else will you do in the future in this direction? What else do you get? ' " (AZ)

It is certain that Romanians in Los Angeles are eager to attend such events.

Until 3 June 2017 SEEfest films can be found and viewed online at: <http://www.films2c.com/seefest-on-vod.html> .

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