

HEAVENS ABOVE / NEBESA

a film by SRDJAN DRAGOJEVIC

SERBIA, GERMANY, NORTH MACEDONIA, SLOVENIA, CROATIA, MONTENEGRO. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

year of production: 2021

length: 122

color

language(s): Serbo-Croatian

subtitles: English

produced by producer(s)

Biljana Prvanovic

Srdjan Dragojevic

World Sales:

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Production Company:

DELIRIUM d.o.o.

Heroja Milana Tepica 15

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Serbia

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HEAVENS ABOVE

a film by SRDJAN DRAGOJEVIC

Original title: NEBESA

Genre: DARK COMEDY

Country of production: SERBIA

Year of production: 2021

Length: 122 minutes

Shooting format:16:9

Screening format: DCP 2K (2048x858) (1:2,39)

Language(s): Serbo-Croatian

Subtitles: English

Color or b/w: Color

Production Company: DELIRIUM, Belgrade, Serbia

Producers: BILJANA PRVANOVIC, SRDJAN DRAGOJEVIC

Co-Production company(ies):

MA.JA.DE. Fiction GmbH (Germany)

Sektor Film (North Macedonia)

Forum Ljubljana (Slovenia)

Studio Dim d.o.o. (Croatia)

Max Film (Montenegro)

Novi Film (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

ZDF/Arte Germany)

Co-Producer(s):

Heino Deckert

Vladimir Anastasov, Angela Nestorovska

Eva Rohrman

Darija Kulenovic – Gudan

Predrag Kalezic, Marija Perovic

Srdjan Sarenac

Co-Producer(s):

Dejan Papic

Zoran Ivkovic

Miroslav Ateljevic

Ratko Zatezalo

Shooting dates: September 2nd – November 22nd, 2019

Shooting location(s): MACEDONIA, SERBIA, GERMANY

Post-production location(s): SERBIA

ISAN:

Technical Details: 25 fps, Sound 5.1, Aspect ratio: 1:2.39

Synopsis 1:

Logline: *After half a century of Communism and Atheism - Religion is Back to stay!*

Heavens Above is a dark comedy with elements of magical realism that explores the impact of MIRACLES on a post-communist society. Told through three stories and spanning over three decades, numerous characters will reappear, intertwine, and affect each other's destinies in increasingly bizarre circumstances.

1993. The first story follows Stojan (*Goran Navojec*), a former army officer turned war refugee, who lives a peaceful life of poverty with his family, until the day he receives an unexpected visitor above his head - a HALO. But due to unwanted attention from the neighbors, his wife Nada (Ksenija Marinkovic) doesn't see the halo as a gift, but a curse. A curse she is determined to get rid of, by forcing Stojan to sin. However, being a kind-hearted man who doesn't fit into his corrupt environment, Stojan finds it hard to commit even the smallest of sins. At first. Gradually, from smaller to bigger sins, and for the first time in his life, Stojan starts to enjoy himself. Ultimately, he drives his family away and becomes a pimp, who uses his halo as a guarantee of the "purity" of his girls.

2001. In the second story, Gojko (*Bojan Navojec*), a mentally challenged and deeply religious young man, believes that he can communicate with his favourite Saint (St.Petka) over a cell phone. His desire to get his hands on one, results in murder and a death sentence. But moments before the execution, the Lord transforms Gojko into a new born baby, while resurrecting the family he has murdered. However, the fact that Gojko turned into an innocent being without sins doesn't convince the authorities. They proceed with enforcing earthly laws.

2026. In the third story, 25 years later, we discover that the baby somehow survived. Gojko is an unrecognised, struggling painter, living in the decrepit slum from the first story, until he becomes a sensation overnight. By God's miracle, Gojko enters the "nutritious" period of his work and all of his paintings are given the amazing quality of feeding the observer. However, the government, with Stojan in charge as the first haloed president in history, nationalizes the artist's work, along with the artist himself.

Drawing parallels with the turbulent shift from paganism to Christianity, *Heavens Above* offers an unconventional perspective on the transitional era in a post-communist country and a number of challenging questions - are these miracles born from a collective consciousness; a need for understanding societal changes by seeing them from a different perspective? Or do they perhaps suggest the presence of Divinity itself? A Divinity seen as merciful and miraculous by some, and punishing like the Old Testament God, by others. Answering these questions is as difficult as giving *Heavens Above* a clear genre classification. However, a Christian nun recently watched the film and called it - a Christian comedy. Perhaps she was right.

Synopses 2:

Logline: *After half a century of Communism and Atheism - Religion is Back to stay!*

Three stories set in 1993, 2001 and 2026. The heroes reappear in different stories and in new, ever more bizarre circumstances. Their destinies intertwine. *Heavens Above* gives an unconventional perspective on the transition period in a post-communist country - treating this era as a turbulent shift from pagan world into a Christian era, many Centuries ago. The occurrences of miracles are the answer of collective consciousness to the changes that force the whole community to look at the world around them, turned upside down, in a new light and miraculous perspective.

Synopses 3:

Logline: *After half a century of Communism and Atheism - Religion is Back to stay!*

But is this disoriented Eastern European society ready for it? A working-class man receives a Halo; a death-row criminal transforms into a baby; an artist discovers that his paintings don't just feed souls, but stomachs too. Breathing the surrealism of Bunuel and rich in distinctive dark comedy, the latest feature from acclaimed Serbian filmmaker, Srdjan Dragojevic ("The Parade"), is by far his most ambitious project yet. Set in a post-communist society, riddled with superstition, corruption and hope, three magical stories intertwine over the span of three decades, in a poignantly idiosyncratic exploration of God's miracles.

World Premiere: Locarno FF

Festivals:

Awards:

Director's note 1:

All my films, each from a different perspective, deal with the TRANSITION in the ex-Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe. PRETTY VILLAGE PRETTY FLAME is about the horrors of the civil war between the Yugoslavs. THE WOUNDS portrays a criminal transition in a country under the international embargo. THE PARADE treats the issue of gay rights in traditional societies of ex-Yugoslav countries and shows that tolerance and human rights are still far away. HOLIDAY IN THE SUN exposes ruthless capitalism in this region via a story about timeshare dealers and their victims, common, naive people.

HEAVENS ABOVE returns to the portrait of the dramatic changes that people have experienced in less than one generation. From a political system with serious human rights violations but with a guarantee of a safe life in a "social state", most people over night found themselves in a different society, in a completely new set of values and relationships.

I spent a lot of time compiling it, trying to give a accurate visual guide of the VISUAL STYLE, LOCATIONS, COSTUM DESIGN and the most important – THE ATMOSPHERE of the film I want to make. Because, with words only, it would be hard to describe a bizarre world I am about to portrait in my film – the Brand new world of ULTIMATE KITCH when hundreds of new churches are built in just one decade, looking alike "fast food restaurants", with a new-born believers in "Instant-God" and "instant money-making". The paintings of Hieronymus Bosch sometimes look "mild" in comparison to contemporary Balkan reality.

But HEAVENS ABOVE is not just another art-house film about war and transition coming from the Eastern Europe and ex-Yugoslavia. Just like many of my previous films - THE PARADE is a good example of this - I believe that this film carries strong potential for cinema audiences all over Europe. Because, I still believe in CINEMA. In communicative, funny, compelling cinema for average working woman and man, not exclusively film festival goers.

Why this particular film? Why these particular stories? What drives me, as a director, to them? I could never give simple and precise answer to that question for any of my films. There is nothing to show except vague and suspicious, often sick reasons. For this particular one, it could be because twenty years ago, after obtaining her master's degree my sister became a nun. I could never understand her reasons for doing this, although we were always very close. On the other hand, it could be because I was a Politician, MP in Serbian Parliament for more than three years (after I have resigned, disgusted) and I find it hard to decide whether God's laws or human laws do more harm. Yet again, this is a Christian film. A Christian comedy, I would say. And not a misanthropic one, definitely.

Director's note 2:

A quarter Century ago, my younger sister unexpectedly ran off to a monastery and became a Nun. My father, a loyal communist, was outraged. My mother, a clerk in a Socialist government, started believing in Christianity again, the religion from her childhood. And myself, I was confused. I could never understand her reasons for doing this, although we were very close. She had just obtained her MA degree in Literature. Years later, I found myself in a brief and disappointing role as a member in the Serbian Parliament. I observed the idiotic "management" of society and wondered - What happens when heavenly laws clash with laws of corrupted government? And which are more harmful to society? I wondered what would happen if God's Miracles appeared in modern times? Would we embrace them or try to make profit from them? Are we able to recognize God's mercy and separate it from Devil's temptations?

Heavens Above explores these questions through the context of a post-communist Eastern European society, which might have forgot about God, but has not been forgotten by him. After decades of devastating war and mafia driven transition, one could argue that God has been especially cruel to this region. What did we do to deserve such a punishment? Is this the "zone of interest" of the God from the Old Testament, while The New Testament God picked up some better regions? Are we living, after decades of Socialism that finally collapsed, a period of the Dark Ages when Christianity exist alongside the Pagan world and Old Gods?

Well, tough questions indeed, but – don't you worry: This is not just another depressive art-house drama about war exploitation and cruel transition, you like to watch while digesting a good meal from the restaurant. Instead of being judgemental and preachy, I simply want to believe that God has a complex, confusing and certainly bizarre sense of humour, perhaps like the one you'll see in this film.

Through all my films, I'm motivated to find a way of smuggling challenging and subversive ideas to the screen, while making them accessible to a wider audience, not just demanding festival goers. It's like creating a Trojan Horse for the 21st century. In my previous film, THE PARADE, I successfully did this to explore the burning issue of LGBT rights in the Balkans. In HEAVENS ABOVE, I'm slightly more ambitious and want to create a few laughs to present day Balkans society, which is very close to "the worst of all possible worlds", completely deprived of God or any sense of humour. A society that replaces God for a Golden calf in various, bizarre emanations of kitsch. But my sister found God in this film. She liked it, and described it as a - Christian Comedy.

3.

For the director who spent half of life in Socialism, in atheist society, making film about Christianity is a challenging task. Especially, when your goal is to be respectful and to make a – comedy out of it. And to answer to some important dilemmas, like: When God's miracles suggest the presence of Divinity and how to differ them from Devil's temptation? Is real nature of God lays in one from Old Testament or we would rather believe in God of love and mercy? Are we able to understand the true nature of God's messages? For my sister, who is Ortodox nun, this film is "Christian comedy". Well it pleases me that God may have sense of humor, as well...

4.

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5.

For my sister, who is Ortodox nun, this film is "Christian comedy". Well it pleases me that God may have sense of humor, as well...

Cast:

Stojan: Goran Navojec
Nada: Ksenija Marinković
Gojko: Bojan Navojec
Father Atanasije: Miloš Samolov
Julija: Nataša Marković
Little Julia: Sana Kostić
Stinky: Radoslav Milenković
Microbe: Srdjan Todorović
Giraffe: Ana Mandić
Borka: Nela Mihailović
Ljubiša Trgovčević: Nikola Pejaković
Petar Marković: Miloš Timotijević
Snežana Marković: Andjelka Prpić
Rajko: Dejan Aćimović

Credits:

Directed by: SRDJAN DRAGOJEVIC

Written by: SRDJAN DRAGOJEVIC
Director of Photography: Dušan Joksimović
Edited by: Petar Marković
Production Designer: Jelena Sopić, Jovana Cvetković
Costume Designer: Tatjana Strugar
Key Make Up Artist: Sandra Ivatović
Sound Designer: Ognjen Popić, Julij Zornik, Zoran Maksimović
Sound Mixer: Darko Glišić
Music: Igor Perović
VFX Supervisor: Nebojša Rogić
Stills Photographer: Andrej Bogatinoski
Produced by: BILJANA PRVANOVIC, SRDJAN DRAGOJEVIC
Production Company: DELIRIUM d.o.o., Belgrade (Serbia)
Financial Support from:
FCS, SERBIA
MDM, GERMANY
MFA, MACEDONIA
SFF, SLOVENIA
HAVC, CROATIA
FC MONTENEGRO
FK BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
EURIMAGES

Director's Biography:
Srdjan Dragojevic, Director/Scriptwriter

Born in 1963 in Belgrade. Degree in Clinical Psychology and in Film Directing. Author of the 8 feature films and 8 books for grown-ups and the kids. Professor at Film Academy in Belgrade 2000-2004. MP at Serbian Parliament, 2012-2015. Director of 200 commercials, for "the bread and butter" purposes. His books for kids "Poopwille", "Poopking" and "Winged childhood" are among the bestsellers for the kids in Ex-Yu region. His film "Pretty Village, Pretty Flame" is among 1000 best films of all time in Halliwell's film encyclopedia and among 30 best war films in history, according to Sight&Sound critics. "The Parade" was a huge box office hit in Europe in 2012 after receiving three awards at Berlinale.

Director's Biography for Locarno (300 signs):

Born in 1963 in Belgrade. Author of the 8 feature films and 8 books for grown-ups and the kids. His film "Pretty Village, Pretty Flame" is among 1000 best films of all time in Halliwell's film encyclopedia and among 30 best war films in history, according to Sight&Sound critics. "The Parade" was a huge box office hit in Europe in 2012 after receiving three awards at Berlinale.

Shorter CV:

Well known for his outspoken views and to-the-point filmmaking. His films bring together real life political issues and art in a way rarely seen.

Filmography:

2021

Heavens Above

2014

Holidays in the Sun (TV movie)

2012

The Parade

Berlinale Panorama Audience Award/Ecumenic jury Award/Golden Else Award

Awards: Torino/Freiburg/Pula/Festiroia/Montpellie/Brussels

2010

Montevideo (screenplay – film and tv series)

Audience award – Moscow film festival

2009

Saint George Shoots the Dragon

Award:Montreal

2005

We are not Angels 2

Awards:Best Serbian film in 5 categories.

1998

The Wounds

Awards:Stockholm/Thessaloniki

1996

Pretty Village Pretty Flame

Awards: Grand Prix-Sao Paolo/Stockholm/Fort Lauderdale/ Minneapolis/Moscow/D'angers/Thessaloniki

1992

We are not Angels

Awards:Grand prix-Umbria,Italy/Best serbian film

BILJANA PRVANOVIC, Producer

She has produced or co-produced 8 feature films, a range of short films (documentaries and fictions), TV commercials, and media campaigns.

Feature film *The Parade* (with over 600,000 admissions), has been distributed all around the world.

Feature film, *St George shoots the Dragon* (with 5M dollar budget), became the most successful Serbian film of the year. The film won a Special jury prize at Montreal Film Festival and became Serbian candidate for the Foreign Oscar award.

Feature film, *We Are Not Angles 2*, became the most successful film in local market with over 700,000 spectators.

DELIRIUM, Belgrade (Serbia)

Production Company

Founded in Belgrade, in 2003, by Srdjan Dragojevic, writer and director, and Biljana Prvanovic, producer.

Selected production overview:

DELIRIUM has produced or co-produced 8 feature films, a range of short films (documentaries and fictions), TV commercials, and media campaigns. Feature film *The Parade* (with over 600,000 admissions), has been distributed all around the world. Feature film, *St George shoots the Dragon* (with 5M dollar budget), became the most successful Serbian film of the year. The film won a Special jury prize at Montreal Film Festival and became Serbian candidate for the Foreign Oscar award. Feature film, *We Are Not Angles 2*, became the most successful film in local market with over 700,000 spectators.