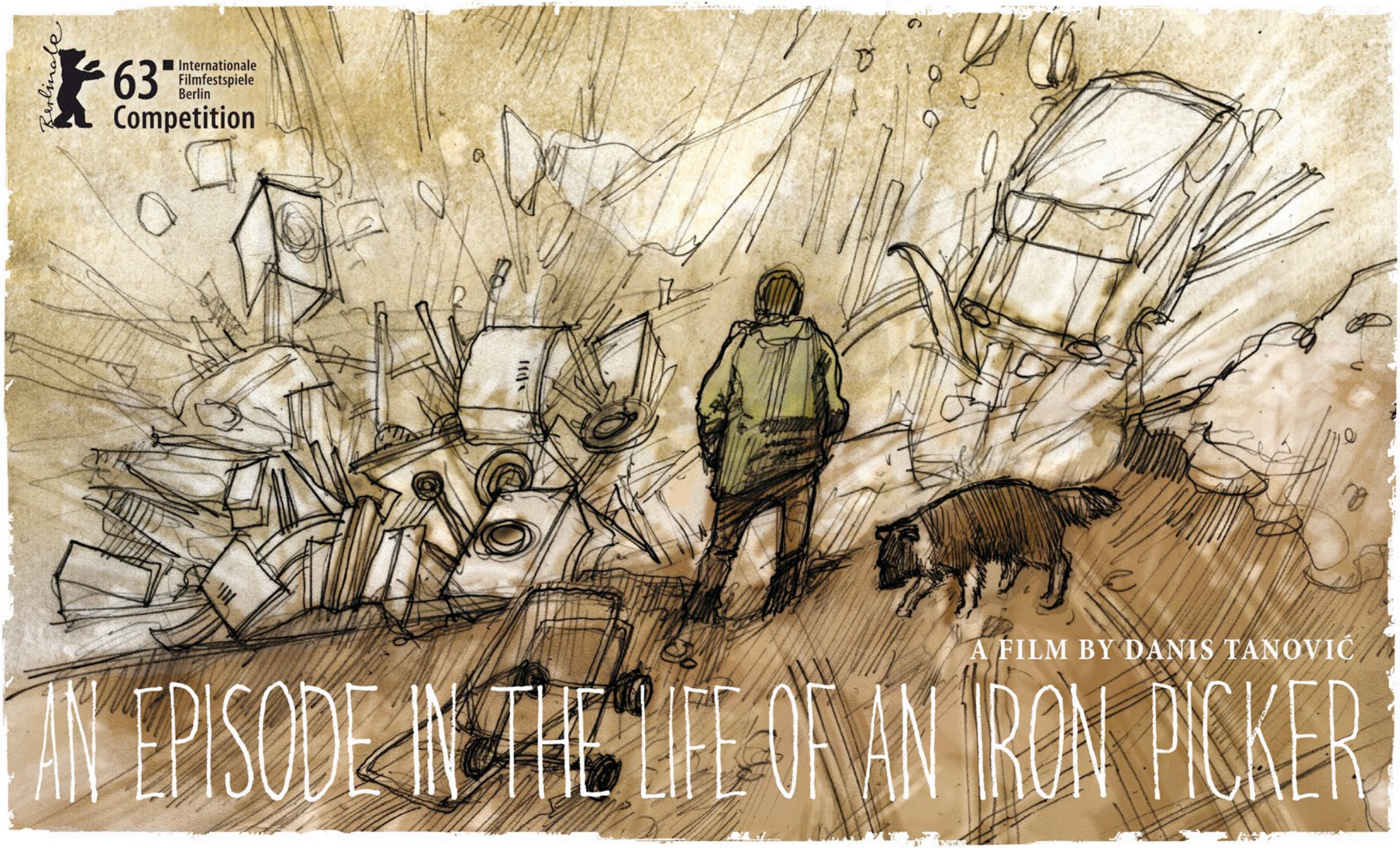
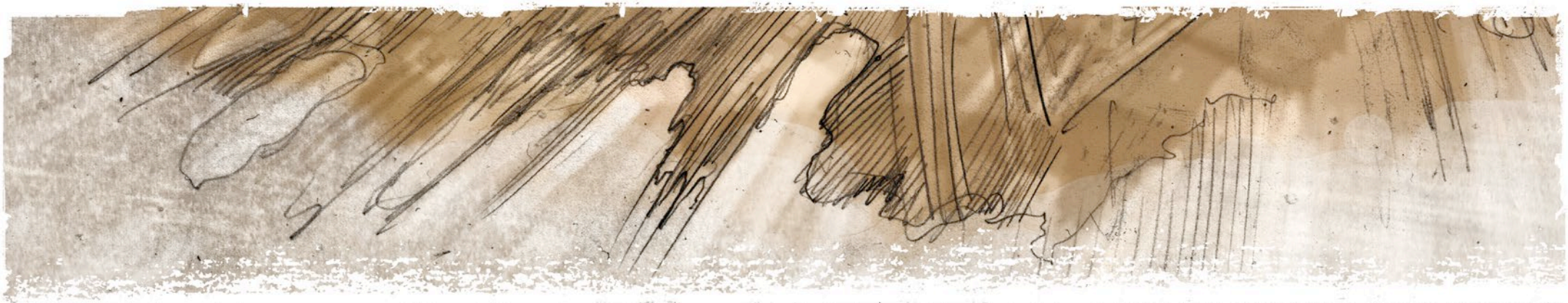

Berlinale
63 Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin
Competition
A FILM BY DANIS TANOVIĆ
AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF AN IRON PICKER

SYNOPSIS

Nazif barely makes ends meet as an iron picker to support his family. He searches daily for scrap metal while his partner Senada tends to their home and their two young daughters. A third baby is on the way.

After a long day's work, Nazif finds Senada laid up in pain. The following day, he borrows a car to drive her to the nearest clinic. The diagnosis is that Senada has miscarried and is still carrying her dead five-month old fetus. The condition is critical and Senada needs immediate treatment at a faraway city hospital.

Because she does not have a state-provided health insurance card, the hospital requests that Senada pay 980 Bosnian marks (500 euros), a fortune for a modest iron picker. Despite Nazif's begging, Senada is denied the crucial surgery and forced to return home to their Roma community in central Bosnia and Herzegovina. For the next 10 days, Nazif will do everything he can to try and save Senada's life – desperately searching for more scrap metal, seeking help from state institutions ... For the next 10 days, Nazif and Senada will be fully exposed to the callousness of contemporary society.



COMMENTS FROM DANIS TANOVIĆ

THE SOCIALLY UNDERPRIVILEGED

The film is a reconstruction of the real events and the intention behind the film is to show the discrimination minorities have to deal with in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Roma communities in particular.

I think it is necessary for the story to be seen, not only to initiate discussions about the society and all sorts of alienation and discrimination are, but to, through the emotional understanding of the victim's state, reach the moment when we all ask ourselves: What kind of people have we become?

Is it possible that fifteen years after the war – In which I witnessed an unbelievable bravery and devotion every day, in which people risked their lives to help a stranger in need – today we live in a society that turns its head away from the socially underprivileged and behaves as if it cannot see the horror that surrounds us.
No system is inhumane as long as there are good people among us.

ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT

I read about Senada's case in the local newspapers, somewhere around Christmas 2011. I got really angry and immediately called Amra Bakšić, who is my friend and producer and asked her if she had heard about it. We agreed to send someone to check the story and few days later, after we got the confirmation, I went to this village myself. I met this couple and instantly felt the warmth of their hospitality; they were a little bit scared when I told them I would like to make some kind of movie about what happened.

At that moment even I was not sure what to do. I spoke to Amra about everything and we agreed that the formal procedure of making this into a film would take us at least a year or two. A few days later I went back and proposed to the couple, Nazif and Senada, to reconstruct the whole event and asked them if they would play themselves in the film.

First they were not sure about it, but I told them that even I had never done

something like this and that in the worst case we wouldn't have to show the film to anyone. But I still wanted to try. After a few days we talked again and they agreed. I was not sure of the result I would get, but I felt I had to do it.

A TRUE STORY

This is a true story and I really tried to stay as close as I could to it. All the scenes were described to me by Nazif and we would then play them out as he remembered them. No screenplay. And I didn't feel any need to make it more dramatic than it was because it was already unbelievable.

Almost all the people in the film are the actual people who took part in the real event. Nazif's brothers, cousins, whole village ... even one doctor is the one that checked Senada into the hospital. A change in character was the doctor who refuses to operate Senada. For obvious reasons I couldn't have him in the film, so I asked a friend of mine who is also a doctor if he would do the part. I also took another doctor friend to play the doctor who operated on Senada. This was done for practical reasons, as we shot this scene in Sarajevo and as our budget was really tight.

Senada and Nazif live in Poljice, a village you see in the film. It is a Roma village and I was very grateful for all the help they gave us. Most of the film was shot in the actual locations of the real event: Tuzla region, Poljice village, and two scenes in the Sarajevo hospital.

DISCRIMINATION

I guess discriminatory acts against people like the Roma are a common practise as it is everywhere in Europe these days. In my country there are many discriminated people, in fact, I would say most of the population in my country is discriminated against in one way or another. I have travelled a lot and I don't think that this is a worldwide problem. There are countries that care about their citizents, never minding the colour of their skin.

BACK TO MY ROOTS

I shot the film in nine days on a Canon 5D Mark II. I was a documentary filmmaker during the war and I actually learned how to film in similar conditions to how I filmed AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF AN IRON PICKER, so this was not strange to me. I was kind of happy to go back to my roots and work this way. The hardest part was working with children. Nazif and Senada were very natural in the first takes, so we rarely made more than three takes.

DANIS TANOVIĆ

An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker is Danis Tanović's fifth feature film.

Tanović's 2001 debut feature *No Man's Land* received over 40 international awards, making it one of the most awarded first feature films in history. Set in the midst of the Bosnian war in 1993, *No Man's Land* won the Oscar and Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film, as well as Best Script prizes at the Cannes Film Festival and European Film Awards.

Tanović has made two other films about war and its consequences. *Cirkus Columbia* is set in the period just before the conflict reaches his native Bosnia & Herzegovina, and the English-language *Triage*, starring Colin Farrell, dealt with post-war trauma.

Tanović was born in 1969 in Zenica, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and raised in Sarajevo where he studied film directing at the Academy of Perfoming Arts. When Sarajevo fell under siege, he spent two years on the frontline filming for the army. The material that Tanović and his colleagues produced on these dangerous missions has been seen in many films and news reports about the Bosnian war. In 1994, Tanović emigrated to Belgium to continue his film studies at INSAS film school and he began making shorts and documentaries.

In 2005, Tanović made the French-language feature *Hell (L'Enfer)*, from a script co-written by the late Krzysztof Kieslowski. The film starred many of France's finest actors, including Emmanuelle Beart, Karin Viard, Marie Gillain, Guillaume Canet, Jacques Gamblin, Jacques Perrin, Carole Bouquet and Jean Rochefort.

FEATURE FILMS

2013 *An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker*
2010 *Cirkus Columbia*
2009 *Triage*
2005 *Hell (L´Enfer)*
2001 *No Man's Land*

CAST AND CREW

Senada - *Senada Alimanović*
Nazif – *Nazif Mujić*
Sandra – *Sandra Mujić*
Šemsa – *Šemsa Mujić*

Writer & Director – *Danis Tanović*
Producers – *Amra Bakšić Čamo*
Čedomir Kolar
Co-producer – *Danijel Hočevar*
DoP – *Erol Zubčević*
Editor – *Timur Makarević*
Sound Designer & Mixer – *Samir Fočo*
Line Producers – *Adis Đapo*
Adnan Beširović
Focus Puller – *Amel Đikoli*
Set Photographers – *Filip Đurić*
Dejan Vekić
Sound Recordist – *Tarik Bešlija*
Unit Manager – *Emir Džino*
Production Coordinator – *Malka Alić*
Researcher – *Mirza Ajnadžić*
Accounting – *Lamija Muminović*
Driver – *Haris Kamenčić*
Assitant Editor – *Redžinald Šimek*
Colorist – *Salem Kapić Kantardžić*
Janes Ferlan
Graphic Design – *Bojan Hadžihalilović*
Amer Mržljak
Enes Huseinčehajić
Assistant Sound Mixer – *Rudi Jesečnik*

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TECHNICAL DETAILS

Length: *74 minutes*
Aspect ratio: *16:9*
shooting format: *HD*
screening format: *DCP*
sound format: *5.1 audio mix*
language: *Bosnian*

THE MATCH FACTORY

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