

# CIRKUS COLUMBIA

A FILM BY DANIS TANOVIĆ



ZABALTEGI



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## SYNOPSIS

Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1991. The communists have fallen from power and Divko Buntic returns to the small town where he grew up to reclaim his family home. After a 20-year exile in Germany, Divko arrives in his flashy red Mercedes with sexy young girlfriend Azra, lucky black cat Bonny and a pocketful of Deutschmarks.

Cash and cousin Ivanda, the recently inducted "democratic" mayor, help Divko forcefully evict estranged wife Lucija and 20-year-old son Martin. Lucky to not have been jailed after their eviction skirmish with the police, Martin and Lucija are moved into a small dilapidated municipal apartment.

Once settled in the comfort of his old house, Divko tries to reach out to Martin, the son he never knew. He offers Martin an invitation to live with him and his soon-to-be new wife Azra. When Lucija finds out, she is furious and fearful that she'll lose her son to his father. Martin reassures his mother, but the young CB radio enthusiast continues to secretly visit his father's home to use the equipment he left behind.

When Divko's beloved cat Bonny disappears, the whole town joins in a frantic search to get the cash reward. The daily hunt for the missing cat strains Divko's fragile relationship with Azra. It also opens up an unexpected but strong attraction between Azra and Martin.

Busy fretting over everyday concerns, most of the townsfolk seem to disregard the rumbling political unrest: Croatia has seceded, all Yugoslavs are being forced to take sides, and the Serbs begin bombing Dubrovnik. Although the area is on high alert, many still can't imagine anyone or anything could divide Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Martin and his mother have life-long friends in both former communist mayor Leon and Yugoslav Army captain Savo. But Martin is soon shocked to discover how quickly friends can become enemies when his childhood buddy Pivac joins a pro-Croatian paramilitary group.

As clouds of war gather, deep feelings and loyalty will be tested by the hardest decision of all: to stay or to leave...





## COMMENTS FROM DIRECTOR DANIS TANOVIĆ

### BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER

Much of my career in filmmaking has been about war and its consequences. While in the army, I filmed it for real, then I made documentaries about war, and those experiences culminated with *NO MAN'S LAND*, my first feature film. Recently, I made *TRIAGE*, a feature that deals with the aftermath of war. The story of *CIRKUS COLUMBIA* actually stops when the war starts. In some way for me, these films make a sort of personal trilogy – before, during and post war. *NO MAN'S LAND* takes place during the conflict. *TRIAGE*, after, and *CIRKUS COLUMBIA*, before.



### TRYING TO REMEMBER

For a long time, the period before the war belonged to a life I couldn't remember. There was this gap in my mind when I tried to think of the time in my life before the war. It was as if the war overshadowed everything that existed previous to it. I felt as if that time was a lost part of my life. Then, suddenly, a few years ago, for no particular reason I began to remember. Sometimes it would be a smell, sometimes the face of a person I used to know, sometimes a scene of no particular importance. I tried to recapture those moments, connect them to some other memory, but they went away as quickly as they came, leaving me with a feeling of loneliness and frustration.



### HELPING WAR CHILDREN TO REMEMBER

Reading the book "Cirkus Columbia" gave me a fast ride back to that period before the war. It's in no way similar to my own experience, but there is something about that book that touches every Bosnian and Herzegovinian. The book tells stories of people who naively believed that war was not possible here, of neighbors who help each other in spite of mortal danger, of lost youth and new beginnings, of hate that for a while seemed to cover everything and, of course, of love that knows no borders. I hope that adapting these stories to the screen will help other war children to remember.









### DENIAL IS HUMAN

I was attracted to making a film set in this pre-war period because I was interested in the lives of these everyday people in the advent of big historic shifts, the storms of history. I wanted to show how oblivious they were in that narrow space between peace and war. It was, I think, a widespread belief at the time that war would not touch us – despite the fact that people with flags and guns were marching down every street. I think it's a very human reaction to deny reason and not accept impending trouble. I was also interested in how the ordinary man next door can become a war camp warden, a torturer, a murderer. Somehow during that time, in that shadowy space, something happens and people change profoundly. Common good people can quickly turn into someone else entirely.

### SOMEBODY ELSE'S SHOES

Working in Bosnia & Herzegovina again, recreating that particular past brought up so many feelings of nostalgia, melancholy and thousands of why, why, whys. I lived in Bosnia during the time period of CIRKUS COLUMBIA, so I have first-hand knowledge. I was already familiar with the events and the psychology. But making the movie gave me a chance to see those things through the eyes of other people, and that process helped me gain the most valuable insight. This is only possible by putting yourself into somebody else's shoes. Deconstructing all the abstract reasons for war – ideology, religion, etc. – and analyzing it in a logical and coherent manner, you'll usually find that the roots of such conflicts are jealousy, greed and fear.



### DEPARTURE POINT FOR DISCUSSION

My movies tend to be anti-war, anti-violence, anti-nationalist, but I don't know if they have any specific single message. It's more complex than that. But it does please me when the ideas and emotions of my movies stick with the audience and they continue to think about them long after seeing them. I believe that movies should be a departure point for discussion. But I don't try to send out set messages. I just show the world in the way that I see it.

### THE OTHER SIDE

I was happy to work in my language again. HELL was in French and TRIAGE, in English. I guess I could probably make a movie in any language, but it was great to go back to my own... The area of Herzegovina where we shot is very beautiful. I was very happy to re-discover the landscape, the forests, the cold rivers. It was a pleasure to be there again, not only for the look of the film, but also to be with the people. This part of the world has a very out-of-time feeling... Unfortunately, so much has changed – irreversibly. I sometimes feel that in 1992, when communism fell, we stood on the edge of a wide abyss. The rest of the world watched silently on the other side. We were forced to jump, but we did not make it to the other side. And we are still falling.



## DANIS TANOVIĆ / DIRECTOR



CIRKUS COLUMBIA is Danis Tanović's most recent film about war and its consequences. While CIRKUS COLUMBIA is set in the period before the conflict reaches his native Bosnia & Herzegovina, Tanović's TRIAGE dealt with post-war trauma. The English-language feature starred Colin Farrell as the troubled photojournalist returning home from war-torn Iraq. Tanović dealt directly with war in his 2001 debut feature NO MAN'S LAND.

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. The widely acclaimed film received over 40 international awards, making it one of the most awarded first feature films in history.

Tanović was born in 1969 in Zenica (former Yugoslavia), now Bosnia & Herzegovina, and raised in Sarajevo. After a diploma in civil engineering, he studied piano at the Academy of Theatre Arts and film at the Sarajevo Film Academy. 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

2010 CIRKUS COLUMBIA

2009 TRIAGE

2005 L'ENFER (HELL)

2001 NO MAN'S LAND



## MIKI MANOJLOVIC AS DIVKO

Miki Manojlovic's filmography includes over 50 films. He has not only acted in his native Serbian, but also in English, French and Rom. Recent films include Jerome Salle's LARGO WINCH (and soon THE BURMA CONSPIRACY – LARGO WINCH TOME 2), Srdjan Karanovic's BESA and Stephan Komandarev's THE WORLD IS BIG. He played Dostoevsky in Giuliano Montaldo's THE DEMONS OF ST. PETERBURG and starred opposite Marianne Faithful in Sam Garbarski's IRINA PALM, for which he received a Best Actor nomination at the European Film Awards.

Miki was born in 1950 in Belgrade into a family of actors. He graduated from the Belgrade School of Dramatic Arts and was acting on stage and in television and film as early as 1970. His role as the Father in Emir Kusturica's WHEN FATHER WAS AWAY ON BUSINESS brought Miki international attention. Miki has also acted in Kusturica's PROMISE ME THIS, BLACK CAT WHITE CAT and UNDERGROUND. In 2004, Miki received the "Pavle Vuisic" Lifetime Achievement Award for his contribution to Yugoslav cinema.

Miki's other regional film credits include Rajko Grlic's THE MELODY HAUNTS MY REVERIES, Goran Markovic's TITO AND I and Srdjan Dragojevic's THE WOUNDS, WE ARE NOT ANGELS and WE ARE NOT ANGELS 2. He played in several films by Goran Paskaljevic – THE POWDER KEG / CABARET BALKAN, SOMEONE ELSE'S AMERICA, TANGO ARGENTINO and TIME OF MIRACLES. In addition to CIRKUS COLUMBIA, Miki appeared in Danis Tanovic's HELL (L'ENFER).

Miki's other film credits include MORTAL TRANSFER (dir. Jean-Jacques Beineix), THE WHORE'S SON (dir. Michael Sturminger), CRIMINAL LOVERS (dir. François Ozon) and ARTEMISIA (dir. Agnes Merlet).



## MIRA FURLAN AS LUCIJA

Mira Furlan is perhaps best known for her roles in the TV series LOST and BABYLON 5. In LOST, Mira played the mysterious French scientist Danielle Rousseau, and from 1992–98, she starred as passionate alien Ambassador Delenn of Minbar.

Before her US career began in the early 90s, Zagreb-born Mira had become one of her native country's leading actresses of stage, film, and television. Mira's early film credits include Emir Kusturica's award-winning film WHEN FATHER WAS AWAY ON BUSINESS, Antun Vrdoljak's CYLOPS, Zivko Nikolic's THE BEAUTY OF VICE, Srdan Karanovic's A FILM WITH NO NAME. Mira emigrated to the US with her husband Goran Gajic in 1991 due to the intolerable political circumstances in her homeland.

An accomplished theater actress, Mira received the Dramalogue Theatre Award in 1995 for her performance in the title roles of Sophocles' "Antigone" at L.A.'s Hudson Guild Theatre and of Lorca's "Yerma" at The Indiana Repertory Theatre.

Before moving to the US, Mira was a member of the Croatian National Theatre and a frequent guest star at major theatres in the whole country. Her roles ranged from Moliere and Shakespeare to Chekhov and Brecht. After a decade-long exile, Mira returned to the stage in Croatia in 2002 to perform the title role in Euripides "Medea" with Rade Sebedzija's Ulysses Theatre Company. In 2004, she made her return to Belgrade to star in Dragan Marinkovic's film TAKE A DEEP BREATH (Disi Duboko). Other recent film credits include Adis Bakrac's THE ABANDONED and Goran Markovic's THE TOUR.







## MAIN CAST

MIKI MANOJLOVIĆ Divko Buntic  
MIRA FURLAN Lucija  
BORIS LER Martin  
JELENA STUPLJANIN Azra  
MILAN ŠTRLJIĆ Ivanda (mayor)  
MARIO KNEZOVIĆ Pivac (Martin's friend)  
SVETISLAV GONCIĆ Savo (army captain)  
ALMIR MEHIĆ Bili (guy who finds cats for Divko)  
MIRZA TANOVIĆ Antisa (cafe owner)  
MIRALEM ZUBČEVIĆ Leon (former mayor)

## TECHNICAL DATA

2010 / Bosnia & Herzegovina / France / UK /  
Germany / Slovenia / Belgium / 113 minutes /  
35 mm / color / 1:2.35 / Dolby Digital /  
in Bosnian / Subtitles in English

## MAIN CREW

DIRECTOR Danis Tanović  
SCREENPLAY Danis Tanović, Ivica Đikić  
BASED ON THE NOVEL "CIRKUS COLUMBIA" BY Ivica Đikić  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY Walther Vanden Ende  
PRODUCTION DESIGN Dušan Milavec, Sanda Popovac  
EDITOR Petar Marković  
SOUND Dirk Bombay, Samir Fočo, Martin Steyer  
COSTUME DESIGN Jasna Hadžiahmetović Bekrić  
MAKE-UP Tina Šubic Dodočić  
CONTINUITY Petra Trampuž Bocevska  
PRODUCERS Čedomir Kolar, Amra Bakšić Čamo, Marc Bachet, Mirsad Purivatra  
CO-PRODUCERS Cat Villiers, Dunja Klemenc, Gerhard Meixner, Roman Paul,  
Marion Hänsel, Miroslav Mogorovi

CIRKUS COLUMBIA a film by Danis Tanović an 2006, A.S.A.P. Films, Autonomous, Studio Maj, Razor Film, Man's Film Productions, Art & Popcorn production / with Miki Manojlović, Mira Furlan, Boris Ler, Jelena Stupljanin, Mario Knezović, Svetislav Gončić, Milan Štrlijić, Almir Mehić Producer Amra Bakšić Čamo, Čedomir Kolar, Mirsad Purivatra, Marc Bachet Co-Producer Cat Villiers, Dunja Klemenc, Gerhard Meixner, Roman Paul, Marion Hänsel, Miroslav Mogorović written by Danis Tanović, Ivica Đikić director of photography Walther van den Ende Editor Petar Marković Sound Dirk Bombay, Samir Fočo, Martin Steyer Costume Design Jasna Hadžiahmetović Bekrić Make-Up Tina Šubic Dodočić produced in collaboration with UK FILM COUNCIL / FONDACIJA ZA KINEMATOGRAFIJU SARAJEVO / FILMSKI SKLAD REPUBLIKE SLOVENIJE / MEDIENBORD BERLIN BRANDENBURG / ART & POPCORN / MINISTARSTVO KULTURE REPUBLIKE SRBIJE / NO SUGAR NO MILK / CENTRE DU CINÉMA ET DE L'AUDIOVISUEL / DE LA COMMUNAUTÉ FRANÇAISE DE BELGIQUE ET LES TELEDISTIBUEURS WALLONES supported by CANAL+ / RAI CINEMA / BHRT / EURIMAGES

[2006]



AUTONOMOUS





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