



Romania Christina Corciovescu

2011 was a jubilee year for Romanian cinema: it was the tenth anniversary of Cristi Puiu's *Stuff and Dough* (*Marfa si bani*), considered to be the first film of the so-called 'Romanian New Wave'. It was also ten years since the first edition of the Transylvania International Film Festival (TIFF), the most important event of its kind in the country. In time, TIFF has become a major occasion on the European film festival calendar. I have marked this historic moment with the recent publication of *The New Romanian Cinema: From Comrade Ceausescu to Mr. Lazarescu*.

The last few years have seen Romania release between 15 and 17 features annually, of which almost half were international co-productions. In addition to this, each year has produced approximately twenty shorts and the total number of distributed films has reached around 180. The increase of multiplexes and cinemas – there are now 137 screens in the country – has helped improve audience attendance, although most of these venues are located in cities, with many smaller towns having no facilities. As stated in the last Romanian entry in the 2010 IFG, domestic cinema is greatly disadvantaged by the lack of widespread exhibition. Romanian cinema only ever attracts viewers when films have won international awards, but the multiplexes rarely ever screen these films because they do not generate significant revenue. In the ongoing debate between film as art or industry, the latter argument is still winning.

Some 2011 premieres did not pass unnoticed at international competitions. After its premiere at Cannes, in the 'Un Certain Regard' section, Catalin Mitulescu's **Loverboy** saw Ada Condeescu pick up the Best Actress award at

Sarajevo. The film tells the story of young man who procures innocent girls only to coerce them into a life of prostitution. However, when he falls in love with one of the girls, he is faced with a tough decision – to follow his heart or to continue in his work.



Adrian Sitaru's **Best Intentions**

Adrian Sitaru's new feature, **Best Intentions** (*Din dragoste cu cele mai bune intentii*), witnesses a man's psychotic episode after his mother is admitted to hospital. His condition improves, but cannot face the idea that his life will one day end. Winner of the Best Director and Best Actor (the excellent Bogdan Dumitrache) Awards at Locarno, it is a skilfully executed film.



Catalin Mitulescu's **Loverboy**



Anca Damian's **Crucic: The Path to Beyond**

Anca Damian's **Crucic: The Path to Beyond** (*Crucic: Drumul spre dincolo*) played at numerous international festivals, collecting a handful of awards. It combines documentary and animation in its true story of the injustice meted out to a young Romanian who dies in a prison in Poland after going on hunger strike to protest against his false arrest.



Bogdan George Apetri's **Outskirts**

Of all the films released over the last year, Bogdan George Apetri's debut, **Outskirts** (*Periferic*) garnered the most awards. It details a young woman's futile attempt to create some order in her life and escape from a miserable world. It received the Golden Alexander and Best Actress awards at Thessaloniki; the Special Jury Prize and FIPRESCI awards at Warsaw, the 'New Europe/New Names' award at Vilnius and the FIPRESCI prize at Vienna.

The Romanian New Wave continues in its commitment to documenting the travails of daily life: recording ordinary events about ordinary people and filmed in a minimalist style. The best exponent of this approach in 2011 was Constantin Popescu's **Principles of Life** (*Principii de viata*). This study of parent/

child relations is viewed through the prism of a man who thinks he can bring harmony to his new wife, whilst maintaining his duties towards his other family. It is an astute drama, balancing the central character's domestic problems with wider, societal issues.



Constantin Popescu's **Principles of Life**

Genre filmmaking also made something of a return. Sinisa Dragin's **If the Seed Doesn't Die** (*Daca bobul nu moare*) combines two road-movie narratives, underpinned by mystical and philosophical themes. Two fathers, one Serbian and the other Romanian, leave for a neighbouring country in search of their missing children. Their paths cross geographically, but they never actually meet. The film's tone is bleak and the two intersecting stories are littered with metaphorical allusions.

Alexandru Maftai directed the romantic comedy **Hello! How Are You?** (*Buna! Ce Faci?*). A couple find themselves bored in their marriage and look to the internet for companionship. They each believe that they have found their perfect partner online, only



Alexandru Maftai's **Hello! How Are You?**



Cristi Puiu's *Aurora*

to realise that they are, in fact, talking with each other. It is a light, fairly predictable film – something of a stark contrast to the dark, realistic tone of Cristi Puiu's *Aurora*. Set amidst a crowded city, populated by grey buildings within grubby surroundings, the film details the development of a man's vengeful obsession, which ultimately leads him to commit three murders. Ostensibly an anti-thriller, with a slow pace standing in for suspense, its bizarre situations and strange tone reflect the worldview of the central character.

The year's best films

Crulic: The Path to Beyond (Anca Damian)

Best Intentions (Adrian Sitaru)

Principles of Life (Constantin Popescu)

Outskirts (Bogdan George Apetri)

Aurora (Cristi Puiu)

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