

Summer Solstice

a film by Michał Rogalski





Romek and Guido, both 17, have their whole lives ahead of them. Their dreams are no different than what most teenagers dream of: they want to dance, listen to the music, and date girls. If not for their respective circumstances, they could have been best friends. Unfortunately, they met in the middle of German-occupied Poland in 1943. Romek tries to help his single mother by working as an assistant rail engine operator. Guido serves in a German unit that oversees the Polish village in which Romek lives. One day, the cruel reality of what seemed so far away from their peaceful countryside, bursts brutally into their lives - a situation that will force each of them to make a difficult and life-altering choice. Will they be able to hold on to their dreams while facing the uncertainty of the future?

SYNOPSIS

Summer 1943. Somewhere in south-eastern Poland.

Romek (17) dreams about a career as an rail engine driver. As an apprentice of an engine driver, Mr. Leon, he spends his days tending to empty train cars on a disinfection ramp on the way to a nearby German concentration camp.

Guido (17) serves in the German gendarmerie assigned to oversee Romek's village. He is also a boy with his head in the clouds. In his spare time, he listens to American jazz broadcasts (contraband in German-occupied Poland).

When Romek steals an abandoned suitcase from the disinfection ramp, he discovers a gramophone and some jazz records inside. Wanting to impress Franka, a local girl, he shows her the gramophone and plays some music for her. Franka is unimpressed. Guido is surprised to hear the music he loves coming from a nearby house. He slips through the fence, climbs to the window, and enters Romek's life. Fear-stricken, Romek and Franka watch as Guido looks through the record collection. He is amazed by the collection and, wanting to make friends, tries to teach Franka how to dance swing. The whole situation is interrupted by a sudden arrival of Romek's Mother and Mr. Leon, who come back from a date.

The next morning, the combat alarm wakes up Guido and the unit. The gendarmes spring to action upon receiving orders from their commander, a man that has interrupted the unit's quiet existence with his stern discipline.

While going to work, Romek finds items thrown by fugitives from passing transports to the camp. Under a bridge, he discovers a dying Jewish boy. When he hears an approaching patrol, he tries to silence the boy. After the danger is gone, he finds that the boy is dead. He runs away.

Guido is horrified by cruelties performed by gendarmes under new leadership. His friend, Odi, tries to comfort him offering a brief moment of rest on the banks of the river.

Running through the woods, Romek meets Bunia, a sister of one of the dead fugitives. At first, he tries to lose her, but eventually allows her to walk with him. They fall asleep on the river bank. Romek wakes up and can't find Bunia.

A moment later, he finds Bunia with her hands up. She stands in front of Guido, who has his rifle trained on her. When Guido recognizes Romek, Bunia grabs the weapon and gives it to Romek, telling him to kill Guido. Romek refuses and throws the gun into the river. They run away, leaving Guido looking for his rifle.

Seeing Guido's punishable situation, Odi decides to lie and report that the weapon was stolen by partisans. The commander calls them out on it and denies Odi's home leave request. Guido is put on kitchen duty. Guido and Odi's friendship is dead.

Meanwhile, Romek finds a hideout for Bunia in the cottage of a senile, old man. Bunia nestles close to Romek in the attic. When Guido invites Franka to his hideout, they listen to the radio and make love.

In these brief moments of happiness, Romek and Guido do not realize that soon they will have to make decisions that will change their lives forever.





DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When looking through some old family photographs, I happened to find a series of photos of my grandparents and my young father with their friends. They seemed happy and carefree that day at the riverbed. The photographs were taken in 1943.

These photos made me realize that today we tend to look at the reality of life during World War II in a simplistic and stereotypical manner. The horrors of that war tend to overshadow the fact that, even then, people attempted to lead normal lives full of youthful joy, love, and fun. All this while behind the proverbial corner, monstrous crimes were being committed on a daily basis.

Some claim that all that has to be said about those times was already said. Maybe they are right. However, I think that the most horrific conflict in mankind's history revealed the true nature of man - the courage to help another human being despite everything and everyone. That is why the stakes of that time will always be universal. Much like the Bible, those times expose a multitude of archetypes of human behavior.

In one of his stories, Heinrich Böll wrote about a young German soldier, who happened to spend the night with a Hungarian girl:

"What are you thinking about?" she asked. The question was a carefully marked shot and hit its target and broke a damn in me. Before I could look into her eyes in the light of the lit match, I found myself answering, "I'm wondering about who will be in this room in seventy years. The person lying in this spot and what they will know of you or of me. They'll know nothing about us. They'll just know there was a war".

And here we are; almost seventy years after World War II. We want to wonder who those people were, that boy and that girl, and what they felt. It's not enough to simply think that once "there was a war".



DIRECTOR'S BIO

Michał Rogalski is a graduate of the School of Journalism and Political Science at Warsaw University, Film and TV Direction Department at the Polish National Film School in Lodz, and European training programme, EKRAN, organized by the Wajda Studio. He debuted in 2009 with the feature film, "The Last Action", starring Jan Machulski, Barbara Krafftówna, Marian Kociniak, Alina Janowska, and Antoni Pawlicki. He directed numerous episodes of "Time of Honor" (Seasons 3 and 4, TVP2), and "Recipe for Life" (TVN). "Summer Solstice", his second feature film, will have its international premiere at the World Film Festival in Montreal.

CAST

ROMEK	Filip Piotrowicz
GUIDO	Jonas Nay
FRANKA	Urszula Bogucka
BUNIA	Maria Semotiuk
ODI	Gerdy Zint
OBERLEUTNANT	Steffen "Shorty" Scheumann
FELDWEBEL	Andre M. Hennicke
LEON	Bartłomiej Topa
ROMEK'S MOTHER	Agnieszka Krukówna
KARPIUK	Juliusz Krzysztof Warunek
KARWAN	Krzysztof Czeczot
GRUBER	Jürgen Hoppmann
BUNIA'S BROTHER	Bartłomiej Kotshedoff
URBANIAK	Damian Ul





WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY	Michał Rogalski
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	Jerzy Zieliński, PSC, ASC
ART DIRECTION	Janusz Sosnowski
SET DESIGN	Wiesława Chojkowska
COSTUMES	Anna Englert Magdalena Rutkiewicz-Luterek
MAKE-UP	Monika Kaleta Dorothea Wiedermann
CASTING	Marta Kownacka
MUSIC	Alexander Hacke
SOUND ENGINEER	Martin Witte
SOUND DESIGN	Paul Rischer
EDITED BY	Milenia Fiedler, PSM Joanna Brühl
PRODUCED BY	Maciej Strzembosz Ewa Borguńska René Frotscher Eva-Marie Martens
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS	Maria Gołoś Alexander Martens Thomas Jeschner Volker Zobelt Hans Kölling



PRODUCERS

Prasa & Film (Poland)

Prasa & Film was established in 1992. It is one of the first privately owned, independent production companies in Poland post-1989. The company is headed by Maciej Strzembosz and Ewa Borguńska.

Prasa & Film focuses on feature film production (“All That I Love” dir. Jacek Borcuch – winner of many international awards, selected for competition at the Sundance Film Festival 2010, Polish entry for Oscars® 2011; “Summer Solstice” dir. Michał Rogalski – Polish-German co-production, to be released in 2015). The company also produces documentaries (“What am I doing here?” dir. Janusz Anderman; “Congress – unfinished” dir. Agnieszka Arnold) and short films – “The Big Leap” dir. Kristoffer Rus (Polish-Swedish co-production, which garnered the Polish Filmmaker’s Association Chairman’s Award for best editing at the Krakow Film Festival and a special mention at the Los Angeles Movie Awards). For over six years, Prasa & Film has successfully produced one of the most acclaimed TV programs on the topic of film, “Weekendowy Magazyn Filmowy”.

Sunday Filmproduktion (Germany)

Sunday Filmproduktion was established in 2010 in Halle. The company focuses on feature and documentary films and invests in international films. Sunday Filmproduktion consists of three producers: René Frotscher (René is also associated with Mafilm, that has been very successful with productions like „Combat Girls. Blood and Honor”), Thomas Jeschner, and Volker Zobel.

CO-PRODUCERS

Poland: TVP S.A., WFDiF, Odra-Film, Studio Produkcyjne ORKA

Germany: Mafilm, RBB – Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg, Synchron- und Tonstudio Leipzig

CO-FINANCING

Polish Film Institute, Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung (MDM), Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg (MBB), Deutscher Filmförderfonds (DFFF), Filmförderungsanstalt (FFA)

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