

WEREWOLF

(Wilkołak)

written and directed by

Adrian Panek

produced by

Magdalena Kamińska / Agata Szymańska

BALAPOLIS

B A L A P O L I S

SYNOPSIS

The film is set in 1945. Eight children that have been released from Gross-Rosen concentration camp arrive into temporary orphanage set in the palace in the middle of forest. 20-year old Hanka, also a former prisoner, became their carer. Under her care, children are slowly trying to recover but the nightmare returns. The dogs from the camp are starting to hunt in the nearby forest. Hungry animals let by the German soldiers from Gross-Rosen hem in the palace and seek for food. The children are trying to survive using the methods they know from the concentration camp.

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INTERVIEW WITH ADRIAN PANEK

What was the initial idea for *Werewolf*?

While I was thinking about my second film, I always wanted to do a contemporary story. I was talking a lot with actor Marcin Czarnik, who told me about his childhood that he spent in Oświęcim in the 80s. Each day he was observing how regular life dominates the nightmarish past of that place. I liked his stories, but I couldn't find the right way to write it down as a script. I started thinking about the feature film set right after war, in this very specific moment when everything is finding balance again. By doing that, I could connect many things. The story about children who survived the concentration camp and the legend about the dogs let from the camp were among them. Those motifs were starting points for me to make a genre film that is a little bit like a horror but it is still a serious piece of cinema.

How far your film is from the historical facts?

From the very early childhood we all know what has happened in Oświęcim. We all have heard about gas chambers and burning people. The education tells us how to kill human beings way earlier than it tells us where life comes from. In that sense, we are the post-holocaust society. We all know those images of barbed wire, stripped prisoners' clothing, bald heads. It is not necessary to re-research a lot to associate these symbols.

Before I wrote the script of *Werewolf* I had read a lot about that period of time, but after all I forgot everything. I wanted to escape from the historical point of view on the past and follow the rules of genre. Working on this script was mostly to fantasize about past events. I don't tell the story about the concentration camp or how it was so I could give myself freedom. Of course, history limited my moves in a certain way because absolutely everything in the film has to be reliable. But I was trying to put it in order respecting the rules of the genre.

Why did you decide to use children as a main characters of the film?

To be honest, there would not have been any danger there if there had been adult persons in that place. You only need to compare the size of a child with the size of a German shepherd to realize that. The concentration camp is engraved in the memory of those children. They are leaving it with the belief that in the world of nature the stronger kills the weaker so the confrontation between them and the dogs makes them act like a wild tribe.

What was your idea for the look of the film?

I was inspired by Lower Silesia, that plays an important role in my life. I was certain that it should be a very beautiful movie. Nature should be both cruel and beautiful in it. I was also sure that the film itself should be precise as much as possible on the level of aesthetics. The mixture of Lower Silesia, its local palaces and nature gave me an inspiration as well as an idea how to reach my goals while making this film.

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Why do you think that the genre structure is right to tell the story about tragedy from the past?

I think that everything is a genre. Even arthouse or cult films are telling the story, because it is inevitable. Each story has to have the beginning, the middle and the end. You can put them in the different order to make the story more surprising. But you can not make a film without using rules of the genre. Of course, thriller is told in a completely different way than romantic comedy, but the structure of storytelling is pretty much the same. Arthouse cinema made an impression that the author figure is so interesting and original that is able to dictate the rhythm of the film. But in my opinion, it is just not true.

Why did you decide to call your film *Werewolf*?

Werewolf is a creature between a human and an animal. I think that the period after 1945 in Poland was a bit like that. An evil was defined by simple, animalistic gestures, and people reduced all their existence to struggle for life. On the other hand, the word "werewolf" recalls pure horror, but it doesn't disturb me at all. I liked the idea that previously I made a film about the Messiah and now I am shooting a film about Werewolf. These are two different ways of thinking about the humanity and I am happy to approach the subject from this other side this time.

We are doomed to our animalistic nature. We grew up from the nature that is cruel and reminds concentration camp itself. Culture is negation of the fact that we are animals, because it is built to escape from animalistic side of our identity. But sometimes something happens and everything disintegrates completely. In 1945 something has ended. We forgot what humanity means and we had to rebuild it. The children are by nature at the beginning of their road of life, so the story immediately becomes the story about new beginning.

After *Daas*, it is your second feature film set in the past. Why are you more fascinated by old times than by contemporary events?

My imagination is not moved by simple references to the old times. It is moved by films, books, places or other people's stories. I think that in stories from the past contemporary feeling is more present than in the current news. While telling the contemporary story it is easy to fall into simplification. I can imagine a film about the return to humanity set nowadays, for example in South Africa. But I have no insight to this world. That is why I make a film set in the culture that I live in.

Did you also want to show the diversity of war experience through the characters that represent different generations?

I imagined that each person that meet up in that palace has to have a biography. That particular moment in time was a period when no one has biography which is not interesting. Every human being struggled and its faith was determined by the past, origin, language and world view. II World War was the time that either killed people and changed them completely. The characters in my film are trying to pull themselves together but they are also dependent on each other. For me, it was important for each person to have its function in this story. Jadwiga played by Danuta Stenka is a contrary to Hanka. I liked the idea that two completely different women became so close to each other.

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Hanka functions not only as a mother for children. For Wladek and Janek she becomes first love.

There are children in this story so for me it was obvious to have also a girl who is a bit older than them. Hanka is actually almost a woman. She became a baby sitter by chance. She stays with the children on their way to the palace just to leave them there and start her new life. A coincidence forces her to abandon her plan and fight with the new danger.

While hearing and reading stories about life in the concentration camp I was struck by the fact how strongly biology reacted on the situation. Behind the wires little children stopped crying because they instinctively felt that it will help them survive. The women stopped having period because the body felt it is not the right moment to have a baby. People who suffered mental diseases were able to act like a normal person to stay alive. After the release, life started to blossom again so strongly. This is why the character of Hanka plays a double role. She is a mother for the boys but also a first love also because Wladek and Janek's emotions are changing after the release from the camp.

Jadwiga becomes a mother again when she meets Mala. During wartime she lost the entire family and now she has someone she can love again.

Jadwiga lost everything – this is what she has in common with Hanka. They both know that humans do everything in order to survive. Jadwiga experiences a strange type of motherhood, a return to the full emotions. I like that Jadwiga is sarcastic and bitter. It shows her strength not her weakness.

B A L A P O L I S

CAST

Janek	Nicolas Przygoda
Wladek	Kamil Polnisiak
Hanka	Sonia Miertelica
Siwy	Jakub Syska
Ruda	Helena Mazur
Czarny	Krzysztof Durski
Chudy	Maksymilian Balcerowski
Duża	Julia Ślusarczyk
Mała	Matylda Ignasiak
Jadwiga	Danuta Stenka
Lońka	Oleh Shcherbyna
Kierowca	Eugeniusz Malinowski
Esesman	Werner Daehn
Czerwonoarmista	Radosław Chrześcianański
Krępak	Wojciech Namiotko

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CREW

ADRIAN PANEK director and screenwriter

Adrian Panek was born in 1975. He studied Architecture at Wrocław University of Science and Technology. He is also a graduate of Krzysztof Kieślowski Faculty of Radio and Television at the University of Silesia and Wajda School. He directed many short films, including *The Passion of Marian* (2006) and *My poor head* (2009), and numerous music videos as well as commercials. In 2011 he made his feature debut *Daas* with Andrzej Chyra, Mariusz Bonaszewski and Olgierd Łukaszewicz in the leading roles. The film was named the best Polish first feature of 2011.

DOMINIK DANILCZYK director of photography

Graduate of Katowice Film School. He worked as a director of photography on many short films, tv commercials and music videos. Dominik collaborated with numerous directors including Filip Bajon, Leszek Wosiewicz, Adrian Panek, Bodo Kox, Kristoffer Rus and Anna Maliszewska. He got nominated for Golden Tadpole in 2004 for his short film *Woman in Darkness*. Dominik was also a dop of *The swimming pool* by Krzysztof Pawłowski and co-director of photography of *Man with the Magic Box* (2017) by Bodo Kox.

ANNA WUNDERLICH art director

Graduate of Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. She is a three times winner of best art direction award at Gdynia Film Festival and two times winner of Polish Film Award Orzel. Anna is a member of European Film Academy. As an art director she worked on *Erlprince* (2016), *Demon* (2015), *Papusza* (2013), *Shameless* (2012) and *Maidens' Vows, or the Magnetism of the Heart* (2010) among many others.

MAŁGORZATA KARPIUK costume designer

Was born in 1985 in Hajnówka. She currently lives and works in Warsaw. Małgorzata is a graduate of University of Warsaw. From 2008 she has been working as a costume designer for feature films, theater plays and documentary films. She also creates costumes for video clips, commercials and social advertisements.

JAROSŁAW KAMIŃSKI editor

Graduate of Film Editing Faculty at FAMU in Prague. From 1992 he has been working as a lecturer at Lodz Film School. Founder of Polish Editors Association and member of Polish Film Academy, European Film Academy (EFA) and American Film Academy. As an editor he worked on *Hostages* (2017) by Rezo Gigineishvili, *The Art of Love* (2017) by Maria Sadowska, *The Lure* (2015) by Agnieszka Smoczyńska-Konopka, *Hiszpanka* (2015) by Łukasz Barczyk, *Jack Strong* (2014) by Władysław Pasikowski, *Ida* (2013) by Paweł Pawlikowski, *You are God* (2012) by Leszek Dawid and many others. He got an award for best editing at Polish Film Festival in Gdynia and he is a three times winner of Polish Film Award Orzel.

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Werewolf

(Wilkołak)

Poland / Germany / The Netherlands

Shooting period: July - November 2017

Premiere: Autumn 2018

Locations: Stołowe Mountains National Park, Bulowice (palace), Ludwikowice (Museum Molke)

The film is financially supported by Polish Film Institute

Production

Balapolis / Magdalena Kamińska, Agata Szymańska

Balapolis is a production company established by Agata Szymańska and Magdalena Kamińska. It produced both feature films and documentaries such as *Baby Bump* by Kuba Czekaj, *Walser* by Zbigniew Libera, *Huba* and *It looks pretty from the distance* by Anka and Wilhelm Sasnal. Szymańska and Kamińska produce unconventional and ground-breaking arthouse cinema. Both producers take part in industry events and film festivals to develop their projects with care of its international exposure. The premiere of *Baby Bump* took place at 72. Venice Film Festival and where the film got Queer Lion Special Mention. Moreover, the company runs the distribution department, handling the distribution of *Baby Bump* and *The sun, the sun blinded me* by Anka and Wilhelm Sasnal. Currently, Balapolis is involved in the production of *Werewolf* by Adrian Panek.

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Co-producers

Twenty Twenty Vision Filmproduktion GmbH / Thanassis Karathanos

Twenty Twenty Vision Filmproduktion GmbH is run by Thanassis Karathanos. The company co-produced such a films as *Elle* by Paul Verhoeven with Isabelle Huppert in the leading role (premiere in Official Selection at Cannes IFF), *Slack Bay* by Bruno Dumont with Juliette Binoche (premiere in Official Selection at Cannes IFF) and *Soy Nero* by Rafi Pitts (premiere in Official Selection at Berlin IFF). The productions of Twenty Twenty Vision Filmproduktion has earned many prestigious international film awards.

House of Netherhorror / Jan Doense and Herman Slagter

House of Netherhorror was established in 2009 by Jan Doense and Herman Slagter to produce and coproduce horrors by the directors from all around the world. House of Netherhorror has its offices in Amsterdam and Rotterdam. *Cherry Tree* by David Keating and *The Pool* Chris W. Mitchell are among the latest films produced by the company.

Rosco Polska / Alois Rostek

Rosco Polska started operating on the European market in 1994. During the first years of its operation, its core activities covered comprehensive services involving the deliveries and assembly of steel structures and units. Currently, Rosco Polska is a holding company, with subsidiaries all over the world. Apart from managing daughter companies, Rosco Polska operates and engages in media, cultural and multimedia products.