
BALKAN TRAFFIC

A film by Markus Stein and Milan V. Puzi•

A coproduction of
Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH, Germany
and
Lotus Film Produktionsges.m.b.H., Austria
in co-operation with Jadran Film, Croatia

Mitteldeutsche
Medienförderung



medienboard.



Synopsis

Short:

The Serb Zoki and Bosnian-born Feti successfully run a quite unique business, smuggling dead people disguised as hopelessly drunken guest-workers back into their fatherland... until one of the corpses turns out to be very alive.

Long:

Based in Berlin, the Serb Zoki and Bosnian-born Feti successfully run a quite unique business: They assist fellow countrymen in bringing back their dead relatives' bodies so that they can be buried in native soil. As the legal way of providing their unusual service is pretty expensive, Zoki and Feti came up with a brilliant idea: Perched on the backseat, their "customers" are escorted over the borders disguised as hopelessly drunken guest-workers.

Despite of a profound mutual dislike, Zoki and Feti are bound together through their tremendously prosperous business. The money is fantastic and - naturally - free of tax. Even the delicate mission of exporting the sister of the towns' most notorious criminal should not pose too much of a problem. Just until an over-ambitious police officer intervenes and, in order to discover the background of this alleged murder, takes the place of the dead body in the coffin. Now on their way through the Balkans, the Undercover-undertakers are faced with a not all-too dead passenger.

At full speed, east and western Europe comically clash in this curios and bizarre road movie.

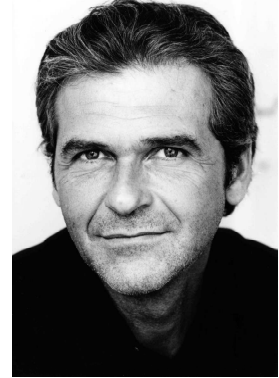
Cast

Marko Pustišek as FETI

Born in Zagreb, 1963. Grew up in Kassel/Germany.

Student of dramatics and musicology at the University of Vienna, Studies in veterinary medicine in Milan and Hanover. From 1993, attending acting classes of Prof. Krauss in Vienna.

Numerous employments at the theatre, e.g. Schauspielhaus Salzburg, Theater in der Josefstadt/ Vienna, Landesbühne Hanover, Gruppe 80/ Vienna, Theater Akzent/ Vienna, Further engagements in Zurich, Klagenfurth, Bregenz, Mödling. In addition, appearances on screen, for example „Soko 5113“ (1998, D: S. Klisch), „Frische Ware“ (1999, D: P. Harather), „AINOA“ (2003, D: M. Kalantari).



Vladimir Pavic as ZOKI

Born 1972 in Munich.

At the age of 13, first appearances in opera productions in Munich and Moscow, Student at the Bavarian Academy of Marketing and Advertising. From 1997, acting studies in Leipzig and Weimar.

Since 2001, co-operation with Hansgünther Heyme, employments at the Ruhrfestspiele Recklinghausen, Theatre National du Luxembourg, Attis Theatre/ Athens, Theater im Pfalzbau/ Ludwigshafen. TV-appearances in „Jesus vs. George W. Bush“, (D: M. Sdun) and „Am Rand“ (D: A. Hillebrand).



Petra Schmidt-Schaller as ULLA

Born 1980 in Berlin.

From 2001 to 2003, acting studies in Leipzig.
In Summer 2003, relocation to Weimar.

Employment at the National Theatre in Weimar,
Städtische Bühnen/ Osnabrück. Appearances on
screen: amongst others in „Reine Formsache“
(2005, D: Ralf Huettnner), „Ein fliehendes
Pferd“ (2006, D: Rainer Kaufmann) and „Nicht
alle waren Mörder“ (2005, D: Jo Bayer).



Supporting actors:



Andreas Schmidt-Schaller
as HEINER



Milan Gutovic
as RILE/GILE



Ljubiša Lupo Gurjčić
as DAVOR



Helmut Rühl
as DR.GRONSCH



Astrit Alihajdaraj
as DRAGAN



Heribert Sasse
as SOLICITOR



Mark Zak
as DAMIR



Andreas Lust
as RODENKIRCHEN

Crew

Director	Markus Stein Milan V. Puzić
Screenplay	Radoslav Pavkovic Milan V. Puzić
Director of Photography	Rali Raltchev
Production Design	John Colton Marcus Wellendorf
Film Editing	Petra Zöpneck
Casting	Rita Waszilovics
Costume Design	Ingrid Leibezeder
Make Up	Helene Lang
Sound	Max Vornehm
Sound Design	Daniel Weis Sebastian Tesch Ansgar Frerich
Sound Mixing Engineer	Florian Beck Eckart Goebel
Chief Lighting Technician	Philipp Gerhardt
Original Music	Fritz Ostermayer
Production Manager	Heino Herrenbrück
Production Manager Austria	Peter Wirthensohn
Exec. Producer Lotus Film	Ursula Wolschlager
Exec. Producer Jadran-Film	Vinko Grubišić Dunja Kustec
Producer	Olaf Jacobs
Co-Producer	Erich Lackner

About the Filmmakers

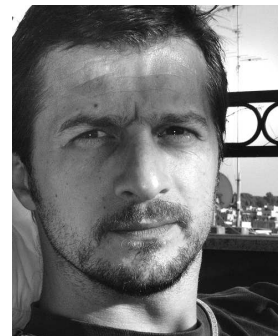
Markus Stein, Co-Director

Born 1965 in Mannheim. 1984-1998 assistant director and assistant camera in more than 20 German and international productions, e.g. with Peter Patzak, Otar Iosseliani, Wim Wenders, Peter Stein, Thomas Mauch. 1993-1997 Directing studies at the Polish Filmschool Lodz. From 1994 to 2004 camera works, for example „IDENTITY KILLS!“ (2001, feature film), „AMOR EN CONCRETO“ (2002, feature film) and directing works, e.g. „DER MARATHON“ (2000, documentary), „FAUST - PROBENZEIT“ (2001, documentary) and „Komiwojazer / The Beginner“ (1998, short film). „The day after tomorrow is Nowhere“ is Stein's first full-length feature film.



Milan V. Puzic, Writer/Co-Director

Born 1968 in Belgrade. Formation at the Belgrade Faculty of Dramatic Arts, Drama Department. Various screenplays for film and television projects, e. g. „OPENNED DOOR“ (1995/1996, comedy-series), „AROUND MY HEAD“ (1996/1997, TV-series), „THREE PALMS FOR TWO PUNKS AND A BABE“ (1997/1998, feature film), „THE DAY WHEN“ 'Tempo' STOP COMING“ (2000, feature film). Director: „LITTLE FAG GROUP“ (1995, video clip), „TRADITION GUARDIAN“ (1996/1997, documentary). Diverse short films.



Rali Raltchev, Director of Photography

Born 1957 in Bulgaria. 1977-1982 student of Cinematography at the National Academy of Theatre and Film Art, Sofia. D.o.P., e.g. for „LUNA PAPA“ (1999, feature film) „SAMSARA“ (2001, feature film), „Erst Ehe“ (2002, feature film), „DIE ZEIT NACH DER TRAUER“ (2003, feature film).

Olaf Jacobs, Producer

Born 1972 in Leipzig, Germany. 1993-95 Commissioning editor of public TV station MDR. 1996 co-founder and later CEO of the film and television company Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH. Writer, producer and director of numerous reportage and TV documentaries as well as feature films, e. g. „DREI STERN ROT“ (2001, feature film), „HEAVEN ON EARTH“ (2001, documentary), „GRENZE“ (2003, documentary), „HOMEMADE HILLBILLY JAM“ (2005, documentary) und „THREE GIRLS“ (2006, feature film). For a long time, executive producer of the Master Class Film of the European Film Academy.

Director's Note

When the production company proposed us to co-direct the film „Balkan Traffic “, we gladly accepted. For, in this particular story, characters with an eastern European background closely interact with those from the west. Therefore, it suggested itself that the directing of the film shall be performed by a Serb and a German. Each of us contributes to the film a unique approach resulting from our personal background: There is Milan, the Serb, who has lived in Germany for several years and Markus, who, in turn, studied and lived many years in Poland. Both of us experienced deeply how absurd yet painful prejudices against other nationalities can be. Therefore, concerning the subject of culturally based misunderstandings and mutual preconceptions, we came to realise how to jointly utilise a broad range of this issue.

Constantly during our work together, we noticed that seemingly obvious German jokes and allusions remain meaningless for a Serb and vice versa. But more often indeed, the crux of our misunderstanding and therewith satire only arose from this dialogue. Only together could we discover the broad comical potential of the film's story. At the same time, a profound mutual understanding arose from that intensive co-operation which allowed us, in the end, to successfully handle the challenge of co-directing.

Whether we choose to or not: We both added our personal experience to the film, the emotional growth of the characters are our own. Each moment of the story is part of our personally history, too. The good thing is, none of us regards this as a loss but instead it might be the entrance to a newfound abundance of comedy and humour: Let's rock-and-roll on stereotypes!

„The day after tomorrow is Nowhere“ is everything but a naïve, unoffending comedy. Black humoured, it follows the functioning of a road movie. On this journey, the stereotypically sketched protagonists from the beginning increasingly liberate themselves from that tight corset.

Every one of them walks their own way in that respect. Ulla, the uptight police officer comes to see that her desire is by no means the consolidation of law and order. Zoki learns to open up to other people, while Feti accomplishes to swallow his pride when true friendship demands it. As in every road movie, the characters therefore take on a double journey; both personal and geographic.

Zoki and Feti run a strange business - bound more through necessity than by own free will. In fact, they can not stand each other. The encounter with Ulla, who steps into their lives in a most unordinary manner, and the subsequent obstacles they face, finally turn their relationship into a - peculiar - friendship. Meanwhile, Ulla's journey through the Balkans differs profoundly: She encounters a different life, new perspectives and...the man of her dreams. Put differently: She learns to be less German.

Markus Stein & Milan Puzic

Producer's Note

Both for Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH and for me personally, „Balkan Traffic “ is the biggest feature film production so far. At the same time, the production shows of our most extended development phase. We heard of the project for the first time at the Berlinale 2000, it was then a mere fragmentary idea, which nevertheless already bore the potential of a black comedy rooted in the present. This greatly appealed to us and opened up a long way of many ups and downs.

Today, five years later, we are filming this comedy. Since then, everything has changed. The situation on the Balkans, the official European relationship regarding the nations of former Yugoslavia but also our view on this region, which only succeeds in appearing on our screens when hosting trials of war criminals or opening new colourful holiday strongholds.

What remains, are the Zokis and Fetis whom we, here in this country, perceive as strangely uniform. Prejudices, misunderstandings and restricted knowledge about this region have lasted, though it is, geographically, much closer to us than Majorca or Helsinki. So; how can one produce a film that reaches audiences here and there? A story that equally speaks to people in the East and the West?

Personally, my most crucial experience has been one evening during the development phase of the script. At that particular point, the German protagonist ought to be worked on more intensively - by an author not only lacking a German passport or visa but also sitting at a desk in Serbia. He eventually went to the Belgrade main station to purchase the Cosmopolitan - and thereby gain insight into what, for him, was the ultimate truth about German women...Presumably that would have been the knockout for German audiences.

Many such incidents followed. It took evening after evening until I could comprehensibly pronounce the place name of the village where the final funeral scene takes place - let alone the name of the mafia-family. And what

exactly were they, anyway? Orthodox? Muslim? Or rather catholic, in the end?

The journey to „Balkan Traffic “ had to be led by a true co-development. The fortunate alliance between the Serb Milan Puzic and the German Markus Stein paved the way to a screenable script that could enthuse and inspire partners. When Markus´ and Milan´s cooperation came to be as strong as to arrive at the mutual will to co-direct the film, my optimism to find further partners and to reach audiences both in Eastern and Western Europe grew yet again.

Having realised the film as a veritable European co-production together with Lotus-Film, Vienna and the Jadran Studios, Zagreb, signifies of the production´s consistent continuation of the film´s multicultural co-development. The experiences we have made so far show that a profound European co-production must exceed technical support and instead start in the development phase. This production shows that it is possible to find suitable ideas.

Olaf Jacobs

Production details

Original title	Balkan Traffic - Übermorgen Nirgendwo (AT: Verliebt in eine Leiche)
English Title	Balkan Traffic
Shooting Locations	Croatia (Split, Zagreb) Germany (Suhl, Berlin)
Original Languages	German, Serbian, Croatian
Subtitles	German/ English
Shooting Format	35 mm
Screening Format	35 mm (Kino) / Digital Betacam (TV)
Shooting Ratio	1:1,85
Sound	Dolby Surround 5.1
Runtime	84 min (2400 metres)

A coproduction of Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH, (Berlin/Leipzig) and Lotus Film Produktionsges. m.b.H. (Vienna) in co-operation with Jadran Film (Zagreb) The film received foundation by Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung GmbH, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg GmbH, Filmfonds Vienna, the Austrian Film Institute, ORF as well as Eurimages and MEDIA.

Hoferichter & Jacobs

Gesellschaft für audiovisuelle Medien und Kommunikationstechnologien mbH

Company Profile

Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH produces feature films and documentaries, starting from the first idea up to the completed film. The productions engage predominantly with present-day themes while telling their stories in a challenging and appealing way. Many of these productions are realised as international co-productions.

After founding the company in 1996, Matthias Hoferichter and Olaf Jacobs principally produced journalistic formats for German television which stood out through a thorough development and a highly qualified realisation. Today, about 100 such television documentaries, reports and features have been produced. These projects in turn establish a basis for developing innovative television formats, series as well as feature films and documentaries, which initially find their audience in the cinema.

The participation on numerous international festivals, for example the 2005 HotDocs in Toronto with "Homemade Hillbilly Jam" or the 2004 Berlinale with "Grenze", as well as a number of awards, e.g. the FIPA d'Or Biarritz for „Heaven on Earth“, confirm this philosophy and simultaneously mark the starting point for a growing importance of an international distribution.

The focus of the company's investments lies both in the development of original ideas and in the extension of international alliances to finance and distribute its productions.

Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH is based in Berlin and Leipzig. Both locations dispose of most modern production technology. Between 2003 and 2006, the company acted as the executive producer of the Master Classes held by the European Film Academy. Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH holds shares of the Cocopelli Musikverlag GmbH, the art & pictures Medien GmbH and the PentAlpha Verlag für Kunst und Medien gGmbH, Leipzig. Olaf Jacobs functions as Chief Executive Officer.

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