



SARAJEVO REVIEW DAILY

FEMICIDE BRINGS FEST TO A HALT



Sarajevo Film Festival shut down its Wednesday schedule to honour a National Day of Mourning after a femicide and protests.

Carmen Gray, August 16, 2023

Sarajevo Film Festival was at a standstill on Wednesday, holding no screenings, talks and social receptions in accordance with a Day of Mourning declared by the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Cultural and entertainment events were not to go ahead in public places, out of respect and solidarity with the victims of a femicide committed in the Bosnian town of Gradacac on Friday.

In the place of scheduled events, a public panel on the topic of "Femicide in Film, Television and New Media" was held on the Festival Square, in which film-makers Aida Begic, Vanja Juranic, Kumjana Novakova and Ademir Kenovic, and actress Nadine Micic critically discussed the normalisation of gender-based violence, and how it has been tackled on screen.

[*Continues next page*](#)

COMPETITION



EUROPA

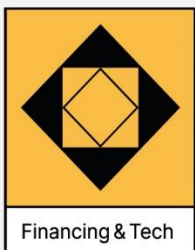
VERDICT: Sudabeh Mortezaei's caustic, unique take on a shadowy corporation expanding into Albania is part neo-colonial satire, part dystopian thriller.

Carmen Gray, August 16, 2023

Austrian-Iranian director Sudabeh Mortezaei's *Europa* allows for no illusions about the inequalities and hypocrisies of modern-day Europe. Some lives are considered more valuable than others in a climate of turbo-charged capitalism where the marginalised are exploited, as mere lip service is paid to human rights by power brokers in parliament assembly halls.

Her first two features, *Macondo* (2014) and *Joy* (2018), dealt with immigrant experience in Vienna, the latter a particularly uncompromising depiction of the lack of

[*Continues next page*](#)



Zinemaldia
Startup Challenge
Selected Projects

EUROPA *(Continued)**EUROPA Director Sudabeh Mortezaei*

options available to a trafficked Nigerian sex worker. Her third feature, screening in the Feature Competition at Sarajevo, revisits these concerns with a broad, structural focus on the pathways of shady “philanthropy.” Situated between a pitch-black, neo-colonial satire and a dystopian thriller about unscrupulous greed, this is a tonally elusive but politically trenchant and original oddity. Its title references the brutally acquisitive, arrogantly paternalistic corporation at its core, helmed by Beate (Lilith Stangenberg), a prim and pale Germanic executive. As *Europa* sinks its teeth into Albania, a stigmatised and economically challenged non-EU member state viewed as a resource that is there for the taking, the expansionist firm functions as a caustic symbol of the European Union and its failures.

“All communication is manipulation,” says Beate. Joined by her equally charmless assistant Lasse (Tobias Winter) and beleaguered interpreter, Albi (Mirando Sylari), she is on an extended business trip to the small Balkan nation, where she has been tasked with persuading local farmers to sign their properties over to *Europa* for large pay-outs. Smooth persuasion is her strategy, but she can barely disguise her smug superiority, as she dupes family patriarchs that she wants nothing more than to secure their children’s futures. She’s armed with the added carrot of lucrative university scholarships, couched as a means of empowering young Albanian women.

Jetnor (played with a stubborn, steady gaze by Jetnor Gorezi) is one dad who cannot be bought. His land, and the bees he keeps, were inherited from his father, who died of cancer from toxic chemical exposure after being forced into factory work by the state. Failing to convince Jetnor directly, Beate seeks influence through regeneration donations to the Islamic Sufi order Bektashi (he’s a devout follower), and via his more malleable daughter Besa (Steljona Kadillari), who wears a “Brooklyn” T-shirt and dreams of studying abroad. Her outward-looking hunger for opportunity has not yet been tainted by cynical realities.

[Full Review](#)

FEMICIDE HALTS FEST*(Continued)*

On Friday, the day the festival opened, Nermin Sulejmanovic live-streamed the murder of his ex-wife, Nizama Hecimovic, on Instagram, shooting her before killing two other people and himself. It was viewed by 12,000 people, and received 126 likes. Meta, Instagram’s owner, has since removed the footage from its platform.

A dimension of the brutal killing that particularly enraged the public was that Hecimovic had already reported Sulejmanovic, who had prior arrests on his record, to the police for harassment and violence, and had not been granted a restraining order.

Demonstrations erupted in several Bosnian cities. Protestors walked through the centre of Sarajevo, drawing attention to a culture of silence around gender-based violence, and failures in the policing and judicial system to adequately protect women. Human Rights Minister Sevlid Hurtic has called for a new law which would see femicide recognised as a specific crime.

[For Full Article, Click here](#)

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Vlad Petri on Revolution



The prize-winning Romanian director on his found-footage docu-fiction hybrid film, clandestine screenings in Iran, and the political power of cinema.

Stephen Dalton, August 16, 2023

The late, great poet-rapper Gil Scott-Heron famously observed that the revolution will not be televised, but Romanian director Vlad Petri begs to differ with his superb found-footage documentary *Between Revolutions*. Interweaving rare archive footage from both the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the popular uprising against Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu 10 years later, Petri's prize-winning docu-fiction hybrid is structured as a series of letters between two close female friends caught up in these world-shaking events, Zahra and Maria. These fictional letters were inspired by real cases from the vaults of Romania's former Communist-era secret police, the Securitate. *The Film Verdict* caught up with Petri at Sarajevo film festival, where *Between Revolutions* is screening in competition.

TFV: Greetings Vlad, are you enjoying Sarajevo?

"Yes, it's an amazing place! I'm really happy that I screen my film here, because it's a city that connects the past with the present and the East with the West. So it's an amazing place to be."

TFV: *Between Revolutions* has already won multiple awards and played numerous festivals, are you surprised that it seems to have such wide appeal?

"When I was researching this I didn't know the film would have a universal appeal because it's of course about Romania, and Iran. At the same time, I have to be honest, during the editing we were asking ourselves many questions regarding how much information should we put into the film about what happened in these two countries?"

[Full Interview](#)

DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION



WHAT'S TO BE DONE?

VERDICT: Documentary maker Goran Devic charts a decade-long battle for worker's rights with an engaging blend of reportage and artfully meta touches.

Stephen Dalton, August 16, 2023

Croatian documentary maker Goran Devic charts the long-term aftershocks of a catastrophic company collapse in his latest Sarajevo film festival competition contender *What's to be Done?* Spanning almost a decade, this elevated exercise in reportage chronicles the bitter, protracted union battles surrounding TŽV Gredelj, a state-owned Croatian railway rolling stock company founded in 1894, which was declared bankrupt in 2012 with hundreds of workers dumped on the scrap heap.

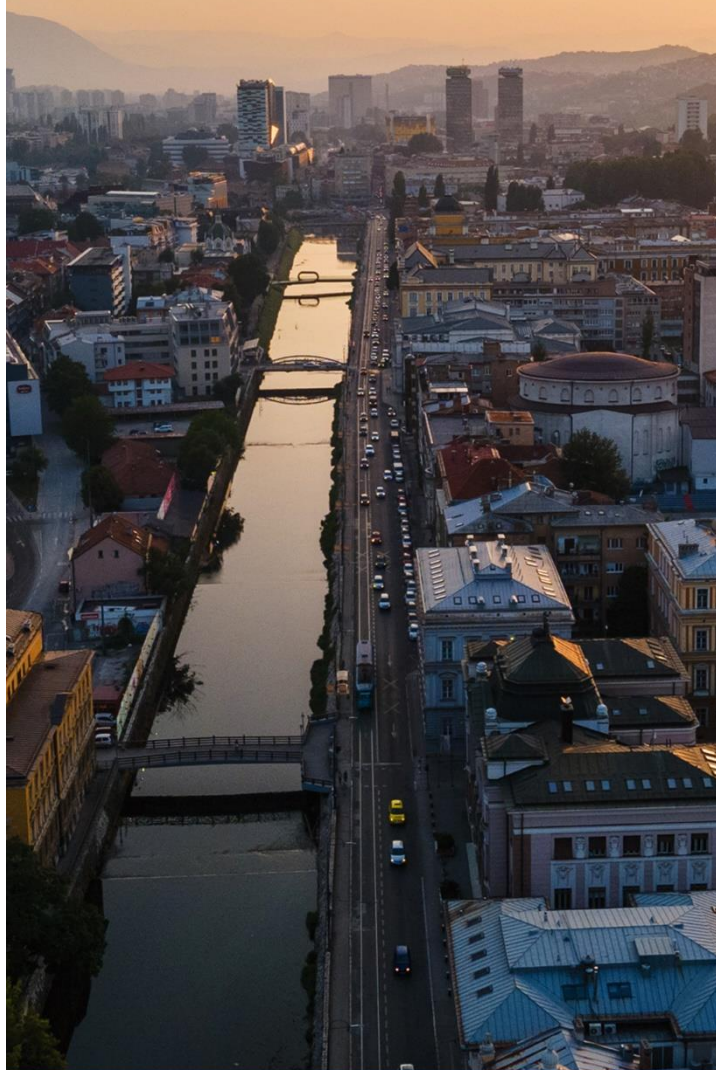
A capsule summary of *What's to be Done?* makes it sound like a daunting slab of drab, all earnest social realism and flinty ideological dogma, especially as it borrows its title from one of Lenin's best-known pre-revolutionary pamphlets. But Devic and his team have some playful aces up their sleeve, including a colourful leading man in the form of union organiser Zeljko Starcevic, plus a few stylistic tricks that elevate newsy reportage into more left-field docu-fiction territory. A fine-grained examination of how industrial policy plays out on a political, emotional and psychological level, this artfully crafted documentary is playful and polished enough to engage casual viewers, with further festival interest very likely.

Not a man burdened by too much modesty, Zeljko is a gift to the film-makers, a natural performer whose years of union experience have clearly honed his flair for rabble-rousing oratory and attention-grabbing street theatre. When first discussing crisis negotiations with management,...

[Full Review](#)

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BEYOND THE FESTIVAL



BLUE BEETLE

VERDICT: A superhero movie with laughs, action, cultural specificity and human-sized stakes -- here's hoping there's room for this character in the next reboot of the DC Universe.

Alonso Duralde, August 16, 2023

In bringing Latino superhero Jaime Reyes to the big screen, Warner Bros. isn't just paying lip service to the character's heritage.

Over the course of this funny, thrilling, and genuinely heartfelt adventure, screenwriter Gareth Dunnet-

Alcocer (the 2019 remake of *Miss Bala*) works in references to everything from Vicks VapoRub (every abuela's secret remedy for whatever ails you) and 1970s Mexican superhero-comedy *El Chapulín Colorado* to the infamous School of the Americas, a symbol of U.S. imperialism in Central and South America.

What's perhaps most impressive about *Blue Beetle* is that it gives audiences something more tangible than the fate of the universe to care about and root for; Jaime, first and foremost, wants to protect his family, and as superheroics go, those are all the stakes the movie needs.

Recent college grad Jaime (Xolo Maridueña, *Cobra Kai*) returns home to the very El Paso-like Palmyra City, only to discover that his family is fighting off the forces of gentrification: his father Alberto (Damián Alcázar, *Acapulco*) has lost his auto shop, and the rest of the family — sister Milagro (Belissa Escobedo, *Hocus Pocus 2*), mom Rocio (Elpidia Carrillo), uncle Rudy (George Lopez), and grandmother Nana (Adriana Barraza) — are about to lose the house (and the whole neighborhood) to the expansion plans of Kord Enterprises.

[Full Review](#)

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VERDICT SHORT



FRAN AND VERKA; OR A USUAL DAY IN AN ABANDONED VILLAGE

VERDICT: The long fingers of the Kosovo War reach into the present in Sovran Nrecaj's patient and stark documentary about Fran and Verka's isolated life in an abandoned village.

Ben Nicholson, August 16, 2023

Sovran Nrecaj came across Fran and Verka during work on a project he has undertaken to document what he refers to as 'micro-histories' from across Kosovo.

Discovering the duo as the sole inhabitants of the village of Vërnakolle in south-eastern Kosovo, he has made them the subjects of his measured observational documentary, *Fran and Verka; or A Usual Day in an Abandoned Village*. The pair have both lived in the village for years, having met one another there, got married there, and resolved to stay there even after the population dwindled. With now just the two stalwart residents, it is one of many 'ghost villages' that can be found across Kosovo, a haunted and haunting legacy of conflict.

Despite his ostensible goal of recording these micro-histories, as a filmmaker Nrecaj is scarcely interested in peddling a narrative. An opening blurb sets the scene and provides important context for Fran and Verka's current situation. It also informs the audience that they 'remember a lively village where children played in the streets and weddings lasted for a week.' Beyond this paragraph of text, though, the film remains happy to stand at a slight remove, capturing the everyday tasks that maintain their secluded bucolic life, and trying to find a way to cinematically represent that obvious bond that keeps the couple there despite the situation.

[Full Review](#)

THE FILM
VERDICT
 The Venice Review Daily



Market Watch

Saudi Film Commission launches Confab Confex

The inaugural Saudi Film Confex, will address three main topics: industry trends; global practices and challenges; and opportunities in filmmaking. Thoughtfully designed workshops will be spread over three days, featuring practical training sessions led by specialists in the film industry's value chain.

The Inspirational Zone will offer top creators sharing their stories and talking about the newest trends in the movie industry. There will be six distinctive "zones" representing various themes in the industry:

- **Inspirational Zone:** where top creators will share their journeys and big-picture trends in the industry
- **Innovation Zone:** to display cutting-edge technology and new product concepts.
- **Destination Gallery:** showcasing the most unique shooting locations in the Kingdom.
- **Interactive Activities:** this area focuses on empowering talented and budding filmmakers by providing interactive platforms and new technologies to unleash their ideas, work to support their talent, and enable their performance.

- **Experience Zone:** introducing recent developments and trends in filmmaking to visitors.
- **Business Zone:** to initiate agreements, hold meetings, and launching partnerships.



Abdullah Al Eyaf, CEO of the Film Commission, said: "The highly anticipated debut of Saudi Film Confex marks an important milestone for the local film industry, especially as the Kingdom continues to see increased interest around its entertainment capacity and offerings. The conference will provide a platform

for both regional and international industry players to connect and will serve as an urban foundation for the collective creation of new techniques and technologies. We are excited to see how the event will impact the evolution of filmmaking in Saudi Arabia and around the world."

The event takes place at BLVD Expo with 40,000 square meters of exhibition space, catering for over 100 exhibitors, 50 keynote speakers. The conference and exhibition is set to bring the world's leading filmmakers, producers and directors to Riyadh.



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