

When I was 18 years old, I left California and moved to New York. To Bronx, New York. During this period of my life I was exposed to a completely different world. I was surrounded by people who by most were considered bad, they were criminals. In time I learned that this group operated through a specific code. The street code, in which reputation and honor were the most important. They mostly lived day to day, they wanted to get things fast and enjoy them well. They risked a lot for very little. They didn't have any grand ambitions although they spoke in very grandiose ways.

I was fascinated by their logic, by their mentality. By the sheer chaos that was their life. By their ability to overcome even the most tragic things with humor. When a person of such background accepts you as one of their own, brings you into their circle, they do everything in their power to protect you and help you.

This made me think a lot about the issue of morals.

Is one bad if he is very good to some? Years later I came to Pristina and met some of the same group who either fled America or were deported. In particular I met a young man who was falsely accused of murder and had to flee and change his entire identity. Hence the inspiration. To see this group of people ten years ago in Prishtina was something extraordinary for me. They hung out at a specific bar, they mostly spoke English, they spent their time reminiscing about their experiences in the United States. To me it was a sort of reverse immigration. They just didn't seem to fit in. I remember thinking I wish I has a camera to record them, that's how unusual they were.

As a woman, I feel that I have a heightened fascination with a man's world, especially this sort of man. So when I decided to work on my first feature film, it was only natural to me that I write about something that I know. I wanted to explore these very things that have had an impact on me. Zeka, as the main character of the film, is an accumulation of bits and pieces of characters that I met. I wanted to test Zeka in circumstances that are unfamiliar, uncomfortable for him, in which he has no experience or support from his circle. Where his reputation as a dangerous guy does him damage instead of winning him respect like he was used to.

This is precisely where Vlora enters his world. She is the young woman who proves to be a challenge for Zeka, in every sense of the word. Vlora is someone with a disturbing past, she is closed up, strange, but most importantly she is pure. For Zeka she is an enigma, whom he cannot get to until the end of the story.

Vlora has a clear goal, to get custody of her daughter. Zeka on the other hand doesn't have any goals or ambitions besides doing what he has been doing most of his life, keeping alive and out of jail. For Zeka this is just another battle that he has to deal with, it's nothing new. As time passes Vlora's goal becomes Zeka's goal too. Saving Hana. By saving Hana both their goals are fulfilled. Zeka's life suddenly has meaning, with this one dangerous selfless thing he does he transforms from an anti-hero to a hero. Vlora on the other hand begins her healing process as she realizes that there are still good men out there who will sacrifice themselves for the sake of others.

VISUAL CONCEPTS

Visually, I want to shoot the film with an intense kind of intimacy. The first part where we are exposed to Zeka's world will stand out with a lot more camera movements but they will feel refined and elegant, relying on steadicam, dolly, and crane shots for the bigger scenes such as the one where Zeka is being chased by the police. I want the grittiness of Prishtina, this dense overpopulated city full of life to be juxtaposed with these smooth camera movements. High contrast but darker colors and lighting.

VISUAL CONCEPTS

When Zeka enters Vlora's apartment and therefore Vlora's world, the lighting and colors become softer. Classic camera movements, tighter shots, lots of close ups. I want the viewer to feel as if they are watching something they aren't supposed to. That's how intimate and private I envision it to be. A side of Zeka as well as Vlora that no one has never seen before, not even they themselves. The camera will speak for them, it will say the things they do not say to each other. Extreme close ups of the eyes, the neck, the hands. Those moments between two people that only the two of them can feel.

VISUAL CONCEPTS

My goal is to have the viewer attached to these characters, for them to feel what the characters feel, for them to be enthralled in the poetry - of having these two lives change right in front of them as the film delves into dealing with the complex issues of morality, identity and a society that stands prejudice to its own self.

MUSIC & COLORS

<u>Music</u> will set the mood and tone of the film. In the beginning, when we are mostly involved with Zeka's world, we will hear a lot of RAP/HIP HOP, that street sort of vibe.

When Zeka's and Vlora's world join together the music will undoubtedly lead the layers of emotion that will unravel. Classical, old Albanian songs, indie pieces that will convey the depth of the poetry in the scenes.

The <u>colors</u> will be grainy, I want it to feel like a 90's film. Deep hues with high contrast, but easy on the eye in the scenes inside the apartment where the light will illuminate these two people who come unexpectedly into each other's lives. Deep earthy colors which will stand out in the summer scenes. Vibrant reds and navy blues. A palette of poetry in a gritty city.

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