



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
COMPETITION
2022 OFFICIAL SELECTION

WINNER - JURY PRIZE

Skopia Film & Jeremy Thomas presentent

EO

Directed by **Jerzy Skolimowski**

Written & Produced by **Ewa Piaskowska, Jerzy Skolimowski**

Executive Producer **Jeremy Thomas**

Italian Co-producer **Eileen Tasca**

Cinematographer **Mychał Dymek**

Editor **Agnieszka Glińska**

Composer **Paweł Mykietyn**

With

Sandra Drzymalska as Kasandra

Lorenzo Zurzolo as Vito

Mateusz Kosciukiewicz as Mateo

And with

Isabelle Huppert as The Countess

Co-produced by **Alien Films** in co-production with **Polwell, Moderator Inwestycje, Warminsko-Mazurski Fundusz Filmowy, Podkarpacki Regionalny Fundusz Filmowy, Strefa Kultury Wrocław, Veilo** with the support of **Polish Film Institute** and **Italian Ministry of Culture**

2022 - 88 minutes - Poland / UK / Italy

Synopsis

The world is a mysterious place when seen through the eyes of an animal. EO, a grey donkey with melancholic eyes, meets good and bad people on his life's path, experiences joy and pain, endures the wheel of fortune randomly turn his luck into disaster and his despair into unexpected bliss.

But not even for a moment does he lose his innocence.

Production Notes

Once upon a time... EO

After seven years absence from directing, Jerzy Skolimowski returns on great form with a contemporary fable, shot in Poland, and Italy whose hero is a donkey, that is forced to leave the circus in which he lived happily, alongside the sweet young Cassandra.

Inspired by the cinema of Robert Bresson, Jerzy Skolimowski pays homage to him by creating this modern tale, whose main character is a Sardinian donkey:

“Several decades ago, I said in an interview (I think it was Cahiers du Cinéma) that the only film that moved me to tears was [Bresson’s] AU HASARD BALHAZAR (1966). I think I discovered it shortly after its release. Since then, I haven't shed a single tear at the cinema. Thus, what I owe to Robert Bresson is to have acquired the strong conviction that making an animal a character in the film is not only possible but can also be a source of emotion.”

EO is a poetic work, a metaphorical vision of the world.

“I wanted above all to make an emotional film, to base the narration on emotions, much more than in any of my previous films.”

During his career, Jerzy Skolimowski directed many great actors, including Robert Duvall, and Jeremy Irons - two of the most generous, marvellous beings with whom I have ever worked – but obviously directing a donkey on screen calls for other resources.

“Directors use intellectual arguments and emotional language to provoke actors to deliver the desired effect. With my donkey, the only way to persuade him to do anything was with tenderness: words whispered in his ear and a few friendly caresses. Raising your voice, showing impatience or nervousness would have been the fastest path to disaster.”

But according to the director there is something even more important:

"The main difference is that donkeys don't know what 'acting' is, they can't pretend anything - they simply ARE. They are gentle, caring, respectful, polite, and loyal. They live to the fullest in the present moment. They never show narcissism. They do not skimp on the supposed intentions of their character; and never discuss their director's vision. They are excellent actors.

To find his “actor”, Jerzy Skolimowski did a casting:

“When the breeder showed me the photos of the available donkeys, I immediately liked those of the Sardinian breed. I knew EO must be grey with white spots around the eyes. I went to a stable near Warsaw to visit the animal that had seduced me the most in the photos. His name was Tako. As soon as I saw him, I knew he was going to be the star of my movie.”

A second casting was then carried out to find him the best possible doubles.

“We used 6 donkeys in total: Tako, Hola, Marietta, Ettore, Rocco and Mela.”

Jerzy Skolimowski says he learned a lot from this experience:

“Donkeys have a surprisingly idiosyncratic nature. Each one we employed had a very different character, which made the execution of each shot quite unpredictable. It was like

trying to solve an exciting puzzle every day; trying to find out what such and such donkey likes, or hates, fears or adores. Sometimes something quite innocuous, like a cable left on the ground, could suddenly become an insurmountable obstacle for them. And on the other hand, something we thought would scare them - like a waterfall gushing out of a huge dam - turned out not to be a problem at all.

This understanding of the animal led the director to adapt to it, beyond what he could imagine:

“The common misconception about donkeys - that they are stubborn - is true. Sometimes it was easier for us to rearrange the scene, or such a planned camera move, than trying to convince the donkey to do something it didn't want to do.”

Jerzy Skolimowski worked with Ewa Piaskowska to write the screenplay, following a now well-established method:

“EO is the third screenplay we have written together. The method is simple: one of us has an idea (in the case of EO, it was Ewa, in the case of ESSENTIAL KILLING, it was me), then we give ourselves a good brainstorming session. Then Ewa takes care of most of the writing, with me making adjustments, whether it's additions or cuts. We usually write in Polish, then Ewa always takes care of the English translation.

Like Vincent Gallo in ESSENTIAL KILLING (2010) EO seeks to escape from a hostile world.

“I wouldn't say "escape", I don't think that's the right word. I would say "avoid". I try to avoid taking part in the ambient banality, injustice, violence. I made this film precisely to detach myself from human dramas, to look at the world in a broader way and from a different point of view.”

It was in Cannes - at the Directors' Fortnight - that Jerzy Skolimowski made a name for himself in 1965, with WALKOVER, his second feature film, celebrated for its innovative form.

“I've always thought that a director's mortal sin is to bore his audience. And so yes, I always try to be imaginative to instil the same ambition in my collaborators. At the time, a young American filmmaker came to congratulate me after the screening of WALKOVER, and although my English was limited at the time, we instantly became friends. It was Jack Nicholson, who was also discovering Cannes. Smoking a joint with him on the beach that night remains one of my fondest memories of Cannes.”

This is the seventh time in his career that Jerzy Skolimowski has been invited in Competition to Cannes.

“Coming back is a bittersweet experience. Several people I've met over the years at the festival are no longer of this world, others cannot come. I too have become a bit of a recluse, I feel better in my home in the forest in the middle of nowhere. The world today does not inspire much optimism - a war is raging in Europe. It seems absurd to celebrate the premiere of a film, with the tragedy unfolding every day in Ukraine.”

Despite its dramatic nature, EO is enriched with funny moments. What makes Jerzy Skolimowski laugh?

“I don't think I've laughed heartily in a long time. But I do smile sometimes - especially at Bufon, my dog, for his playfulness, or for the way he tilts his head when he listens to men's conversations, as if he doesn't want to miss a word.”

EO is a film about innocence, which leads one to wonder if the director has preserved his own.

“In our cynical and unforgiving world, innocence can pass for naivety, or can be taken for a sign of weakness. But I still endeavour to cultivate what is left of the innocence I have in me.”

Agata Kordos

(Animal Handler)

Make movies with animals

We have been working as Animal Wranglers on film sets for over 30 years and have experience working with many different species of animals. All the animals that take part in film production are specially selected according to their physical and psychological abilities. Before shooting, the animals are accustomed to the conditions on the set, and all scenes involving animals are consulted with us, which allows us to prepare them properly. The most important thing, apart from the performance of the scenes, was the safety of the animals and their good physical and mental condition.

The case of the fox

Working with wild species is not easy. The fox taking part in the scene was rescued from a fur farm and brought up by us from very early childhood and has full trust in us. Furia willingly works with humans, has a lot of experience in front of the camera. In the scene, she is in natural, forest conditions, to perform her task she was motivated by her favourite treats.

The legislation

In Poland, we have an animal protection act. All animals, including donkeys, work up to 8 hours on the set. During our work with animals we feel responsible for them, they are our actors. We make sure that the animals do not feel stressed during the shooting, that they enjoy working and having contact with the film crew. We take care of their comfort during work on the set. Animals were under constant care of a veterinarian, which gave us additional assurance that they are healthy and feel good. During the preparations and shooting we took care of proper breaks and resting conditions during the night.

Indoor/outdoor scenes

Our donkeys for the film went through the whole process of preparation for the film and for particular scenes. They were previously accustomed to different conditions - forest, water,

rain, different kinds of ground. They were introduced to different rooms, they learned how to work under saddle, how to work with a cart, they got to know other animals in the film. We in turn had the opportunity to learn about their predispositions to perform particular scenes. This allowed us to smoothly perform the scenes with donkeys in every terrain and in different rooms.

In front of the Camera

Sandra Drzymalska

Kassandra

Sandra Drzymalska (born in 1993), one of the most talented Polish actresses of the young generation, graduate of the prominent AST National Academy of Theatre Arts in Kraków. She has appeared in over a dozen films and TV series. As a student she debuted in the acclaimed mini series BELFER (prod. Canal+) after which she was invited to play in other films: RICOCHETS (prod. Uisel Studio), BOYS WITH BUTTERFLIES (prod. Koi Studio), AMOK (prod. K&K Selekt Film). For her role in IT'S REALLY AWESOME (prod. WRiTV UŚ) she received an award at the Festival of Film Debuts in Koszalin for "personality and talent emanating from the screen". Then she played a pregnant Polish emigrant Lena in the Italian drama SOLE (prod. Kino Produzioni/Lava Films). The film was awarded twice in Venice and received the European Film Award in the category "European Discovery 2020". For her roles in films LOVE TASTING (prod. No Sugar Films) and EVERYONE HAS SUMMER (prod. Before My Eyes) Sandra was awarded at the Polish Film Festival. She played one of the main female roles in THE GETAWAY KING (prod. TFP), the feature directed by Mateusz Rakowicz. In the same year she played the main roles in two TV Series: SEXIFY, which gained worldwide critics' attention (prod. Netflix) and MENTAL (prod. TFP). In the film "EO" by Jerzy Skolimowski, presented in the main competition at this year's Cannes Film Festival, she plays the role of Kassandra.

"This shooting was a truly amazing and magical experience and also rich in lessons. My main partner in the film was the donkey, my focus. I had to create a relationship with him, until I overcame my fears and trusted him fully. The whole movie happened like a dream"

The pre-shooting meetings mainly consisted of getting to know each other in order to create the required climate of trust. Animals have an acute sensitivity, they sense your emotions, so I tried to stay very calm and sure of myself. I was always at close distance from them, showing them tenderness; and between takes, I would thank them.

"Working with Jerzy Skolimowski has been a pleasure. He trusts his actors by giving them a lot of freedom. He gives you very simple and specific advice. So I always knew what Jerzy expected of me"

"What makes him special is his courage, his exceptional charisma and a child's soul. Of the directors I have worked with, none are as happy with a successful scene as Jerzy."

Lorenzo Zurzolo

Vito

Lorenzo Zurzolo was born in Rome in 2000. He made his debut in the theater at the age of 14, in the title role in Pinocchio, with Giorgio Albertazzi. Among his film projects at a very young age, he had starring roles in UNA FAMIGLIA PERFETTA by Paolo Genovese, **Sconnessi**, and COMPROMESSI SPOSI by Francesco Micciché, and more recently WEEKEND and MORRISON by Federico Zampaglione, which in 2021 earned him a Nastro D'Argento.

On Netflix, he made his debut as protagonist in BABY, the series by Andrea De Sica, and later in SOTTO IL SOLE DI RICCIONE directed by the Younuts.

In 2022 he'll star in new and various projects, as PRISMA, a TV series produced by Amazon Prime, directed by Ludovico Besegato, on the theme of "diversity". SOTTO IL SOLE DI AMALFI, spin off of Sotto il sole di Riccione, in which he will be the protagonist of a new story focusing on problems related to blindness, DIABOLIK - 3rd installment, directed by Manetti Bros, where Lorenzo plays Diabolik at young age, and Jerzy Skolimowsky's EO in a starring role with Isabelle Huppert, in competition at Cannes '22.

"Before my audition I only knew Jerzy Skolimowski by name, or almost. I had seen ESSENTIAL KILLING, which I really liked and then I remembered the Golden Lion, which had awarded him in Venice for his entire career in 2016. Since then, I have discovered two of his chefs- d'oeuvre, DEEP END and THE SHOUT. I love the way he tells stories and I love the truth he breathes into all of his characters and the secrets they carry."

"When I read the script, I immediately understood that the character hid a seriousness, because of his troubled family past, which he had first tried to escape, before deciding to confront it."

"To facilitate my work of incarnation, Jerzy told me everything about Vito's life, from his birth to the period depicted in the film: his past, the deepest psychological reasons that motivated his choices. This description made him so real to me, that I could intimately know and understand him".

Mateusz Kościukiewicz

(Mateo)

Mateusz Kościukiewicz was born in 1986 and is one of today's most prominent Polish actors. His first film, ALL THAT I LOVE premiered at The Sundance Film Festival. For his appearance, he got essential awards in Poland. His next film, MOTHER THERESA OF CATS, he got named the best actor at Karlovy Vary Film Festival. IN THE NAME OF, brought him a Shooting Star Award at Berlinale, and MUG was awarded the Grand Prix Prize a few years after. Mateusz got the chance to work at the theater with names like Krzysztof Warlikowski and Krystian Lupa.

Mateusz starred in more than 30 films, and in many of them, he was a leading actor. He had a chance to work with directors like Jerzy Skolimowski, Peter Greenway, Liliana Cavani, Małgorzata Szumowska and many more.

Isabelle Huppert

The Countess

Isabelle Huppert is one of France's foremost actors, she has amassed multiple award wins and nominations for her roles including Best Actress at the Academy Awards for ELLE, which led her to win numerous awards for her role in the film. She has a record 16 César Awards Nominations, including two wins. Huppert is known for her many acclaimed performances across film, theatre and television. Her early career featured prominent roles in Claude Goretta's THE LACEMAKER, Jean-Luc Godard's SLOW MOTION in which year she also made her English language debut in Michael Cimino's HEAVEN'S GATE now very highly regarded. Other english language films include THE BEDROOM WINDOW, I HEART HUCKABEES, THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ELEANOR RIGBY, LOUDER THAN BOMBS, GRETA, and FRANKIE. Huppert's performances in Claude Chabrol's features VIOLETTE NOZIERE and A STORY OF WOMEN defined her as a fearless protagonist. This trend has continued in Michael Haneke's controversial THE PIANO TEACHER and later with ELLE. In 2022 she was awarded the prestigious Golden Bear at the Berlinale 2022, EO will be premiering in Competition at Cannes in 2022.

Behind the Camera

Jerzy Skolimowski

(Director / Screenwriter / Producer)

With over twenty films to his name, Polish director Jerzy Skolimowski's work includes the Berlin Golden Bear winner *THE DEPARTURE*, Cannes Grand Prix winner *THE SHOUT*, the political drama *MOONLIGHTING*, and *THE LIGHTSHIP*, for which he won Best Director at the Venice Film Festival. He has also received the Golden Lion for the Lifetime Achievement from Venice Film Festival.

Skolimowski collaborated with Roman Polanski on the screenplay for *KNIFE IN THE WATER* and *THE PALACE*. As an actor, he has appeared in *WHITE NIGHTS*, *EASTERN PROMISES*, *BEFORE NIGHT FALLS* and *THE AVENGERS*.

Skolimowski returned to Cannes as director in 2008 with the critically lauded thriller *FOUR NIGHTS WITH ANNA*, which opened the Director's Fortnight and also won the Grand Prix de Jury at the Tokyo International Film Festival. *ESSENTIAL KILLING*, won Grand Prix de Jury at the Venice International Film Festival in 2010, Best Film in Mar del Plata International Film Festival, Best Film and Best Director at Gdynia Film Festival as well as Polish Film Academy (Golden Eagles).

Skolimowski is an accomplished painter who has taken part in the Venice Biennale and exhibited across Europe and the US.

Ewa Piaskowska

(Scriptwriter / Producer)

Ewa Piaskowska has produced the last four films of Jerzy Skolimowski and co-wrote three of them. She has also collaborated with Roman Polański and Jerzy Skolimowski on the screenplay of *THE PALACE*.

She is the co-owner Skopia Film.

She is a graduate in Art History from the University of Warsaw and Film, Television, Video and New Media program at UCLA.

Interview with Ewa Piaskowska

How did you start collaborating on writing with Jerzy?

It was the result of pure accident. Years ago, Jerzy signed an agreement with Paolo Branco to write *FOUR NIGHTS WITH ANNA*, for which he received the first installment. But then got involved in painting and realized of the approaching deadline only a few days prior. Instead of returning the first installment, we decided to drop everything else we were doing at the time and went ahead with the writing of the script. Because the time was short, in order to make this work we had to work together.

Before meeting Jerzy, what was your knowledge of cinema and what type of movies were you attracted to?

My knowledge of cinema was not at all profound, but I was always attracted to any creative expression that was out of the ordinary.

Among Jerzy's first films, is there one in particular that, in your opinion, sums up his vision of cinema ?

Jerzy's early Polish films have always just blown me away. The sparkling intelligence of his dialogues (resonating so clearly in Roman Polanski's *KNIFE IN THE WATER* and Andrzej Wajda's *INNOCENT SORCERERS*, the off-hand charm, the creative freedom and his auto-ironic sense of humor, always underscored by a touch of bitter idealism, have always moved me deeply.

How do you work together? Is there a particular place, a time, which favors this work in pairs?

We seem to work best on short deadlines :) And preferably in desolated locations. I usually work at night, Jerzy then wakes up to a set of pages, which he works on during the day.

EO really works both narratively and aesthetically. Is it a difficult balance to find, and how do you achieve it?

Filmmaking is, I guess, a little bit like cooking. You collect the best ingredients at your disposal, throw them together, and then impatiently watch them turn into pure magic or a mediocre dish. With *EO*, we owe so much to our Director of Photography, Michał Dymek (and the two other DoPs involved), our editor, Agnieszka Glińska, our composer, Paweł Mykietyn, and the rest of the creative team.

Apart from writing, what does your work as a producer consist of? What were maybe the major difficulties during the production of a film whose "hero" is an animal?

I am responsible for the paperwork, I am on set for every minute of the film's creation, I am involved in Jerzy's work with the editor, the composer and the sound designer. We are a tiny company, we operate more like a family & friends unit than a typical production enterprise.

How do you work with Jeremy?

Jeremy is a producing icon. It has always been a true privilege to see how he thinks, what he prioritizes, how he comes to his decisions, or works with directors. He's in a class of his own.

Jeremy Thomas

(Executive Producer)

Jeremy Thomas was born into cinema as his father and uncle were successful film directors. He started in the film labs and graduated to editing, working on many movies and ultimately editing a film for Ken Loach. In 1974, Thomas produced his first film, Philippe Mora's MAD DOG MORGAN starring Dennis Hopper, and then founded Recorded Picture Company.

Thomas has gone on to produce many distinctive films, including Nicolas Roeg's BAD TIMING, EUREKA and INSIGNIFICANCE, and Nagisa Ôshima's MERRY CHRISTMAS MR LAWRENCE starring David Bowie. In 1986, Thomas collaborated with Bernardo Bertolucci on THE LAST EMPEROR, which won nine Academy Awards® including Best Picture. Thomas went on to make many films with Bertolucci including THE SHELTERING SKY, STEALING BEAUTY and THE DREAMERS. Thomas has strategically remained an independent producer, resulting in a diverse body of work, including David Cronenberg's NAKED LUNCH, CRASH and A DANGEROUS METHOD, Takeshi Kitano's BROTHER, Jonathan Glazer's SEXY BEAST, Takashi Miike's 13 ASSASSINS, Hara-Kiri: DEATH OF A SAMURAI, BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL and FIRST LOVE, Jim Jarmusch's ONLY LOVERS LEFT ALIVE, Ben Wheatley's HIGH-RISE, and TALE OF TALES and PINOCCHIO by Matteo Garrone. Thomas has worked with many other leading filmmakers including Stephen Frears, Richard Linklater, Bob Rafelson, Phillip Noyce, Wim Wenders and Terry Gilliam.

In 1992, Thomas was appointed Chairman of the British Film Institute. He has been President of the Jury at the Tokyo, San Sebastian, Berlin and Cannes film festivals (Un Certain Regard), and has also served on the main Jury at Cannes. His long relationship with Cannes has seen him premiere over 15 films at the festival. Thomas has produced over seventy films and continues to make movies at Recorded Picture Company. Skolimowski and Thomas have a long-standing relationship which began when Thomas produced THE SHOUT as his second film, which won the Grand Prix du Jury at Cannes in 1978. They also collaborated on ESSENTIAL KILLING, which won the Special Jury Prize and Best Actor at Venice, and 11 MINUTES which also screened in Competition at Venice.

Michał Dymek

(Cinematographer)

Michał Dymek is an award-winning cinematographer and graduate from the Polish National Film School in Łódź. He is a member of Polish Society of a Cinematographers (PSC) His films have been screened at numerous film festivals all around the world including the Cannes Film Festival, Sundance, Rotterdam, Camerimage and BFI London Film Festival.

In 2020 his movie SWEAT directed by Magnus von Horn was in the official selection of Cannes Film Festival. The same year Michał received the main cinematography award for the film at the Gdynia Film Fest in Poland and a nomination at Polish Society of a Cinematographers awards (2022).

Michał has also shot several awarded short films, including THE BEST FIREWORKS EVER (dir. Aleksandra Terpińska) which earned the Canal Plus and the Audience Award at the Semaine de la Critique at the Cannes Festival 2017.

His latest work - an international co-production WOLF, directed by Nathalie Biancheri - starring George MacKay (1917), Paddy Considine (GAME OF THRONES) and Lily-Rose Depp (THE KING) is currently screened in the cinemas.

Agnieszka Glińska

(Editor)

Born on 30 November 1975 in Warsaw, Poland.

She studied the theory and history of film at the Łódź University and film editing at PWSFTViT in Łódź, Poland. She is a member of the: Polish Association of Editors (PSM), Polish Film Academy (PAF) and European Film Academy (EFA). In 2015, THE HERE AFTER by Magnus von Horn and, in 2020, 11 MINUTES by Jerzy Skolimowski brought her "Best Editing" awards at the FFFF in Gdynia. In 2016 she received the ORŁY for "Best Editing" of 11 MINUTES, the highlight of her career.

Her other films include: ALL THAT I LOVE by Jacek Borcuch, DIFRET by Zeresenay Mehari (candidates for Academy Awards® in the category of "Best Foreign Feature Film"), COMMUNION by Anna Zamecka and LAMB by Valdimar Jóhannsson (both shortlisted).

Paweł Mykietyn

(Composer)

Born on the 20th of May 1971 in Oława. In 1997, he graduated from the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music, having completed Professor Włodzimierz Kotoński's musical composition class.

He is the author of the music for most works of Krzysztof Warlikowski. In 1995, he won first prize at the UNESCO International Rostrum of Composers in Paris, in the young composers category. A year later, his Epifora won top prize at the IV UNESCO International Rostrum of Composers of Electroacoustic Music in Amsterdam, in the young composers category.

Author of two operas, symphonic, chamber, vocal and electronic compositions. Starting in 1996, he composed the musical scores for the majority of (28 in total) performances directed by Krzysztof Warlikowski. He has also collaborated with the likes of Adam Hanuszkiewicz, Grzegorz Jarzyna and Wajdi Mouawad. He has composed soundtracks for films by the likes of Andrzej Wajda, Jerzy Skolimowski, Małgorzata Szumowska and Šarūnas Bartas.

In 2001, he was awarded the Culture Prize of the Silesian Country of Lower Saxony. He received the 2012 Prix France Musique Sacem for the music he composed for J. Skolimowski's feature film ESSENTIAL KILLING.

ARTISTIC LIST

Kasandra	SANDRA DRZYMALSKA
Ziom	TOMASZ ORGANEK
Mateo	MATEUSZ KOŚCIUKIEWICZ
Vito	LORENZO ZURZOLO
The Countess	ISABELLE HUPPERT

This film was made out of our love for animals and nature. The animals' well-being on set was always our first priority, and no animals were harmed in the making of this film.

TECHNICAL LIST

Directed by	JERZY SKOLIMOWSKI
Screenplay by	EWA PIASKOWSKA JERZY SKOLIMOWSKI
Director of Photography	MICHAŁ DYMEK PSC
Director of Photography	PAWEŁ EDELMAN PSC MICHAŁ ENGLERT PSC
Edited by	AGNIESZKA GLIŃSKA PSM
Music	PAWEŁ MYKIETYN
Produced by	EWA PIASKOWSKA JERZY SKOLIMOWSKI
Co-produced by	EILEEN MURIEL TASCA
Executive Producer	JEREMY THOMAS