

a film by Kukla

FAKTAŠY



Locarno Film Festival
CONCORSO CINEASTI DEL PRESENTE
OFFICIAL SELECTION

FANTASY

ORIGINAL TITLE: **Fantasy**

LANGUAGES: **Slovenian, Albanian, Serbian,
Bosnian, Macedonian**

CATEGORY: **Fiction**

GENRE: **Drama, Queer**

RUNNING TIME: **98 min**

LOGLINE

*Tomboy Mihrije and her best friends
Sina and Jasna are drawn into a
transformative bond with Fantasy.*

SYNOPSIS

Mihrije, Sina and Jasna (early 20s) are best friends who live in Slovenia. They are tomboys and refuse to conform to the conservative system they live in. Their world turns upside down when they meet Fantasy, a transgender woman. Together, they embark on a journey that explores the complexities of gender, desire, and self-discovery.

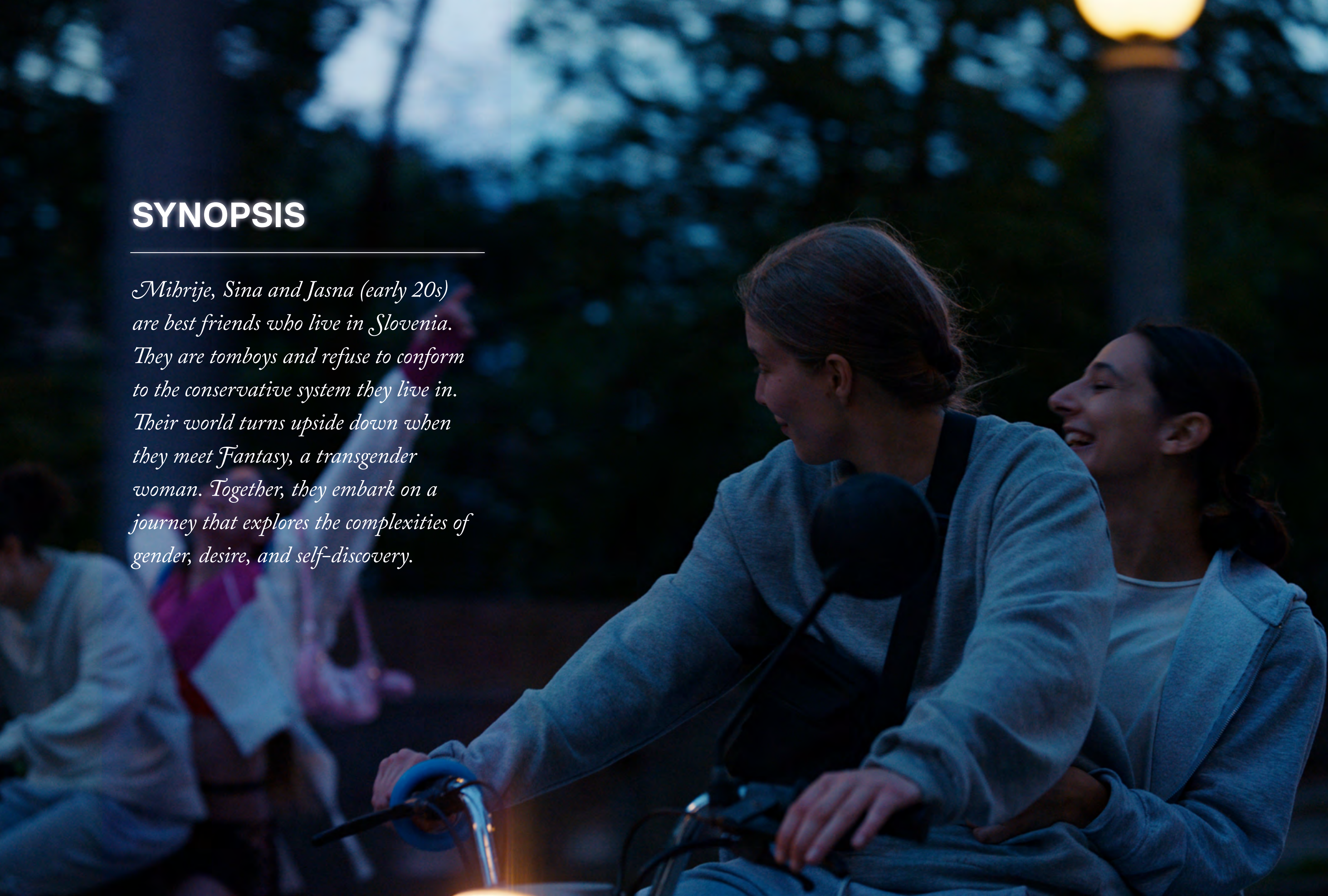




photo: John Pavlish

DIRECTOR'S BIO

*Kukla, born in 1991 in Brežice, Slovenia is a film directress and musician. In 2014 she finished the Film Academy in Ljubljana (film and TV directing). Her last short film **Sisters** won **Grand Prix at Clermont Ferrand Int Festival 2021** & **Prix du Public in Premiers Plans Angers**.*

***FANTASY** is her first feature and participated in many workshops including Cinéfondation.*

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY:

SISTERS - Short Film / 23 min / 2020

Grand Prix: Clermont-Ferrand

Audience Award: Premiers plans D'Angers

Best Short Film: Fire!! Barcelona LGBT Film Festival

Best Short Film: Kiki Festival Zabok

Special Jury Mention: Valencia International Film Festival Cinema Jove

Best Short Film: Festival of Slovenian Film

FANTASY - First Feature Film / 98 min / 2025

Locarno Film Festival - Concorso Cineasti del Presente

Sarajevo Film Festival - Competition


Q&A WITH THE DIRECTOR

☞ *What inspired you to tell this story?*

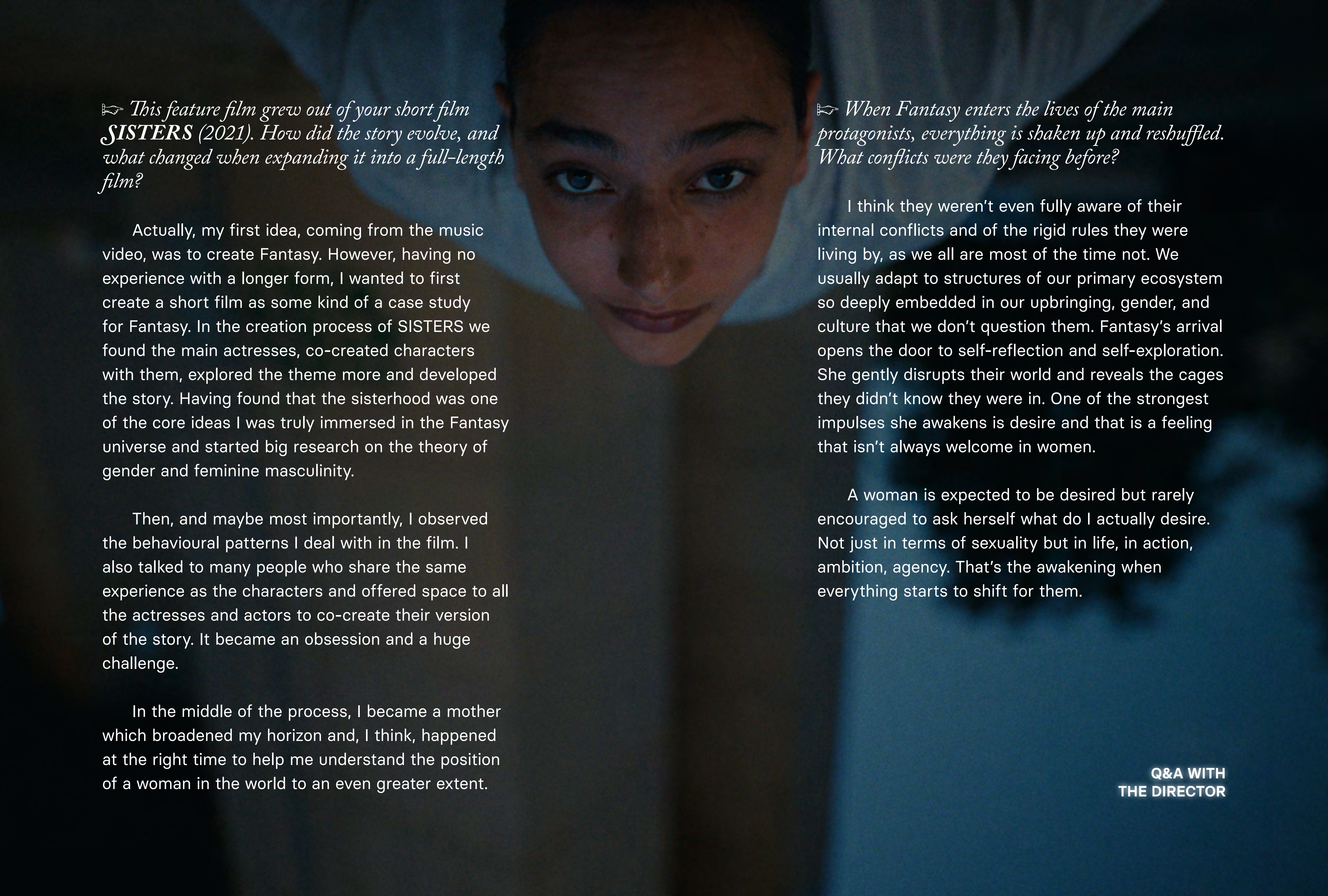
The idea first came to me about 10 years ago when I was directing a music video and the protagonists were tomboy girls in grey sweats, riding motorbikes and training together. That image of the “forgotten ones” in baggy clothes with ponytails low down by the hair line, who somehow remained prisoners of their family and their environment for not fitting the rigid rule lines of womanhood in patriarchal Balkans, got stuck in my head and sparked a cascade of memories and visions, from sworn virgins (virdžinas), which is a big and complex part of Balkan history, to the legacy of turbo folk culture today.

The closer I got to the finale of the creation of the film, the more I realized the story was, in many ways, a reflection of my own experience growing up and living in the Balkans. A few years ago, a documentary-style propaganda film was circulating that posed the question ‘What is a woman?’, framing those who didn’t have a clear-cut answer as if they were brainwashed fools. But I don’t believe there is a definitive answer, just as there’s no absolute answer to ‘What is a man?’ That’s not what interests me. What I wanted to explore was ‘How is it to be a woman?’ today and here.

In the film I wanted the woman to look at herself, if possible, with her own eyes but also show the gender alchemy, the diversity, the tension, the violence and the contradictions that not only shape this region but societies everywhere.



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☞ *This feature film grew out of your short film **SISTERS** (2021). How did the story evolve, and what changed when expanding it into a full-length film?*

Actually, my first idea, coming from the music video, was to create Fantasy. However, having no experience with a longer form, I wanted to first create a short film as some kind of a case study for Fantasy. In the creation process of SISTERS we found the main actresses, co-created characters with them, explored the theme more and developed the story. Having found that the sisterhood was one of the core ideas I was truly immersed in the Fantasy universe and started big research on the theory of gender and feminine masculinity.

Then, and maybe most importantly, I observed the behavioural patterns I deal with in the film. I also talked to many people who share the same experience as the characters and offered space to all the actresses and actors to co-create their version of the story. It became an obsession and a huge challenge.

In the middle of the process, I became a mother which broadened my horizon and, I think, happened at the right time to help me understand the position of a woman in the world to an even greater extent.

☞ *When Fantasy enters the lives of the main protagonists, everything is shaken up and reshuffled. What conflicts were they facing before?*

I think they weren't even fully aware of their internal conflicts and of the rigid rules they were living by, as we all are most of the time not. We usually adapt to structures of our primary ecosystem so deeply embedded in our upbringing, gender, and culture that we don't question them. Fantasy's arrival opens the door to self-reflection and self-exploration. She gently disrupts their world and reveals the cages they didn't know they were in. One of the strongest impulses she awakens is desire and that is a feeling that isn't always welcome in women.

A woman is expected to be desired but rarely encouraged to ask herself what do I actually desire. Not just in terms of sexuality but in life, in action, ambition, agency. That's the awakening when everything starts to shift for them.

**Q&A WITH
THE DIRECTOR**

*As the female body is
still a political battleground,
the female gaze has to be
claimed and fought for.*



✎ *In what way do their individual challenges reflect society in general?*

In the end their challenges are very universal, the struggles of second generation immigrants, the questions of identity, belonging, and fitting in. And as the female body is still a political battleground, the female gaze has to be claimed and fought for. As Dr. Martin Luther King said "Nobody is free until we are all free".

✎ *What does Fantasy stand for?*

Fantasy is her chosen name but I also wanted to play with the word and everything it evokes. Our fantasies are often portals to our true selves and I wanted her character to challenge and awaken that within the three protagonists. At the same time being aware of how often women are expected to be fantasies of themselves, so there is also a bit of self-irony in that. She's also based on a real person; I once knew a Fantasy.

Q&A WITH
THE DIRECTOR



*☞ Can you explain how *Fantasy* is affecting the lives of the three main protagonists?*

Her presence and self-acceptance brings out what they've been suppressing and transforms their understanding of identity, leading each to rethink and redefine what it means to be a woman, but also just a person. I love how she surpasses the fixed ideals of identity and plays with the fluidity of it. It is very inspiring seeing a flower growing out of the concrete and that is Fantasy, strong enough to live her own truth in the brutalist post-patriarchal reality but remaining vulnerable.

When you experience the presence of somebody being so unapologetically themselves, I believe it can be transformative.


*☞ What is also striking about *Fantasy* are the visual and aesthetic decisions. How did you come up with the concept?*

Bold visual language has always been natural to me, it's how I process the world and tell stories. The central visual question was how to tackle the transformation from grey to lilac, from the stark brutalist Yugoslav blocks to Fantasy's soft world, playing with tension between rawness and gentleness. Since the film walks a fine line between reality and fantasy, we leaned into magic realism, using visual metaphors as symbols of becoming and transformation.

I wanted the special effects of light elements to show the hope of a possible exit from the concrete. It could be just Mihrije's internal fantasy or a wish, but it is a symbol of hope and change. As music plays a big part in my art and my life, we borrowed elements from the music video world to portray the inner worlds of the characters.

With the Cinematographer we were devoted to the find the balance between strong visual gestures, such as perspective bending shots and playful camera movement, and a cinematic language that serves the story. Over the years of working on Fantasy, we did many tests, took hundreds of photos and videos, and went on extensive location scouts to find the right angles and create the atmospheres we were looking for.

**Q&A WITH
THE DIRECTOR**



✍️ *This film is a true Balkan collaboration, with people from different countries and more than 5 languages spoken (Slovenian, Albanian, Serbian, Bosnian, Macedonian). What was it like bringing together so many cultures, and why was that important for the story?*

Slovenia often looks like an Alpine fairytale from the outside but beneath the surface it's surprisingly multicultural, some kind of a melting pot of different Balkan nations and I really wanted to embrace that. This story reflects my own reality, since I grew up in a multilingual, multicultural environment in a small industrial town, surrounded by people from all over the region. Every day, I heard around five languages and exchanged different cultures and points of view.

That spirit shaped the story, since all the characters come from mixed backgrounds. Second-generation immigrants carry something deeply imprinted on them, yet there is the possibility for their own new narrative. Since the majority of the cast are first time actors, I was searching for people who embodied the characters through their own lived experiences. And then, quite naturally, the creation process expanded through the region, bringing in even more collaborators not just from the countries mentioned, but also from Croatia, Montenegro and Kosovo.

I don't carry the same nostalgia for Yugoslavia that many older generations do but I do love the fact that we can still collaborate as people with shared roots and that we can respect and celebrate our differences. That felt essential to the complexity of our story, since it is about identity, tension and in the end connection. It naturally deepens when you're working across cultures, languages and borders.

Second-generation immigrants carry something deeply imprinted on them, yet there is the possibility for their own new narrative.

Q&A WITH
THE DIRECTOR



➤ The Balkans are often seen as very traditional, but your film shows a more complex picture. How did you show both the strict rules and the moments of acceptance within that society?

The Balkans are a diverse and contradictory place. Many nations, languages, religions and different traditions living together, bonded by “Slavic-ness” and a common, complex and often painful history. There’s still a strong presence of traditional values and inherited roles, however, there is always a wish, a fantasy to break free from that. At the same time, the internet and the modern world have left their mark. Sometimes I feel the West forgets that time moves forward here, too.

In the Balkans, there’s this constant inner tension, a pull between the past and the future, between radical fear of the Other and a radical, but often silent, longing for acceptance. I also believe that much of the homophobia and transphobia we see in the region comes from within, often from people who are repressing something in themselves.

That repression is what I wanted to explore and expose, not to judge, but to understand it and offer space for a change.

**Q&A WITH
THE DIRECTOR**

CAST



Alina JUHART



Sarah AL SALEH



Mia SKRBINAC



Mina MILOVANOVIĆ

CREW

Writer & Director:

KUKLA

Cinematographer:

Lazar BOGDANOVIĆ

Editor:

Lukas MIHELJAK

**Original music composed
and produced by:**

Relja ĆUPIĆ

Production Designer:

Maja ŠAVC

Sound Designer:

Julij ŽORNIK

Costume Designer:

Damir RAKOVIĆ

Make-up & Hair Design:

Tinka PRPAR

PRODUCTION

DECEMBER is a Slovenian-based production company founded in 2013 by producers Vlado Bulajić and Lija Pogačnik, alumni of the EAVE Producers Workshop and members of the **European Film Academy (EFA)**. Their core mission is to develop and produce fiction and documentary films in collaboration with emerging and innovative directors and screenwriters with distinctive authorial voices.

Following the production of three short films, they introduced two feature debuts: **Inventory** (2021) by Darko Sinko that had its world premiere in the New Directors competition program at the San Sebastián Film Festival (SSIFF) and **Bitch, a Derogatory Term for a Woman** (2021) by Tijana Zinajić that premiered at the Mostra de València, and later screened at the Sydney Film Festival in the Europe! Voices of Women program. The two films garnered a total of eleven awards at the Festival of Slovenian Film (FSF), including Best Film and Best Director. Later they produced two documentary features: **2017** (2022) by Goran Vojnović, and **The Last Cowboy** (2024) by Tadej Čater, which premiered at the Sarajevo FF. Their international co-productions include titles **The Diary of Diana B.** (2019), **Safe Place** (2022), **Dražen** (2024), and **Mother Mara** (2024).



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SUPPORTED BY:

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DECEMBER

