# Oscar contender Beautiful Evening, Beautiful Day movie looks at being gay under Yugoslavian communism



Ivona Juka’s film Beautiful Evening, Beautiful Day, which serves as Croatia’s official entry for the Oscars this year, is currently being showcased in Los Angeles as part of a guerrilla campaign aimed at creating awareness for the film. This poignant drama delves into the historical persecution faced by the LGBTQ+ community in Yugoslavia during the repressive regime of Josip Broz Tito in the 1950s, an era marked by severe discrimination against homosexuals.

The film stars Croatian actor Dado Ćosić in the lead role of Lovro, a brave partisan who fought against fascist forces during World War II and later transitioned into a career in filmmaking. He is joined by an ensemble cast that includes Djordje Galic, Slaven Doslo, and Elmir Krivalic, portraying Lovro’s comrades and collaborators in the arts. Set around 16 years post-war, the narrative shifts dramatically as Lovro and his friends come under scrutiny from Tito’s Communist Party, which increasingly targeted individuals based on their sexual orientation.

Prominent in the casting is veteran actor Emir Hadzihafizbegovic, who plays an apparatchik named Emir, assigned to monitor the group’s activities at their film studio. This dramatic portrayal reflects the historical reality whereby homosexuality was criminalized in Yugoslavia in 1959, leading to oppressive actions including imprisonment and accusations that were often politically motivated.

Beautiful Evening, Beautiful Day is presented in black-and-white, evoking a feeling of the past while addressing a grim chapter in history where approximately 500 gay men were imprisoned, with many sent to the notorious Goli Otok penal colony. Juka’s work not only recounts the personal stories of those who suffered but also offers insight into the broader societal context as Tito’s regime sought to impose a strict Marxist ideology on the populace.

The film, which marks Juka’s second fictional feature following her 2015 narrative You Carry Me, is deeply personal for the director, influenced by the experiences of a close family member who faced persecution for his homosexuality. In her words, speaking to Deadline, Juka reflects on her upbringing in a progressive family and states, “This film is a love letter to him and his generation.”

The narrative explores Lovro's transformation from an exuberant filmmaker to a prisoner enduring starvation and dehumanisation on Barren Island. Juka notes the horrors associated with Goli Otok, where prisoners were forced to act against one another in an environment designed to strip away their dignity. "I did a huge amount of research into stories from that period," she explained, revealing the harsh realities that motivated her storytelling.

While the film's core delves into the darker aspects of this history, it does not overlook prior moments of joy and camaraderie among Lovro and his friends, juxtaposing the initial freedom they experienced against the tightening net of state control.

One significant aspect of Beautiful Evening, Beautiful Day is its explicit portrayal of male love scenes, which sparked considerable debate during casting. As Juka shared, some major Serbian stars expressed discomfort with these intimate scenes, suggesting their removal. She firmly resisted this notion, asserting their importance to depict the tension between love and oppression: “Eros is the only place of freedom,” she articulated. The director sought to foster open dialogue with the cast to create authentic portrayals of intimacy, a process she acknowledges came with its own challenges.

Moreover, logistical hurdles arose during production, with several filming locations withdrawing support upon learning of the film’s LGBTQ+ focus. Producer Anita Juka detailed her experience with local film funds and potential partners who halted communications after initially expressing interest. This reflects broader societal attitudes that continue to affect artistic expression concerning LGBTQ+ themes in the region.

In the midst of these struggles, the film faces additional challenges in securing funding for its awards campaign. The Croatian Film Center awarded Juka and her production team significantly less than previous years, a decision they suspect may correlate with the film's LGBTQ+ themes. They expressed concern regarding possible biases influencing financial support, particularly as the film had been unanimously selected by all twelve professional film associations in Croatia for the Oscar entry.

Despite these obstacles, the filmmakers remain determined to showcase the film's significance, highlighting its universal message and historical relevance. The team is actively working to arrange screenings across major cities such as New York and London, driven by a commitment to reach audiences worldwide.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://cineuropa.org/film/466780/> - Corroborates the film's title, director, screenplay, cast, and the countries involved in the production.
* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beautiful\_Evening,\_Beautiful\_Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beautiful_Evening%2C_Beautiful_Day) - Confirms the film's selection as the Croatian entry for the Best International Feature Film at the 97th Academy Awards and details the cast and production companies.
* <https://www.filmaffinity.com/en/film612566.html> - Provides information on the film's genre, running time, and the historical context of the story set in 1950s Yugoslavia.
* <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt33309194/> - Supports the cast list, production companies, and the film's runtime, as well as its historical setting and plot.
* <https://letterboxd.com/film/beautiful-evening-beautiful-day/> - Corroborates the synopsis, including the characters' transition from partisans to filmmakers and the censorship they faced.
* <https://cineuropa.org/film/466780/> - Details the film's director, Ivona Juka, and her role in writing and directing the film.
* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beautiful\_Evening,\_Beautiful\_Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beautiful_Evening%2C_Beautiful_Day) - Mentions the film's cinematography, editing, and music, which are crucial elements in portraying the historical era.
* <https://www.filmaffinity.com/en/film612566.html> - Highlights the film's themes, including the persecution of the LGBT community and the communist regime's impact on artists.
* <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt33309194/> - Discusses the challenges faced by the characters due to their sexual orientation and the communist party's actions against them.