

DOKUDAILY

TENTH ISSUE

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SEE YOU NEXT YEAR

PHOTO: GRESA NUREDINI

FOR CULTURE. FOR DOKUFEST.

At DokuFest, I have met friends I will have for life; I have discovered another shade of the sky at dawn, one that compares to no other nuance of any sky in the world. But above all, I have come to know an extraordinary space devoted to the production and articulation of film culture, in a way that no other place in Albania or Kosovo does.

I know the stories that before the 1950s, films were shown in cafés in this city. In 1952, the first cinema in Kosovo opened, Kino Lumbardhi (Bistrica): a place where many of us feel our soul finds rest. This year, I have felt the absence of that space (due to its renovation) deep within the layers of my sensitivities. Our bond with spaces is stronger than one might think. The eye moves with the same automatism as in the home where it has lived for years. And this year, this home, and these cinemas, extended into other parts of the city. But DokuFest has been the catalyst that keeps the cinemas in this city alive and breathing. Perhaps it should not be said in such poetic terms.

This organization is the reason cinemas in this city have found their own path, where we meet the people who select the films, who work in logistics, who sit with great dedication in the projection room, who switch the lights on and off when films are shown, who welcome us into the cinema hall or even those who refuse to stop talking while the film is playing.

At DokuFest, I have also discovered a mental space within which I can do something I will try for my entire life to make happen and to keep at a steady rhythm: writing about culture. Reflecting, analyzing, observing and hopefully finding an eye that silently reads those thoughts condensed into writing. This space is built with patience and dedication. And it is hard. But it happens. For many years, DokuDaily has been among the few platforms with a special focus on writing about films and the entire world they bring with them. Writing in Albanian about culture is also one of the most pressing and urgent issues, where freedom of expression faces extraordinary obstacles in the absurdity of living in a world that suffers from everything except lack of information.

For this space alone, I invite anyone reading this piece, extending a broad and heartfelt invitation to all who have a passion for good writing and analysis, to make the effort and not give up. Such a space exists here in Prizren and at DokuFest, in this city that manages to turn every corner into a cinema. For all of you who read and write, these spaces are ours to preserve together, even if only once a year.

Let's write and read culture, in our ways, O in our language. It is our duty.

Written by Blerina Kanxha



SOME OF YOU WERE ASKED DURING THE FESTIVAL WHAT
“ENDLESS”, “GREED”, “MENTAL” AND “VOID” MEAN TO YOU.
THESE ARE SOME OF THE ANSWERS:

ENDLESS IS WORK. HUMAN WORK. PAIN. FAMILY.
HOME. LOVE. GENOCIDE. HUMANITY. CINEMA. HOPE.
THE HORIZON.

GREED IS A PRECISE WORD. A SYSTEM WE LIVE IN.
UGLY. A SIN. NOT A SPECIFIC. PATIENCE WORD.
EVERYTHING THAT IS NOT LOVE. POWER. I DON'T
KNOW. MASSIVITY. OWNERSHIP. DISPARITY. LETARGY.
BILLIONERS.

MENTAL IS STABILITY. I HAVE NO ANSWER FOR THIS.
ALL THIS HEAT. EVERYTHING EXCEEDING THE
PRESENT. FAMILY. THE WHOLE WORLD. MY CURRENT
STATE. PRIZREN.

VOID IS A BLACK HOLE. THE OPPOSITE OF ENDLESS.
IMPOSSIBILITY. LACK OF EMPATHY. DELUSION.
INDIFFERENCE. HUGE. SCARY.

INTERVIEW

Catastrophically Perfect

DokuDaily spoke with Alba Çakalli, the festival's producer, on the last day before DokuFest's Closing Ceremony.



ENDLESS GREED MENTAL VOID

PHOTO: ELMEDINA ARAPI

At the start of the festival, we spoke with Alba, in a moment that seemed like everything was exploding just a few moments before the festival began but, as always, after every bad thing comes something good. And Alba, with her almost combative rhythm and straightforward way of speaking, gives us a rundown of all the chaos that spins in the festival's backstage. This is to understand that events like this though they fill our spirits with all the poetry and beauty of life and creative minds also require strong bones to keep them standing.

Day after day, it was once the calm before the storm: "We started with joy as soon as the festival began." "The target was to cut expenses, increase profits, and I think we found a way this year, even though we still haven't seen the final balance, because that's next week's job," said Alba.

"The team pushed hard on so many things and we improved the festival's digital infrastructure, which is a very good thing"; "Plus, this unfortunate budget cut and the rising prices—I think we managed to handle it"; "The cinemas were full", Alba said all this almost in one breath. But all this doesn't happen alone, and she adds:

"Today I was thinking, without the team, without people's support, this thing doesn't happen, and I'm not the kind of person who likes to give orders, but it turns out I had to. In the end, though, the cooperation with people has been very good."

We continue with:

"They took away my driver's license a day before the festival." We know this because it happened right before the rehearsals in the castle. But what happened afterwards was that despite her wish to fully serve her penalty, between various meetings with friends, Alba once again ran into the policeman who had taken her license, found a way to appeal it, but by following the festival's pace, the time to appeal had already passed.

Regarding production, Alba talks to us about the big ambitions tied to organizing concerts, on top of the daily work in the cinemas, and then about dealing with different institutions at all levels and with all the infrastructure because it's not just about working with the festival staff, but also with the police and the courts and finally about finding someone who might be the only person in Prizren who knows how to handle the generators. "We were forced to become engineers, mechanics, and electricians too." And you realize that you can do everything, but the fate of a festival can still end up in the hands of just one master craftsman.

"On the night of Ylli Limani's performance, they called me and said the third generator wouldn't start." Alba then, in her own way, mobilized the entire city of Prizren so that there wouldn't be any technical breakdowns. Not a single scream was uttered at any point. That same night, with the master craftsman's physical presence secured, everyone was making sure everything went smoothly for the audience.

In this edition, behind the black curtain were also the requests for invitations, institutions, and the only thing we can say for this moment especially regarding attendance at concerts is: Why didn't you buy your ticket on time?

When We Are Hosted by the Best!

A Conversation with Ardora Cakalli and Erëza Kirajtani



PHOTO: SUER CELINA

Prizren is a hospitable city, but hospitality is a tricky and complicated field. Especially when you realize that the comfort of home can't be replaced by anything. Often, in these issues of DokuDaily, when we have spoken with different people, they have described the feeling of familiarity in the city as something easily noticeable and internalized. And truly, cultural events, no matter how small, require a diligent, tireless team that can function with machine-like precision, but also, of course, knows how to say a kind word. Something just within the bounds of perfection, more or less.

Ardora and Erëza have both worked at DokuFest for years. For them, it's once again a family affair but not quite as sweet and privileged as someone might think, since they often unintentionally become examples for other colleagues. For Erëza, this is her first time working in the hospitality department, after moving from being a volunteer to the media department, and now returning to hospitality, making sure every guest enjoys the comfort they want during the festival. Ardora has gone through these experiences in previous years, from guests who, unfortunately, arrive in Prizren with health problems, to late-night calls because someone lost their keys, or to quirky requests like: "Where can we get our nails done?"

In other circumstances, the girls would have every reason to vent about someone forgetting to check in, or a taxi driver picking up guests at the wrong airport. The distances between the airports of Skopje, Prishtina, and Tirana are considerable. But Erëza tells us that this year, the department's communication system has been automated enough to avoid unnecessary calls. But are there ever no unnecessary calls? They will never stop.

Here at DokuDaily, we know the importance of a good night's sleep, so we asked Erëza and Ardora what their typical day is like. Ardora says: "Because we're in hospitality, we deal with a lot of people, and they're coming from all over the world. For every little thing they ask us to change their room or hotel, but they need to understand that it's not always possible, and not everything can be done right away." Erëza points out that people are often very detail-oriented, and out of curiosity, they tend to want to know everything.

Ardora recalls last year, when emergency issues ranged from "I broke a tooth, take me to the dentist" to "Where can I get my hair done, take me to the hairdresser." But this year, the most frequent situations haven't been emergencies; rather, the Prizren heat has knocked out more than a few people, and calling an ambulance was the sensible thing to do. Still, Ardora says: "We in hospitality never leave anyone stranded; we've fulfilled all their requests."

Transport and communication often become sources of frustration, with comments like: "I don't ask the department, I go where I want," or "I'm not waking up at five, I wake up when I want." But Ardora and Erëza are used to these lines, and with great gentleness but also a strong sense of urgency, they manage to put everyone at ease.

While we were talking to them, someone had just arrived in Prizren and urgently asked for a place to stay. In a Prizren where hotels are full and the influx of festival visitors and diaspora is at its peak capacity, somehow, they still find a way, somewhere in this city there's a house, a place where you can lay your head on a pillow. These last-minute requests are normal for the girls. They're used to them by now.

This year, working with transportation has been calmer thanks to cooperation with GoOpt, and work with hosting houses has been reduced, but there have still been cases where a visitor didn't know from which airport they should depart, stretching the very concept of time itself. Yet the girls have Olympic-level patience.

Because Prizren knows how to host, it knows how to host better than anywhere else. They are glad that people have so much interest in the festival and that they understand the experience of being a visitor somewhere else. "You can't complain about every little thing," Ardora says.

And there are beautiful surprises too. Many visitors are so impressed by the hospitality that they find a moment to give gifts and express their thanks in their own way. "Sometimes they've even given us money, and we split it all and went out for coffee," they laugh.

Working at DokuFest has now become a tradition for them, as they have other family members who also work at the festival. Ardora admits: "Sometimes it's not all that great." Erëza adds: "We have to be much more attentive to everything." Break moments during the festival are, for them, the concept of another universe. But they do this job with the greatest love.

This year, the hospitality department has welcomed more than 250 visitors, and it must be understood that their work, and the work of anyone in hospitality, is truly priceless. The girls always wear a smile and have that look of care in their eyes, making sure everything goes well. We spoke together on the last day of the festival, at its 24th edition, and you could see the relief in their eyes as they said: "Now everyone's gone." But Ardora and Erëza are examples of a youth that never tires of working, and they are part of what makes this festival what we know and love so deeply.

DOKUNIGHTS

The Pulse of Berat and the Pulse of Prizren

The installation “ResistanceExistence” glowed with colors that swirled from the stage all the way to the hillside. The full moon had just lifted its head above the fortress, and the audience coming from Marash felt the thrill in the air: a music that comes straight from a gentle soul, a soul that loves life in that wise tangle of Central Albania. The Berat Orchestra on the Kino Lumi stage.

DokuNights has always made space for the best Albanian music bringing groups like Saz’iso, River Voices, and Orkestra Shkodra last year. This time, we danced and celebrated to the playful rhythms of Berat’s traditional folk music. Under the care of Oda3, this musical ensemble has created an album that gathers all the joy and tenderness of life into sound music that speaks in the inner language of the city of Berat. Renowned musicians such as Mehmet Topi, Albi Kadëna, Florenc Qafa, Altin Nuka, Adrian Hodaj, Lutfi Keci, and Arjanit Qafa joined forces with the utterly unique voices of Petrit Berisha and Ludmilla Baballëku and we were lucky enough to throw ourselves into dance under their music.

People everywhere: on the landing by the river, where, almost secretly and with quick steps, some slipped down to see the stage from below. Along the walls surrounding the stage, people sat or stood, listening intently. On stage, in the reflection of all Prizren’s lights, the elegant movements of hands rolled like waves, hair swept by the wind, in songs that bound Prizren and Berat together.

For anyone who has heard these songs since childhood, they are the motifs of a life segmented by every family celebration or end-of-year festivity. They are lyrics that flow naturally, telling life and love in the simplest yet deepest forms. For many, hearing these songs may bring a sense of festivity and nostalgia and the urge to throw one’s arms in the air to forget all problems, whether sipping the local rakia or lying back with eyes that stitch themselves to the sky like a thread through a needle.

On the last night of DokuNights, we were all brought together with an emotion that even language itself can barely articulate. Waving handkerchiefs, thinking of the shy girls at the windows, thinking of the young men walking the cobbled streets, hiding emotion in the corner of the eye the songs of Berat connected us to what we love most in our tradition: the feeling of belonging, with both feet on the ground, yet spun into the air through sound.



PHOTO: LUKA STRIKA

CLOSING CEREMONY

DokuFest concluded its 24th edition on the stage of Kino Lumi, the same venue where this year’s festival opened, and where for nine consecutive days we gathered to watch films together.

The Closing Ceremony began with a video echoing the message of this year’s DokuFest opening, emphasizing the situation of occupation in Gaza, oppressed peoples, and the ways in which we articulate or take a stand toward these realities.

Over nine days, the festival presented 213 films, hosted 9 performances, 8 discussions, 4 masterclasses, and 6 workshops across 9 cinemas and improvised venues throughout the city, including at the ITP premises.

This successful edition of DokuFest reached its peak with the announcement of what had perhaps intrigued us most during the festival: the winners!



Distribution Award: Ndera – Endrit Qarolli
in collaboration with Radiator IP Sales



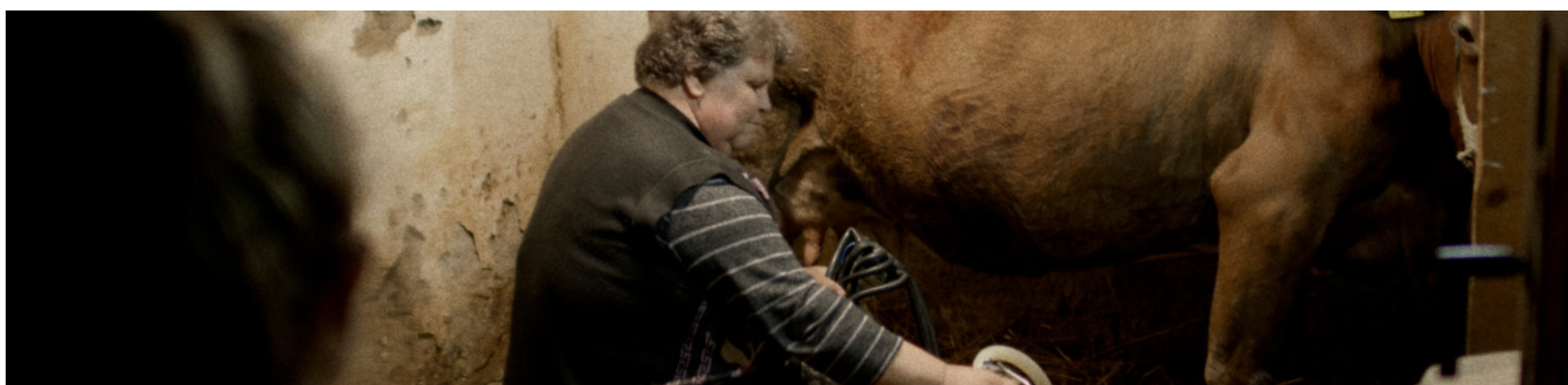
Audience Award: Palace of Youth – Maddie Gwinn
supported by ProCredit Bank



DocuYouth Alliance Award: Coexistence, my Ass! – Amber Fares



Balkan Short Film Award: Merging Bodies – Adrian Paci



Balkan Short Film Award: Antigona – Iber Deari & Mirsad Abazi
Special Mention



Balkan Dox Award: Soil and Wings – Stefan Malešević
supported by IPKO



Balkan Dox Award: A Strange Colour of Dream – Yasemin Akinci
Special Mention



Green Dox Award: May the Soil Be Everywhere – Yehui Zhao
Special Mention



Green Dox Award: Shifting Baselines – Julien Elie



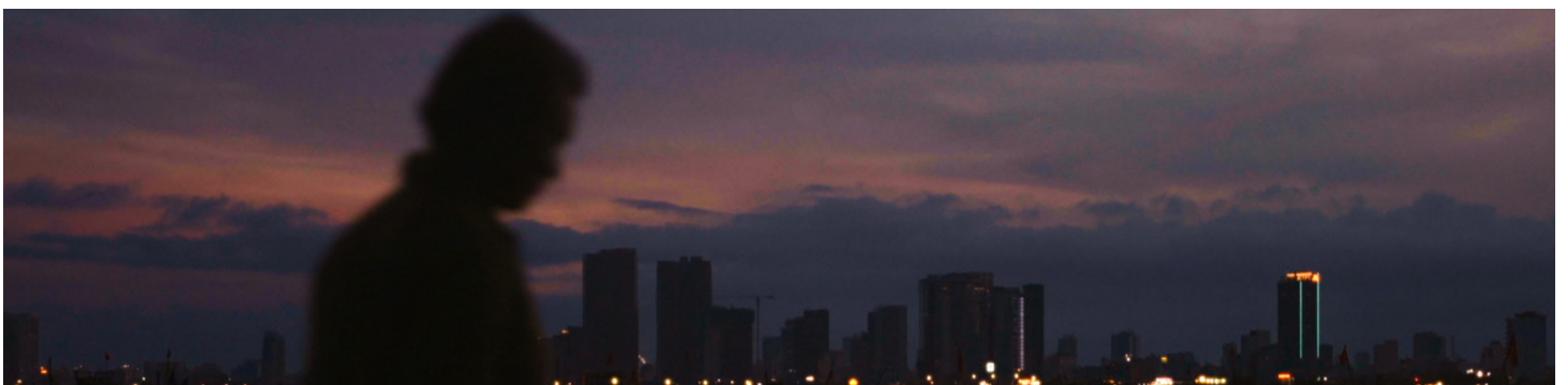
Human Rights Dox Award: My Dear Théo – Alisa Kovalenko



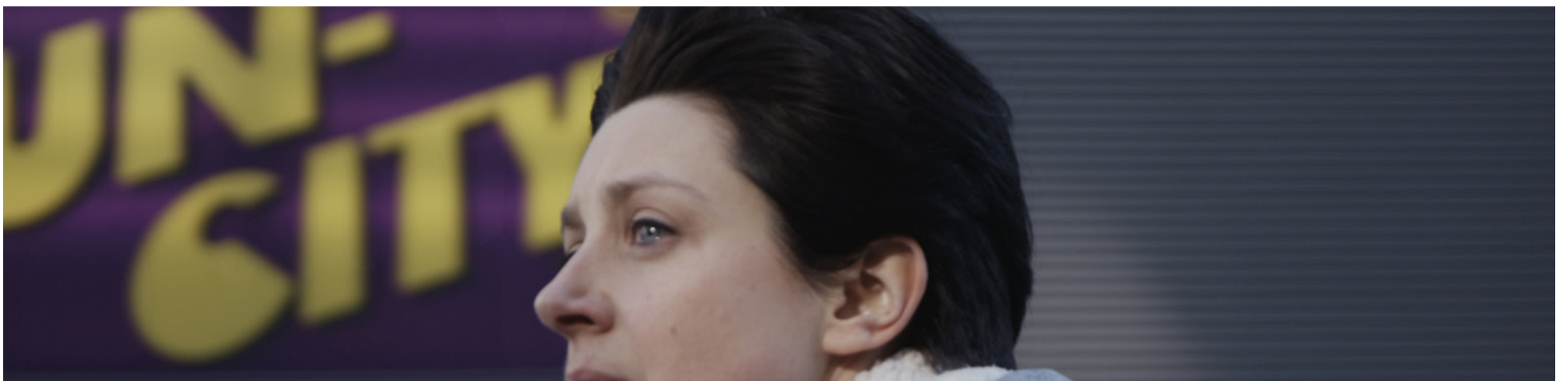
European Short Film Award: Masterpiece Mommy – Dorothy Sing Zhang



International Short Film Award: Blue Heart – Samuel Suffren



Documentary Short Film Award: We Were the Scenery – Christopher Radcliff



Feature Documentary Award: Action Item – Paula Ďurinová
in collaboration with the Swedish Embassy and SIDA



National Category Film Award: SOS – Anita Morina

To read the jury statements, please click [here](#).





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