

BOTTLEMEN

A DOCUMENTARY WESTERN DRAMA BY NEMANJA VOJINOVIĆ

RT DOBRE NADE in co-production with SET SAIL FILMS, URGH! and TV SLOVENIA, with the support of FILM CENTER SERBIA presents "Bottlemen" with YANI BOC
Editor DRAGAN VON PETROVIĆ, Cinematographer IGOR MAROVIĆ, Sound design & mix BOŠTJAN KAČIČNIK, Original music PREDRAG ADAMOVIĆ, Line producer NADA KOSTIĆ,
Co-produced by VIVA VIDENOVIĆ, Produced by MARIJA STOJNIĆ and NEMANJA VOJINOVIĆ, Directed by NEMANJA VOJINOVIĆ



URGH!



RTV SLO





PRESS KIT

BOTTLEMEN

a documentary western drama

Directed by **Nemanja Vojinović**

Title: **Bottlemen**

Original title: **Flašaroši**

Country: **Serbia, Slovenia**

Running time: **84 minutes**

Production house **RT DOBRE NADE (Serbia)**

Co-producers **URGH! (Slovenia) SET SAIL FILMS (Serbia)**

Producers **Marija Stojnić, Nemanja Vojinović**

Co-producer **Viva Videnović**

World Sales **Taskovski Films**



SHORT SYNOPSIS

On the outskirts of Belgrade, Serbia, one of the biggest landfills in Europe spreads across the remains of the ancient Vinča civilization. Plastic bottle collectors aka 'bottlemen' make a hard living from this toxic landscape, but now their vibrant community is facing a new threat.



SYNOPSIS

Vinča is a suburb of Belgrade. But seven thousand years ago, some of the largest settlements in Prehistoric Europe were right here. What was once a cradle of European civilization now holds up a mirror to our contemporary, overconsumption-fuelled lifestyle, as one of the largest unsanitary landfill sites in Europe spreads across the Stone Age site, covering it in mountains of waste.

A community of mostly Roma workers, known as 'bottlemen', make a precarious living on these unstable mountains of toxic, steaming, sometimes burning waste. Working in gangs like wolf packs, they compete to pick out the 'plastic gold' of used bottles for recycling.

Moving from sweeping total shots of the stunning apocalyptic landscape – where clouds of toxic gas and gigantic swarms of foraging gulls eclipse the workers, and even the huge mechanical excavators crawling across its surface – **Bottlemen** focuses in on the 'wolf pack' led by timid former boxer Yani.

In a calm, observational style, the film paints an intimate portrait of Yani and his pack as he struggles with leadership, his faraway family and the constant chaos of working the treacherous landfill mountains. As they work, drink, play and live together, Yani and his men fall into an existence on autopilot, often forgetting why they came here in the first place.

Ultimately the strains of balancing family and financial commitments and leading his unruly pack start to tell on Yani. Cracks appear, and he finds himself in an even more precarious position, working alone. Then news hits that the landfill is to be modernized, throwing everyone's future into doubt...

Bottlemen is a homage to a vibrant, essential and yet largely invisible community, as well as an eco-western and a stark contemplation of where our society is headed.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

This film is inspired by the actual story of its location – an archeological site of the ancient Vinča civilization, the cradle of the European Neolithic which, today, is the biggest landfill in the Balkans. At first I wanted to make a poetic and abstract landscape film, about the clash of two archeological sites – one of the ancient civilization from the Stone Age, and one of the present civilization, filled with garbage and plastic, a true mirroring image of contemporary civilization.

The first time I actually visited the landfill, I was quite shocked by the scenery: thousands of seagulls flying around looking for food, heavy machinery shaking the ground, hundreds of collectors scavenging for plastic bottles or other recyclable material. I saw a new world, completely unknown to me and I felt like I was in a Mad Max movie. I got to know this post-apocalyptic landscape and the community of plastic bottle collectors – bottlemen, hard working people, living and surviving in the most brutal conditions, yet resilient and authentic, full of life. I wanted to show this world of bottlemen and tell their stories, because they will be forgotten - the landfill is being transformed now, and the entire process of manual waste management will be automated, replaced by machines.

The story follows one bottlemen group and its leader Yanika, a former boxer. He initially came to the landfill with the idea to earn enough money to buy a house for his family. But years go by and life outside the landfill doesn't stand still - family circumstances change, making Yanika's plans about the house less possible to achieve. What ties him to the landfill is the group that he is leading. We are following his struggle of being a team leader and the conflict that eventually decimates the group and leaves Yanika working alone. He keeps working on the autopilot mode, and waits for the moment of the closing of the landfill.

In Yanika and his bottlemen group I found the characters I needed to tell an ecological story with a strong human element and address issues like overconsumption, the absurdity of modern labor and exploitation. I chose to follow the plastic bottle collectors, as plastic is one of today's major problems, an arising catastrophe swamping our cities, oceans and waterways, still without a long term solution.

The visual approach is observational, with elements of cinema verite and poetic documentary. We follow the characters in their intimate moments, depicting scenes from real life without the use of interviews or voice over. By using lenses that range from wide to mid length, I intend to put the viewer in an intimate position, very close to the subject. On the other hand, with a telephoto lens the characters are "glued" with the surrounding, and merge into the landscape. Besides strong visual compositions, the sound gives sometimes realistic, sometimes subjective and very ominous feeling.

This is an ecological western, in terms of its cinematography, landscape, and characters, but primarily in its elements of an ongoing threat, the modernization which will forever change the life of the landfill community. The old world is changing and the new era begins.





ABOUT THE DIRECTOR



Nemanja Vojinović studied film directing at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade, where he graduated in 2012. His short documentary film *Reality, fuck off* won awards at regional and international festivals. He made his feature documentary debut as a director and producer with *Las Distancias* (2017), in which he followed emigrants from Cuba to the United States. Nemanja is a Member of the Association of Documentary Filmmakers of Serbia, DOKSERBIA.

Filmography:

Bottlemen, feature documentary, 2023

Las Distancias, feature documentary, 2017

(Beldocs IDFF 2017, Belgrade DFF 2017, Bergamo FF 2018, Miona Fest 2019)

Where is Nadja?, feature fiction, 2013

(Vrnjačka Banja 2013, CinemaCity 2013, Palic IFF 2013, Sopot FF 2013)

Reality, fuck off, short documentary, 2011

(Award for best documentary short at the Belgrade Short FF 2012.)



ABOUT THE PRODUCER



Marija Stojnić is a director and producer whose films synthesize documentary and other art forms. After film studies at The New School (NY) and Academy of Arts (Belgrade), her experience was carved through working on film and tv productions in the US and Europe. In 2019, she co-founded Belgrade based production house Set Sail Films in Serbia. Her feature length debut ***Speak so I can see you*** premiered at IDFA's 2019 First Appearance Competition, had its US premiere at MoMA's DocFortnight 2020, won national

Grand Prix @ Beldocs 2020, Best film @ CaracasDocs 2021 and St. Andrews FF 2021, and was recently covered by The Guardian.

Rt dobre Nade is a newly founded production company in Belgrade, Serbia. We are focused on contemporary stories with a strong social impact. While ***Bottlemen*** is the company's debut project, Rt dobre Nade, together with production company All Inclusive Films did a post-production for feature documentary ***Las Distancias***.

Set Sail Films is a wide scope film production company that cherishes strong author voices across fiction, documentary and animation. It was established in 2019 in Belgrade by producers Andrijana Sofranić Šučur, Miloš Ivanović and director / producer Marija Stojnić, who decided to merge their distinctive experiences in the film industry. Produced films and projects in development have been supported by MEDIA, Eurimages, Film center Serbia, Hubert Bals, DOHA film institute among others.

URGH! is an independent production company founded by producer **Viva Videnovic** in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Our main goal is to work with talented filmmakers and produce projects that deal with socially relevant issues, ranging from arts and culture to problems of contemporary society, people and the environment.



BOTTLEMEN CREW

DIRECTOR **Nemanja Vojinović**
PRODUCERS **Marija Stojnić, Nemanja Vojinović**
CO-PRODUCER **Viva Videnović**

EDITOR **Dragan von Petrovic**
CINEMATOGRAPHER **Igor Marović**
SOUND DESIGN **Boštjan Kačičnik**
ORIGINAL MUSIC **Predrag Adamović**
ANIMATION **Nikola Silić**
COLOR GRADE **Sakis Bouzanis**
LINE PRODUCER **Nada Kostić**
WORLD SALES **Taskovski Films**

PRODUCTION **Rt dobre Nade**
CO-PRODUCTION **Urgh! , Set Sail Films, TV Slovenia**
SUPPORT OF **Film center Serbia**



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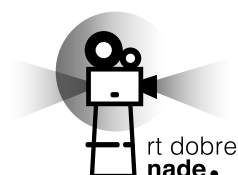
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RT DOBRE NADE / URGH! / SET SAIL FILMS
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