



FESTIVAL DE CANNES  
Sélection officielle - Un certain regard

# TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE

Mit Filmen von  
**Cristian Mungiu, Ioana Uricaru, Hanno Höfer,  
Constantin Popescu**

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# **TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE**

**TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE enthält folgende Episoden:**

THE LEGEND OF THE OFFICIAL VISIT  
THE LEGEND OF THE PARTY PHOTOGRAPHER  
THE LEGEND OF THE GREEDY POLICEMAN  
THE LEGEND OF THE AIR SELLERS

## **SYNOPSIS**

Die letzten 15 Jahre des Ceausescu-Regimes waren die schlimmsten Jahre in der Geschichte Rumäniens. Unbeirrbar bezeichnet die Propagandamaschine genau diese Zeit aber als die "goldenen Jahre".

TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE bringt die populärsten Urban Legends aus den goldenen Jahren auf die Kinoleinwand. Urkomisch, bizarr und überraschend sind diese Mythen, entstanden aus den oft surrealen Ereignissen aus dem täglichen Leben unter dem kommunistischen Regime. Und Humor war es, der die Rumänen am Leben gehalten hat. Die kurzen Filme von TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE versuchen diese Stimmung wieder aufleben zu lassen und porträtieren das Überleben einer Nation, die sich täglich im Angesicht einer irrationalen Diktatur wiederfand.

Bei offiziellen Besuchen Ceausescus gingen die Bürgermeister der Dörfer auf dem Lande so weit, dass sie Früchte an die Bäume hängten, um ihr Dorf in ein möglichst gutes Licht zu rücken. Und sie befolgten die merkwürdigsten Anweisungen eifriger Parteiaktivisten.

Für ein gutes Image im Ausland gab Rumänien vor, keinen Analphabetismus zu kennen. Doch die Realität sah anders aus. Ein junges Parteimitglied verspricht seinen Vorgesetzten, den Menschen in einem abgeschiedenen Dorf das Lesen und Schreiben beizubringen.

Ein Polizist erhält zu Weihnachten ein lebendiges Schwein und vergast es heimlich, damit seine Hunger leidenden Nachbarn nicht aufwachen. Die Geheimregeln der Kommunistischen Partei legten fest, dass Präsident Ceausescu auf offiziellen Aufnahmen vor Vertretern der «weltweiten kapitalistischen Fäulnis» niemals seinen Hut ziehen durfte – auch nicht vor Präsident Giscard d'Estaing ...

TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE kombiniert verschiedene wahre Geschichten zu einem Portrait einer Ära, in der Essen wichtiger war als Geld, Frieden mehr Bedeutung hatte als Liebe und das Überleben über irgendwelchen Prinzipien stand.

## MAIN CAST

### ***The Legend of the Official Visit***

The secretary..... Alexandru Potocean  
The mayor ..... Teo Corban  
The Party Inspector ..... Emanuel Pirvu

### ***The Legend of the Party Photographer***

Photographer..... Avram Birău  
Photographer's assistant ..... Paul Dunca  
Party secretary ..... Viorel Comănici

### ***The Legend of the Greedy Policeman***

Policeman Alexa..... Ion Sapdaru  
Policeman Wife..... Virginia Mirea  
Policeman best neighbour ..... Gabriel Spahiu

### ***The Legend of the Air Sellers***

Crina ..... Diana Cavaliotti  
Bughi ..... Radu Iacoban

## CREW LIST

Directors ..... Ionana Uricaru, Hanno Höfer, Constantin Popescu, Cristian Mungiu  
Cinematographers ..... Oleg Mutu, Alex Sterian, Liviu Mărghidan  
Screenplays..... Cristian Mungiu  
Editing..... Dana Bunescu, Theodora Penciu, Ioana Uricaru  
Sound design and mix ..... Dana Bunescu, Cristinel Sirlu  
Original music..... Hanno Höfer, Laco Jimi  
Production designers ..... Cezara Armasu, Mihaela Poenaru  
Dana Istrate, Simona Păduretu  
Costumes ..... Dana Istrate, Brândusa Ioan, Luminita Mihai, Ana Ioneci  
Line producers ..... Catalin Neagu, Răzvan Cliza, Florentina Onea,  
Adrian Smarandache, Adrian Moroca  
Producers ..... Oleg Mutu, Cristian Mungiu

The films have been produced with the support of Romanian National Centre of Cinematography and with the contribution of BV McCann Erickson Romania, of National Television SRTV, of Zenith Media, of Unilever Romania, of ZIUA, of GMP Advertising, with the help of City Cinema Management and of Anonimul Foundation and co-financed by SEE Cinema Network and Why Not Productions.

## **NOTE OF WRITER AND PRODUCER – CRISTIAN MUNGIU**

### ***ABOUT THE CONCEPT***

"Tales from the Golden Age" aims to provide an unconventional subjective history of the late Communist times in Romania, told through its urban myths from the perspective of ordinary people. Romanians consider urban legends to be true stories that were passed from mouth to mouth. They were the main topic of gossip and debate in the long cues for food.

The project re-creates in a nostalgic and evocative way the times of our youth during the eighties, through music, language, objects and stereotypes of that age.

The film offers an overview of the survival of a nation having to face every day the particular logic of a dictatorship – revealing the comic aspects of a dictatorship that was taking itself too seriously.

### ***STRUCTURE***

TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE is composed of several stories connected by the mood, narrative pattern and the details of the historical period: the only car you can see on the streets is DACIA, the local version of Renault 12; the daily TV program is just two hours long; everybody steals from the State; food is more important than money; you have to obey party orders no matter how illogical. The people wear a grim expression yet still, deep inside, they are alive, they aim to love and to be loved.

### ***CREATIVE APPROACH***

After a screening with 4 MONTH, 3 WEEKS AND 2 DAYS, a spectator told me he has the feeling we are more and more making films for the festivals and less and less for the audience and asked me if we can do anything to change this. I said yes. I decided to open up the rest of the project TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE to different Romanian directors, enlisting filmmakers old enough to remember the period. I chose the stories, wrote the screenplays, got involved in the casting and editing, ensuring that finally there is just one film, but each director was free to use his own cinematic language.

Waiting in line during communist times, you never knew what you were going to get. We transferred the principle to the film: different screenings of Tales from the Golden Age will feature a different combination of episodes. So if you talk to somebody who has seen a different episode than you, think of what we experienced staying in line.

TALES FOR THE GOLDEN AGE has for me the feeling of the Italian films of the sixties or seventies, popular, direct and funny, revisiting cinema as a popular art.

## **THE LEGEND OF THE OFFICIAL VISIT**

Director : Ioana Maria Uricaru

### ***Context***

Official Party visits were spectacular events. Often, the official motorcade would cross numerous villages and towns to reach its final destination. In each of these towns, officials would mobilize the inhabitants to demonstrate wild enthusiasm. The most bizarre Party orders would be obeyed blindly and absolutely.

### ***Story***

In the small village of Vizuresti, the Mayor and his assistant are preparing for an official Party visit. The road is being paved, trees are painted, cows are scrubbed and paraded. Every villager is set to work: the visit must be a success. Contradictory updates arrive constantly from Party headquarters. It is announced that the day before the visit, there will be a general rehearsal in all the villages on the motorcade's route.

Since Vizuresti is last in line, it is assumed that the Party inspectors would stop for dinner, and the Mayor and his team set about making preparations. The officials duly arrive, instantly ordering the removal of a merry-go-round at the entrance of the village. Dinner is served and, after a long day, the booze flows freely. The Mayor calls an orchestra for the entertainment of the delegation and the official dinner turns into a joyful feast – interrupted only by a late night call from Party HQ cancelling the impending visit. With the pressure off, the officials decide to celebrate their freedom with a ride on the merry-go-round... in the middle of the night. Perhaps blindly following Party directives is not the best idea after all.

## **THE LEGEND OF THE PARTY PHOTOGRAPHER**

Director : Hanno Höfer

### ***Context***

The Party's daily paper, "Scinteia", was Romania's most censored publication. All articles and pictures had to follow strict Party directives if they were to be approved and published in the paper.

### ***Story***

President Giscard d'Estaing's visit to meet Ceausescu is a huge event. Many "Scinteia" journalists cover the occasion, but pictures are the most important issue since the articles are pre-written anyway.

Everything goes well until somebody from the censor's office discovers that in every photograph, Giscard d'Estaing was wearing his hat while Ceausescu was holding his. Some bright spark of a Party official considers that the working classes could interpret this as the communists showing deference before Capitalism. This simply isn't possible - so, with the deadline looming, the debate begins. Should they remove the French premier's hat or airbrush one on to Ceausescu? What happens leads to the first time in history that "Scinteia" isn't printed in time to reach its working class readership the following day.

## **THE LEGEND OF THE GREEDY POLICEMAN**

Director: Constantin Popescu

### ***Context***

By the end of the Communist era, famine was overtaking Romania. Food was more valuable than money and meat more precious than gold.

### ***Story***

Danut is the son of a policeman, living in a small apartment in a block of flats in a small town. The local tradition is to eat pork for Christmas but stores are empty. Therefore, when a distant relative from the country decides to bring pork for the celebration, everyone is more than happy. The only problem is that he brings the pig alive, to show that the meat is fresh. How do you slaughter a pig in the middle of the night without making any noise and thus alerting your hungry neighbors, not to mention the police? Danut comes up with a brilliant solution: gassing the hapless beast using the kitchen stove.

## **THE LEGEND OF THE AIR SELLERS**

Director: Cristian Mungiu

### ***Context***

There was no private initiative during the Communist times. Everything belonged to the State and everybody worked for the State. People wanting to buy a car usually had to eat only yoghurt and bread for two or three years to pay the deposit.

### ***Story***

18-year-old Crina is disappointed that her parents won't let her go to spring camp with her school friends as they are saving to buy a local-made Dacia car. Then Bughi, a handsome student, rings at her door and asks for a sample of water. Having noticed people's respect for - and fear of - the authorities, he has devised an ingenious moneymaking scam. He would pretend to be from the Ministry of Environment checking the quality of the water inside people's apartments and ask permission to take a sample of water in a bottle.

By selling these bottles, he is able to earn a fair amount of money. Bughi soon convinces Crina to join him. For her, the money isn't important. Together, they are Bonnie and Clyde robbing banks.

## **Christian Mungiu – Director/Writer**

Born in Iasi, Romania in 1968.

Degree in English and American Literature, University of Iasi, 1993.

Degree in Film, University of Film and Theatre, Bucharest, 1998.

Before becoming a filmmaker, he worked as a journalist for print, radio and television.

**2009**                    **TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE**  
Screenplays/Co-Director/Producer

**2006 / 2007**        **4 MONTHS, 3 WEEKS AND 2 DAYS**  
Writer / Director / Producer  
Cannes 2007- PALME D'OR

**2005**                    **LOST AND FOUND**  
Co-Writer / Co-director  
Berlinale 2005

**2002**                    **OCCIDENT**  
Writer / Director  
Quinzaine des Realisateurs - Cannes

## **Ioana Maria Uricaru - Director/Editor/Writer**

Born in Romania in 1971.

Degrees in Biology and in Film and Television Directing.

Before directing films, she worked as editor, journalist and and teacher.

**2009**                    **MALPENSA**  
director, shortfilm by Cristian Mungiu, in pre-production, Mobrafilms  
**THE WITNESS**  
Writer and director (shortfilm)  
**TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE**  
Director  
**SELF COMES TO MIND**  
Video performance

**2007**                    **NATIONAL TREASURE**  
Co-director with Wang Ying, documentary, Communication University of China  
**THE SUN AND THE MOON**  
Writer and director (shortfilm)  
**OUTSKIRTS**  
Co-written with Cristian Mungiu, in pre-production  
**HAPPINESS**  
Writer

## **Hanno Höfer - Director/Scriptwriter**

Born in 1967 in Timisoara, Romania.

Degree in film, University of Film and Theatre, Bucharest, Romania, 1998

Degree in South-East European History, Berlin, 1993

Member of two important Romanian jazz and blues groups: Nightlosers and Harry Tavitian's Orient Express

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|-------------|---|
| <b>2007</b> | <b>TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE</b><br>Co-director               |
| <b>2007</b> | <b>NADIA</b><br>Director (documentary)                        |
| <b>2001</b> | <b>HUMANITARIAN AID</b><br>Director (short film)              |
| <b>1998</b> | <b>DINCOLO / ON THE OTHER SIDE\$</b><br>Director (short film) |
| <b>1997</b> | <b>THE INTERNATIONAL PHONECALL</b><br>Director                |

## **Constantin Popescu – Director/Writer**

Born in Romania in 1973.

Degree in Spanish/ English and Master in British Cultural Studies.

Literary debut in 2002. Since then he has published texts in several important literary papers and a novel which won the prize for debut awarded by the Writers' Association of Bucharest in 2002.

Before becoming a filmmaker, he worked as translator, and production and director assistant.

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| <b>2009</b> | <b>THE PORTRAIT OF THE FIGHTER IN HIS YOUTH</b><br>Director and script       |
|             | <b>TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE</b><br>Co-director                              |
| <b>2008</b> | <b>SMILING YELLOW FACE</b><br>Director (shortfilm)                           |
| <b>2007</b> | <b>WATER</b><br>short film, director and writer                              |
| <b>2006</b> | <b>DREZINA</b><br>Director and writer (TV drama documentary)                 |
| <b>2005</b> | <b>A LINEMAN'S CABIN</b><br>Director, script by Christian Mungiu (shortfilm) |
| <b>2004</b> | <b>THE APPARTMENT</b><br>Writer and director (shortfilm)                     |