



DON'T
FORGET TO
BREATHE

SYNOPSIS

Everything changes for a 15-year old Klemen, when his older brother Peter (18), he is very attached to, falls in love with beautiful Sonja (18).

Klemen (15) adores his older brother Peter (18) who is his idol and best friend. The boys, raised by a single mother, are growing up in a small countryside town, spending their days on the tennis court, training to be champions.

When Peter falls in love with the beautiful Sonja, Klemen's world starts disintegrating. He feels anger towards his older brother's voluptuous girlfriend who is bringing radical change into their life, while at the same time being hopelessly drawn to her feminine sensuality. Sonja is a fully grown young woman, confident in her charms.

Klemen is confused by the unfamiliar emotions washing over him and obsessed with Sonja in various conflicting ways. He comes up with foolish plans to break up Peter and Sonja so he can have his brother back. But his reckless ideas only manage to drive Peter further away, and the boy has to face the consequences of actions that could result in disaster.





DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

“ Don't Forget to Breathe is an intimate drama about growing up, jealousy, first love, and strong emotions that one is often overcome with during this period of life.

Through the eyes of a 15-year-old, I wanted to show this difficult but essential life period, one marked by dramatic confusion, irrational impulses, impetuous arrogance and the anxiety of letting go of one's childhood, coupled with a newfound and powerful attraction to the opposite sex, with all the unavoidable experiences that push and shove a child to transcend into the world of adults.

I believe adolescent impressions are fundamental and formative to the human condition, as well as being relatable and universal, though we in our daily routines so often forget how profoundly they shaped our adult personalities.”

MARTIN TURK

INTERVIEW

with director **MARTIN TURK** and actor Matija Valant

— **To begin with, let's talk about the skeleton plans for the film "Don't Forget to Breathe".**

Martin: "Don't Forget to Breathe" was a project I started thinking about when I was still a student at the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television. I was exploring the idea of two brothers. One of them moves away and the other one becomes jealous and wants him to come back. It was a long time ago, some 18 years ago, but nothing came out of it at the time. The idea slowly matured inside me. I think it was in 2009 or 2010 when I resumed the idea.

— **This is not a typical youth film. Your approach is very poetic and it's what distinguishes it from the film classics of the genre. How did you find the visual appearance of the film?**

Martin: It evolved parallel to the script. Many poetic descriptions of nature, the force of nature in particular, could be perceived in the script when we start financing the project. By then, everything was already very clear; it was also the groundwork of the script. We wished to put more stress on the visual component. When I talked about it to Radislav Jovanov - Gonzo, my director of photography, we immediately agreed on the skeleton plan. However, the visual part was present from the very beginning.

— **This is your fifth cooperation with Gonzo. Your creative co-operation is obviously successful. How do you cooperate during the shooting? When did he join the project? How does it all work after the five projects you have done together?**

Martin: The main thing is that Gonzo and I became friends. We don't just discuss films. We also talk about music and many other things. Our co-operation is beyond merely professional. He reads the first drafts of the screenplay and then we start discussing them. We mostly talk about which films we should see, so that we exchange ideas about the visual side and quickly find a common idea that we stick to later on. We both know what we are looking for from the very beginning.





That is why we don't argue about it. We don't change the basic idea somewhere in the middle of the shooting. We never lose track because we lay the foundation in the very beginning. From the creative point of view this is wonderful. We trust each other. I find Gonzo fascinating. We did several visually diverse projects together. Gonzo has already completed so many projects that he's actually good at anything. He always amazes me with his ability to change the style and mode whenever necessary. He is very openminded and curious. He's also good at upgrading. That is why I trust him, and I find such trust very important, especially in films where visual elements are important.

— **Several members of the film crew worked with you in the past. Did they put their creative touch to your new project as well?**

Martin: I've already cooperated with most of the crew, so we know one another well. That makes it easier. You can fully trust the film crew. When we start making plans we immediately see our final objective and know how to attain

it. When we start talking about it everything looks very simple. Gonzo and I usually start from the visual elements. We give the outline to the other key members. That helps them understand our ideas and then add and upgrade them. From my point of view, the upgrading is the most important component. I'm very open, I trust my crew and accept their suggestions whenever they are good. The film can only benefit from it.

— **The White Carniola (i.e. Bela krajina) region is one of the characters in the film, and production company Bela Film symbolically returned to White Carniola after a period of 20 years and feature film "Guardian Of The Frontier" by Maja Weiss which was also shot there. Why did you choose that region? What is it that separates it from all the other regions in Slovenia?**

Martin: My producer and life partner Ida Weiss grew up in White Carniola and she named her company after it (i.e. Bela Film translates to White Film). It means that I, too, somehow

belong to it. Parts of the script were written with specific locations in the region in mind. I chose White Carniola because it is a place that breathes. I find it essential. When you see it on camera you're impressed by its peculiarity. Visually, White Carniola is really magical: the river, nature and its timelessness. The town of Metlika lends an atmosphere of timelessness which is perfect for the film. I also tried to link it with the film "The Guardian of the Frontier" as some sort of a homage to White Carniola 20 years later. We even used some props from that film. One of the canoes, for example. Iva Krajnc starred in both films. There's an indirect connection between them. One day, Iva and I were cracking jokes and I said: "You're a character from 'The Guardian of the Frontier' 20 years later. Now you have children."

— **How did the locals look upon the film crew?**

Martin: I think they all found it funny because the shooting was done in White Carniola. A passer-by once asked us why we chose the place. Because it's beautiful, I said. It's more

interesting to know how the film crew adapted itself to the White Carniola. I think everyone enjoyed it. The crew found it interesting to shoot there. Most of the crew members were there for the first time. From this point of view the experience was very positive. It had a good influence on the crew. The filming was beautiful.

— **What was it like, looking for actors among non-professionals? What were you looking for in these young people?**

Martin: The process of looking for the actors was very time-consuming. It took us several months to find them. We organized an audition and some 700 girls and boys showed up. We organized three rounds. In the last round we had three boys and three girls. Then we had rehearsals to find the best matches. It was a long and complex process. The first couple we chose were Matija and Tine, then we chose their matching girls and their mother. It was difficult. Being the director, I was looking for the characteristics that would remind me of the characters I was creating. I also paid attention to their acting talent, of course.

— **How did you reach out to the actors during the shooting?**

Martin: The preparative process took a long time. We had many rehearsals and made many test shoots. All the participants got to know one another before we started filming. That's why nobody had any surprise in store when the shooting started. What do you think, Matija? We tried to prepare them in advance.

Matija: I quickly got into the swing of thing. It wasn't difficult to catch the rhythm. But in the beginning it was a shock.

— **What was your experience with the director like, especially since this is your first film?**

Matija: In my opinion, Martin is a great director. He kept the whole crew and cast under control. He explained everything we had to know. When I wasn't sure about a scene I could always ask him. Everything went well.

Martin: Tijana Zinajić was in charge of preparing the actors. Before we actually started shooting we had many rehearsals and the actors came to the set well prepared. They

entered the world of their characters before the actual filming started. We talked about the atmosphere and the time. That made it easier when the shooting started. It wasn't completely new for them. We just continued the work we had already started.

— **How was it on your first day of the shooting?**

Matija: As I remember, Martin said to me not to take it as if it was a big deal but rather think of it as a job millions of people around the world do every day. I said to myself I wouldn't allow myself to be nervous. I'd calm down and try to do what they told me. It wasn't difficult. I kept watching the crew all the time because I'm very interested in how films are actually made, what the duties of the film crew members are and how they work together as a team.





— **What would you say is most important in the relationship between a director and an actor? Which is the most important and indispensable element for both of them?**

Matija: Be both like similar music. When we had differences of opinion we could easily talk it over while listening to Metallica.

Martin: I often listen to music and take a piece of music as a basis. I explain feelings with music. I select a song that fits a feeling – anger or sadness, for example. In case you don't find the right words music makes it easier to describe an atmosphere. You say: Try to find the feeling in a similar song. It's much easier for me. This is how I talk to the director of photography. Now I talk to him in the same way. It works very well when you're not sure how to explain something. It's easier with music.

— **Let me conclude by asking what you learned from each other.**

Matija: Martin taught me a lot about directing. One day I'd like to become a director. This experience was wonderful for me, a real character builder. I came up with many ideas for film projects I'd like to do in the future. I'm very grateful to him for the summer we spent together. I learnt a lot from him and I think I'll learn even more from him in future.

Martin: I found it funny. The film is partly autobiographic. I looked at him thinking about myself, about what I was like. You relive some things from your past. In a way I took a leap into the past. Maybe it added something to the atmosphere of the film. So it was interesting from this point of view as well.

Matija: It was a special feeling. I played Martin in the film and I observed him to figure out what he would do in a certain situation. I tried to express this.

Review

THE GREAT AWAKENING

MATIC MAJCEN, FILM CRITIC

"Wake up, Klemen!" are the first words uttered in *Don't Forget to Breathe*, third feature film by Slovenian director Martin Turk, and it's no coincidence these very words will reverberate throughout the course of the story. It isn't just that Klemen, the film's 15-year-old protagonist, has to get out of bed that morning, there's a far deeper, markedly metaphorical call underlying the utterance, conjuring to mind a particular theme, quite familiar from the history of cinema. In *Don't Forget to Breathe* we observe the "great awakening" of the main protagonist, unfurling through his rite of passage in a key period of

human maturing, against the backdrop of a hot summer in blossoming nature. Summer in the province is here essential for the narrative: here, the season isn't just playing the part of a mere scenic adornment but is also a powerful participant; not just an actor but a supreme demiurge, a force majeure that – as if in Greek drama – tosses its helpless heroes into a chaotic world, setting them before tribulations whose outcomes can't be predicted, and whose consequences will only emerge as the wheel of time makes its turn. Only one thing is certain – this is the one, unforgettable summer that will forever shape their lives.

We've seen this motif in many classics of world cinema, of course – in Renoir's *Partie de campagne* (1936), Ozu's *Early Summer* (1951), Bergman's *Summer with Monika* (1953), Visconti's *Death in Venice* (1971), Rohmer's *The Green Ray* (1986), Reiner's *Stand by Me* (1986), Cuarón's *Y tu mamá también* (2001), Ozon's *Swimming Pool* (2003), or Guadagnino's *A Bigger Splash* (2015) to name but a few. It is possible to argue that these are some of the most phenomenological films ever made. They are vivid journeys where the viewer himself can feel the tickling of the sunlight on the naked skin, sweat gliding across revealing

bodies, treetops rustling in the breeze and flowers making the meadows burst with life; fruit colouring the table and freedom oozing through the air – it's the time of carefree leisure and reckless abandon. Indeed: these films, perhaps absorbed only through the eyes, are also felt in a very intuitive manner.

But as idyllic as their landscapes seem to be, these films are also rife with conflict. Their characters face misunderstandings, whether social or psychological; there's struggle between the urban and the rural, between teenagers and parents, strangers and lovers, between conformism and rebellion, the present and the past, and, fundamentally, between the perfection of the moment and its inevitable transience. Klemen in *Don't Forget to Breathe* is a true descendent of those canonical characters, perturbed by the same inner frictions though he's unable to conceptualize or communicate them. This is the summer when new emotions will emerge deep within him, and they will catch him unprepared. As the world erupts into bloom, the young man will wage war on his

immutable fate, enacting a stubborn rebellion, not knowing his battles will be as hopeless as Don Quixote's.

Let's face it - all the summer films listed above are actually coming-of-age films, regardless the age of their protagonists. They portray the same great narrative, the tale of those unfathomable moments of youth which in the long run remain embedded in our very core, lingering across the currents of our lives. It's the fire that will, as a warm winter memory, flicker before the eyes of Elio in *Call Me by Your Name* while echoes of an escape into nature flood his memory, just as they do in Renoirs' *Day in the Country*: "What shall we do today?" "Escape!"

It would appear that these same voices perturb the sleep of Martin Turk's protagonists. At any rate, they participate in a dialogue arching across cinema's past, and so Klemen, too, is unwittingly part of that great archetypal awakening, which in *Don't Forget to Breathe* flares up and burns out before the eyes of the audience.



Review

DON'T FORGET TO BREATHE

ANDREJ ŠPRAH, FILM THEORETICIAN

Adrian Martin, the insightful examiner of modern cinema and youth film, wrote this fitting description of the teenage period: "In one way or another, most youth stories deal with what the cultural theory characterizes as the 'liminal experience': that lingering moment between yesterday and today, between childhood and adulthood, between nobody and somebody, where nothing is secure yet everything is possible. Inside this sense of in-between, it doesn't feel like a passing phase but rather like the most significant and perfect moment of our lives." Precious few films managed to encapsulate the essence of this understanding as sensitively as Don't Forget to Breathe, and

fewer still enriched it with such outstanding value. Martin Turk has accomplished this extraordinary achievement on the grounds of his evident conception that this "liminality", this "ambiguity", this "viscosity" between the former and the future social role of the teenager isn't to be filmed in a pretentious manner, the all-too-expected temptation of "colossal events", "great narratives", "fatal decisions" or "traumatic undergoings".

Don't Forget to Breathe's screenwriter and director evidently grasps that realistic foundations with careful characterization, withdrawal of spectacle compensated by an

atmosphere of dramatic build-up, deliberate dynamics and shifting rhythm may also provide a confident, mesmerizing film structure. His greatest ally is a captivating affection for visualisation which, through a fine-tuned sense for the emotional backdrop, natural atmosphere, meditative digressions and aesthetical shifts credibly portrays what cannot be presented via narrative, acting or dialogue. Martin is aware that the stormy depths of uncertainty, explosions of stubbornness and rebellion, reckless rule-breaking paradoxically coupled with complete helplessness, a sense of permanent failure and critical importance of persisting in the chase for the unreachable

... may only be delivered through ultimate patience, making time and room for each sensation. He also knows that only the subtle gradients of duration can truly represent the here and now of liminality ... Thus, the author perpetuates a refined pillow-shot aesthetics that compresses, personalizes and integrates time with the rest of the audiovisual elements into that feeling of all-embracing moment yet inevitable transience.

This is why Don't Forget to Breathe is a film that will most deeply affect those who are themselves immersed in the whirlwinds of incomprehensible overwhelming longings, disappointments, hopes ... who know, feel and believe they are at once nothing and everything, no one and someone ... alongside all those who've already stepped over the thresholds of their own futures yet still carry within a living, tangible memory of vulnerable youth. Finally, it will also be appreciated by those who perhaps "in haste of our daily lives forgot already all those formative feelings that have shaped our personalities decisively", as the author personally puts it.

It may be perceived as a reminder that each new generation is shaped its own way, though perpetually on the foundations of the common human condition, the universal struggle with the terrifyingly mysterious depths of man's spirit and incomprehensible universe. Notably it can also be seen as a particular homage and continuation of the tradition of those precious pearls of newer Slovenian cinema that succeeded to find in the beauties of nature a key component for the representation of the relations between the mind and the world, an underlying scenery of inspiration and contemplation, a setting for the rethinking and questioning of seemingly commonplace yet absolutely essential concepts.





CAST & CREW

Klemen **MATIJA VALANT**

Peter **TINE UGRIN**

Sonja **KLARA KUK**

Jana **RONJA MATIJEVEC JERMAN**

Mother **IVA KRAJNC BAGOLA**

Tennis Coach **NIKOLA DJURICKO**

Gregor **JAKOB CILENŠEK**

Andrej **MIHA RODMAN**

Written and directed by **MARTIN TURK**

Producer **IDA WEISS**

Director of photography **RADISLAV JOVANOV – GONZO**

Music **TEHO TEARDO**

Production design **MARCO JURATOVEC**

Costumes designer **EMIL CERAR**

Make-up artist **MOJCA GOROGRANC PETRUSHEVSKA**

Editor **BEPPE LEONETTI, a.m.c.**

Sound designer **RICCARDO SPAGNOL**

Re-recording mixer **JULIJ ZORNIK**

Location sound mixer **ANTONIO PETRIS**

Co-writer **GORAZD TRUŠNOVEC**

Production manager **MATIJA KOZAMERNIK**

Co-producers **MARTA ZACCARON, DARIJA KULENOVIĆ GUDAN, MARINA ANDREE ŠKOP**

MARTIN TURK

www.martinturk.net



He graduated film directing at Ljubljana Film Academy (AGRFT).

His films were screened at over one hundred film festivals worldwide, including Cannes - Quinzaine. In 2009 he was selected for the Cannes Cinefondation Residence where he developed his first feature film *Feed Me With Your Words*, released in 2012. His second feature film *A Good Day's Work* premiered in 2018 at Busan International Film Festival.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- **Don't Forget To Breathe / Ne pozabi dihati** (2019, feature film)
- **A Good Day's Work / Dobar dan za posao** (2018, feature film)
- **Sunday Morning / Nedeljsko jutro** (2017, short fiction)
- **A Well Spent Afternoon / Dobro unovčeno popoldne** (2016, short fiction)
- **Doberdob – A Novel By A Rebel / Doberdob – Roman upornika** (2015, feature documentary)
- **Feed Me With Your Words / Nahrani me z besedami** (2012, feature film)
- **Things We've Never Done Together / Stvari, ki jih nisva nikoli naredila** (2011, short fiction)
- **Stealing the Corn / Robutanje koruze** (2009, short fiction)
- **Everyday Is Not The Same / Vsakdan ni vsak Dan** (2008, short fiction)
- **A Slice of Life / Rezina Življenja** (2006, short fiction)
- **The Excursion / Izlet** (2002, short fiction)



PRODUCTION

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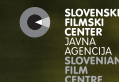
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TECHNICAL DATA

Length: 98 min.
Format: DCP, colour, 25fps, 1:1,66, 5.1
Language: Slovenian
Year of production: 2019
Country Of Origin: Slovenia/Italy/Croatia
Genre: arthouse/drama/coming-of-age

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