

INTERVIEW

Przemysław Wojcieszek on *Secret*

VOL. 14 (FEBRUARY 2012) BY COLETTE DE CASTRO

Przemysław Wojcieszek's film "Secret" screened in the FORUM section of this year's Berlinale. The story revolves around three characters who are carrying a common burden from the past...

Where did you get the idea for the film?

I was working on this idea for several years because I had been working as a theater director so I wanted to stage this in the theater with three actors. I wrote the first draft of the script, but I had some problems selling it to theaters as they weren't too interested. So I decided to make a movie. We went through several versions of the script, and finally we ended up with this version. It's somewhere in between a regular narrative and a more experimental approach. This version is almost without dialogue, very simplified compared to the original version. We cut out a lot of the situations where they talk about the case and argue. It's not a conventional movie where someone's looking for truth and doing an investigation. It's more about the psychological situation these people are in.

It's very roughly edited. I wanted to keep the rhythm going at a very particular pace. Some people like it a lot, some people hate it. As far as I know, the reactions are pretty extreme and I think it's a good thing. It was shot last year in October, and we only finished the final cut last month. The first screening was yesterday - it was overwhelming for me, I didn't know what to expect.

Is the film based on a true story?

The whole case murder of the family is real, I merged three stories together.

How did you find the actor who plays Tomasz?

I like the main character a lot. I really like Tomasz, he's a fine actor. He's not a

professional dancer, but a theatre actor.

Are there a lot of Jewish people in Poland?

Unfortunately, no. We had a big minority before the Second World War, over three million people, it was a separate nation. And now it's non-existent, there are about ten thousand people. There is no distinct culture like before the war, it's wiped out.

Where is the theater we see in the film?

I shot this in my home town, a city three hundred kilometers away from Berlin. It was an extremely low budget filming. For the month of the filming, there was virtually no budget, we just took my personal camera and started filming. As I said I was working as a theater director, so I know a lot of people from theater management. I just called the manager and asked him if we could use this place for free.

How did Madonna influence this film?

We had a lot more of Madonna in the script. We had several voice-overs read by the boy, and they were paraphrased Madonna lyrics. It was like his personal diary, his thoughts and ideas. Like Madonna lyrics, it was naive and sentimental but also touching in some ways. We left in just these titles you see popping up on the screen sometimes.

Why does the female character scream at the end?

Well, she only screams twice. I wanted a metaphorical ending. The whole story line is very vague. She is unable to find out about the truth, so in some way she is obsessed with this. At one point she tells the boy that if she can't find out about the truth, she will explode. And they do both explode, the boy explodes on stage, and she explodes by screaming.

Actually, there is a strong Polish context to this film that I should explain. There were a number of cases like this in Poland after the war. For various reasons, in particular racism, no murderer or traitor was ever jailed for committing such a crime. So these people were living safely for years. The grandfather doesn't feel guilty, he won't respond. So what can she do? She can only scream.

Thank you for the interview.