PUPKIN PRESENTS

A film by

Ena Sendijarević

TIGER COMPETITION

INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ROTTERDAM

2019

# TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE

CASTING TIMKA GRIN, CSA I REBECCA VAN UNEN, CSA DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY EMO WEEMHOFF PRODUCTION DESIGN MYRTE BELTMAN
COSTUME DESIGN NEDDA NAGEL MAKEUP & HAIR ARTIST TRUDY BUREN SOUND RECORDING TACO DRIJFHOUT EDITOR LOT ROSSMARK SOUND DESIGN VINCENT SINCERETTI MUSIC ELLA VAN DER WOUDE
FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR PAUL ZOMERHUIS LINE PRODUCER JET CHRISTIAANSE ASSOCIATE PRODUCER AMRA BAKŠIĆ ČAMO CREATIVE PRODUCER LAYLA MEIJMAN CO-PRODUCER VPRO, JOOST DE WOLF, MARIEKE MOLS
PRODUCED BY PUPKIN, IRIS OTTEN, SANDER VAN MEURS, PIETER KUIPERS WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY ENA SENDIJAREVIĆ

This film is supported by the Netherlands Film Fund, NPO Fund, The Netherlands Film Production Incentive, CoBO, Creative Europe Programme - MEDIA of the European Union

Sara Luna Zorić  Lazar Dragojević  Ernad Prnjavorac

TIGER COMPETITION
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ROTTERDAM
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# TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE

## a film by Ena Sendijarević

The Netherlands, Bosnia - 2018 - 91 min - 2K DCP - 4:3 - 5.1- Dutch, Bosnian w/ English subs - Colour

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**TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE**
by Ena Sendijarević

# Logline

Alma travels from the Netherlands to Bosnia to visit the father she's never met. Teaming up with her indifferent cousin and his charming best friend, they embark together on an increasingly unpredictable road trip adventure through the country's scorching heartland.

# Synopsis

On the edge of adulthood, Alma leaves her mother's home in the Netherlands and travels to her native Bosnia to visit the father she's never met. But from the start nothing goes as planned. Her cousin Emir gives her a frosty reception and mocks her easy life in the West. At the same time, undeniable sexual chemistry leads Alma into a passionate relationship with Emir's best friend, the troublemaker Denis. As the obstacles mount, Alma stays fearlessly determined to follow her plan and find her father. She just has to figure herself out first.

High on the reckless energy of youth and the rush of adult discovery, the rebellious trio sets off on the adventure together, embarking on an increasingly unpredictable road trip through the scorching Bosnian heartland. Over the course of the journey, Alma will learn to accept and understand herself, embracing all challenges that come her way.

**TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE**
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# Director's Statement

TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE tells the story of a teenage girl, struggling with her identity. She is neither from the East nor the West, being born to Yugoslavian parents and having grown up in a country very much opposite to the Balkans: The Netherlands. She is neither a girl nor a woman, having already discovered her sexuality but at the same time being naïve and open to the world in a childish way. She finds herself constantly navigating between opposites: New or Old, Mother or Father, West or East, fast sex or everlasting love, Masculine or Feminine, Dutch Calvinism or Bosnian Islam, iPhone or wild nature, European passport or Yugoslavian soul.

What does it mean to be in-between in our ever-globalizing world? Does it mean being none of both? Does it mean being all of it? How to harmonize antipodes? How to look at our modern-day world with all its contradictions and complexities with an open eye? These are the questions I asked myself during the process of making TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE.

TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE is a highly personal, semi autobiographical, intuitive expression of the loneliness of the in-between human being. To find an answer to these questions, I went back to the country of my origin to seek out the ruins of my connection to this land, and to be as honest as I could possibly be about them.

This is where I created the character of Alma, an Alice in Wonderland like character who goes on a Kafkaesque journey to visit her father. She is accompanied by her cousin and his best friend, both from Bosnia, both unemployed and just as "care free" as Alma herself. This triangle of characters represents a West-East European power balance, between the privileged on one side, and those left behind on the other, divided between the bitter and the opportunistic, the ones who would like to join the West and the ones who actively turn their back to it. This tension between the three sometimes becomes sexual, at other times gentle attempts at forging a real connection are being made.

With TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE I wanted to make a young, playful film, to translate the young and reckless energy of the trio in a fresh and energetic cinema language. I have set myself the goal of playing with the clichéd and stereotypical portrayals of migrants, womanhood, the Balkans, sometimes denying and at other times inverting them, making us uncomfortable in a Brechtian way and thus aware of them.

In the end, TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE is also a film about reconnecting to nature and being alive, being present in our modern millennial world. It is not only an expression of loneliness, but also a celebration of it. Because I believe in the Romantic idea that exactly in the moments that we spend alone, preferably in nature, we can connect to our true selves in a spectacular way.

**TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE**
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# In Conversation with Ena Sendijarević

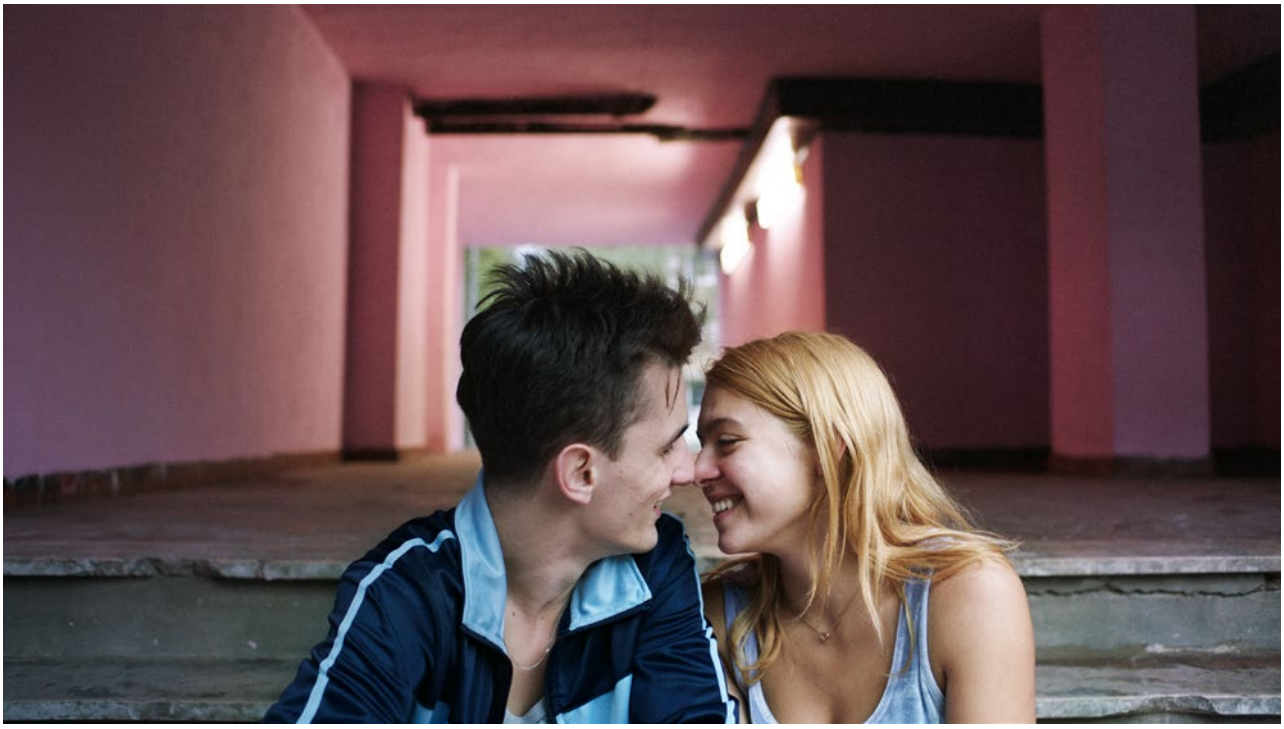
*What was the original inspiration for Alma's character, and how much did you draw elements of your own biography to portray her dual identity?*

The original inspiration for Alma was the female character in 'Stranger Than Paradise' by Jim Jarmusch. I thought it was beautiful how the film presented migration-related issues in a fresh and quirky way. As I was in the process of creating Alma's character, I discovered that I needed to know her better and show more of her than Jarmusch does in 'Stranger Than Paradise'. I wanted to get to the root of her problem and searched for that. I noticed that it became easier to make her more authentic by giving her some of my personal thoughts and character traits. But to be honest, I tried to do this with all of my characters.

I think viewers will relate me with the character of Alma the most, simply because she is a Dutch girl with Bosnian roots, just as I am. Personally, I think I am more relatable to some of the other characters than to Alma.

I have intentionally chosen a character completely different from my personality, since I didn't want to tell my own life story but explicitly wanted to look at the underlying power structures in the friendship of the three characters. My main character Alma wants to return to her homeland, but finds out that she has to accept a schizophrenic relationship with the idea of home. Her cousin Emir wants to stay in the homeland, but is struggling with a political situation that is very difficult and Denis, the friend of Emir who Alma falls in love with is a dreamer and a traveller, as well as a ladies man, who tries to make use of opportunity.

I asked myself how I could clarify the tension that is underlying the story of these three characters. I always feel this tension when I travel, whether it is to Bosnia or to other parts of the world. It never seems to be addressed in daily life, but I felt the need to do so.



# TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE
by Ena Sendijarević

Alma's development is still the most important line in my story, and it did take me quite some time to finally embrace her existential drama, which lies close to the crisis I experienced making the film and researching my personal relationship to Bosnia. Being a former refugee, one always seems to be a character in a two-sided story: in the arrival country you are the 'unfortunate' person, the victim of violence. But in the country you have left behind you are the lucky one. I always felt my struggles in life were too big for The Netherlands, but too small for Bosnia. And the process of this film was in itself a step in rising above these struggles.

*TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE is a film about a physical journey, but also about the self-discovery of your protagonist.*

The story I am telling is ultimately a story about migrants. During the development of the characters and the story, I felt that there is a kind of political correctness regarding the portrayal of these types of characters. The migrant is primarily a victim, someone who is 'good' and fights against the 'evil' world. Sexuality should be avoided. I think this approach dehumanizes the migrant. Why would a migrant not have the right to be sexual?

I also felt the same issues in contemporary stories about young women, whether they consider themselves explicitly feminist or not. They all seemed to want to avoid the sexual aspect, as if the focus on female sexuality devalues women. I wanted to create complex characters, having both good and bad qualities. And I wanted to focus on the way they experience sexuality, since their sexuality is also an integral part of what defines them as humans.

I enjoy the fact that my protagonist Alma is slightly unpredictable; she is adventurous, despite the fact that she is still searching for who she is as a person. Her struggles with her own body and the contradictions between men & women, East & West are expressed in her burgeoning sexuality. She is used to dealing with sex in a Western way, but at the same time it is a way for her to make contact with the world she doesn't know. Ultimately, the film also is about becoming a woman, and how can you become a woman without examining your own sexuality?

# TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE
by Ena Sendijarević

*What was it like for you to shoot in Bosnia?*

The shooting period of this film was tough for me. During the shoot I lived in Bosnia for several months and it hurts me to see Bosnia's current state. It looks like the world has turned its back on her. Sixty per cent of the youth is unemployed, nothing is functioning as it is supposed to, the governmental system, that has been set up by the Dayton agreement, is encouraging segregation and corruption. Because we made a road movie, I had the chance to spend time in many different parts of Bosnia. It was heart-breaking to see how many people are struggling to survive. I really wanted to help them, but I felt powerless. For me, this sense of powerlessness has become part of the film.

During the casting I met a lot of young Bosnians and found that they have little awareness of the stifling world in which they live. They grow up with the idea that they have no influence on anything and that they are inferior, because they are war children. Through the Internet, they have access to the world outside of Bosnia and so they always refer to their own world as absurd. They are always repeating what their nostalgic parents say: "In the time of Yugoslavia everything was better." And this discourse takes away all of their power, but without them even realizing it. By focusing on the past, they are not concentrating on the future and their possible role in it. So many films about the war are being made in Bosnia, it is time to liberate the young generation from it. It is not their war and they do, now, have the power to change the course of their country.

I was constantly confronted with the scars and wounds of a non-functioning country in which the young generation has been let down. In my opinion the contrast between the young generation of Dutch people, who were part of the crew, could not be bigger. It was difficult to find my own position between the two.

*How did you go about casting a character who needed to so completely carry the film? How did you work with Sara Luna Zoric to develop Alma's personality, as well as her physicality which plays a strong role in the film?*

I always work very intuitively with my actors. I usually tell my story through the lens of the camera, therefore it is not necessary for me to intensely rehearse with the actors. Sara Luna often complained that she could not prepare for scenes, but for me it was necessary to decide what I wanted to do with her at the last moment. This creates a kind of hyper focus, giving instructions while shooting a scene. She had to find a way to intensely focus and anticipate my voice, while not responding immediately since the take would otherwise be unusable. Therefore, she had to stay in the moment's flow. This is something an actor either can or cannot do. A very strong intuition is crucial for this and Sara Luna and I have been able to use this. Surrendering control was difficult for her, yet I think this actually contributed to making it a good performance.

It was difficult for her to relate to Bosnia and the Dutch and Bosnian crew as well. I observed her as she was trying to find a place between the two sides of the crew and cast. I was highly inspired by watching the three main actors and how they related to each other.

# TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE
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*How did you develop the film's aesthetic? Were there any direct inspirations in terms of cinematography or the visual treatment?*

I wanted to create an alienating world, which would focus on a construction rather than on reality. I think film has the power to show that the world around us is changeable, that we do not have to live with choices made by others. A stylized film world shows there are different views and by doing so that there are several possible truths.

I often have problems with films that claim to have a psychological 'truth', representing social situations and characters as inevitable. I believe that film is always manipulation and I like it when a filmmaker is honest about that.
I used Brecht's ideas in order to make choices. He uses his 'Verfremdungstechnik' to address problems in society. Another filmmaker who played a very important role in this matter is Fassbinder. There is a lot of truth in his approach to minorities and the weaker members of society. He shows how society corrupts them, instead of representing them as heroes.

Visually I have been inspired by Kaurismaki, Fassbinder, early films by Agnes Varda and Jane Campion, but also more contemporary filmmakers such as Reygadas and Tsai Ming Liang. They are all existential filmmakers, and I wanted to give back humanity to these three characters by reaching for their mortality and existential struggle.
Additionally, it was important for me to create a different image of Bosnia, to focus on Yugoslav architecture and nature, two ingredients of this country that have never been spotlighted by cinema in the way they deserve to be.

# Biographies

**Ena Sendijarević**
Ena Sendijarević is an Amsterdam based filmmaker of Bosnian origins. She studied Film Studies at the University of Amsterdam and the Freie Universität Berlin, before graduating from the Netherlands Film Academy as a writer / director in 2014.
She directed several successful short films like TRAVELERS INTO THE NIGHT (2013), FERNWEH (2014) and IMPORT (2016). Her work has traveled to international filmfestivals, including Cannes' Directors Fortnight, TIFF, IFFR, Palm Springs, Message to Man, taking home numerous awards.
Her latest short film was the official Dutch short film entrance for the Oscars 2017. Ena has been invited as jury member in multiple filmfestivals. TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE (2018), her debut feature film, will premiere in the Tiger Competition at the 2019 International Film Festival Rotterdam.

**Filmography**
TRAVELERS IN THE NIGHT – 2013 – NETHERLANDS – 09:46
FERNWEH – 2014 – NETHERLANDS – 14:02
IMPORT – 2015 - THE NETHERLANDS – 16:55
TAKE ME SOMEWHWERE NICE – 2018 - THE NETHERLANDS | BOSNIA – 1:31:10

**Pupkin**
Pupkin is one of the leading production companies in the Netherlands. The company has a strong and exciting track record of discovering and developing new talent. Pupkin produced the festival favourites BOYS (directed by Mischa Kamp), THE DEFLOWERING OF EVA VAN END (directed by Michiel ten Horn), QUALITY TIME (by Daan Bakker) and MY FOOLISH HEART (by Rolf van Eijk).
Upcoming projects are, in development: family film DREAMSCAPE (ACE selected project 2017/2018) and in production: the debut feature PARADISE DRIFTERS by Mees Peijnenburg.
After producing Ena Sendijarević's multi award winning and Cannes selected short IMPORT in 2016, her debut feature film TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE will premier in the Tiger Competition at IFFR 2019 and released in national cinema's March 21st.

# Cast & Crew

**CAST**

| | |
|---|---|
| Alma | Sara Luna Zorić |
| Denis | Lazar Dragojević |
| Emir | Ernad Prnjavorac |
| Mother | Sanja Burić |
| Club Singer Jovana | Jasna Đuričić |
| Politician | Mario Knezović |
| Magician | Emir Hadžihafizbegović |

**CREW**

| | |
|---|---|
| writer & director | Ena Sendijarević |
| first assistant director | Paul Zomerhuis |
| line producer | Jet Christiaanse |
| cinematographer | Emo Weemhoff |
| production designer | Myrte Beltman |
| costume design | Nedda Nagel |
| hair & make up | Trudy Buren |
| editor | Lot Rossmark |
| sound designer | Vincent Sinceretti |
| music | Ella van der Woude |
| associate producer | Amra Bakšić Čamo |
| co-producer | VPRO: Joost de Wolf, Marieke Mols |
| creative producer | Layla Meijman |
| producer | Pupkin: Iris Otten, Sander van Meurs, Pieter Kuijpers |

**TECHNICAL SPECS**

| | |
|---|---|
| original title | TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE |
| English title | TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE |
| country | The Netherlands \| Bosnia |
| length | 91 min |
| year | 2018 |
| genre | Roadmovie |
| screening format | DCP |
| shooting format | 2K |
| aspect ratio | 4:3 \| 25 fps |
| sound | 5.1 mix |
| spoken language | Dutch \| Bosnian |
| subtitles | English \| Dutch |
| colour | Colour |

TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE was supported by the Netherlands Film Fund | NPO Fund | The Netherlands Film Production Incentive | CoBO | Creative Europe Programme - MEDIA

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