OFFICIAL SELECTION COMPETITION
TALLINN BLACK NIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL 2017
FIPRESCI AWARD
36. ISTANBUL FILM FESTIVAL 2017
BEST SCREENPLAY
24. ADANA FILM FESTIVAL 2017
BEST DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
24. ADANA FILM FESTIVAL 2017
BEST ACTRESS
24. ADANA FILM FESTIVAL 2017
Something useful
Başak Köklükaya Öykü Karayel Yiğit Özşener
Directed by Pelin Esmer
Written by Pelin Esmer Barış Bıçakçı
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www.somethingusefulmovie.com

Director Pelin Esmer
Script Pelin Esmer & Barış Bıçakçı
Director of Photography Gökhan Tiryaki
Editing Pelin Esmer & Evren Luş
Art Director Elif Taşçıoğlu

Cast
Başak Köklükaya, Öykü Karayel, Yiğit Özşener,
Ayşenil Şamlıoğlu, Berfu Öngören

Producers (Turkey)
Pelin Esmer (Sinefilm,TR)
Marsel Kalvo (Mars Production,TR)

Co-Producers
François d'Artemare (Les Films de l'Après-Midi, FR)
Frans van Gestel (Topkapi Films, NL)
Arnold Heslenfeld (Topkapi Films, NL)
Laurette Schillings (Topkapi Films, NL)
Mehmet Aktaş (mîtosfilm, DE)

Genre Drama
Runtime 104 minutes
Shooting Format 4K Digital
Aspect Ratio 2.39:1

Sales & Festivals
Sinefilm
Dilde Mahalli
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thing yarar
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Yavuz needs many things to live
and an executioner to die.
But a poet is also needed both to live
and to die.

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Why would someone like Leyla go to a high school reunion dinner? And take an overnight train to get there. After all, she hasn't been to a single one for the last 25 years...
What is Canan, a student nurse, doing on the train? Reluctantly going to an interview for a nursing job when she would like to be an actress instead.
And Yavuz? He spends all day lying by the window watching the passing hawkers, horse carriages and people. He is waiting for Canan, or maybe Leyla, or maybe a executioner and a poet who meet on a train one night.

direct or's not e

Two words that we can by no means put side by side while talking or writing just happen to get together in a poem. We do not find it odd. We are fascinated. If we find them together in a prose we feel uneasy. We find this illogical and absurd; we even try to separate them. But when those two words come side by side in a verse magic happens and all we do is to imagine. And I tried to imagine this film not as prose but a poem while writing "Something Useful". What happens if three people, unlikely to come together in our daily lives, a poet who is travelling on train to go the her high school's reunion dinner to see her friends for the first time after 25 years, a nurse, reluctantly travelling in the same train on her way to her mission to kill someone and a man, physically immobile but mentally very active who has demanded to be killed get together one afternoon? This is not naturally an everyday situation but fortunately cinema is founded on "what if" questions. And that was the feeling that I had at the onset of the film, something like the wish of putting three words unlikely to get side by side in a verse. As far as I am concerned that is the main and only link between the film and poetry.

Why does a poet decide to accompany a paralyzed man who wants to die, and a young nurse who has taken on the difficult task of killing him? To help them? Because she is fascinated by them? Because she is fascinated by death? Because she is curious? Or is it because she wants to do something useful? Would she have done something useful by accompanying the unwilling murderer and spending time with someone who wants to die? When art exists as a powerful and magical tool for understanding life, why does the artist continually seek to do something useful? I imagined a road movie where the spectator can add his or her questions to mine and then I set off.

Pelin Esmer

director's biography

PELİN ESMER / DIRECTOR & SCRIPTWRITER & PRODUCER

Pelin Esmer was born in Istanbul. She studied sociology. While working as an assistant director in various Turkish and foreign films she started making her own independent films. After her first documentary **"The Collector"** she founded her own film company Sinefilm and made her feature films **"The Play"**, **"10 to 11"** and **"Watchtower"**. She was invited to Cannes Film Festival's Résidence du Cinéfondation in Paris where she wrote the script for **"10 to 11"**. Her films has been premiered in important festivals like ***San Sebastian, Tribeca, Toronto, Rotterdam***, received many awards and were released in Turkey, Germany, France and US.

Filmography

2017 **"Something Useful"** (İşe Yarar Bir Şey)
fiction, 104'
writer, director, producer, co-editor

2012 **"Watchtower"** (Gözetleme Kulesi)
fiction, 100'
writer, director, producer, co-editor

2009 **"10 to 11"** (11'e 10 Kala)
fiction, 110'
writer, director, producer, co-editor

2005 **"The Play"** (Oyun)
documentary, 70'
writer, director, producer, cinematographer, editor

2001 **"The Collector"** (Koleksiyoncu)
short documentary, 46'
writer, director, producer, cinematographer

For further information please visit:

www.pelinesmer.com

interview with the director

"Something Useful" is a poetic film. It is like adapting a long poem to cinema. It is a story of a poet and her meeting in a train with a nurse dreaming of becoming an actress; it keeps the sense of curiosity until the final scene. Was your motivation at the onset to make a poetic film?

Two words that we find it hard to put side by side in prose just happen to get together in a poem. And it happens in such a way that we do not find it absurd, we can still survive if we do not understand it, we experience something beyond comprehension and we let ourselves carried away with that experience. I set off imagining a film offering a sense close to reading a poem. Just because it was exciting for me to imagine three characters that could perhaps be gotten together only in this film, just like words that can only be side by side in a poem. I wanted to place and follow them in a situation, although not impossible but with a low probability of happening. Maybe with the hope of understanding something more about life itself...

More than half of the film is set in a train. I always thought that train scenes have always been special for filmmakers. Would you agree?

A train is a very suitable setting to create a world; it also allows you to tell a story with its aisles, with its wagon restaurant in which you can place all kinds of different characters, with its compartments in which you can create a more confidential and private space, with its intermediate stations. Then, out of the windows, there is a whole world flowing like a film. Let's say things that get unintentionally involved in your story. From the large windows of a train, it is possible to see simultaneously the world outside and inside of the train, all in one frame. The train was a perfect setting for this film that includes scenes that go back and forth between the outer and the inner worlds of the main character. The train was the perfect vehicle to combine its outside and inside in the same frame. Besides, it is a long journey. I wanted to enlarge a rather claustrophobic setting by adding the outside to it.

Had you imagined the long single-shot reunion dinner right from the beginning? It must have been a difficult scene to shoot.

Yes, thirty-two takes! When I was writing, I was visualizing Leonardo's Last Supper. Although with the presence of the victim not in person but in idea, a dinner table without Jesus/Yavuz. I always imagined a U-shaped table when writing. I wanted to limit the guests' escape paths for urging those who sit far away from each other to catch each other's eye. Everything in that scene settled once I decided to shoot it in a single shot. Then we wrote that scene accordingly. We placed the characters around the table according to their stories, imagining, except for a fee pauses between stories, an ever-flowing imagery like those seen during the train episodes at the beginning of the film. We wanted to picture the idea of "death" that was not possible to narrate concretely by asking, "what will not be there when there is death?" Everybody must have along list in mind, In Cortazar's, for instance, that was that ordinary yellow flower.

There is something that I am especially curious about. The references in the film, like Cortazar... Are they your and Baris Bicakci's favorite writers?

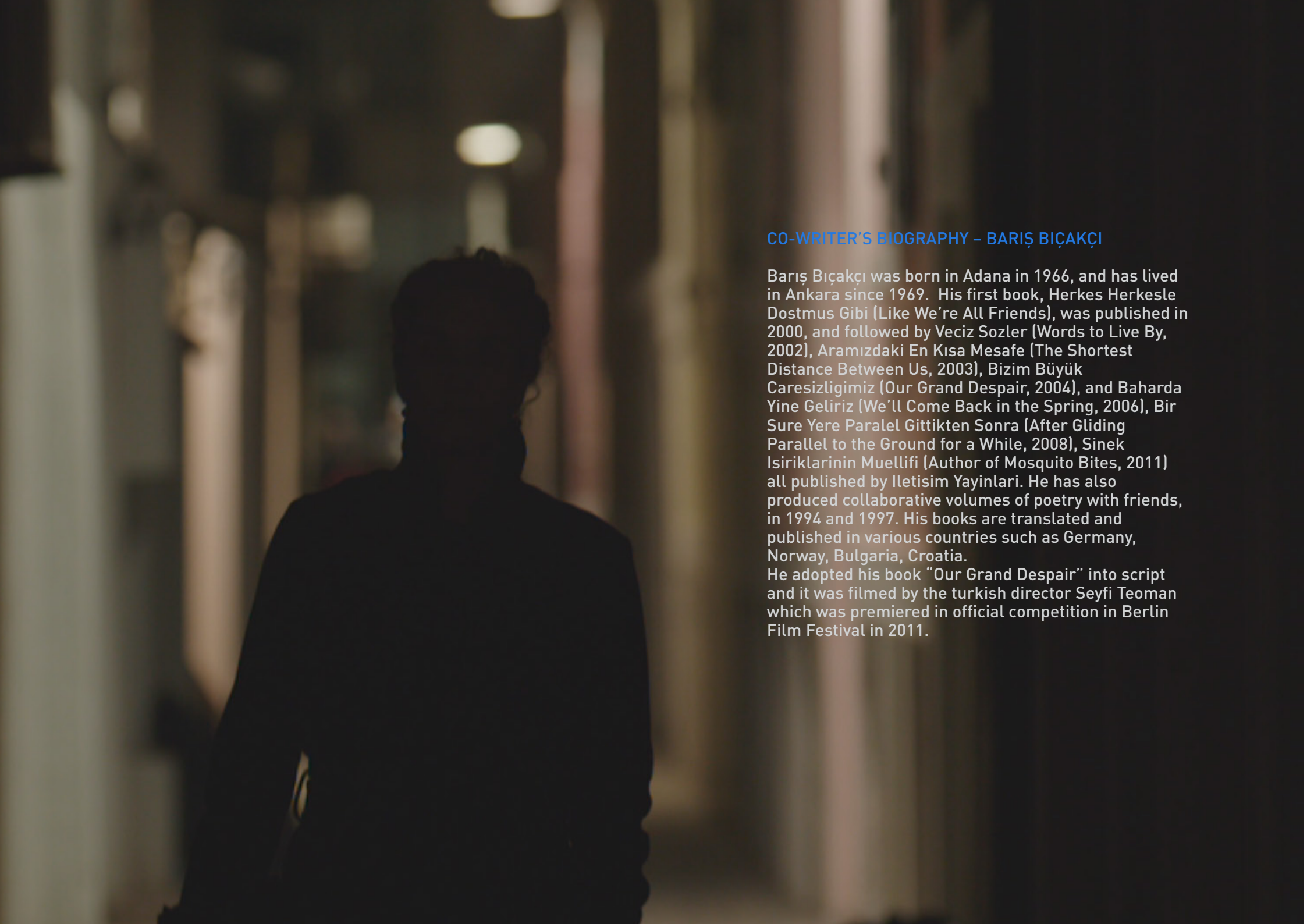
Yes, they are writers that we love. But Cortazar is not only a writer whom we admire but also someone who may have encouraged us on the sly to dare trying new things. He combines the real and the surreal so perfectly, he can turn something very real to something so fantastic and vice versa. Maybe with the help of this encouragement we have not passed off at moments when one could say "no way, it's not realistic" and managed to put three characters that are unlikely to get together and leave them in a situation with a low probability of happening.

I would like to ask you about the essential motivation of the lead character Leyla. When we look at the classic narrative cinema, in road movies, there is a need for a character and at the end of her journey she reaches her target, fulfills her objective and she is transformed. How Leyla's transformation can be evaluated?

The idea of a transformation that is completed at a certain point does not excite me in cinema. I even find the sentence "Something happens and the character transforms" hair-raising. Our character Leyla does not go to the reunion dinner or to Yavuz' due to a sudden event, nor she is changed or transformed. She experiences something that is rather big and burdensome, she chooses to let herself to get exposed to a difficult experience that will never leave her. I find it more attractive to leave her at a point where we can imagine what she is transformed to, if she ever does.

Could you tell us about your future projects?

I have recently shot a new documentary. I would like to finish that as soon as possible. I earned a DAAD scholarship to go to work on my future projects in Berlin. There was a script that I had started before "Something Useful"; I want to go back to it in there.



CO-WRITER'S BIOGRAPHY – BARIŞ BIÇAKÇI

Barış Bıçakçı was born in Adana in 1966, and has lived in Ankara since 1969. His first book, Herkes Herkesle Dostmus Gibi (Like We're All Friends), was published in 2000, and followed by Veciz Sozler (Words to Live By, 2002), Aramızdaki En Kısa Mesafe (The Shortest Distance Between Us, 2003), Bizim Büyük Caresizligimiz (Our Grand Despair, 2004), and Baharda Yine Geliriz (We'll Come Back in the Spring, 2006), Bir Sure Yere Paralel Gittikten Sonra (After Gliding Parallel to the Ground for a While, 2008), Sinek Isiriklarinin Muellifi (Author of Mosquito Bites, 2011) all published by Iletisim Yayinlari. He has also produced collaborative volumes of poetry with friends, in 1994 and 1997. His books are translated and published in various countries such as Germany, Norway, Bulgaria, Croatia.
He adopted his book "Our Grand Despair" into script and it was filmed by the turkish director Seyfi Teoman which was premiered in official competition in Berlin Film Festival in 2011.

DOP'S BIOGRAPHY – GÖKHAN TİRYAKİ

Gökhan Tiryaki was born in Istanbul, Turkey, 1972. He worked for national TV station (TRT) and joined the production of several TV films and documentaries as a cameraman between 1991 and 1996. Since 1996, he has been working as a cinematographer. Among the directors he has worked with are NBC Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Yılmaz Erdoğan, Asif Kapadia, Çağan Irmak, Tolga Karaçelik.

BAŞAK KÖKLÜKAYA / *LEYLA*

Başak Köklükaya one of the well-known actress in Turkey has completed her education in ballet and theater. She has worked in many films and Tv series. She is known for her films “Mustafa Hakkında Herşey” by Çağan Irmak, “Harem Suare” by Ferzan Özpetek, “Üçüncü Sayfa” and ”Itiraf” by Zeki Demirkubuz and “Milk” by Semih Kaplanoğlu which was an offical selection of Venice Film Festival. After a long break, she has return back to acting with “Something Useful”.

ÖYKÜ KARAYEL / *CANAN*

After finishing her education in theather, Öykü Karayel became well-known with her role in the play "Güzel Şeyler Bizim Tarafta" at the Theater Krek. She followed her career in several TV series. In cinema she has worked with Zeki Demirkubuz in his film “Bulantı” and “Toz” by Gözde Kural.

YİGİT ÖZŞENER / *YAVUZ*

Yiğit Özener is an actor working in theather, cinema and television. After his education in Electronical Engineering, he studied acting at the Şahika Tekand studio and has acted in many theather plays. He gained attention with his roles in films such as " Dedemin Insanları" by Çağan Irmak, "Kaybedenler Kulubu" by Tolga Örnek and "Beş Vakit" by Reha Erdem.

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