

Crossing borders



Silent Ones

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Ricky Rijneke's debut feature is a dreamlike portrait of a distressed young woman. By Geoffrey Macnab.

A young Eastern European woman Csilla (Orsi Tóth) and her brother Isti are on the road together without a clear destination, looking for a better life. Csilla wakes up inside a crashed car, in the middle of nowhere, not knowing where her brother Isti is. He has vanished.

This is the starting point for Rotterdam-based filmmaker Ricky Rijneke's debut feature *Silent Ones*, screening in the Hivos Tiger Awards Competition.

'The shooting you can divide in two,' the young Dutch director points out. Scenes set on land are filmed in a more 'dynamic' way with a handheld camera. The scenes on board the ship on which Csilla embarks as she seeks a new life in Western Europe are filmed in more 'sober' and 'claustrophobic' fashion. Throughout, dialogue is kept to a minimum.

Silent Ones stars Hungarian actress Orsi Tóth. She met Rijneke when they were both attending the Locarno Festival. 'It was a challenge!' Tóth reflects on *Silent Ones*. 'To be in the Netherlands was heavy for me because I was so alone. That was not easy.'

She and her director spoke different languages. They communicated in an intuitive way.

When Rijneke started writing the screenplay, she had no idea that her main protagonist would be a Hungarian. 'I start the film with images, atmosphere and the state of mind of the character,' she says.

When she met Tóth in Locarno, she had already seen her in Kornél Mundruczó's Pleasant Days. 'I really liked that film. I knew she was a really great actress, very strong ... I work with people who inspire me – it doesn't matter where they come from.' She describes Tóth as 'a one-take actress' who was always able to pick up the sense of a scene without too much instruction.

Silent Ones has a dreamlike quality. The director has described the film as portraying the inside of her lead character's mind. 'Yes, the film is about the mental state of the young Hungarian woman. After she wakes up in the middle of nowhere and her little brother has disappeared in the car accident, there is a grieving process. She withdraws into a dream world. The boundaries between reality and fantasy begin to blur and fade away.' Rijneke wanted her film to have the quality of 'a feverish dream.'

This wasn't a movie shot in a rigid way and then cut together according to the screenplay. Rijneke acknowledges that she 'discovered' her movie during the editing process, which took many, many months. 'The script always changes. Even in editing, everything changes and the script changes. It's like an organic process. In the editing, you are exploring again the film.'

Silent Ones passed through Rotterdam's CineMart as the budget was pulled together. 'That was really a good platform to meet a lot of producers and to network,' the director recalls.

The young director is already writing a new project, Hotel Europa, about 'young isolated people who, after a long winter, want to go out and party.'

Even before the Rotterdam premiere, Silent Ones was picked up for world sales by French company Wide Management – a sign that international distributors already see Rijneke as a talent to follow.

Hivos Tiger Awards Competition
Silent Ones – Ricky Rijneke

Geoffrey Macnab.

<http://www.filmfestivalrotterdam.com/professionals/programme/news-archive-2012-2013/crossing-borders/>