

Berlinale
58 Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Forum



BULUT FILM
PRESENTS

SUMMER BOOK

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY
SEYFİ TEOMAN





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A FILM BY
SEYFİ TEOMAN

2008 ● Turkey ● Turkish ● Format: 35mm/1:1.85 ● Sound: Dolby Digital
Press kit and photos can be downloaded from www.bulutfilm.com

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SYNOPSIS

Throughout one long summer, each member of a family in a provincial town tries to solve his/her personal crises as their daily lives flow by at their own slow pace. The film follows the lives of Mustafa, his wife, Güler, his two sons and his younger brother Hasan living in Silifke, a southern town in Turkey.

Mustafa is a hard-working and ambitious agricultural merchant who is cold and austere towards his family. One day he suffers a brain hemorrhage on a business trip that leaves him in a coma. Güler wrestles with her suspicion that her husband is having an affair. Veysel, their teenage son, wants to leave the military academy to study business administration. Ali, their

10-year-old son, has to cope both with his bully classmate and the chewing gums he has to sell. He is given a workbook called the "Summer Book" at school at the beginning of the summer holiday. Although he is supposed to learn lots of things from the book, he never has the chance to use it because his bully friend takes it from him. Instead Ali learns more from his own experience throughout this long summer, creating his own practical summer book. Hasan, Mustafa's younger brother, chose a life of solitude since his divorce, and he has always been an outsider to the family. But with his brother in a coma, Hasan finds himself deeply involved in family affairs: he has to solve the mystery about Mustafa's mistress and the money lost during his trip.





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ABOUT THE FILM

Summer Book is plain, calm, and rewarding. It takes you effortlessly through a summer at a Mediterranean province, Silifke, and presents a non-polished view of everyday life that surrounds 10 year old Ali and his family. The pace of provincial life governs the characters, their motives and decisions, and events that lead their story: nothing is more unexpected than life can be at times. Ali gets into an unfair fight with a bully; the brother is uncertain about his future; the uncle seems to have negotiated with his past life; the mother does not trust her husband; the father has an acci-

dent. Yet, by choosing not to dramatize or even pronounce, the film opens the time and space for contemplation. The clarity of Seyfi Teoman's camera offers a world where fairness, uncertainty, negotiation, trust, and death are reunderstood. With his distinct and convincing style in *Summer Book*, Teoman already takes his place among the fine, young filmmakers of contemporary Turkish cinema, who present the cinematic landscape of the province.

Övgü Gökçe, Altyazı Monthly Cinema Magazine





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INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

Does the story of the film have autobiographical aspects? Is there a character that you feel closer to than others?

Of course there are lots of scenes and details in the film inspired by my own experience, especially the ones about childhood. I grew up in a similar environment, and when I was younger I had similar tensions with my friends and my family. Because of this connection, I can say, the little boy Ali and his teenager brother Veysel are the characters I feel closer to than the others.

The film starts as the story of the little boy, Ali; the reference to the title also prompts the audience to expect a film about Ali. However, later you shift the perspective of the story; on and off, it becomes the story of Ali's brother Veysel, or of Ali and their uncle Hasan. Why did you choose these three char-

acters as the focal points of the story?

I think it is very interesting to focus on a family, rather than a particular character. It gives you the opportunity to deal with different generations at the same time. Ali, his brother, his uncle and even his father, as the eldest of the group, may be considered as the same character at four different ages. So one can easily argue that the family here stands for one man's life living in a provincial city.

Though we do not see the father, Mustafa, later on, the name of the father has a certain presence throughout the story. Why is he so central in spite of the fact that he almost disappears in the middle of the story?

This is a family's story where the father is an authoritarian man. I think by definition, the power of an authority comes from the influence it has even when it is not physically present. ▶



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An important theme in the story is the possibility -or even the desire- of replacing the father with another family figure. That is also why the father's presence is important even though we don't see him too much.

There is no music in the film. Are you against the use of music in cinema? Why did you refrain from using music?

I am not against it but I am always very skeptical about film music. There are really good examples but they are very rare. I find most of them awful. As a director, there are lots of attractive toys you can play with and music is the most colorful of these toys. But I believe that film directing is mostly about restraining yourself and concentrating on the essence of the meaning you are looking for. I did not prevent using music, I rather did not think about it or felt the need to use it.

There are many car scenes in which we only see characters driving, or many scenes in

which we only see characters walking. Why did you use such scenes so frequently?

This is all about trying to create a certain pace and rhythm. And I think a person walking or driving in a film is not just a person walking or driving but more. They are not static, they are moving, so there should be a motivation or reason for their movement. And showing a character walking or driving in a certain location defines him or her within that particular location, which is very important for creating a certain mood. These scenes are more powerful than a lot of dialogue scenes for me.

"The money" is the source of the two major tensions in the film: the compensation that Veysel needs for leaving the military school, and the money which is lost in the car. Especially the latter one that has a McGuffin side to it. Why did you use money as a source of tension?

The people in the film are living modest lives in a small town. They are very hard-working and

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any amount of money is very important in their lives. So any issue about money inevitably turns into a major tension. Money and property are not subjects you can ignore if you make a film about provincial life and if you have a merchant father figure at the core of the story.

Hasan, the idealistic uncle who at the beginning supports Veysel, turns out to be a true conformist after the father's disappearance. Why does he change sides that drastically?
Because he is weak and a conformist character. He is basically a loser. He appears to be idealistic when he has no responsibilities or in situations without pressure, but when he is led into being the new father figure he simply conforms. Conformism is the easiest way if you have to make a decision. He is weak, and he chooses the easiest way.

One expects to see more intimate relationships between people in a provincial town. However, most of the dialogue is between

the family members. Strangers have a solely functional role in the story. This seems to render the characters as isolated and lonely. They are reminiscent of the ones we got used to see in big cities, although one of the ongoing tensions in the story is between living in a big city and a small town. Have you tried to challenge such a dichotomy by limiting the scope of relationships?

I think expecting a wider range of relations in a provincial town is a cliché. A town full of eccentric, joyful and warm people does not exist in real life. This only exists in films. The people, especially the young ones in small cities are really as lonely as the people in big cities. They are even lonelier, because of the feeling of being left outside the center and missing the opportunity of having a different life. Also the narrative of the film is based on showing mostly the intersections between characters while leaving the rest to be completed in the spectator's mind.

Interview by Altyazi Monthly Cinema Magazine, January 2008



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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Summer Book is a film about the pace and rhythm of life in a small provincial city. Silifke, the town where the film was shot, is in the Mediterranean region and very close to the coast. Despite its beauty and great positioning, the town is rarely visited by tourists and is far from the cliché portrayal of Mediterranean towns full of friendly, joyful and loud people.

While I was writing the script of this film, I kept reminding myself that the places we live in always

impose their characteristics upon our lives. We either accept or react to it, but in any case we are shaped by it.

I am very much interested in the dramatic potential of non-dramatic moments in life. Presentation of dramatic moments without dramatization is another face of my approach. The combination of long wide shots with functional close-ups, amateur actors, minimal acting and natural lighting are the determining characteristics for the style and atmosphere of this film. I think a film should try to be as loose as life itself.





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DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Seyfi Teoman was born in Kayseri, Turkey in 1977. After studying economics at Bogazici University in Istanbul, he lived in Lodz, Poland for two years, studying film directing at Polish National Film School. He shot his short film, *Apartment* in 2004 which has been screened in many international film festivals. He directed his first feature *Summer Book* in September 2007. At the moment, he is working on his second feature.



FILMOGRAPHY:

Tatil Kitabı (Summer Book)

Writer, Director

92 min, 35mm, Turkey, 2008.

Apartment (Apartment)

Writer, Director, Producer, Editor

23 min, 35mm, Turkey, 2004.

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COMPANY PROFILE

Founded in 2006 by Yamaç Okur and Nadir Öperli, Bulut Film is a production company that aims to produce films with directors' labels. As such Bulut Film is interested in avant-garde styles, experimental narratives, and fresh talents. Bulut Film's vision is to produce first films of young and talented directors who are eager to have a word in

international cinema scene, and to support young and talented screenwriters. Bulut Film also plans to produce or coproduce the prospective projects of internationally acclaimed Turkish directors. As such, Bulut Film aims to accelerate the number of Turkish films that will be screened in international festivals and other distribution cycles.

FILMS

- Summer Book (Director: Seyfi Teoman) / *completed, world premiere in Berlin (2008)*
- Our Grand Despair (Director: Seyfi Teoman) / *pre-production, script to be completed in May 2008*
- Black Cloud (Director: Theron Patterson) / *pre-production, script completed, principal shooting: Summer 2008*
- Frenzy (Director: Emin Alper) / *pre-production, principal shooting: Summer 2009*

For more information about Bulut Film please visit www.bulutfilm.com



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TANER BİRSEL TAYFUN GÜNAY
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BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
MULTİPLAĞIĞI FILM MERKEZİ

