



HIVE (12A)

Director: Blerta Basholli

Starring: Yllka Gashi, Çun Lajçi, Aurita Agushi

Kosovo/Switzerland/Albania/Republic of Macedonia, 2021, 1hour 24 minutes

This debut film has already wowed at the Sundance Film Festival winning World Cinema Dramatic section, Best Director Award and Audience Award: the first film ever to win triple awards.

Telling the fictionalised story of Fahrije Hoti forced to find ways for her family to survive after her husband is missing in the Kosovan War, it is a "liberation story told with easy naturalism... she (Basholli) isn't interested in partisan politics, nor is she waving any obvious flags. Instead, she concentrates on textures, gestures and practices of everyday life..." (Manohla Dargis, **New York Times** 2021). Barsholli's writing and direction has also been praised as a "spare, focused storytelling that creates room to breathe." (Alan Hunter, **Screen Daily**, 2021)

Battling with harsh patriarchy, not only does Hoti finally triumph, learning to drive and becoming an entrepreneur but also other war "widows" join her rebellion, forming a successful collective selling local food produce. The film "honours feminine strength...celebrates the enabling properties of indestructible female camaraderie." (Thomas Laffly, **Roger Ebert**, 2021). The closing moments of the film feature footage of the real Hoti.

Stories of women left by their men going to war, surviving the limbo of uncertainty of what has happened to them, or actual widowhood are archetypal "yet in focusing on this one woman, Basholli is making an argument about what types of war stories are worth telling." (Manohla Dargis, **New York Times**, 2021)

This is Basholli's first feature length film. Showing the same determination and perseverance as her lead character, it took 10 years to make the film. Born in Kosovo in 1983, Basholli has lived in New York for four years, working as a student on several film projects. Her documentary *Mirror, Mirror...* (2006), shorts *Gjakova 726* (2008) and *Lena and Me* (2011) have been screened at a number of Film Festivals winning awards and official selection.

Fellow film Director and Writer Jasmila Žabanić (*Quo Vardis, Aida?*) says "The beauty and strength of this film lies in the fact that the director, the actress, the whole team manage to show the invisible, to say the unspeakable. Like a hive, the film vibrates in you a long time after you have watched it."

Notes compiled by Constance Adams