

Berlinale  
75<sup>th</sup> Internationale  
Filmfestspiele  
Berlin  
Competition

LUXBOX



# *Kontinental '25*

a film by RADU JUDE

**Original Title** *KONTINENTAL '25*

**International Title** *KONTINENTAL '25*

**Director & Screenwriter** RADU JUDE

**Country** ROMANIA

**Production Year** 2025

**Genre** DRAMA, COMEDY

**Duration** 109 min.

**Language** ROMANIAN, HUNGARIAN, GERMAN

**Technical Informations** RATIO 1:1.85 | SOUND FORMAT 5.1



## Cast

Eszter TOMPA  
Gabriel SPAHIU  
Adonis TANȚA  
Șerban PAVLU  
Oana MARDARE  
Annamária BILUSKA  
Adrian SITARU  
Marius DAMIAN  
Nicodim UNGUREANU  
Ilinca MANOLACHE  
Dan URSU  
Vlad SEMENESCU  
Daniel PALEACU  
Theodor GRAUR  
Marius PANDURU



## Synopsis

Orsolya is a bailiff in Cluj, the main city in Transylvania. One day she must evict a homeless man who lives in the basement of a building. An unexpected event creates a moral crisis she tries to solve as best she can.

## Crew

Director & Screenwriter RADU JUDE

DOP MARIUS PANDURU, RSC

Editor CĂTĂLIN CRISTUȚIU

Production design ANDREEA POPA

Costume design CIREȘICA CUCIUC

Casting DAN URSU

Sound recordist HRVOJE RADNIĆ

Sound design CRISTIAN ȘTEFĂNESCU, ALEXANDRU DUMITRU

Re-recording mixer ALEXANDRU DUMITRU

Music MATEI TEODORESCU

Executive producers RAMONA GRAMA, DAN WECHSLER, JAMAL ZEINAL-ZADE,  
ANDREAS ROALD, BERTA MARCHIORI, FERNANDA FROTTÉ, PAUL THILTGES, ADRIEN CHEF

Producers ALEX TEODORESCU, RODRIGO TEIXEIRA

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SAGA FILM

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# Interview with

RADU JUDE

**The film opens with a homeless man committing suicide after being evicted, and then follows Orsolya, the bailiff who carried out the eviction. How did you build the story around this situation?**

That's a tricky question because this project is actually very old. The first spark of the story came from a news item I read years ago about a similar situation. I made a note of it and even pitched it at one point to Romanian HBO for a TV movie, but nothing happened. Over time, the story kept lingering in my mind, especially as real estate development and inequality became more pronounced in Romania. Despite rising GDP figures, the gap between rich and poor has only grown, and that's very troubling.

**You've mentioned Roberto Rossellini as a key influence on this film. In what way?**

For me, a story also needs a specific form, not just a narrative. At some point, I read an article about Rossellini's *Europe '51* and rewatched the film. I was struck by its themes — a woman consumed by guilt, searching for redemption. I saw parallels with my story and decided to explore those themes, but in a way that's less metaphysically tragic and more grounded in a very contemporary blend of comedy and drama - I could say my film is a caricature of sorts of Rossellini. And there was yet another influence — I rewatched *Psycho* by Hitchcock, which inspired the

film's structure. *Psycho* begins with a victim and then shifts focus to the perpetrator. I followed that idea: the homeless man's story transitions to Orsolya's. She is not the murderer but in a symbolical way she feels she could be somehow complicit, like everybody else around, in a way. That's how the film took shape.

**This is an obvious commentary on the social and political issues in present-day Romania. As you say, the film blends a sense of tragedy with elements of comedy. Would you describe this as a satire?**

You mentioned the social and political aspects, and it's true. I would also add the ethical dimension — the feeling of guilt and the moral dilemma that the main character faces. But it's a bit ridiculous because it's a moral dilemma that comes after the events, after the damage has already been done. Now, I'm not sure "satire" is the best word for it. You might be right, but I don't have the same distant perspective as a critic or viewer. For me, it's more about exploring the ridiculousness and drama of the situation at the same time. At its heart, there's a tragedy, but how people react to it can be absurd. When we question our own reactions to tragedies, we often find them on the verge of ridicule.

**Where do you see this kind of reaction today?**

Take global crises, like those in Ukraine or Gaza. Some people feel good about themselves for posting on social media about these issues obsessively sometimes, but then they'll share a picture of their lunch or a cute cat 15 minutes later. I'm not judging — I do it too — but I find that there's a comedic, almost Balzacian "human comedy" in these contradictions. It's less a satire and more a reflection of the absurdity and complexity of human reactions.





**Similarly, the main character feels guilty and tries to ease her conscience through small acts, like reading left-wing intellectuals or donating to NGOs. But these are inadequate responses to the systemic issues she's complicit in. Does her sense of guilt reflect the limitations of individual actions within the broader economic model?**

I have some resistance to this idea, not because it's wrong but because it's the work of a critic or theorist to expand from the particular to broader generalities. For me, it's more personal and small-scale: a story about someone with good intentions, someone who is kind-hearted and conscientious, but still trapped within the system. Most of us have moments where we see injustice around us — a homeless person, for instance— and feel terrible, but then move on. Maybe we donate money to ease our conscience, but we know it doesn't create real change. In Romania, this feeling is heightened by the country's history. After the Ceaușescu dictatorship, the transition wasn't to a social democratic model but to a neoliberal one with little social protection. Orsolya's guilt reflects this broader systemic failure, but the film focuses on her individual experience rather than making a grand ideological statement. I remember also Carlo Ginzburg, one of my favorite historians, explaining how the case is more interesting than the rule. So, I try to focus on the particular, on the details of this case.

**The film is set in Cluj, a city in the heart of Transylvania that has undergone significant changes in recent years. How does its transformation into a "smart city" and tourist destination impact the narrative and the characters' experiences?**

Cluj is a mixed case. On one hand, it's seen as a success story — its IT industry is booming, the population is growing, and it's considered more modern and civilized compared to other Romanian cities. But this success has come with gentrification and chaotic urban development, especially around the city. The city is surrounded by hills, so its expansion has spilled over into nearby villages, like the one where Orsolya lives. These villages have grown rapidly, often without proper infrastructure, schools, or hospitals. I wanted to contrast Cluj's narrative of success with the stories of those who are left behind—the losers in this process of economic growth. It's a counterbalance to the triumphalist story of development.

**The film features some striking shots of dinosaur statues. What's the reason behind that choice?**

That was actually a coincidence! We were shooting near a hotel complex called Wonderland, which kindly sponsored our stay. Behind the hotel was a Dino Park, and when I saw it, I thought it was perfect. Originally, we had planned a scene in the woods, but I replaced it with the dinosaurs. Symbolically, it can suggest a world where humans no longer exist — a kind of post-human future. But these dinosaurs are also fake, tourist attractions, so they reflect how everything, even the prehistoric, gets commercialized. It's an open-ended image, and I think you could write an entire essay about its meanings.

**Let's talk about the actors. How did you cast Eszter Tompa, who plays Orsolya, and how did you work with her?**

This film was shot back-to-back with another project, a very free adaptation of the myth of Dracula, using the same crew and many of the same actors. Eszter Tompa had a smaller role in *Dracula*. During rehearsals, I realized she was perfect for this other part. She's incredibly talented and from Romania's Hungarian minority, which added another layer to the story, touching on Transylvanian history and contemporary nationalism.

**Why shoot back-to-back, and why did you use an iPhone? Does the unpolished nature of the film enhance its subject?**

Shooting back-to-back was cost-effective. The crew and resources were already in place. As for the iPhone, it was about embracing simplicity. The technology is affordable now, so I wanted to prove that you can make a film with minimal resources. It's like going back to the basics of cinema, to the Lumière brothers. We shot it in 10 or 11 days, with no lights or grip equipment, relying on dialogue and natural settings. It was liberating. It also ties into Rossellini's idea of working with a "poverty of means." Many films about poverty or social violence are made with multimillion-dollar budgets. There's a mismatch sometimes, and I wanted to push against that. Of course, the film was possible because of everybody's involvement, the actors, the crew, the producers - a huge thank you to all!

**How does this film connect to your broader filmography?**

I've always been interested in history, and this film reflects that. But it's different in its simplicity. The dialogue, the minimal mise-en-scène,

and the focus on words make it a bit different when compared with the rest of my work. The montage of buildings towards the end, dissolving the narrative into images, also feels new. It's a return to early cinema's potential. There is another aspect I realized later I can see it in a continuity with some of my last films: the desire for documentary, if I can express myself in these terms. Some of my recent films are either montage documentaries, or fiction films where there are also documentary elements. It feels like these documentary parts ground the film in reality, in a way. Or maybe not, it is just a need. This is why the fiction here is broken by simple documentary shots of buildings from the areas where the story takes place. In a way the film has two threads: the fictional one and the documentary one and in the end the documentary takes over.

**Where do you see yourself within Romanian cinema today, and what's left of the Romanian New Wave that made such an impact nearly 20 years ago?**

I'm just trying to make the films I want to make, without any particular ambition to match the brilliance of my peers. The filmmakers of the New Wave are still creating outstanding films, but I think Romanian cinema could benefit from more diversity in voices and styles. My model, in terms of scale and versatility, is Portuguese cinema, which successfully spans both commercial and experimental works. There's a lot of talent in Romania, including a promising younger generation, and I'm confident they will continue to produce fascinating films. I reread what I said, and it sounds like I talk too much polite bullshit, so I don't know.





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## Director's Biography

Radu Jude (born 1977) is a Romanian director and screenwriter. His films, including *The Happiest Girl in the World* (2009) *Aferim!* (2015), *"I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians"* (2018), and *Uppercase Print* (2020), won multiple awards worldwide. In 2021, *Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn* received the top prize at the Berlinale. His feature film *Do Not Expect Too Much from the End of the World* (2023) was awarded the Special Jury Prize at the Locarno Film Festival and was Romania's Oscars submission at the time.

## Director's Filmography

### 2025 - *Kontinental '25*

Feature film - Berlinale 2025 - Competition

### 2024 - *Eight Postcards from Utopia* (*Opt ilustrate din lumea ideală*)

co-directed with Christian Ferencz-Flatz

Feature documentary - Locarno Film Festival 2024 - Special Mention of The Beeld & Geluid IDFA ReFrame Award at IDFA 2024

### 2024 - *Sleep #2*

Desktop film - Locarno Film Festival 2024 - Fuori Concorso

### 2023 - *Do Not Expect Too Much from the End of the World*

(*Nu aștepta prea mult de la sfârșitul lumii*)

Feature film - Locarno Film Festival 2023 - Silver Leopard

### 2021 - *Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn*

(*Babardeală cu bucluc sau porno balamuc*)

Feature film - Berlinale 2021 - Golden Bear for Best Film

### 2020 - *The Exit of the Trains* (*Ieșirea trenurilor din gară*)

co-directed with Adrian Cioflincă

Documentary - Berlinale 2020 - Forum

### 2020 - *Uppercase Print* (*Tipografic majuscul*)

Feature film - Berlinale 2020 - Forum

### 2018 - *"I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians"*

(*"Îmi este indiferent dacă în istorie vom intra ca barbari"*)

Feature film - Karlovy Vary IFF - Crystal Globe for Best Feature Film Award

### 2015 - *Aferim!*

Feature film - Berlinale 2015 - Silver Bear for Best Director

### 2012 - *Everybody in Our Family* (*Toată lumea din familia noastră*)

Feature film - Berlinale 2012 - Forum

### 2009 - *The Happiest Girl in the World* (*Cea mai fericită fată din lume*)

Feature film - Berlinale 2009 - Forum



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