

Tomislav GOTOVAC

HUO | Are we looking at your new film?

TG | Yes. This is the first movie I shot with a normal budget after 25 years. I shot the first *Glenn Miller* in 1977 and this one I shot last year, it's called *Glenn Miller 2000*.

HUO | Is this a second part or a second version?

TG | Neither. First I have to explain why these films are called **Glenn Miller**. He was a musician who, during WWII, from 1938-1942, played every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday for 15 minutes on the radio program broadcast around the whole USA. These were the years when American people listened to Glenn Miller on small radio sets. Then the American government, **Roosevelt** and **Eisenhower**, said to **Glenn Miller** that he had to go to war. So he put together a whole band and they went to England and broadcast American music, which meant big band music, to all of Europe, to Nazis and fascists, Soviet soldiers etc. Near the end of WWII, on Christmas 1944, **Roosevelt** and **Eisenhower** called **Glenn Miller** to give a big concert in liberated Paris. He went there with a small airplane and the band was traveling by big airplane. The big airplane arrived in Paris, but the small plane disappeared. I think this is a very symptomatic thing, at that time there was heavy Nazi fighting in Arden. During that era we all listened to Glenn Miller all the time.

HUO | And Glenn Miller just disappeared?

TG | Yes. But not his music, it was alive for a long, long time. And there is a

GLENN

'Glenn Miller Band'.

In the old Yugoslavia after the War, Western jazz was somehow forbidden. Music from the USA was the sound of liberty. We listened to jazz, American music and the big band sound and we thought we were liberated. But it was a communist country! **Josip Broz Tito** and the communist party were in power for many, many years. Maybe you know that song by **Leonard Cohen** *Jazz Police*, this is what was happening here. The borders were closed, nobody could get in or out. For me, American music and movies were freedom. And I took this symbol into my movie, the name of **Glenn Miller**. And there is something else... Maybe you know the movie by **Anthony Mann** *The Glenn Miller Story*? In that movie **Glenn Miller** searches for the right sound and then he finds it and says 'That's it!' I searched

MILLER

for my attitude in avant-garde films, and I found something, it is – Glenn Miller.

HUO | Marina Abramović says that you are not only a filmmaker but also a protagonist of performance art.

TG | Yes, I am involved in both. And all my films are somehow also performances.

HUO | They are mostly black and white?

TG | Yes, mostly. The film you are watching now is all one take, of 45 minutes. It was shot on a road in a Zagreb suburb, at the place where the trams turn. We were driving in circles the whole time.

HUO | Where is the camera fixed?

TG | I will show you.

HUO | Who invented this?

TG | My best man, **Mudri**, who disappeared in Vukovar in 1991, together with his brother. He made this stand especially for me in 1977 but I only used it

last year. **Mudri** was his nickname, which means 'wise man'. I call this thing Pan Mudri, 'pan' stands for panoramic.

2000

HUO | Why did you wait 23 years to use it?

TG | Ah, that's another story... There was a communist

conspiracy against my reputation and my art. It started in 1973 when I was at the end of my school days at the Belgrade Academy. At that time I was playing the main role in a movie called *Plastic Jesus*. The director **Lazar Stojanović** went to jail for three years because of it. **Saša Petrović**, Lazar's film professor, was a famous director who won the Grand Prix Special in Cannes in 1967 for his film *I Saw Happy Gypsies*, in the same year when **Antonioni's** *Blow Up* was awarded. **Saša Petrović** was twice nominated for the Oscar for Best Foreign Movie, in 1967 for his film *Three*, and in 1968 for the film *I Saw Happy Gypsies*. **Saša** had to leave Yugoslavia, although he was such a famous filmmaker. That was a very tragic situation.



HUO | Why was that movie so attacked?

TG | It contained documentary material about **Josip Broz Tito**. **Lazar Stojanović** was assisting in a documentary film about student demonstrations in June 1968, directed by a group of foreign directors. On that occasion they shot a public speech given by **Josip Broz Tito** when the demonstrations ended, in which **Tito** thanked the students for giving up their protesting and going back to their studies. **Lazar Stojanović** just took this material. Scenes where **Tito** is preparing for a speech in a TV studio, a program broadcast on television before **Tito's** speech, the famous TV series *The Forsythe Saga* that contained subtitles with sentences like 'We do not believe you' or 'You are rotten', and finally **Tito's** speech itself. The Party wouldn't allow that. Many people connected to the film *Plastic Jesus* got into trouble. It was banned until 1999. It was hidden for twenty years.



Plastic Jesus, Lazar Stojanović 1971

HUO | You acted in it?

TG | Yes, I was a star. My first movie, and the director went to jail and his professor had to leave the country! But I don't think it is such a good movie. The reason it was banned was just the material on **Tito**.

HUO | When did you meet Marina Abramović?

TG | I met **Marina** in the summer of 1970; a film crew from Bavaria came to Belgrade to shoot about the young people's movement. They asked me

to make a performance for the crew, both in an open space and in an apartment. Somebody arranged it in Marina's place. I made a performance there.

HUO | Which performance is it?

TG | I will show it to you someday. I have it on film. Back then, Marina was a 'regular' fine artist, painting mostly her naked body and the clouds. I have her drawing from 1968. After my performance, Marina decided to do something else! I'm kidding; I don't know what Marina would say to that, it is just my interpretation... I think that Marina started to work differently in the summer of 1970. She went with Neša Paripović, her husband at the time, to Zagreb for her post-graduate studies, to the school of the famous Croatian painter Krsto Hegedušić. They were in Zagreb during '71 and '72. Soon after she did *Rhythm 2*, her first performance with pills, tranquilizers and tonics, at the GALLERY OF CONTEMPORARY ART in Zagreb.

HUO | When did you do your first performance? I guess it must have already been in the '60s?

TG | My first performance... Alone or in public?

HUO | Both. I am also interested in how you combined that with your filmmaking.

TG | It was in 1962 on the Medvednica Hill near Zagreb. I was showing the magazine *Elle*. I was going through the pages and photographer Ivica Hribko took the photos. I did a lot of performances in Belgrade in 1964.

HUO | That's very early!

TG | I was already quite old. I was 25. [laughs]

HUO | Did you have information about 'happening art'?

TG | Many years after. I knew about Dada performances and the whole Dada movement. The 2. MUSIC BIENNIAL held in Zagreb in 1963 was very important to me, when a few very significant artists participated. Do you know the dancer Anna Halprin?

HUO | Sure.

TG | I saw her with her *Dancers Workshop Company*. That was extremely important for me. And Cage was there. John Cage was there that same year, but Anna Halprin was the most influential for me.

HUO | What was it that made her so important for your work?

TG | Everything. She mixed normal situations with crazy stuff. During her show one barefoot girl with a transistor went through the audience and made them all stand up. It was 100 percent crazy! The police were there all the time. Half of the audience was police in civilian clothes. Those were heavy years. The secret police (UDBA) was controlling everything and especially art from the West. Ah, this is the end of the movie!

HUO | I see you have the names of directors important for you written here... Ozu...

TG | Ozu is one of the most important people for me. The films by Jean-Luc Godard from the sixties, *Une femme est une femme*, *Le mépris*, *Pierrot le fou*, have names of the movies which Godard preferred then.

This is my homage to Godard.

HUO | Why is Billie Holiday so important for you?

TG | She is in my soul. In every man there is a woman's part. In me, that's Billie.

HUO | Who else was important for you?

Do you know the very famous director David Lean? He was a woman completely. His psychology, everything, especially in his black and white movies like *Brief Encounter* and then *Great Expectations*... When he started producing color movies, that was something else. But his older movies, they are fantastic. Especially *Brief Encounter*, I like it so much. Spielberg said that everything he knows about movies comes from David Lean. Everything. That means that Spielberg has a woman's soul too, for sure.

HUO | Why Ozu?

TG | All the movies by Ozu that I saw were shot from a tripod, from the height of a sitting person. They were all sitting... And no one moved from that position, it was a steel border. This opened up incredible possibilities of interpretation for him, just like Bach's very defined forms, his fugues and chorales, in which emotions are then inserted. It's the most beautiful thing. Ozu. Dreyer, Bresson... They are movie seekers, they only think of the red thread they are following, which is not content or beauty, but the very essence of film.



Dedications to the directors at the end of the Glenn Miller 2000

KUBELKA

HUO | And Kubelka?

TG | That's another story. He is an avant-garde artist who at the beginning of the '50s discovered film. And that is something else, another film.

HUO | Did you see his films in Zagreb at the time?

TG | No, we saw them much later, in the late '70s when Kubelka came to Zagreb and talked in German about all of his movies. That was fantastic. It lasted for three or four days for a few hours a day. And he showed them several times. He asked us if we wanted him to speak in English, but we told him that his language is German and that he should speak in German and someone would translate. I liked it all so much. I also like Jonas Mekas...

HUO | Did he come to Zagreb?

TG | No. But in 1967 Adam Paul Sitney came to Zagreb with lots of underground movies. Everything except Andy Warhol's films, because he asked a screening fee for every movie. And we didn't have money to pay for that...

HUO | And this is how you saw Mekas's movies... I am coming back to Ozu because you were talking about his framework. And I would like to know about your framework.

TG | OK, I will now show you the framework.

This is *Morning of a Fawn*, my first avant-garde movie. The sound is from the Jean-Luc Godard movie *Vivre sa vie*, the scene when a pimp turns on the jukebox and Ana Karina dances. A very simple process, only one take.

And this is another take, a zoom to a wall, without sound. It is the second part of this composition.

The third part is with the sounds of sirens taken from George Pall's movie *Time Machine*.

It was completely different to hear sirens after 1991, when there were general alerts and blackouts every now and then.

This film is from 1963.

HUO | There was no war then?

TG | The war against communism. No, I'm kidding; I had nothing against communists, they had something against me.

HUO | Why?

1963
TOMISLAV
GOTOVAC

PRILJE PO
DNE JEDN-
OG PO UNI



TG | Because I am so independent. They asked me twice to join the Party, and I refused so twice saying that I was religious. They said they would fuck with me until the end of my life... I like everything that is... something. I like Leni Riefensthal and Soviet movies of Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Dovzhenko, all beautiful pieces. All propaganda for communism...

HUO | Your films are not propaganda?

TG | My voice is propaganda for me... I know better... All of my movies are documents of what is in front of the camera. This movie we are watching now, *Morning of a Fawn*, is Zagreb for me. Zagreb is a panic and this is a characteristic sound for Zagreb, a panic city.

HUO | Do you know the panic movement of Jodorowsky, Arrabal, Topor?

TG | Do you know the movie *Panique* by Julien Duvivier? It's fantastic; it is a movie from the forties, with Michelle Simon and Vivien Roman. Julien Duvivier is a beautiful director. I like him very much.

This is all the same movie, *Circumference* [Jutkevič-Count]. The music is Jimmy Rushing singing in the band of Count Basie. Now listen... this sound of Count Basie's big band... it was anarchy then... And now it is so normal. Just jazz...

HUO | So, the circumference was your invention?

TG | This movie was shot in 1964. Michael Snow started with similar movies in 1967 and 1968. I was three or four years ahead of him. But I was in Zagreb, Croatia, Belgrade, Yugoslavia... Nobody cared. This movie is, I think, among the most important films of avant-garde cinema. I know it...

Morning of a Fawn,
Tomislav Gotovac
1963

This movie was originally shot on *umkerfilm*, reverse film.

These interpolations, they are

from silent movies. This is my homage to silent movies, because I saw so many of them in Zagreb's *Kinoteka*.

HUO | Can you explain to me how they affected your films? I would also like to know how this was shot.

TG | The cinematographer had a camera and a belt which we held to keep him from falling down, a totally primitive technique. The important thing was just to shoot it. We were at the top of the then tallest building in Belgrade, and the building's called *Albania building!* [laughs] You know what it means? And then you had a man from Zagreb who came to Belgrade to shoot a movie on top of the Albania building! I really don't understand how we ever managed to get up there. We asked a man there if we could go up, we told him we had a camera and that we would like to shoot something. And this stupid man allowed us to go up, which was totally against the law, we should have had a police permit... But we just did it.

This is Belgrade, the capital of Yugoslavia, in 1964. Can you get what this all means!?! It was so terrible...

HUO | Did anyone finance you to shoot it?

TG | No, just my personal money.

HUO | Was it shown publicly at the time?

TG | Yes, it was shown in 1964 at the Serbian festival of amateur movies. **Regina Cornwell** made a thesis on **Michael Snow's** films, and when she saw my movie *Circumference* in London in 1979, she chose to write about all of my movies except that one. It's because this film is so similar to films by **Michael Snow**, and yet it was shot earlier. So she wrote about all of my movies except that one. And I find that so characteristic... I like it so much, this movie, *Circumference*. A silent movie that features jazz, war, everything... all the differences between Croats and Serbs, all of it is in there. At least in my humble opinion.

HUO | What's next?

TG | Now you'll see *Direction* [Stevens-Duke]... Do you know this music? It's **Duke Ellington**, and the song is called *The Creole Love Call*. This is a street in Belgrade, Boulevard of the Revolution, that starts from the Marx and Engels Square. And on that square was the Museum of the Revolution of the People of Yugoslavia. The woman who was the director there was **Marina**

Abramović's mother.

HUO | She was close to Tito, wasn't she?

TG | Yes, very close...

HUO | Marina's brother is also now in Amsterdam.

TG | Yes, I know. **Velimir**, we called him **Velja**. I like him very much, because he was a very good film director, many years ago. He studied film and philosophy and physics.

Now, *The Creole Love Call* in the center of Belgrade, on the Boulevard of the Revolution. You will again see interpolation, of a photo of **George Braque** that **Henri Cartier-Bresson** took on the 6th of July in 1944, when D-day started... Bresson went to **Braque's** apartment and said, "This is an important day, I have to take your photo." That is the photo I used in this movie. Nobody knew about it when I was showing it then. Look at these cars... This is the fashion of the forties, small cars, only Fiats and Volkswagens... It was really a poor time for most of the people in Yugoslavia.

HUO | How many films have you made?

TG | Not so many, about twenty, I think, maybe fifteen. But for me the numbers are not important, quality is important, I only ask for quality.

For me the best film is *Circumference*.

Three flags are the symbols of this time of my life. Because I was a clerk in a bank and then in a hospital. That was my day job.

And now you will see *Blue Rider* [Godard - Art], October, 1964. 'Art' is for **Art Blakey**, a drummer. The sound is from the TV series *Bonanza*, a show that was very popular then.

HUO | So, Godard was an obsession for you in the 1960s?

TG | Godard was obsessed with **Rossellini** and American movie directors, **John Ford**, **Howard Hawks**... I was obsessed with **Godard**, because I discovered in him the same soul, not the same features, but the essence of the feature. Using movies like a para-language.

HUO | When did you see Godard for the first time?

TG | Not at the end of the '50s, not in the early '60s, later, around 1963. In Yugoslavia they used to wait for a few years because at that time it meant that the fee for showing the movie was lower. I didn't instruct the cameraman, I just told him to shoot the faces or anything he thought

interesting, to catch the chaotic movement... Similar to how Jackson Pollock worked. But now some people from Denmark, Lars von Trier for example, use a camera like this. I saw it for the first time in late '60s, in the movies by Bo Videberg.

I took the sound for *Blue Rider* from an edited soundtrack from an episode of *Bonanza* that was incredibly popular at the time. They are talking about Chinese problems in some small city. One of the Chinese tried to trade a cake for the American flag.

That was a dangerous movie to shoot. There were four or five of us, so we thought if somebody started a fight, we'll fight... Again, we did it without police permission. We didn't ask anyone. And you should know that every second man in those bars was a policeman. We were shooting it on Saturday, in bars and restaurants, morning and afternoon. It was terrible, but they didn't beat us up...

HUO | So many of these people were policemen in civilian clothes?

TG | In those years in Belgrade in bars and restaurants only the secret police were around. It was terrible. And we were walking around with an Eastern German 16 mm camera 'Pentaka' and shooting. It's very sensitive, 27 DIN material. Look at these faces, they are fantastic. But it was so dangerous...

[Laughs]

HUO | When were you born?

TG | In 1937, in Sombor, Yugoslavia.

HUO | When did you come to Zagreb?

TG | When my father took our family from Sombor to Zagreb in 1941.

HUO | You said that it was 50:50, fifty percent alcoholics, fifty percent police?

TG | But there were many that were both alcoholic and police at the same time! [laughs] You must know that at that time Yugoslavia really was a police state, especially in Belgrade, the center of Serbia. And Josip Broz Tito was afraid of an assassination attempt.

HUO | Were there any projects at this time that you wanted to do but didn't do? Unrealized projects?

TG | For me the most important was aesthetics, jazz and feature movies from all over the world... Especially the early Swedish movies of Sjöberg, and also

this director that played in Bergman's *Wild Strawberries*, Victor Sjöström. Then Soviet directors, also American directors from the beginnings of movie production, Italian neo-realist directors. After the '50s, Japanese directors like Kurosawa, Mizoguchi, but not Ozu... Ozu came much later for me.

This is a one-minute movie called *Tomislav Gotovac*.

HUO | Ah, it's like a self-portrait...

TG | And this is my show in FRANKLIN FURNACE FOUNDATION in 1994. It had more than 330 photos, newspapers, etc. And I shot it as a one-minute movie.

HUO | When was this made?

TG | 1996, I think.

HUO | I am very interested in unrealized projects and artists' concrete utopias.

TG | Yes, I will tell you about one. I wanted to make an 8-hour movie *Worker*. It would involve a woman or a man working eight hours on a certain machine in a factory. I would use a static camera and shoot eight hours of work.

HUO | Would it involve different people?

TG | No, no, it would be the same person all the time.

HUO | You never made it?

TG | No, who would give me money for that!?! Now it would be possible, you have all different kinds of cameras. But when I wanted to shoot it that was way too expensive. Shooting one person working for eight hours – you could be judged only as stupid and crazy! You are a fascist just for making us listen how you want to make that movie...

There was also a performance I wanted to make in the late '90s with the Croatian army, but it was forbidden. I wanted to use 1000 soldiers to produce one sound which would go through space. I wanted to put people on a bridge from one side to the other and they would produce one sound, which would go around.

HUO | Like travelling.

TG | Yes.

HUO | Why couldn't you do it?

TG | It needed 1000 people that had to be organized. So it should have been the police or the army... And where would I get a general willing to cooperate? ►