



ALEC UTGOFF



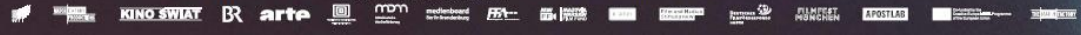
NEVER GONNA SNOW AGAIN



A Film by

MAŁGORZATA SZUMOWSKA & MICHAŁ ENGLERT

LAVA FILMS AND MATCH FACTORY PRODUCTIONS IN COPRODUCTION WITH KINO ŚWIAT MAZOVIA WARSAW FILM FUND DI FACTORY BAYERISCHER RUNDfunk
 IN COOPERATION WITH ARTE WITH THE SUPPORT OF/CO-FINANCED BY POLISH FILM INSTITUTE FILM-UND MEDIENSTIFTUNG NRW DEUTSCHER FILMFORDERFONDS GERMAN-POLISH FILM FUND
 CINECOPRO AWARD FEATURING ALEC UTGOFF MAJA OSTASZEWSKA AGATA KULESZA WERONIKA ROSATI KATARZYNA FIGURA ŁUKASZ SIMLAT ANDRZEJ CHYRA KRZYSZTOF CZECHOT
 CINEMATOGRAFICZNY MICHAŁ ENGLERT POST EDITING JAROSŁAW KAMIŃSKI POK, AGATA CIERNIAK PRODUCTION DESIGN JAGNA JANICKA CASTING MAGDALENA SZWARCBAUT SOUND KACPER HABISIAKOWSKI
 MARCIN KASIŃSKI HAIR MARCIN JACHYRA COSTUME DESIGN KATARZYNA LEWIŃSKA MAKE-UP WALDEMAR POKROMSKI GERMAN LINE PRODUCER STEFAAN SCHIEDER PRODUCTION MANAGER DAĞMARA BAGNECKA
 CO-PRODUCERS ANNA SPISZ TOMASZ KARCZEWSKI MARCIN PIASECKI JEDRZEJ SABLŃSKI RAFAŁ GOLIS COMMISSIONING EDITORS CARLOS GERSTENHAUER (BR) CORNELIA ACKERS (BR)
 MONIKA LOBKOWICZ (BR/ARTE) BIRGIT KÄMPER (ARTE) PRODUCERS AGNIESZKA WASIAK MARIUSZ WŁODARSKI VIOLA FÜGEN MICHAEL WEBER MAŁGORZATA SZUMOWSKA MICHAŁ ENGLERT
 WRITTEN BY MICHAŁ ENGLERT & MAŁGORZATA SZUMOWSKA DIRECTED BY MAŁGORZATA SZUMOWSKA CO-DIRECTED BY MICHAŁ ENGLERT
 POLSKO-NIEMIECKI FUNDUSZ FILMOWY



NEVER GONNA SNOW AGAIN – MALGORZATA SZUMOWSKA

PROJECT SUMMARY

**EEN FILM VAN
CAST**

MALGORZATA SZUMOWSKA
ALEC UTGOFF, MAJA OSTASZEWSKA, AGATA KULESZA,
WERONIKA ROSATI, KARARZYNA FIGURA, ANDRZEJ CHYRA

**EEN PRODUCTIE VAN
IN SAMENWERKING MET
LAND VAN HERKOMST**

LAVA FILMS, MATCH FACTORY PRODUCTIONS
MAZOVIA FILM FUND, KINO ŚWIAT, DI-FACTORY
POLEN, DUITSLAND

TAAL

POOLS, RUSSISCH, FRANS, VIETNAMEES

LENGTE

113 MINUTEN

GENRE

DRAMA

RELEASEDATUM

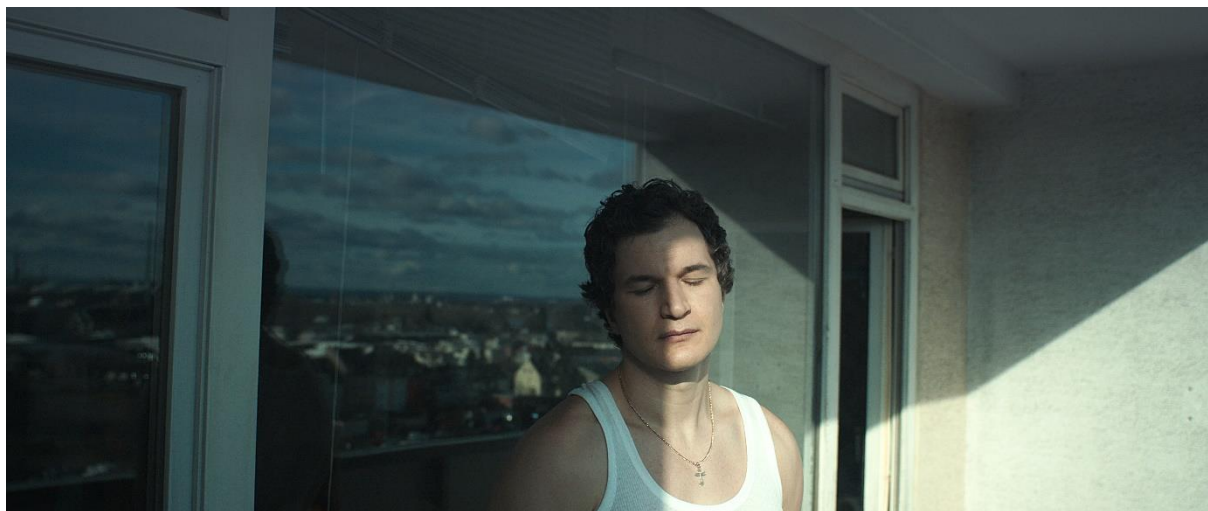
21 OKTOBER 2021

FESTIVALS & AWARDS

VENETIË FILM FESTIVAL – OFFICIËLE SELECTIE
POOLSE INZENDING VOOR DE OSCARS

KIJKWIJZER

SYNOPSIS



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LANGE SYNOPSIS

One grey, foggy morning in a large, Eastern European city, a mysterious person appears – a man carrying a bed. The visitor uses magical, hypnotic techniques to get a residence permit and starts working as a masseur in a suburban housing estate. The bland, gated community, built for the rich in the middle of what used to be a cabbage field, is walled off from the 'worse' world around it. Somewhere in the distance loom the skyscrapers and cranes of a city aspiring to become an international hub, the East constantly in pursuit of the West. The identical houses are inhabited by an array of well-to-do representatives of the upper class to which we all constantly aspire. They seem to feel an inner sadness, a longing. Perhaps it is for the winter, which is no longer present in this eastern country. Unlike them, their children don't build snowmen anymore. But maybe their emptiness runs deeper? The masseur, an attractive man from the authentic, exotic East enters their lives. He has a gift. His hands heal, his eyes penetrate the souls of the lonely women. To them, his Russian accent sounds like the song of the past, a peaceful melody of their childhood, when the world was a safer place. Zhenia, for this is his name, changes their lives.



CAST

ALEC UTGOFF	ZENIA
MAJA OSTASZEWSKA	MARIA
AGATA KULESZA	EWA
WERONIKA ROSATI	WIKA
KATARZYNA FIGURA	BULLDOG'S OWNER
ANDRZEJ CHYRA	CAPTAIN
ŁUKASZ SIMLAT	WIKI'S HUSBAND

CREW

DIRECTOR	MAŁGORZATA SZUMOWSKA
CO-DIRECTOR	MICHAŁ ENGLERT
SCRIPTWRITERS	MICHAŁ ENGLERT & MAŁGORZATA SZUMOWSKA
CINEMATOGRAPHY	MICHAŁ ENGLERT P.S.C.
PRODUCTION DESIGN	JAGNA JANICKA
EDITING	JAROSLAW KAMINSKI, AGATA CIERNIAK
SOUND	MARCIN KASINSKI MPSE, KACPER HABISIAK MPSE, MARCIN JACHYRA
COSTUME DESIGN	KATARZYNA LEWIŃSKA
MAKE UP DESIGN	WALDEMAR POKROMSKI

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DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY & FILMOGRAPHY

One of the most prominent Polish directors of today, Malgorzata Szumowska was born in Krakow in 1973. She has directed, written and produced feature and documentary films and has received numerous awards at international and Polish film festivals. After two well-received shorts, her first feature, 'Happy Man' (2000) was nominated 'Discovery of the Year' at the European Film Awards and won the Special Prize in Thessaloniki. Her second feature, 'Strangers' (2004) was presented at Sundance and Berlinale; '33 Scenes From Life' (2008), won her the Special Jury Prize at the Locarno Festival. She later directed 'Elles' (2011) with Juliette Binoche, and 'In The Name Of.' which won the Teddy Award at Berlinale. She returned to the Berlin festival with 'Body' in 2015 and 'Mug' in 2018, which won her the Silver Bear for Best Director and Grand Jury Prize respectively. Her first English language feature, 'The Other Lamb' (2019) was screened in Toronto, San Sebastian and London. She recently completed a short film for Miu Miu and has just finished her new feature 'Never Gonna Snow Again'.



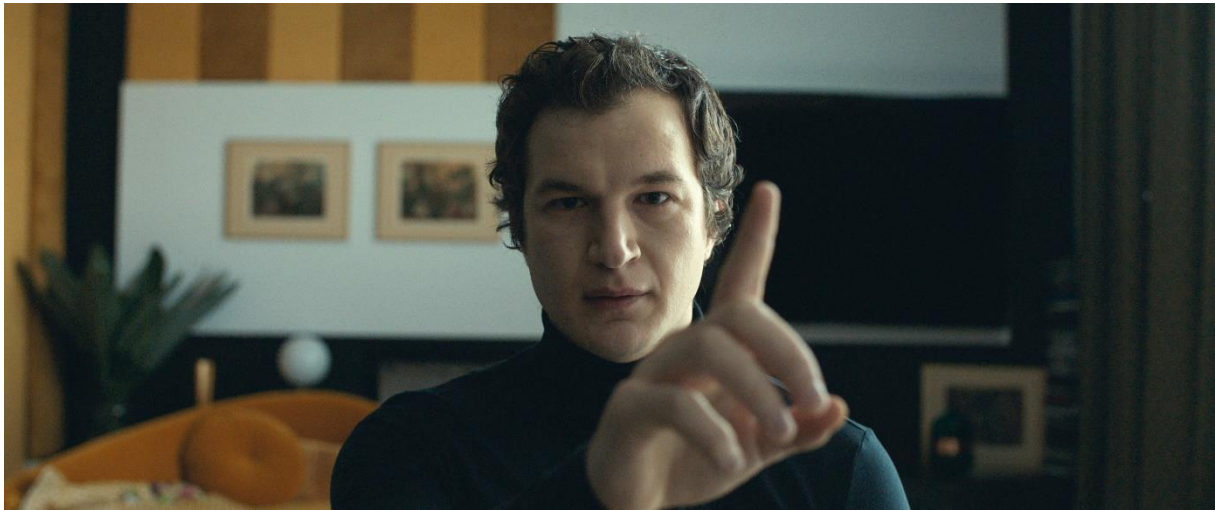
MICHAŁ ENGLERT

Warsaw-born cinematographer, screenwriter and producer Michał Englert is a graduate of the Cinematography Department at the National Film and Theatre School in Łódź, which is where he met Małgorzata Szumowska. Their documentary short 'Silence' (1997) won him an award for best cinematography at a film festival in Mexico. Since then, Szumowska and Englert have made over a dozen documentary and feature films together, becoming a renowned artistic duo whose cooperation runs far deeper than that of most directors and cinematographers. Their filmography includes '33 Scenes from Life' (2009), awarded at the Locarno Film Festival, which also won Englert the award for best cinematography at the Polish Film Festival in Gdynia, as well as 'In the Name Of...' (2013), 'Body' (2015) and 'Mug' (2018), which all won awards at the Berlinale festival. In 2013, Englert won the award for Best Cinematography at the Sundance Film Festival for his work on Jacek Borcuch's 'Lasting'. He is keen to take part in international projects, such as Ari Folman's 'The Congress' (2013) and Etienne Kallos' 'The Harvesters' (2018), both shown in Cannes. He was also responsible for the cinematography on Krzysztof Skonieczny's loud, HBO-produced series 'Blinded by the Lights' (2018), based on Jakub Żulczyk's bestselling novel.

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ALEC UTGOFF

Born in Kiev, Ukraine, Utgoff moved to Great Britain at a young age. He graduated from Drama Centre London in 2010. Later that year, he appeared alongside Johnny Depp and Angelina Jolie in German director Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's 'The Tourist'. He has also appeared in several notable big-budget productions, including Kenneth Branagh's 'Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit' (2014), Brad Peyton's 'San Andreas' (2015), David Koepp's 'Mortdecai' (2015) and Christopher McQuarrie's 'Mission Impossible – Rogue Nation' (2015). He has worked with such prominent actors as Kevin Costner, Tom Cruise, Jeremy Renner, Gwyneth Paltrow and Ewan McGregor. Utgoff is also known for his roles in TV series, most notably in Season 3 of the Netflix hit, 'Stranger Things'.



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You shot ›Never Gonna Snow Again‹ soon after your English-language debut, the well-received ›The Other Lamb‹. Was it good to take a break from the ›Polishness‹ you usually portray in your films?

Małgorzata Szumowska: It was so good that we're planning another break quite soon (laughter). It was an interesting experience, for various reasons. It's no secret that an English-language debut opens a lot of doors. Many directors wait years for it to happen, so we were lucky to have made it. Unlike Michał, I had never worked on someone else's script before. We had a lot of fun looking for the right form for the story. Also, after making 'The Other Lamb' I felt we both want to make a film like 'Never Gonna Snow Again'.

Michał Englert: The script was originally set in Australia, which we ended up changing to Ireland, where we shot the film. Catherine S. McMullen, the writer, was open to making changes, but they were also influenced by our American producer, who had certain expectations about the film. With 'Never Gonna Snow Again', we were able to enjoy full artistic freedom once again.

Is 'Never Gonna Snow Again' going to be another film like 'Body' (2015) and 'Mug' (2017), which take a look at Poles as a nation to see whether we are able to treat ourselves a bit less seriously or even laugh at ourselves?

M.S. I think it's more like 'Body' than 'Mug'. By juxtaposing kitschy references to Kieślowski with bits of irony and tongue-in-cheek, we were able to deconstruct the metaphysical layer, taking it seriously nevertheless. We wanted to give the film a certain lightness, although it seems that during this peculiar time, marked by the pandemic, people are looking for serious messages.

M.E: You can see a certain continuity and consistency in the film, an attempt to develop the cinematic language that interests us most, which is quite contrary. It reflects our way of looking at life, which is full of paradoxes and tragicomic situations. To some, this type of narrative may diverge from the accepted canon, but we wanted the emotional amplitude of the film to be quite broad. Today, many productions, especially mainstream ones, are carefully and superficially balanced. Having a bit of everything is supposed to make a film sell well. We, on the other hand, are trying to be free, to approach our work intuitively, which means we are less calculating. Our artistic awareness grows constantly with each film we make. We hope we are still able to be genuine; the films we make together are certainly very honest on our part.

After the Berlin premiere of 'Body', you mentioned that your idea was to make a film about the relationship between a person and their body, which turns into the relationship with one's soul. I think this is also a good description of your new film.

M.S.: I totally agree. Our characters' needs are initially related to their bodies – they want a relaxing massage. These days, people hold a strong belief in various physical gestures, such as healing, magic tricks and miraculous diets. This is probably caused by a fear of the finality of death. Zhenia, the protagonist, transcends the corporeal and touches something more, allowing his clients to enter another dimension, outside this reality.

M.E: What Małgorzata is talking about may be the common human urge to prolong one's life in good physical or material condition. We live in times when people are constantly trying to measure, label, weigh and plan everything, attempting to create a formula for the perfect life. Exclusive gated communities, like the one where the film is set, are a further consequence of this type of thinking. The protagonist holds secrets inside him; the modern world is consumed by them. Both the coronavirus and the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe, which is referenced in the

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film, are phenomena which, although scientifically proven, are not tangible, they cannot be touched. They're metaphysical, a kind of force majeure. This reveals a certain spiritual void, which is why the place the characters are so willingly transported to is just that – an empty space.

M.S.: Yes, the film is about a need for spirituality. You can feel a new era coming. We are transitioning from aggressive capitalism and the gradual destruction of our planet towards a greater awareness of what it has all led to. We also have an urgent need to go deep inside ourselves.

In one of the scenes, the character played by Agata Kulesza says that all people care about nowadays are their looks. We focus on the physical, sharing the most minute details of our lives on social media. Where does this need come from?

M.S.: I think we've reached a dead end; although perhaps I'm naive and everything will soon go back to what it was like before. You can see an obsession with the physical, people want to keep their bodies good-looking and fully functional for as long as possible. This is caused by Instagram and the idealised images posted there. In reality, everything looks totally different. It's sick – you meet someone for the first time and you're surprised to see what they actually look like.

M.E.: The whole sphere of interpersonal relationships, now largely based on social networking platforms, is built on our need to belong to a group, to be accepted in society. As a result, people focus only on how they are perceived by others. This image is often distorted, filtered to fit a particular situation. In our film, we wanted to show people when they are alone. Zhenia's skills, especially hypnosis, are important in this context, as they let him pull the other characters out of the hustle and bustle of their everyday lives so they can finally get some rest and take a look at themselves in silence. The seemingly banal ability to look inside oneself, to define one's real needs and longings, to name one's feelings, is actually a very difficult task for them. They avoid hard questions, interpreting reality in the way that suits them best. But certain questions cannot be escaped, they'll catch up with us sooner or later. As Eastern philosophy teaches: 'Without mud, the lotus cannot bloom'... they cannot be touched. They're metaphysical, a kind of force majeure. This reveals a certain spiritual void, which is why the place the characters are so willingly transported to is just that – an empty space.

M.S.: Yes, the film is about a need for spirituality. You can feel a new era coming. We are transitioning from aggressive capitalism and the gradual destruction of our planet towards a greater awareness of what it has all led to. We also have an urgent need to go deep inside ourselves.

The characters also seek this approval from Zhenia. 'Don't think ill of us', says one of them, as he lies on the massage bed.

M.S.: They all have a strong need to be accepted, and Zhenia seems extraordinary to them, perhaps because of his Eastern origins. It's funny, but he seems exotic to them. These people no longer identify with the East, they consider themselves part of Western Europe, which is why they ascribe wondrous characteristics to the exotic, Ukrainian healer. It is very common in communities like the one in the film to recommend masseurs, osteopaths, teachers and therapists to each other, treating them like miniature idols. The characters find solace in Zhenia. The sexual aspect is also important – he has a strong affect on women. He is a man with a mystery, but no specific qualities; his clients can project whatever characteristics they wish onto him. He may be a guardian angel to one person and a Woland character to another.

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They also patronise him, for example in the scene where he has to massage one of the clients' dogs.

M.S.: Zhenia is, after all, an employee, a person of lower status. The picture we painted of the Polish nouveau riche who think they are entitled to more may be a bit mean, but it is definitely true. There is a certain amount of warmth in our teasing, because we didn't intend to criticise anyone. After all, we are partly describing people we know, including ourselves.

Is the image of the Polish upper class, which you portrayed through the inhabitants of the gated community, the result of your observations?

M.S.: Some of it is personal. The characters' children go to a French school, like our own kids. During the year I spent in Paris, my son, who plays a part in the film, went to kindergarten there, so it seemed like a natural continuation. I paved the way and now Michał and Maja Ostaszewska's children also go there. This gave us a close look at the French school system. The people whose kids go to private, foreign schools are a very specific crowd. On the other hand, the level of education they receive gives their children total freedom. They speak foreign languages perfectly, they have no reasons to feel insecure... Curiously enough, Poland is what they like best. What a paradox. Our upper class has a serious inferiority complex about its Easternness, they would like to break away from the East. This subject has not yet been taken up by Polish cinema.

M.E.: We also made fun of ourselves in the film. At first glance, the setting seems totally unattractive to a filmmaker – these people have everything they need, they have no problems. We don't raise any particularly important social issues. We decided to take a contrary approach to the matter – maybe it's worth exploring something that seems safe?

Is the film largely based on your own experiences?

M.S.: A lot is based on me, on Maja Ostaszewska, on the other mothers we know from the school. The scene about cutting down trees is Michał's story. It's always a mix. Besides, we started out as documentary filmmakers. We have a knack for observation – it's where our films come from. It was Michał who came up with the idea of making a film about a masseur, a kind of modern-day confessor. We do actually know a man who wanders from house to house with a folding bed. We built the story step by step based on our observations of people and their relationships. At one point, we wanted to make a film about the mothers and their relationships with their children. We used that a lot. Parents often refuse to admit that their children are particularly rude or aggressive towards them. They hide it very carefully. I once read a New York Times article about the phenomenon of 'helicopter parenting' – parents who do too much for their children, spreading a protective umbrella over them, turning them into people who are completely unable to cope with adult life. It's an upper-class sin. Michał and I come from a generation which grew up under communism. When I talk to my foreign friends, they simply can't imagine that when I was 15, there was nothing in Poland. They think I'm joking. We grew up in a different system, where materialist, capitalist values didn't exist. We experienced both realities, which I think makes us tougher. We know a lot about life.

An important topic, increasingly present in public discourse over the last couple of years, is the issue of migration, including for economical reasons, and how various European countries are dealing with it. Is this why Zhenia comes from Ukraine?

M.S.: Good drama requires problems to be condensed. If the masseur was a Pole, he wouldn't be able to say as much about our society. It's always easier to see yourself in a stranger, to recognise your own problems in him. Just as Poles are used as cheap labour in the West, so are Ukrainians

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in Poland. They come here, often working illegally. It turns out that getting a permanent visa isn't that easy, so they are forced to go back home every so often. Zhenia uses his hypnotic abilities to illegally obtain a permanent residence permit. He did what he had to do – Ukrainians really don't have it easy here. The gated housing estate is a symbol of modern Poland, but it may even be a symbol of Europe. After all, we are all watching her close her borders to refugees. We grew up in a different system, where materialist, capitalist values didn't exist. We experienced both realities, which I think makes us tougher. We know a lot about life.

Why does the upper class have such a strong need for isolation?

M.S.: I think it's very Polish. Many parents I know from private schools live in such places. Their explanation is simple – they spent their lives working very hard to achieve the position they currently have. Political scientist Rafał Matyja wrote a very interesting analysis of this phenomenon – he claims the upper class is actually impoverished. They aspire to gated communities where everyone else is exactly like them. They don't want neighbours who live in council houses. They cling on to their own group and isolate themselves from the rest. But they aren't rich enough to buy full freedom. They live in a spiral, which forces them to constantly make more money to preserve their status, which makes them terribly neurotic and even less keen to share their space with people who, in their opinion, don't deserve it. Matyja calls Poland a semi-peripheral country, plagued by an inferiority complex shaped by its history. We are on the outskirts of the mainstream. Interestingly enough, the elites of London or New York want to live in totally different places than their Polish counterparts. The Polish upper class usually lives outside cities, in estates which are walled off from the rest of the world. They don't want to be in bustling city centres.

M.E.: The semi-peripheral nature of our country is the soil on which the populist seed of radical ideologies can flourish, as we can see at the moment. It targets our complexes, activating a desire for ennoblement, as well as pride and conceit, creating an aggressive understanding of nationality. It also generates a need to feel safe, to build a wall around ourselves so a stranger can't even sneeze on us. In a broader context, this is becoming increasingly dangerous. Life is about the ability to enter dialogue with people of different origins, views, social classes. The desire to surround oneself with one's own people, which stems from a fear of otherness, reinforces boundaries which are currently getting stronger and stronger. Like Małgorzata said, the estate where our film is set can be associated with many things. Even the guard makes fun of his role, knowing that he can let someone in or send them away, depending on his mood. These are our little codes which we try to present in a funny, inconspicuous way.

These codes seem to be an important, characteristic element of your films.

M.S.: Someone counted the films we made together – it turns out this was our 17th. The farther you go, as they say... We have the impression that almost all the stories that can possibly be told have already been told. That's why form is key. These days, when we're drowning in a deluge of audiovisual pulp, form is what makes a film stand out. To tell a story, you first have to know how to do it. To me, that's what cinema is about. It's not about repeating tropes you've seen thousands of times in other films. I think we've developed our own style over the years.

Do you work on the visual aspects as you're writing the script?

M.E.: Certainly, to some extent, because our scripts are usually shorthand. We write using slogans instead of elaborate sentences. A word, especially when written, is just a seed. Sometimes, we describe a seemingly simple scene which the production manager plans to shoot in an hour, but turns out we need a whole day. Not everyone is able to understand this at first, but it's a matter of emphasis. This

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is where cinema really begins. Sometimes we don't fully realise why something moves us, but when it does, we follow it. Intuition mixes with experience and artistic sensibility. It's also a matter of courage, the ability to take risks and make radical decisions.

M.S.: It takes a lot of time to make a film this way, to try each camera position. Suddenly you understand why Alfonso Cuarón needed 110 days to shoot 'Roma'. We shot 'Never Gonna Snow Again' in less than 40 days, so we had to react quickly. The crew was sometimes a bit shaken, because we changed all our plans overnight, but they already know us a bit, so they were able to trust us. There's also the question of the pressure we put on ourselves. There's always an element of compromise, but we hate giving up at a certain stage.

Did you shoot a lot of spontaneous extra scenes, like you did for 'Body'?

M.E.: We've had the nickname 'Bonus&Value' for a few years now. This is how it started: you always write the scene number on the clapperboard, and because we kept adding things, someone began using those two words. We didn't add much to 'Never Gonna Snow Again', though. We shot the film in two, actually three stages. We had the whole concept, but because we were unable to do more rehearsals with the full cast, we had to react on set. There were a few difficult moments when we changed the beginnings of scenes, not to mention the dialogues. But I felt that we had a very clear picture of where we were going the whole time.

In this context, does it help to work with your regular crew, such as costume designer Katarzyna Lewińska, makeup artist Waldemar Pokromski and actors Maja Ostaszewska, Andrzej Chyra and Łukasz Simlat?

M.S.: It definitely saves a lot of time. I consider myself skilled at leading actors, although I admit I keep it brief and quick. I find working with experienced actors very easy. Agata Kulesza is a good example – it was her first role in one of my films, but there was a mutual trust between us. We were both curious about working together and we both wanted to do it. I told her about her character, about the specific scenes, she didn't ask any unnecessary questions. It wasn't hard, as was the case with Maja Ostaszewska, with whom I'd worked many times before.

Alec Utgoff, known from the third season of the popular series 'Stranger Things', as well as the big-budget production 'Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit' (2014), plays the role of Zhenia. How did he end up on set?

M.S.: My son, who watched the third season of 'Stranger Things', pointed Alec's character Alexei, out to me. At the time, Michał and I were looking hard for a lead actors. We had several ideas, but we finally decided we had to have a Ukrainian or Russian actor. We hired a casting agency, which sent us several propositions, but we didn't find anyone interesting. I sat down to watch season three of the series, which I am personally a fan of, and I texted Michał: I think I've found our masseur. Alec has a very interesting face. He looked exactly like the character we had been imagining. Reaching him, however, turned out to be extremely difficult. Finally, my American agency got involved. At first, he declined. I immediately wrote to his agent, who arranged for us to meet in London. We had the chance to talk before I left and I quickly managed to convince him. Our cooperation turned out to be fruitful, albeit exceptional. Alec is very technically skilled, but being used to large, studio productions, he was expecting totally different messages from me – very specific information regarding the character's behaviour and motivations. Which wasn't easy, because Zhenia's character is ambiguous.

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Visually, the story is told in a fairly simple way, which contrasts with the stylised parts set in the reality into which the characters are transported.

M.E.: The starting point was important, that is the social class which the film was all about. Its aesthetics don't really appeal to us, we found their surroundings visually unattractive. We had to find an approach which would allow us to describe something we find unappealing – such as the exclusive, gated estate – in an interesting way. Set designer Jagna Janicka found a way to do this. We first visited the estate with our German producer, pretending to be potential buyers. We slowly melted the hearts of the housing association in order to convince them to let us in for a longer period of time. In our films, we often adopt the narrator's point of view. Despite the fact that we have a strong protagonist, the story isn't really told from his perspective. In order to describe a certain social situation, we had to take a step back from it and watch it from a distance. This point of view is interwoven with Zhenia's inner world and the reality of the intimate side of hypnosis. The narrative becomes more personal, more mysterious. With us, however, simplicity in thinking and storytelling, combined with a certain intensity, always wins. Having said that, simple doesn't have to mean obvious. Parts of the film strongly influence the viewer's perception. During Zhenia's first visit at Maria's, there is a lot of noise until the moment she falls asleep. There is a long silence. She is woken by Zhenia snapping his fingers, which we also intended to bring viewers out of a certain trance. Rhythm and contrasts were very important to me.

In 2000, you made the short film 'Ascention', inspired by Mikhail Bulgakov's prose. The plot was based on a similar concept – the appearance of a mysterious stranger in a small community changes people and their relationships.

M.E.: We even thought about how Zhenia has something of Woland in him. Both films are based on layered storytelling. The everyday drama contrasts with a hopefully subtle attempt at touching the metaphysical. In the short you mentioned, we also used a simple event as a starting point to enter the characters' stories a bit more intimately. It's usually harder to tell a story with a collective protagonist. Although Zhenia is the main character of 'Never Gonna Snow Again', there were important protagonists in each of the houses. A situation like this calls for compression and shorthand, which is why we often use props as storytelling devices. This allows us to broaden the literary scope without adding events to the plot.

M.S.: Interestingly enough, 'Ascention' was our ticket abroad. The short was shown in the Cinefondation selection at Cannes. It was an amazing experience for us as young people.

'Never Gonna Snow Again' is also a continuation of your long-term cooperation.

M.S.: We worked together on all our films, although we kept separate credits. We now decided this doesn't make much sense and we want to operate as a duo. Michał's contribution to the project was even greater than usual, which is why he is credited as 'cooperating director'. We are also getting more and more offers from abroad. We felt that we have to reinvent ourselves, plan our future in cinema. We would like our duo to become widely recognizable one day and we are making a conscious effort to make that happen. Being an artistic duo gives us many more opportunities than working solo.

The titular snowfall is a cathartic moment for the characters, a hope for something new. At the same time, a title appears informing viewers that the last snowfall will occur in 2025.

M.S.: I remember looking forward to winter when I was a little girl, when we used to go sledding and build snowmen... As a result of climate change, my children no longer know the Poland where it always used to snow in the winter. Global warming also sparked the pandemic – the one we're going through

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now, as well as the ones we will see in the future. People will have to learn to function under new conditions and build their immunity, because without it, individuals will be vulnerable to all these bad things. A terrible situation is unfolding in front of our eyes, where only the strong will be able to survive. As I watch the world change, I think about my children, and I feel a certain anxiety. They will probably never see many things I had the chance to witness. Not only snow, but certain species of animals. Perhaps they will live in a wonderful world without the constant pressure, the rat race of capitalism. But I am really worried about how they will function. And though I believe there is hope in our film, I do know for sure that it's never going to snow again.

The titular snowfall is a cathartic moment for the characters, a hope for something new. At the same time, a title appears informing viewers that the last snowfall will occur in 2025.

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