

REEL SUSPECTS

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INVISIBLE



A film by Ignas JONYNAS
102 min, Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, Spain, 2019
Color, HD & DCP
Lithuanian, Ukrainian

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LOGLINE

An ageing dancer pretends to be blind to become a TV star, but before the lie is exposed, he has to face his past crimes.



SYNOPSIS

A former dancer Jonas pretends to be blind to enter a TV dance competition. He meets his new dance partner Saulė who at first is disturbed by Jonas' disability, but soon enough discomfort gives way to genuine interest and the couple becomes the most popular contestants of the show. At the same time Vytas, someone from Jonas' past, is released from prison after serving a sentence for murdering his wife Marija. Vytas is afflicted with contradictory feelings: he is convinced that his wife's ex-lover Jonas is equally responsible for her death.



DIRECTOR' STATEMENT

Since Jonas uses his disability as a tool of manipulation, the relation between blindness and manipulation appears as the main topic of the film. We live in the age of visual culture, which made the information more visible, but at the same time it gave an opportunity to create illusion and manipulate with human mind. In Lithuania, as in many other countries, television is a mass consumer product, which forms the viewer's worldview, perception of aesthetics, political and ethical choices. In reaching the widest possible audience, it became a huge manipulative mechanism, bringing political or financial benefit. TV media forms a criterion of truth, installs values and sets the units of measurements, according to which people's deeds are assessed, world's geopolitical events are perceived or the popularity of fashion and trends are imposed upon. Paradoxically, the more images viewer sees, the blinder he gets.

INVISIBLE confronts different forms of blindness – physical and symbolic – and brings up the question, if it is still possible to “see the truth” in nowadays world. The aesthetics of the film is conditioned by interweaving of two cinematic impulses: documentary and fiction. Focusing on details and unconventional compositions, the cinematography would allow us a glimpse into hidden feelings and invisible layers beyond social contexts. The “objective” and “observational” camera constantly gravitates towards fiction, revealing ambiguous sides of the characters and their relationships with others. The blindness, as a deprivation of the visual, opens up a space for the corporeal and the sensual. This film aims to follow the logic of sensation and non-voyeuristic eroticism. Certain images would start to function as gestures and touches, so that tangible could be cut out in the visible. Through the shift of attention to other senses, alternative patterns of bodily movements, their rhythms and intonations would be exercised. The film aims to locate the space, which is still left for intimacy and internal visions, conceiving it almost as an impossible task. In the world of technological media, the individual becomes homogenized and conditioned by trivial social preconceptions. In our film, the moments of pure solitude and intimacy would be contrasted with situations of collective and social world. The cinematographic canvas of the film is based on the intensification of colors and the contrasts among them. This kind of aesthetic tension aims to capture the actual experience of blindness, when the imaginary becomes the part the real, as if ordinary situations were seen in phantasmatic and surreal colors.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

IGNAS JONYNAS (Lithuania) director/writer studied Theatre and TV directing studies at Lithuania Academy of Music and Theatre (LMTA). Has been working in film & theatre since 1993. In 2003 wrote and directed SUNDAY AS IT IS - 40 minutes feature which was screened at a number of film festivals. His short THE DANCING WORM won the Audience Award at the Circuitto of Venice International Short Film Festival in 2007 and the Best Photography Award at Luciana Film Festival. The first feature full-length film of Ignas as a writer and director THE GAMBLER had its World premiere at 61st San Sebastian Film Festival (New Directors) and was screened at more than 40 festivals and countries around the world. The film won the Special Jury Award at the 29th Warsaw Film Festival, 6 Silver Crane Awards in Lithuania (including Best Film Award), as well was awarded at 9th L'Europe Autour de l'Europe - Arthouse Film Festival of Paris, France (Prix Sauvage

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Competition, Special Jury Award and Prix Luna for Best Film) and 30th Festroia International Film Festival of Setúbal (Silver Dolphins for Best Script and Best Actor). Ignas Jonynas has also directed numerous plays at the theatres.

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

Sunday as it is (2003)
The Dancing Worm - SHORT (2007)
The Gambler – FEATURE (2013)

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Country	Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, Spain
Duration	102 minutes
Language	Lithuanian, Ukrainian
Image	Color
Screening Format	2K DCP / 5.1 Surround Sound / Flat 1.85:1
Shooting Format	Arriraw 2,8K
Shooting Location	Lithuania, Ukraine

CAST

Jonas	Dainius KAZLAUSKAS
Saule	Paulina TAUJANSKAITE
Vytas	Darius BAGDZIUNAS
Petro	Alexandr IGNATUSHA

CREW

Directed by	Ignas Jonynas
Written by	Ignas Jonynas & Kristupas Sabolius
Edited by	Paulius Zavadskis
Produced by	Magic Films, Locomotive Productions, Limelite, Nephilim Producciones

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Director of Photography
Costume Designer
Production Designer
Sound
Music Composer

Denys Lushchyk
Sandra Straukaite
Nerijus Narmontas
N/A
Toms Aunins

PRESS REVIEWS

Cineuropa

SAN SEBASTIÁN 2019 New Directors

Review: Invisible

by CRISTÓBAL SOAGE

29/09/2019 - The second feature from Lithuanian director Ignas Jonynas seals his reputation as a bold voyager into the human soul, with this brilliant — and disturbing — piece of craftsmanship



Dainius Kazlauskas in *Invisible*

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Lithuanian filmmaker **Ignas Jonynas** has returned to the New Directors section at the 67th [San Sebastián International Film Festival](#) with *Invisible* [+], a powerful film with an unequivocal visual impact. Add in an airtight screenplay that leaves no loose end untied, the work of Jonynas himself and his frequent writing partner **Kristupas Sabolius**, and the audience is assured a memorable cinema experience. It's one of those films that you don't want to know too much about in advance in case it spoils the effect; suffice it to say that it's a story about two men whose lives are advancing down parallel paths, linked by a single traumatic and violent event that condemns them to run into one another again.

(The article continues below - Commercial information)

Invisible opens with a series of ravishing nature scenes that contrast almost indecently with the people we find in them, who seem to represent the most abject faces of the human condition. We see the dead body of a woman with unmistakable signs of violence in the back of a van, and a man with bloodstained clothes fleeing an unseen pursuer in a disoriented haze. The contrast between the sublime and the viciously repulsive is established right from the start. Indeed, one of the film's recurrent devices is to show two diametrically opposed realities in the same scene, realities that, when they eventually collide, will unleash an uncontrollable danger.

From this commanding beginning, we find ourselves searching for the thread that connects what we saw in the opening scenes to Jonas (a dashing but tortured dancer who can't seem to get his life on track, played by **Dainius Kazlauskas**) and Vitas (a recluse who, after winning his freedom, is riddled with a desire for revenge that nothing can assuage, played by **Darius Bagdziunas**). The film toys with the viewer's expectations, leading its protagonists on a sinuous path without ever troubling to clarify their ultimate destination. Jonas tries his luck in a TV talent show and manages to become a national hero by giving a thrilling performance in a ballroom dancing contest while pretending to be blind. Meanwhile, Vytas gives himself up to his all-consuming rage, finding no comfort in the church where he frequently takes refuge and able to think of nothing that eclipses his desperate craving for vengeance.

And so, through a man who is lost and overwhelmed by his emotions, and another alienated from himself by a hatred that we never quite get to the bottom of, Jonynas offers us a searingly truthful insight into a diverse and complex set of themes. From our innate capacity to deceive ourselves and block out reality, to the media's shameless manipulation of people's hopes and expectations, to the pernicious effects of lies and violence, the film lands its punches with a captivating formal restraint that keeps our eyes glued to the screen throughout.

Invisible was produced by [Magic Films](#) (Lithuania), [Locomotive Productions](#) (Latvia), [Limelite](#) [+] (Ukraine) and [Nephilim Producciones](#) (Spain).

France's [Reel Suspects](#) are managing international sales.

Cineuropa

SAN SEBASTIÁN 2019 [New Directors](#)

Ignas Jonynas and Kristupas Sabolius • Director and screenwriter of *Invisible*

"Our choreographer was also an important scriptwriter, as he wrote the whole choreography of the two characters' feelings"

by CRISTÓBAL SOAGE

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01/10/2019 - We sat down with Ignas Jonynas and Kristupas Sabolius to talk about their second, San Sebastián-screened film, *Invisible*, which addresses topics such as toxic masculinity and media manipulation

Six years after their first time taking part in the New Directors section of the [San Sebastián Film Festival](#) with [The Gambler](#) [+], Lithuanian filmmakers Ignas Jonynas and Kristupas Sabolius visit the Basque city once again to present [Invisible](#) [+]. This visually rich piece of work tackles a diverse range of powerful topics, resulting in a film that is emotionally moving as well as intellectually stimulating.

Cineuropa: Your first feature won myriad awards and plaudits; did this put more pressure on you while making your sophomore film, or did it give you more confidence?

Ignas Jonynas: I think each film and each movement in art are precious for you as a person. You try to find the best way to deliver your ideas. We start from an idea – what’s bothering us or what could be interesting for our society – and then we try to find the best way to convey it. We try to find an entertaining way to talk to the audience about things. The biggest pressure is yourself.

Kristupas Sabolius: The average amount of time we spend writing is four years. Digging into a topic that is important for us takes up all the time. The most difficult thing is to find common ground.

The producer of the TV show says, “People want sad stories with happy endings.” If that’s true, your film is going to have a tough time of it with the audience. What do you think?

KS: In the movie, we talk about false expectations. That’s how television works: they create the promise of fake happiness. That’s also how capitalism works: you’re going to win the jackpot and become a millionaire. Nothing of this, or at least 99% of it, ever happens. You remain stuck in this mediocre bubble usually, which is neither tragic nor glorious. But tragedies are important, and that’s what the Greeks discovered. Tragedy is an exaggeration, of course, but it’s important to eliminate false expectations in order to better understand that these false expectations are leading you into some kind of mist.

The way you shoot nature makes it feel almost sacred and pure, in contrast with the human characters, who are far from it. What was your intention with this?

IJ: Through nature, we wanted to show the wild dimension of a human being, contrasting it with the spiritual one, which we show through religion. The question is how to balance it out. All through the film, you see how these two realities are always intertwining.

KS: And also, nature is sacred, in a way, and there is a relationship between nature and dance. If you think about dance, there are two dimensions: one that can be seen, and other that is internal, which you can feel. We think that’s a good way to talk about the truth. Nature, for us, represents an invisible truth because you cannot see the “real” nature; you can see beautiful images of animals, but nature is something much wilder, but always truthful. There are no lies in nature – that’s an invention by human beings.

How did you prepare the choreography? Are the actors professional dancers?

IJ: That was tricky, as the characters in the film are richly layered, and through movement, you see a lot of things about them that they can’t fake through that movement. The main actor [Dainius Kazlauskas] was my classmate, and I know his background: he was a professional dancer, but that was 25 years ago. So he had to train a great deal, and it was very challenging for him – we had two months of very intense rehearsals. The actress who

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plays the dancer [Paulina Tautasnaikaitė] has some ballet experience. She wasn't a professional in this area but has been involved with it for years. The choreographer was extremely important in helping them.

KS: Our choreographer was also an important scriptwriter, as he wrote the whole choreography of these two characters' feelings. We tried to write it down in the script, but it's impossible to put down in words how the chemistry of the dance happens, as it's very subtle.

One of the characters finds solace in the church, while the other discovers new horizons in TV shows. Are the media a new kind of god?

IJ: Yes, I think so. Images in general are a new god, because we live in a world of images and are surrounded by them. We are very dependent on them: you only have to look at social networks and how people present themselves. They can be completely depressed but they will still flaunt their impressive lives all the time.

Hidden Treasure: Jonynas Stages Greek Tragedy against Backdrop of Eastern Europe



A student of [Krzysztof Zanussi](#), Lithuanian director [Ignas Jonynas](#) infuses his third feature film with a tragedy of high style, filling it with frenzied passion, a cold-blooded premeditation and unsolvable philosophical questions. *Invisible* is a drama with a love triangle at its centre, and builds to a payoff that will surprise even the most sophisticated of viewers.

Jonas (Dainius Kazlauskas) is a middle-aged man living with his blind taxidermist uncle in an remote village. As a dancer, he dreams of being noticed and appreciated but faces countless refusals , until he realizes that a physical disability could give him the edge in

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the eyes of TV producers and viewers. After all, everybody admires how these people courageously perform on stage. Jonas then pretends to be blind, deceiving the producers who hire him, his dance partner Saule (Paulina Tujanskaitė) and the large audience of a television dance show. The dream is close to coming true, but one day the past catches up to Jonas: Vytas (Darius Bagdziunas), the jealous husband of Jonas' lover, finds him to get revenge.

For the Polish cinema built on moral anxiety (Wajda, Kieslowski, Zanussi), the starting point was asking eternal philosophical questions, relying on biblical subjects and ancient Greek drama. Jonynas' film is an Oedipal tragedy, trying to deceive fate and to avoid destiny. *Invisible* focuses on the universal questions of good and evil, truth and lies. Questions that everyone solves alone: behind closed doors, not on TV shows. Continuing the tradition of Polish cinema, Jonynas creates a closed world, gloomy, and yet picturesque and populated by curious human monster types. The movement takes place from the outside world to the world of the innermost feelings. It's an animal instinct, the kind that is inherent to every person, that moves Jonas, and is reflected in his surroundings: stuffed animals in the house of a relative, mystical visions from the past appearing in the forest.

DP Denis Luschnik films them all vividly, including a virtual deer on the TV set. As a primeval man, Jonas expresses his feelings without words, only through dance. He despises ballroom dancing because of its rigid construction and measured scores, favouring the sharp, chaotic movements of contemporary dance instead, in which he strives for a free and unrestrained existence. Wherever the tragedy occurs and whatever it's based on, the catharsis is an indispensable element of purification. *Invisible* is a proof of a new moral anxiety, and an attempt at purification in everyday life.

Reviewed on October 17th at the 2019 Warsaw International Film Festival – Competition 1-2. 84 Mins. Part of the The Fipresci Warsaw Critics Project.