

Letter to America (Писмо до Америка)

Bulgaria / 89mins / 2001

Director and Screenwriter: Iglika Trifonova

Cinematography: Rali Ralchev

Editing: Yordanka Bachvarova, Floor Smal

Sound: Gusta van Eijk, Antoin Cox, Robert Juhazs

Music: Milcho Leviev

Cast: Philip Avramov, Ana Papadopulu,
Peter Antonov, Andy Barret, Joreta Nikolova and more.



This is one of the first screenings of LETTER TO AMERICA in the South East, and I am most grateful for Alan Foster for his efforts in promoting the film. Until last year, Allan was chair of BFFS Scotland and was in 2001 invited to be their representative on the International Federation of Film Societies panel adjudicating at the Molodist International Film Festival, Kiev, 2001 as to which film was to receive the Don Quixote award. (Molodist means "youth" in

Ukrainian, and the festival is dedicated to film debuts and student films).

The panel gave the award to LETTER TO AMERICA, and Allan must have been impressed as he now has permission to allow film societies in the UK to screen the film. It has never received a UK film classification or been taken up by any distribution company.

In Bulgaria LETTER TO AMERICA was awarded 9 national prizes, and was the country's submission for the 2001 Oscar awards for best foreign film. It has since been selected by over 40 international festivals and also included in over 20 special screenings around the world, as well as being broadcast in Germany, France, Israel, Greece, Canada, Japan and other countries.

Audiences across Europe have been thrilled by a stunning, romantic story of a broken friendship.

When surfing the web for information on the film I discovered that the Cinema Paradiso film club in The Netherlands screened the film this August and it received an audience mark of 8.28 out of 10, consequently receiving a higher score than well known titles such as Kill Bill Vol 1 (8.24); Lost in Translation (7.93); The Dancer Upstairs (7.69).

Although it is hard to compare one film with the next, it does go to show that an audience used to mainstream American titles can still decide that a Bulgarian film merited a higher score. (Incidentally their currently top rated film for this year is Nanook of the North with 9.51. This is the classic documentary made in 1922 by Robert J. Flaherty. The Whale Rider is presently fourth with 9.14).



Perhaps the following gives a good explanation as to why LETTER TO AMERICA has been well received. This is the report of the jury at the 25th Noordelijk Film Festival (Northern Film Festival) held in 2003. It claims to be the largest regional film festival in the Netherlands

“During the past five days, the jury has watched many exciting films, of which only seven films were nominated for the Interregio Competition, and only one these seven films could be awarded the so-called Matad’or.



Choosing one film out seven seems an easy task, but it isn't. It is hard to draw a line between good and better and between better and best, and the decision will always be subjective, even with a bigger jury. We agreed on good and bad, but then which film is best....?

Finally we agreed on a film....:

a poetic film that applies the possibilities of the medium for telling a seemingly simple story.

a quest in the shape of a road movie. A journey from a busy, degenerated city into a unique landscape with authentically exciting people, touched and shaped by life, but completely in balance with themselves and their surroundings.

a quest out of a no-nonsense society (in which, as we all know, nonsense seems to be a criterion) to intimacy, quietness, passion, the ease with which we make up with death.

an exciting quest of a simple tune, that - through being sung – brings the dead back to life.



The jury is glad to be able to reward the clear views and the braveness of this female filmmaker.



We hope that this award will be a stepping stone in the process of making a new masterpiece.

The jury is deeply grateful for this magnificent film.

As you probably already know, the Matad’or 2003 goes to Igluka Trifonova for the film LETTER TO AMERICA.”

(WNCC members may be interested to learn that for that film festival, “The winner of the Inter-Regional Competition will receive €10 000 and the Matad’or. The prize is fashioned in the form of a rising star. The name Matad’or refers to winner’s gold, the toughness of the bullfighter, but also to the spy Mata Hari, that famously individual and independent Frisian woman.”)

I think this film will reveal a part of Europe that few of us will have seen, thereby once again demonstrating that it really is One World.

Iain McGlashan

Igluka Trifonova

(1957, Sofia) studied Film and Television Directing at the National School of Theatre and Film in Sofia, Bulgaria, from which she graduated in 1982. She worked as assistant director, later started to direct documentary films. Letter to America was her feature debut.

