

RISE AND SHINE
CINEMA



HOLY COW

a film by Imam Hasanov

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Free Art
AZERBAIJANI FILM PRODUCTION

Kloos & Co.
Medien GmbH

Conset
FILMS

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LOGLINE

One man's dream of bringing a European cow into his picturesque mountain village in Azerbaijan unsettles the conservative community that wants to keep their secular traditions intact.

SYNOPSIS

Tapdig has a dream of bringing a European cow into his picturesque village in Azerbaijan to improve the conditions of his poor family. He decides to call the cow *Madona*.

His passion unsettles the traditional community, the Old Men see a threat in having a foreign cow among them as they say its milk will be full of chemicals. Even his wife Vafa does not want to take care of such a strange breed. But Tapdig is ready to risk it all and challenges the conservative mentality to open up and rethink the attitude.

How do human beings handle change while remaining true to their own traditions?

HOLY COW questions the prejudices against the unknown and how ready are we to accept a newcomer.

TRAILER: <https://vimeo.com/144750223>

SELECTED INTERNATIONAL PRESS:

"Clearly a talent in the making."

"Provides an interesting counterpoint to the timely economic migration story."

Filmuforia, <http://www.filmuforia.co.uk/holy-cow-2015-l-idfa/>

"This fairytale-like, uplifting narrative is not only a tribute to stubbornness but also a feelgood film about making dreams come true. It shows how people change when globalization affects them directly in their existence - even in the smallest village in the Caucasus."

Sweet Movies, <http://sweetmovies.nl/idfa-18-29-november/>

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CREW

Written and directed by: Imam Hasanov
Camera: Sarvar Javadov
Sound: Jalil Mamadov
Sound Mixing: Martin Blauber (Beep)
Sound Design: Thomas Wallmann, Niklas Kammertons (Neuton)
Colorgrading & Mastering: Jan Ali Moravec (Spoon)
Editor: Philipp Gromov
Produced by: Veronika Janatková, Andra Popescu, Stefan Kloos
With: Xanali Tapdiq Huseynov, Vafa Huseynova
Jalil Huseynov, Atamai Huseynov, Emil Huseynov
and Madona & Alyonka

A production of Kloos & Co. Medien (GE), FreeArt (AZ) and Conset (RO)
in coproduction with ZDF in collaboration with ARTE supported by Doha Film Institute, Medienboard
Berlin-Brandenburg, Sundance Documentary Film Program

Developed at CAUCADOC 2012 and DOK Incubator 2015

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Format: 1 :1.85 color
Screening format: DCP, File
Length : ca. 75min.
Original language : Azeri, Farsi with subtitles

THE DIRECTOR: IMAM HASANOV



Imam Hasanov is an upcoming filmmaker from Quba, Azerbaijan. After graduating from the Baku State University of Art and Culture with a degree in Film and Theatre Directing in 2002, Hasanov made his debut as a director of several theatre plays and founded the Creative Youth Organisation *Azerbaijan Union of Theatrical Figures*.

In 2006, after a Studio Ateliers Varan course on documentary film, he started working as a director for national TV. *HOLY COW* is his first feature documentary. It received the CAUCADOC BEST PITCH AWARD in 2012 and was awarded at DOK INCUBATOR 2015. Imam is an alumni of the

BERLINALE TALENT CAMPUS.

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR IMAM HASANOV

How did it all start? How did you get the idea for the film?

Some years ago, the national Azerbaijan television sent me to do a reportage in this very typical traditional village *Lahic*; a rural place where daily life hasn't changed for decades. The society there is based on traditions, routines and religion.

By chance, I was introduced to this man: TAPDIQ, a simple farmer, who is dreaming of changing the life and poor living conditions of his family by importing a cow. Not an ordinary cow, but a European cow, which can produce four times more milk than a local cow.

For me it was important to show the simple and real life of these people. Because most of the movies shot in our country, even documentaries, are showing the good and happy life. As if we didn't have any problems and all of us would live very happily. But this is not reality. Where there are people, there are also problems...

How did you work with Tapdiq? How was it to shoot the family's daily life?

I remember our first meeting with him. He was proud and brave. He believed that no matter what he will buy this cow. And I believed in him and in his dream.

The relationship with his wife had already been spoiled by his dream of a cow. His wife Vafa was initially against the idea of bringing the cow, she was also against the film and my crew. In the beginning, I could not even shoot with her. She always avoided the camera and did not want us to enter their family life.

As in each family they had their issues and disputes. Vafa being afraid of the old men and local residents, she did not want others to know about their conflicts. In an old village like this, it is the *Aqsaqal*, a group of well respected old men who give advice to everyone how they should live their lives. And if you don't obey and don't listen to them, you lose the respect of the community, you become an outsider, everyone ignores you.

I negotiated so many times with Vafa not to be against us. Her husband did as well. I promised to protect them from the attack of the old men and the local people. She started to like us and appreciated our presence only when the cow-dream began to work in reality, when it started changing their life and brought a little happiness to their family.

Who would imagine that a foreign cow can improve a family's income? Who would believe that a European cow can secure a family's future?

I am absolutely sure that this film and the cow has changed their life and really brought them a little happiness. And of course to me, too. Now they are happy together and I'm happy for them.

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Can you tell us more about the place the film was shot? Azerbaijan is not well known to us...

I've heard a lot about this ancient and strange place *Lahic*, but I had never been there before. I always wanted to go and see with my own eyes, but never succeeded. In times of the Soviet Union, this village was even more conservative. Gradually, however, the times changed and people began to move to the city and to other villages.

Then the Karabakh War began. Many died in this war, even our main protagonist Tapdiq was involved in this war, he was fighting for our homeland. These things slightly changed the situation in the village. But despite of all what was going on, the villagers, especially the old men, remained closed and conservative.

Initially, my protagonist had a dream to buy a cow, and my dream was to shoot a film. I saw how he collected the money for his dream. I was a witness how he was fighting for this dream. I saw how he followed this dream and never gave up.

What is the central theme of your film?

I think this is one of the central themes of the film: Never to give up. Follow your desires. And of course it is about the freedom of choice: Everyone has the right to choose how he wants to live and no one has the right to interfere in someone else's life.

I would like to convey this message through my protagonist to the audience: cherish tolerance, freedom, love and hope!

Tapdiq has it all inside of him. I think he is a very charismatic person. Everyone loves him.

This film is not about the cow; the presence of the cow is just an occasion to reveal the true face of the society. Our *Holy Cow* is just a metaphor. The metaphor of yesterday and tomorrow, the metaphor of the past and the future, the clash of East and West, these two great cultures and their trains of thoughts, non-perception of Islam by Christianity, or vice versa, and latent hatred towards each other within these big religions. The fact that such a traditional society is always ready to open up for innovation. Who would believe that a cow could create such a revolt?

FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.holycow-film.com

facebook.com/film.holy.cow

PRESSMATERIAL FOR DOWNLOAD:

www.holycow-film.de

www.riseandshine-berlin.de/portfolio_page/holy-cow/

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