

Cigarettes and Coffee (Un Cartus de Kent si un Pache), a 13 minute 35mm film scripted by Romanian Director Cristi Puiu, won the Golden Bear for the Best Short at the 2004 Berlin Film Festival. Set in a Bucharest restaurant, it draws the audience into a strained dialogue between Vlad, a successful young businessman and Mr Tomescu, his 60 year old father. Mr Tomescu has been dismissed from his job as a van driver two years before his

A devotee of Giorgio Morandi, the 20th century Italian minimalist artist, Puiu was pursuing a successful career as a fine artist when he saw Jim Jarmusch's **Strangers in Paradise**, a film that encouraged him to turn his creative energies to cinematography. "I very much liked the story and the acting and, although the images had little within them, I was attracted to their visual richness," he remarks.

them through a window and feeling the helplessness of their situation."

Mutu chose Kodak Vision 500T (5279) for its rich black and big latitude. "Cristi asked me to use as little light as possible to preserve a natural look, so I pushed the negative one stop and, at the same time, kept the ratio 1:4 between interior and exterior shots," he says. "We made the exterior a little colder by adding a KinoFlo 4 Bank with CTB half filter to balance the

Recalling Cigarettes and Coffee



planned retirement and asks his son for help in finding driving work, but Vlad can only propose a job as a night watchman. Already mentally and emotionally distant from each other, the generation gap deepens an already tense situation, with father and son carrying on their parallel trains of thought, unable to connect. When they part, their relationship has deteriorated even further.

After directing a series of shorts, Puiu made his feature debut with **Marfa Si Bani (Stuff and Dough)**, a striking award-winning drama that was selected for the Directors' Fortnight at Cannes 2001. "When I saw Jarmusch's first three **Coffee and Cigarettes** dialogue-led, restaurant-based films, I decided to pay homage to him by writing a script and filming my own classic version based on my relationship with my father," he says. "The human element was important to me in my choice of Oleg Mutu as Director of Photography, because I needed a person I could get along with who was sensitive rather than rationalistic. I normally prefer handheld shooting that gets close to actors' skins, but I wanted Oleg to shoot **Cigarettes and Coffee** in a very precise, structured manner with the ARRI BL-IV on a tripod. The film demanded sensitivity, combined with a cold, distant approach in shooting and editing to reflect the images and the tension that builds up in the dialogue. I wanted to give the audience the effect of physical closeness to the characters, while creating a distinct impression of detachment - of seeing

colour temperature from 3200K to 4500K and we were then able to obtain 4500K in the interiors and 5600K in the exteriors. During colour correction we adjusted the picture for natural skin colour, but maintained the colder background," notes Mutu.

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"Franciois Truffaut declared 'film has to say something about cinema and something about life' and that's the way I understand it," states Puiu. "My films say something about myself and my experiences and when I understand a concept, I don't feel comfortable about repeating it. Directing **Cigarettes and Coffee** was the most beautiful day of my life, but I want to continue exploring new images and new directions", he concludes.

Since forming Mandragora, his own production company in Bucharest, Puiu is shooting his second feature with Mutu - **Moartrea Domnului Lazarescu (Mr Lazareth's Death)** - a drama about an ailing drunkard who needs help, but is refused treatment at several hospitals. ■

left: Romanian Director Cristi Puiu

Above: Set in a Bucharest restaurant, *Cigarettes and Coffee* draws the audience into a strained dialogue between a businessman and his father.

