



# Ilegitim

## Illegitimate

**Adrian Sitaru**

**Producer** Anamaria Antoci, Stanisław Dziedzic, Klaudia Śmieja, Yohann Cornu. **Production companies** Domestic Film (Bucharest, Romania), Film Produkcja (Warsaw, Poland), Damned Films (Paris, France). **Director** Adrian Sitaru. **Screenplay** Alina Grigore, Adrian Sitaru. **Director of photography** Adrian Silisteanu, Alexandru Lorian Timosca. **Editor** Mircea Olteanu, Theo Lichtenberger. **Sound design** Ioan Filip, Dan-Stefan Rucareanu. **Sound** Ioan Filip. **Production design** Elena Manea. **Costumes** Marian Vasilescu.

**With** Alina Grigore (Sasha), Robi Urs (Romeo), Bogdan Albulescu (Cosma), Adrian Titieni (Victor), Cristina Olteanu (Gilda), Miruna Dumitrescu (Julie), Liviu Vizitiu (Bogdan).

DCP, colour. 89 min. Romanian.

**Premiere** 13 February 2016, Berlinale Forum

**World sales** Versatile Films

Sitting at the dinner table with his four grown-up children and their partners, widower Victor relishes his role as family patriarch. He holds forth on physics and wine until his son Cosma confronts him with the fact that his name has shown up in historical documents which indicate he denounced women wanting to flaunt the abortion ban in place until 1989. The mood abruptly shifts. Victor defends himself by pointing out that he is, after all, against abortion and that twins Sasha and Romi owe their very lives to this fact – their mother wanted to abort them. Yet when Sasha announces she is pregnant soon afterwards, Victor's convictions are put to a true test. The camera is always at the very centre of the family hurricane that begins to rage, following the heated discussions with pans and zooms and only catching its breath in more contemplative moments. This fast-paced film owes much to its terrific acting ensemble. It asks how different generations should deal both with each other and with historical responsibility, but most of all it is an intelligent look at just how little divides absolute truths, unwavering convictions and hypocrisy.

*Anna Hoffmann*

## There is no second take

*Ilegitim* is about time and how it affects us physically and psychologically. As such, I see it as a drama, with some good humour like in real life; a drama about love in all its forms. It's about relationships falling apart, about the choice between being pro-life or pro-abortion, but also about the choice of physical love between brothers – a taboo subject that is very little discussed, but which is covered by numerous specialised works.

Exceptional actors play themselves in the film as they do in real life, without second takes, filmed in a documentary style, with framing that seeks out the characters' faces, discovering things in the moment, as they happen in real life, when the cameraman would see the action for the first time.

Adrian Sitaru

## "It seems that the brain likes to be played with"

*Which was your main goal in making this film?*

**Adrian Sitaru:** I wanted to make a different kind of film, in a different cinematic style, from my previous work, and to be as un-intrusive as possible as an author, both in the script and the directing. The film is intended as half-fiction, half-documentary. *Ilegitim* was made without a proper budget, and nearly without any money, and was only possible thanks to the faith of several people and the support of the Romanian National Centre for Cinematography in Bucharest.

*Was the perspective in Ilegitim clear from the very beginning or did it change during shooting?*

It never had a clear direction, probably just an instinctive one. At one point, I had in mind the ending, the last scene. We struggled in the editing phase as well and, considering it was based on the concept of an observational documentary, it was not easy at all to handle it and find the precise angle. I think the idea of a forbidden love story was also there from the very beginning, when Alina Grigore came to me with a story in which the main characters were named Julie and Romi – a clear reference to Romeo and Juliet.

*How would you describe the experience of working with the actors?*

Building the characters and their backgrounds was probably where the longest, most challenging effort went. It took more than a year. But it did pay off, since during shooting I had nothing left to change about them. The characters were so well built and so aware of who they were, that they merged perfectly, from the very first take, just as I wished.

*How did the shooting go?*

I followed the idea that in real life we never get the chance for a second take, which makes it authentic, but also the fact that each day we have goals to accomplish, be they small or large. Each evening I would send each actor an e-mail especially for them with instructions about what their goal for the next day would be. And that was about it. They knew they were to start shooting at a set time and they were waiting for the production crew as if they were a family that had accepted being filmed, just like in a documentary where there is this kind of agreement. During the two weeks of shooting, the actors were in their characters' shoes 24/7. In fact, they had started

immersing into the characters long before the two weeks of shooting; that's why it was rather difficult for them to get out of character after the shooting. If you believe in what you are doing, this role-play, even when performed for short periods of time, can trigger a kind of schizophrenia. It seems that the brain likes to be played with.

*Taking into consideration the improvisation during shooting, how did the editing go?*

I wouldn't call what we did during shooting improvisation. You don't call the act of shopping improvisation. The editing was hard because we had several directions we could have followed. When I met our editor, Mircea Olteanu, I told him, 'Here you have around twenty-five hours of material filmed with two cameras over two weeks, I'm not giving you the screenplay because I don't really have much of that, I won't tell you what I think the film should be about because I am not exactly sure and I don't want to influence you, just as I did with the actors and the cameramen. Watch it, edit it and we'll talk more after that.'

*Ilegitim touches upon morality-related issues. Does the discourse of the film go in a moralising direction?*

I truly hope not. Certainly, it touches upon issues that have to do with morality, but it also deals with matters of law and legitimacy. I did not think of anything but my own prejudices and ambivalence, and those of the people around me. I do not have answers; only dilemmas I would like to share with people around me.

*What reactions or thoughts would you like to trigger in the audience through this film?*

I would like the audience to reflect upon what love in extreme situations means, as I did, and by that I mean real love. What does it mean to decide to forbid someone from something, or even worse, to forbid someone to live? What reasons would you have for that? What right would you have to decide for others? And no, I am not talking from a religious point of view; this would make things far simpler.

Interview: Catalin Anchidin, January 2016



**Adrian Sitaru** was born in Deva, Romania in 1971. After studying Computer Science at the Polytechnica University of Timișoara, he completed studies in Film and TV Directing at the University of Bucharest. In 2008 he made his debut full-length feature film, *Pescuit sportif/Hooked*. Adrian Sitaru lives and works in Bucharest.

## Films

2007: *Valuri* (16 min.). 2008: *Pescuit sportif/Hooked* (84 min.). 2009: *Lord* (23 min.). 2010: *Colivia/The Cage* (17 min.). 2011: *Din dragoste, cu cele mai bune intentii/Best Intentions* (103 min.). 2012: *Chefu'/House Party* (18 min.), *Domestic* (85 min.). 2013: *Fixeur/The Fixer* (98 min.). 2014: *Excursie/Excursion* (19 min.), *Arta/Art* (19 min.), *Counterpart* (20 min.). 2016: *Ilegitim / Illegitimate*.