

BLOSSOM VALLEY

A FILM BY LÁSZLÓ CSUJÁ



Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival
East of the West – Competition



FOCUSFOX presents within the frame of the Hungarian National Film Fund's Incubator Programme BLOSSOM VALLEY cast LÁSZLÓ RÉTI, BIANKA BERÉNYI, ROBERT KARDOS, KARDLY KOZMA, GYÖRGY KARDOS
production manager KATA CSANKI, VIKTOR EGRI executive producer ANDRÁS TÓTH, ANDRÁS PIRES MUHI Ist AD JÁNOS GYÖRGY sound GÁBOR CSÁSZÁR costume designer KÉARA KALICZ-MESZÁROS
production designer ANNA NYITRAI editor ATTILA CSABAI D.O.P. GERGELY VASS written by LÁSZLÓ CSUJÁ GERGŐ V. NAGY producer ANDRÁS MUHI GÁBOR FERENCZY director LÁSZLÓ CSUJÁ

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BLOSSOM VALLEY / VIRÁGVÖLGY

a film by **LÁSZLÓ CSUJA**

Hungary, 2018, 83 min., colour, digital

FIRST FEATURE FILM

Developed and produced in the frame of Hungarian National Film Fund's
INCUBATOR PROGRAM

[TRAILER](#)

“an ironic punk road movie about an odd couple on the run” @kviffest

International premiere: [2018 Karlovy Vary International Film Festival – East of the West Competition](#)

Hungarian premiere: September 2018, released by Elf Pictures

Directed by László Csujá

Script by László Csujá and Gergő V. Nagy

DoP: Gergely Vass / Edited by Attila Csabai

Visual design by Anna Nyitrai / Costumes by Klári Kalicz

Sound by Gábor Császár

Mentor: Ildikó Enyedi

Produced by András Muhi and Gábor Ferenczy / FocusFox

Main cast: Bianka Berényi, László Réti, Károly Kozma, György Kardos, Róbert Kardos



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SYNOPSIS

Who are the real crazies in an unhinged world? An ironic, punkily brash road movie about young lovers on the run, interwoven with poetic and realistic images. Bored Bianka kidnaps a child and gets the trusting Laci to help her create a home. Together they form an instant family who set off in a caravan, fleeing the law and a bunch of crooks.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

What does it mean to be normal? How do you become normal? *Blossom Valley* is about a meeting of two "not normal" people: one is morally, the other is mentally disabled. However, both of them have an ambition to feel that they have a place in the world. *Blossom Valley* is an irregularly structured movie, which plays with the genres of melodrama and crime with non-professional actors.



LÁSZLÓ CSÚJA

(34) Graduated in screenwriting from the University of Theatre and Film Arts (Budapest), in the screenwriter class of Gábor Németh and György Báron in 2012.

His short film, [Phosphorus](#), competed at several prestigious international film festivals including Tampere, Cork and Edinburgh.

He is currently completing a documentary, [Nine Months War](#), funded by the Doha Film Institute, about the Ukrainian-Russian military conflict.

Blossom Valley is his first feature film.

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CAST & CREW

Blossom Valley came about as the result of the combined effort of an enthusiast group of young filmmakers working for the first time on a full-length feature film. László Csujá – writer-director, Gergely Vass – cinematographer, Kata Csánki & Viktor Egri – production managers, Julia Raczky –scripter, Antal Agatics – casting director, Anna Nyitrai – visual designer, Anita Kőváry-Kalán – make-up artist, Attila Csabai – editor, and many more.



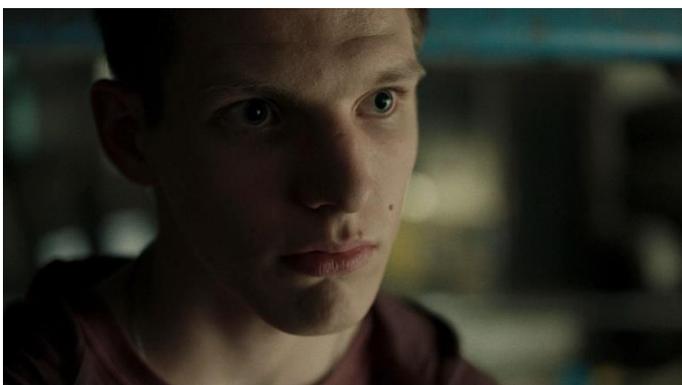
Bianka Berényi (21), aka *bbiankaa*, is a Hungarian [Instagram](#) celebrity and performer-singer of [EU Cannibal](#) music project.

Bianka topped the Cool List Hungary 2016.

“Her Instagram rides a rocky rollercoaster from a bloody vision of hell to the champagne high life, while her musical project, [EU Cannibal](#), is a gut-wrenching mash-

up of garage, metal and disco... Should we take a glance back a couple of decades from now, and consider the epitome of cool in the 2010s, these dark and dirty, wrong and rascally images are sure to be the first things we think of.”

Bianka began modelling in 2017 for prestigious luxury brands including Prada and Helmut Lang.



László Réti (22) is a 3-time Special Olympic Games winner, with bronze, silver and gold medals in roller skating from the 2011 Special Olympics, and gold in figure skating from the European Championships in 2010.

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Gergely Vass (32) cinematographer
Graduated from the University of
Theatre and Film Arts (Budapest),
in the class of János Kende H.S.C.,
in 2010.

Scholar at the Budapest
Cinematography Masterclass lead
by Vilmos Zsigmond A.S.C. and
Elemér Ragályi H.S.C. in 2010.
After working as DoP on *Shams* and
Farah Laila tv series (dir. Khaled El
Hagar) *Blossom Valley* is his first
full-length feature film.

Gergő V. Nagy writer

Graduated in screenwriting from the University of Theatre and Film Arts (Budapest),
in the class of Gábor Németh and György Báron in 2012.

Co-writer of *The Execution* (dir. Petra Szócs, 2014 Cannes Film Festival Short Film
Competition) and György Pálfi's upcoming feature film *His Master's Voice*.

HNFF Incubator Program

The Hungarian National Film Fund (HNFF) created the *Incubator Program* in 2015 to encourage young directors to create their first full-length feature film. The initiative's main ambition is to make their debut as simple as possible: directors can apply with a treatment, and, after a pre-selection, a jury and a professional audience choose the 5 best projects at a pitching forum.

The HNFF provides financial support amounting to a max. of EUR 70,000 for each feature documentary, EUR 200,000 for each feature film, and EUR 265,000 for each animation – excluding the 25% tax rebate.

In this form, the Incubator Program is extremely attractive for young filmmakers attracting 67 applicants in 2015, 69 in 2016 and 71 in 2017.

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FocusFox production company

FocusFox Studio has been serving clients effectively and thoroughly for 20 years with a continuous technical and infrastructural leadership. To keep up with global trends in picture post production, the studio uses the most up-to-date equipments for video and film post.

Since 2011 FocusFox also acts as a production company marked by Gábor Ferenczy, András Muhi and Attila Tózsér. Its first movie *What Ever Happened to Timi* (dir. Attila Herczeg) became a blockbuster, the most successful local comedy in Hungarian theatres in 2014.

Dr. András Muhi producer [IMDB](#) andras.muhydr@gmail.com

Founder and head of Inforg Studio, a dominant production house of contemporary Hungarian cinema between 2000-2010. Inforg produced/co-produced 25 features and 100 short films, 80 documentaries and 15 animations, many of them were participants and prize winners of the leading international film festivals. Since 2015 he is working with FocusFox.

selected films

European Film Award Best Short winner *Before Dawn* (dir. Bálint Kenyeres, 2005)

Berlinale Silver Bear winner *Just the Wind* (dir. Bence Fliegauf, 2012)

Karlovy Vary Crystal Globe winner *It's Not the Time of My Life* (dir. Szabolcs Hajdu, 2016)

Berlinale Golden Bear winner, Oscar nominee *On Body and Soul* (dir. Ildikó Enyedi, 2017)

Gábor Ferenczy producer [IMDB](#) gferenczy@focusfox.hu

After long years spent in dubbing and post production industry he started his producer carrier in 2012 with the ghetto cartoon *Nyócker 8D* (dir. Áron Gauder) as a co-producer. Since then he has done numerous films that marks his producer/co-producer/executive producer activity.

selected films

Karlovy Vary Crystal Globe winner *Corn Island* (dir. George Ovashvili, 2014)

Hungarian Film Award Best Feature winner *Strangled* (dir. Árpád Sopsits, 2016)

Karlovy Vary Crystal Globe winner *It's Not the Time of My Life* (dir. Szabolcs Hajdu, 2016)

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“We tried to avoid cheap catharsis” – an interview with László Csujá

by Ferenc Varga

A story of lovers on the run in today’s Eastern Europe. With a stolen child, a morally blind girl and an excessively naive boy. That’s how director László Csujá describes his first feature film *Blossom Valley* that debuts in the East of the West Competition at Karlovy Vary.



The male protagonist of *Blossom Valley* is a mentally challenged boy, as was the case with your previous two short films. What did you want to show about this phenomenon this time?

The notion of parenthood interested me the most. There are horrible misbeliefs that certain individuals don’t deserve the right to have a family because their intelligence is not high enough. This situation creates a lot of questions with no easy answers.

You’ve cast two non-professional actors, Bianka Berényi and László Réti, for the lead roles. What excites you about them?

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Both have very strong and consistent inner worlds. With Laci, I was taken by his purity: there is something archaic about him, as if he is from another time. And Bianka's freedom was completely enchanting. I looked at two-hundred girls during casting. All of them tried to satisfy us – all except her. Which is a kind of autonomy, an outsider mentality in and of itself. I was impressed by that.

You describe *Blossom Valley* as a story of lovers on the run, but the love between the two leads is pretty restrained.

I had intended the love story to be much more intense, but after Laci and Bianka joined the production, I realized that concept wouldn't work. These were different people, and I needed to build the characters from them, from their potential relationship.



When did you figure that out? After you'd already shot some tests with them?

Yes, we realigned things a little so that we now have a naive boy who wants to experience what it is to hold responsibilities, to be an adult, a self-reliant person, and the drama stems from the fact that he has to accomplish this in an untenable situation, with a girl who doesn't fit into any conventional morality. It's completely clear from the very beginning that everything will go wrong. I like films where the protagonists make a well-intentioned decision, and then they're sucked into a fatal vortex as a result. It's true to life for some reason.

If everything had to go wrong, was the actual ending obvious for you as well?

Actually, yeah. We thought long and hard about how we should avoid a didactic take on the theme of mental disability. I don't care for the kind of films that nestle

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themselves into well-intentioned humanism and easy catharsis. There's a huge trend now in making films about kind-hearted, unfortunate heroes who always do the right thing, and, in turn, they're brutally punished by an evil society. *Un mujer fantástica* is a good example. People even cry at the end of these kinds of films. It's cheap catharsis. We tried to avoid that, and therefore the theme of mental disability turned out to be more ambiguous, rather than heavy-handed. We were careful not to make definitive statements about it, only ask indirect questions.

You first had the idea for *Blossom Valley* six years ago. When such a long time passes between conception and execution, directors tend to overthink their films. How did you manage to avoid that trap?

Two things. Firstly, after we'd chosen Bianka and Laci as our leads, the script was rewritten. The other thing was, I gave myself a challenge: I had to add something new to each and every scene during the shoot. For example, we found out on set that a supporting actor had a cool laugh. So we asked him to laugh really loud whenever someone spoke to him. Things like that.



Some people are sure to hear Bianka's sing-songy, affected speaking voice, and find it grating. Was it hard to decide whether you should soften it or not?

Most of the cast of *Blossom Valley* are non-professional actors. Each of them has a unique speaking voice. Bianka's voice might be surprising at first, but I believe most viewers will get used to it after a couple of scenes. And they'll probably remember her distinctive tone years later.

What does the title of the film symbolize for you?

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An imaginary place where all is good.

***Blossom Valley* has elements of several genres: lovers-on-the-run melodrama, road movie, classic noir, etc. Were the genre tropes helpful in giving the film direction?**

Definitely, but we didn't approach the story as a straight-up genre piece. I love playing around with genre tropes. You can use them directly, even unabashedly, then just drop them completely. I'd like to think the film has this kind of playfulness, where certain stereotypical things appear, you start to expect something... and another thing happens.

What films did you find the most inspiring from these genres?

In the film noir *Gun Crazy* (1950), the female protagonist is very much like Bianka. Of course, there is also *Badlands* (1973) as a lovers-on-the-run melodrama, and there's a great film that's considered a road movie called *Wanda* (1970) by Barbara Loden. I also kept thinking of a Hungarian movie from the forties called *Something Is in the Water* (1944) that has Katalin Karády appearing from thin air, wrecking the life of Pál Jávör and then vanishing.

The film was conceived within the Incubator Program with a budget of roughly 250,000 EUR. Did the relatively low budget make the shooting more stressful?

The lack of time certainly enhanced the rawness of the film. We had to reduce the number of setups, most of the scenes consisted of just two shots.

Ágnes Havas, the CEO of the Hungarian National Film Fund, said they created the program to encourage the making of films that take place here and now. Do you also feel these types of movies are missing in Hungary nowadays?

Yes. Hungarian films should reflect much more of today's society. If we continue this tradition in feature films as well, it's going to do a lot of good for Hungarian film culture in the long run.

When was this tradition broken?

I suspect Hungarian film lost this type of direct connection around the fall of communism. In the eighties, we had great films by György Szomjas that dealt with the relevant issues of Hungarian society. Remember how wonderful Károly Eperjes was in *Tight Quarters*, aka *Light Physical Injuries*, (1983), how lively those characters were! It's not the realism or documentarism I miss in recent movies, but the filmmakers' close connection to the reality of Hungarian life in general.

After fifteen years of directing short films, you had the chance to make your first feature. Was it a struggle or did you always feel like you were on the right track?

It wasn't always ideal. I thought I was in a bad situation between 2011 and 2015, I couldn't find my voice. It felt like a downward spiral.

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How about now?

I feel like I'm on the up and up. My documentary *Nine Months of War* is almost finished, it follows the life of a Subcarpathian Hungarian soldier during the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict. If the Hungarian film industry boom continues, I'll be just fine.

Do you have any other projects planned?

Yes, we're working on a script about a female bodybuilder with the visual artist Anna Nemes, that already received a grant for script development from the Hungarian National Film Fund.

What does it mean for you that *Blossom Valley* will debut at Karlovy Vary?

Apparently, the audience is great there, everyone is open and friendly, I'm looking forward to it a lot. I think they'll appreciate the kind of East-European sense of humour that's typical of our film.

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