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PRESENT



ANITA B.

A film by Roberto Faenza
based on the novel by Edith Bruck
"Quanta stella c'è nel cielo"

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DIRECTOR	ROBERTO FAENZA
SCREENPLAY	EDITH BRUCK, ROBERTO FAENZA, NELO RISI
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	ARNALDO CATINARI
EDITOR	MASSIMO FIOCCHI
SCORE	PAOLO BUONVINO
PRODUCTION DESIGNER	COSIMO GOMEZ
COSTUME DESIGNER	ANNA LOMBARDI
SOUND	MASSIMO SIMONETTI
LINE PRODUCER	ALESSANDRO LOY
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER	ANDREA MANGANELLI
PRODUCERS	ELDA FERRI- LUGI MUSINI
PRODUCTION BY	JEAN VIGO – CINEMA UNDICI with RAI CINEMA
DISTRIBUTION	GOOD FILMS
LENGTH	88 minutes

CAST:

ELINE POWELL	ANITA
ROBERT SHEEHAN	ELI
ANDREA OSVART	MONICA
ANTONIO CUPO	ARON
NICO MIRALLEGRO	DAVID
CLIVE RICHE	DOCTOR
GUENDA GORIA	PIANIST
with	
MONI OVADIA	UNCLE JACOB
and with	
JANE ALEXANDER	SARAH

“What is love?, asks Anita, the teenage heroine of this film. And she struggles to define it. In the end, she comes to the conclusion that: “maybe it’s something so wonderful that if you even try to define it stops being wonderful”.

ANITA B.

The story

Anita, a Jewish girl of Hungarian origin who has emerged alive from Auschwitz, is taken in after the war by her one surviving relative: her aunt, Monika, the thirty year old sister of Anita’s father. Monika, however, does not like to be called ‘Aunt,’ and receives her niece with something less than enthusiasm.

She lives, Monika, with her husband Aron and baby son Roby, in Zvikovez, a small town in the mountains of Czechoslovakia, not far from Prague. Also in the household is the good-looking young Eli, Aron’s brother, whose philosophy of life can be summed up as follows: “men want to unbutton their pants, women think about love”. In the town, situated in the Sudetenland, that before the war had a large German population, the former inhabitants have been forcibly ejected, their homes taken over by returning prisoners and refugees. There is an air of increasing tension in the place, as the communists prepare to seize power.

To begin with after her arrival, Anita finds herself a virtual prisoner once more; this time because of a lack of any papers. She cannot leave the house, and scarcely meets anyone outside the immediate family. Those people she does come in to contact with, however, all seem intent on forgetting the recent horrors; they want to go out and dance, enjoy themselves, and listen to popular songs broadcast across the Iron Curtain by the Voice of America. Anita too has her dreams, but unlike the others is determined not to turn her back on the past.

She’s a spirited girl, full of hope for the future; finding her strength in the memory of her parents, themselves both killed in the camps. She is disconcerted by that refusal to remember on the part of all those around her. No-one - not even Eli, with whom she soon embarks on a passionate affair - seems even to want to think about what has happened, let alone talk about it. It’s as if everyone feels ashamed of having survived.

The denial of pain blocks the path to the truth. Anita instinctively knows this, but when she tries to breach that collective wall of silence that surrounds her, she finds herself

being pushed back. So, if she wants to talk to anyone about her beloved and lost parents, she has to do so with little Roby, who listens to her happily but doesn't understand.

In that melting pot of languages and nationalities that is the Central Europe of those days, once Anita is able to get out of the house she meets a whole range of unforgettable characters: among them the larger-than-life Uncle Jacob, a musician who seems to be the conscience of the community; Sarah, the dynamic 'ferrywoman' who organizes the refugees' clandestine passage to Palestine; and young David, who like Anita is an orphan - if he has lost his parents in quite different if no less tragic circumstances - and with whom Anita becomes very friendly - until one day he suddenly vanishes, in pursuit of his own dream.

All at once, Anita has to face a new challenge; young though she is, and just on the brink of womanhood, she finds herself pregnant with Eli's baby.

With an unexpected twist to the story, Anita finally will take a decision which requires a lot of courage.

A Note from the Director

Roberto Faenza

How many films have been made about the Shoah? A great many. Some would say too many. I have made one myself. But very few have been made about the aftermath; on, as it were, the life after death.

This is precisely the period that Anita B. covers; filling a gap that is due to various causes. Amongst these, and primarily, is the desire on the behalf of all concerned to forget. When a trauma is too great, the psyche tries to deal with it by removing it.

Anita is a gentle and impressionable girl; in her early teens when she emerges, still just alive, from Auschwitz. Yet, despite her youth and fragility, and her experiences in the camp, she has kept her strength and courage. She goes forward into the new world that awaits her full of energy and determination, but also with a certain ingenuity.

In those immediate post-war years, everyone seeks to live life to the full. But for many, this means trying simply to wipe out the past; without stopping to realize that that in turn means, in essence, to wipe out themselves. So it is that the only person with whom Anita feels able to talk about what she has gone through is a one year old child. Little Roby listens happily to her stories, but of course he cannot understand them. Everyone else encourages Anita 'to change the subject'. Or tells her, 'What's done is done; forget it.'

But Anita does not want to forget. She wants to move forward with her eyes and mind wide open; not to be a mere survivor. And perhaps what most she wants to do, in order to re-establish her identity, is find love; even at the cost of giving herself further pain.

The passionate affair on which she embarks seems likely to end in tears, or worse; but miraculously her leap in the dark becomes the start of a journey towards the light, and the occasion of her rebirth.

I believe that Anita B. is my most 'non-conformist' film; even more so than the much-censored "Forza Italia!" In an age when the cinema seems increasingly to be devoted to the representation of unreal worlds inhabited by robots, all shot with a plethora of ever more sophisticated and mind-numbing special effects, this is a story about real people whose lives are examined with discretion, respect; as if being approached on tip-toe.

Edith Bruck's novel, on which this film is loosely based, tells how Anita finds herself constantly having to face a hostile world, as if it were a crime to have been a deportee - and to have returned. I have never asked Edith precisely how autobiographical her story is, but I added a 'B.' to the title in homage to the author. When I finished reading

the book, on a flight to Japan where I was about to present another of my films, I found myself crying uncontrollably and had to seek refuge in the airplane's toilet. I often wonder how we dare complain about our trivial day-to-day concerns, when there are people who have truly lived through hell.

Another great writer and survivor of the camps, the Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel, whom I have had the great good fortune to meet, says that from the moment you start dealing with the Holocaust, you become a witness in the court of history.

Ours is a great responsibility, even if we are just spectators. But it is a fine responsibility; because if our testimony is truthful, it becomes like a candle that, being lit, can never thereafter be snuffed out.

I tried to shoot the story of Anita with 'an open heart'; to be infused by the spirit of her enthusiasm, her honesty, and also her subjectivity. Somewhat as I did with "Jonah Who Lived in the Whale", I kept the camera at the eye-level of my protagonist, so that what is seen does not claim to be objective.

As I was working in the mountains of Northern Italy and Prague, I reflected that this latest film - that took me two years to find the finance for, and another year to complete - was in a sense the sequel to my earlier film, "The Soul Keeper", and that with luck, Sabina Spielrein would have loved it. For which reason I finished with a scene that stands as a tribute to two brave and indomitable women: "a journey to the past with only one piece of baggage: the future".

The director
ROBERTO FAENZA

Born in Turin in 1943, Roberto Faenza gets a degree in Political Science and a diploma at the Rome *Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia*, the leading Italian institution in the field of cinema. Faenza makes his directing debut in 1968 with an international success, **Escalation**, a film that describes the different sides of power through the relationship between an upper-class father and his hippie son. Immediately after that he realizes **H2S**, an angry apology of the 1968 movement. He then leaves Italy and goes to the United States, where he teaches at the Federal City College of Washington DC. In 1978, back in Italy, he makes **Forza Italia!**, a ferocious satire on the power of the Italian Christian Democratic party, at that time dominant in Italy. Though very successful, the film is withdrawn from the theatres on the day Aldo Moro, President of the Christian Democrats, is kidnapped by the terrorist group Red Brigades. Aldo Moro being the one who, before being killed by the terrorists, recommends, in his handwritten memoirs found in the den of the Red Brigades in Milan, to see the film “if one wants to realize the recklessness of my fellow party members”. In 1983 he shoots in New York **Copkiller (aka Corrupt)**, with Harvey Keitel, Nicole Garcia and the leader of the Sex Pistols, Johnny Rotten. In 1990 he makes **The Bachelor**, based on a short story by Arthur Schnitzler with a prestigious cast: Keith Carradine, Miranda Richardson, Kristin Scott-Thomas and Max Von Sydow. The costume designer is the Oscar winner Milena Canonero with whom he starts a fruitful friendship and collaboration. In 1993 he directs **Jonah who Lived in the Whale**, with Jean-Hugues Anglade and Juliet Aubrey, a striking tale on the Holocaust seen through a child’s eyes, for which he is awarded the *David di Donatello* (the Italian Academy Award) as Best Director. In 1995 **According to Pereira**, the last Italian film with Marcello Mastroianni, who was awarded the *David di Donatello* as Best Leading Actor. The film was also interpreted by Daniel Auteuil. In 1997 he makes **Marianna Ucrìa**, based on the novel by Dacia Maraini, awarded with 3 *David di Donatello*. In 1999 he directs in Israel **The Lost Lover**, with Ciaran Hinds and Juliet Aubrey, based on the bestseller by Abraham B. Yehoshua about the ongoing clash between Jews and Palestinians. In 2002 he directs another successful work, **The Soul Keeper**, with Iain Glen and Emilia Fox, inspired by the burning passion between Carl Gustav Jung and his young Russian patient Sabina Spielrein. In 2003 he directs **Come into the Light**, about the life of Father Puglisi, a parish priest killed in Palermo by the mafia. The film received the nomination at the European Academy Award (EFA) as Best Director 2005. The film was awarded with the Vittorio De Sica Best Film Award and the Best Leading Actor Award at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in 2005. In 2004 he realizes **The Days of Abandonment**, in competition at the Venice Film Festival 2005, based on the novel by Elena Ferrante. In 2006 he directs **I Vicerè (The Viceroy)**, based on the novel by Federico De Roberto, a powerful costume drama, in competition at the 2008 Shanghai International Film Festival, awarded with 3 *David di Donatello*, including Milena Canonero for Best Costume. In 2008 he directs **The case of the Unfaithful Klara**, shot in Prague and Venice, interpreted by Iain Glen and Kierston Wareing. In 2011 he directs **Silvio Forever**, a controversial docufilm about Silvio Berlusconi. In 2012 he directs **Someday This Pain Will Be Useful To You**, with Toby Regbo, Marcia Gay Harden, Ellen Burstyn, Lucy Liu, Peter Gallagher, Stephen Lang, Deborah Ann Woll. Faenza’s activities are not limited to cinema: author of essays and books, he is professor at the University Sapienza of Rome, where he teaches “Theory and technique of film-making”. He directs the website Cinemonitor.it.

The producers

Elda Ferri - Chairman of Jean Vigo Italia S.r.l.

She is the producer of “Life is Beautiful” (*La vita è bella*), directed by Roberto Benigni, winner of 3 Academy Awards in 1998. In 1999 she has received the Raoul Wallenberg Award. In 2005 she has received the Media Salles’s “European Producer of the Year Award” during the Cinema Expo International in Amsterdam.

Luigi Musini - Chairman of Cinemaundici S.r.l.

In 1984 he founded, together with Roberto Cicutto, Mikado Film S.r.l., which became one of the most prestigious independent production/distribution companies in Italy. After De Agostini acquired Mikado, he continued his activity as film producer with Cinemaundici S.r.l.. In 2012 he co-founded the distribution company Good Films S.r.l. together with Ginevra Elkann, Francesco Melzi D’Eril and Lorenzo Mieli.

Domestic and international distribution

“*Anita B*” is produced by Jean Vigo Italia and Cinemaundici. Good Films will be the domestic distributor and will handle foreign sales. Release in Italian theatres is foreseen 16th of January 2014.

RaiCinema S.p.A. co-produces the film.

Cast

The cast consists mainly of young English-speaking actors already making a name for themselves, like the two protagonists.

Eline Powell was discovered by Dustin Hoffman and appeared in his first film as a director, the recently released *Quartet*.

Robert Sheehan is already an idol of teenagers the world over for his role in the English TV series *Misfits*, a science fiction series about a group of young people compelled to undertake socially useful jobs after they have been arrested for minor crimes.

Other cast-members include actors with a well-established reputation in Italy, such as the Hungarian born Andrea Osvert, and the Italians Moni Ovadia and Jane Alexander (who also starred in Roberto Faenza's *The Soul Keeper*).



Eline Powell



Robert Sheehan



Andrea Osvalt



Antonio Cupo



Nico Mirallegro



Moni Ovadia



Jane Alexander



Guenda Goria



Clive Riche