



### Sidney Lumet Retrospective at TIFF 2023

The 22<sup>nd</sup> edition of the **Transilvania International Film Festival** takes us on a journey into the cinematic universe of one of the most prolific American directors of the modern period, **Sidney Lumet** (1924 - 2011). Between 9<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> June, **Close-up Sidney Lumet** brings six restored works by the renowned filmmaker at Cluj-Napoca. The programme is inspired by the retrospective dedicated to the director by **Lumière Film Festival** (Lyon, France) in 2022, a cinephile event par excellence that celebrates classic cinema by presenting restored versions of masterpieces and tributes to legendary directors.

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Interested in social and moral issues, Lumet was always drawn to naturalism and realism, and his training in the golden age of television allowed him to have an energetic and direct filmmaking style. Known as "*an actor's director*", he was able to get impressive performances from his collaborators that include famous film stars such as **Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, Katharine Hepburn, Sophia Loren, Paul Newman, Henry Fonda, Sean Connery, Philip Seymour Hoffman** and **Faye Dunaway**. All these features together with his belief in the collaborative nature of cinema make Lumet „*one of the finest craftsmen and warmest humanitarians among all film directors.*” (**Roger Ebert**).

A masterpiece of world cinema, **12 Angry Men** (1957) is Lumet's first feature, a suspenseful courtroom drama about a jury that must decide whether to convict or acquit a teenager accused of murder. Winner of the **Golden Bear at Berlin International Film Festival** and nominated for three **Oscars**, the film is a masterclass in filmmaking, perfectly using all the tools of cinema to create a smart and sophisticated story with strong characters and intense moral reflections.

**Fail Safe** (1964) is a screen adaptation of the novel with the same title by **Eugene Burdick** and **Harvey Wheeler**. Starring **Henry Fonda** and **Walther Matthau**, the film follows the crisis caused by a programming error that initiates the destruction of Moscow by a squadron of American planes, and the attempts to stop the bombers before they launch the first nuclear strike. With a striking visual style: it is shot in black and white, with sharp shadows and claustrophobic close-ups, with no original music and a theme that brings another moral conflict to the fore, the dramatic load of the film is heightened.

Based on a true story, **Serpico** (1973) is a neo-noir biographical drama about an honest New York City cop, Frank Serpico (played by **Al Pacino**), who publicly denounces corruption in the law enforcement, becoming an enemy to his colleagues and a walking target. For **Variety**, the film's great accomplishment is Sidney Lumet's direction, which deftly combines gritty action, complex character and thought-provoking commentary. Nominated for **Oscar, BAFTA** and **Golden Globe**, the film is a masterpiece, with **The New York Times** finding it "electrifying" because of Pacino's acting and the intensity of Lumet's style.

With an enviable record of achievements: one **Academy Award** and six other nominations, seven **Golden Globe** nominations and the **Best Actor Prize at San Sebastián Film Festival**, **Dog Day Afternoon** (1975) "captures perfectly the zeitgeist of the early 1970s, a time when optimism was scraping rock bottom", according to the renowned American author **Christopher Null**. Inspired by a true story, the film stars **Al Pacino** and **John Cazale**. Three amateur thieves plan to rob a bank, but the heist quickly escalates to a hostage situation, a media circus and a bizarre nightmare. Considered a manifesto against the idea of authority, strongly linked to the aftermath of the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal, **Dog Day Afternoon** is also the first film to feature a bisexual male protagonist.



**Network** (1976) is a satire of the media world. News anchor Howard Beale (**Peter Finch**) discovers he is going to be fired and goes into a furious rant while on TV, threatening to shoot himself on air. The episode sees a huge rise in ratings and is cleverly exploited by ambitious producer Diana Christensen (**Faye Dunaway**), who begins to develop increasingly outrageous and extreme shows. With nine nominations and four **Academy Awards**, the film was included by the **American Film Institute** in the 100 best films in its history, and placed by **Roger Ebert** on his list of absolute masterpieces.

The retrospective is completed by a rarity that is also one of the hundred favourite films of legendary Japanese director **Akira Kurosawa**. **Running on Empty** (1988) tells the gripping story of a family trying to stay together, even though the parents are fugitives, wanted by authorities for their anti-Vietnam War activity. On the verge of adulthood, the eldest son (played by **River Phoenix**) wants a more stable life and to pursue his talent as a pianist, but knows that this means permanent separation from his family. The result is an extremely powerful film about the muted clash between the personal and the political, about lives deeply scarred by past radicalisms and the lies we tell to protect ourselves, benefiting from the same morally nuanced narrative typical of Sidney Lumet's landmark titles.

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