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A GOLDEN BEAR

A Romanian school teacher's private sex tape accidentally ends up on the Internet in the recent Berlinale Golden Bear winner, which was co-produced by Luxembourg.

Bad Luck Banging or Looney Porn is the latest film from Romanian iconoclast Radu Jude (for my money, his satire about contemporary Romanian society, *I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians*, was the best film of 2018). *Bad Luck* is part of this year's Made in Luxembourg section, as it was coproduced by Luxembourg production company PTD (Paul Thiltges Distribution). Our festival will provide the first ever premiere of the film in a cinema, as the Berlinale was entirely digital this year.

The film consists of three parts, with the opening five minutes quite the entry into the story, so to speak, as we see the very explicit footage of what looks like a home-made sex tape of a married couple. The woman in the tape is Emi (Katia Pascariu), a middle-aged schoolteacher who is the protagonist of the film. In the first part, she wanders around Bucharest, a town that has been changed by the pandemic and not for the better, as she talks on the phone about the horror of all horrors: somehow, their private sex tape has somehow found its way onto the internet. Like the coronavirus, things spiral out of control from there and it seems impossible to stop the recording from being shared and copied, making it impossible to contain, let alone make it disappear.

This would be bad enough for anyone but of course it is much worse for a schoolteacher, as her students become aware of the clip. Jude wisely never shows the kids. Instead, in the film's last act, he concentrates on the hypocrisy of their parents, who complain bitterly about the amoral and completely unacceptable behaviour of their children's teacher when all that she has done is slept with her own husband.

This is then contrasted with what they do, apparently, find acceptable themselves, which includes the rewriting of Romanian history to suit their own far right-wing perspectives, casual racism and anti-Semitism and the belief in all sorts of fake news and conspiracy theories. What's so fascinating about Jude's film is that it makes it clear that we live in a society now where supposed moral outrage, often about subjects that aren't

worth being outraged about, is something that is instrumentalised by the powers that be and the media and, in turn, the masses, to distract from other issues. As the film underlines more than once, Emi is a respected teacher appreciated by her colleagues and loved by her students; most kids would kill to have a smart and dedicated teacher like her.

Set during the pandemic, with characters always wearing masks and social distancing (mostly) in place, the question really becomes: Why do people believe it is necessary to severely judge a teacher for something that is both normal (sex within a marriage) and she can't be blamed for (she was not the one who put it on the internet)? In a time when a pandemic is raging, more pressing issues should be the focus of people's attention rather than this unfortunate incident (as the cookie title suggests, the teacher had just bad luck while "banging" her husband).

Pornography is an easy target in the name of the protection of the innocence of children — a term that becomes virtually meaningless as soon as children have unrestricted access to the Internet. Indeed, in the film's middle section, Jude looks at how definitions of many debate-ready terms have eroded, changed or are hypocritical in some way. It also suggests how smart a teacher Emi really is; she's not rigidly sticking to dusty old definitions but always open to the way in which meaning and context are always connected and evolving. This knowledge arms the audience with the means to better enter the battle of the third act, in which the teacher is interrogated by the supposedly worried parents, who seem more interested in their own outrage than the position of the teacher or the well-being and education of their own children.

It's a satire that's dark, funny and intentionally outrageous. Jude wants to make you think about how shocking marital sex can really be with everything else that is going on in the world. Like most contemporary debates, there are moments that are unfocused or repetitive but the takeaway of the film as a whole will be crystal clear for everyone willing to go on this wild ride. **BOYD VAN HOEIJ**