

## Giorgio Bosisio about A YOUTH

### “The almost existential state of waiting”

Together with his group of young Afghan friends, Peyman finds himself stuck in Athens. Their hope is to reach mainland Europe and reunite with their loved ones, but that could take years; and it might never happen. Living in limbo, but armed with a new-found freedom, they kill time by aimlessly strolling around the city, sharing jokes, rap battles, stories from the past and dreams for the future. As Peyman is waiting for news that could shake his false state of harmony, he tries to make sense of the world around him through music and poetry.

Based between Milan and London, director Giorgio Bosisio comes from a fiction background. Ever since 2015 - the moment marking the start of the European refugee crisis - he began to feel a growing sense of being deceived and manipulated by the media. He decided then to make a documentary, developing an unconditional and direct relationship with the subjects of his film. A YOUTH (spoken in Dari & Farsi) describes the emptiness caused

by the almost existential state of waiting in which Peyman, his mother and friends are immersed. The film made a successful festival career (Shortfest Aspen, Olympia Pyrgos, Hot Docs, Guanajuato, Helsinki...) and a re-edit was distributed by Aljazeera English.

Giorgio Bosisio: I first travelled to Greece as a volunteer in 2016 but it was only in 2017 that I first met Peyman during a stop-motion animation workshop that I facilitated for Greek and Afghan teenagers. Back then, he was living with his mother at Hotel City Plaza, one of Athens' "refugee squats". City Plaza was a project launched by migrant communities, in cooperation with the Greek and international solidarity movement, offering people a dignified alternative to the overcrowded camps. It was here, in this safe haven, that Peyman performed some of his rap songs for me. A few days later we recorded them and shot his first music video.

**How did you proceed from rap to**



#### film?

Bosisio: After working on his video clips, I decided to shoot a short portrait with the aim of attracting media attention and promoting his music to a European audience. The trailer I edited convinced my old friends and colleagues Afolabi Kuti and Charlotte Carroll to come on board as producers, who were able to raise finances from Executive Producer Emma Bealand and the Lush Film Fund. Finding the budget is what ultimately helped turn this short portrait into the cinematic journey that became A YOUTH.

**How did this affect your consciousness as a filmmaker?**

Bosisio: I never felt comfortable with the idea of making documentaries, probably because I was afraid to take responsibilities. I remember the long chats I had with Peyman and how finally it was him who insisted on making this film. We took the decision together, trusting one another and sharing a substantial part of our lives. The film profoundly changed us both as individuals. This is what I see when looking at A YOUTH: a relationship between two people taking shape as they are growing closer. What began as a personal need to relate more directly with what was happening at the borders of our European fortress and consciousness, soon grew into an





urge to reflect on my own borders, approach and motivations as a storyteller.

**What was the most important accomplishment for you in your live-action documentary debut?**

Bosio: One of the biggest challenges was allowing myself to understand what was really going on, rather than setting my mind on what I was going to get; trying not to impose myself on the situation and avoid tailoring my point of view onto the structure of the story.

**This year you participated, as an observer, in the ECFA General Assembly in Berlin. I would appreciate**

**your feedback, as a director.**

Bosio: It was great; I felt like discovering a world of new possibilities. The film industry can be a cold place to wander in, but ECFA felt like a house gathering of friends, understanding that one of the most important audiences is also one of the most commonly ignored: young people.

**Have you ever considered making films – fiction or documentary – especially for a young, let's say 8-14 years old audience?**

Bosio: Before getting in touch with ECFA I actually never even considered youngsters as a possible audience for my films. Only after winning the award at the Olympia Festival I began to realise that probably A YOUTH's primary audience would be exactly that age. We brought the film to several high schools in Athens; it was amazing to find out how engaged students were during the Q&A's. We'll continue bringing this film to schools and young people and we're looking for partners to help us in doing so, as the topic of adolescence seems to be reoccurring all the time in my work. I usually don't start a film process considering who could be the receiver, but after discovering what ECFA is all about, this could become my new challenge.



**What is your new project all about?**

Bosio: I am developing my first feature documentary. THE POSSIBILITY OF A LANDSCAPE is a sci-fi journey through the past, present and future of the river Po's delta, a world shaped by entanglements and contradictions. Until recently, this bio-reserve protected by UNESCO hosted one of Europe's biggest power plants, which now will be turned into a gigantic tourist resort. As the sea rises and threatens to flood the delta, we find ourselves questioning what landscapes can tell us about ourselves and our future, and what is left of us if we reduce all nature into a postcard or a resource to leech. Landscapes are stories too, mirrors of an open dialogue

between nature and culture. This film wants to be a starting point to conjure new possible narratives.

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Eva Schwarzwald