

Published October 11th, 2023

'In the Heart of the Machine,' a Bulgarian thriller in Orinda

By Sophie Braccini



Image provided

performances, and make this parable about what it is that makes us human convincing and very touching.

'In the Heart of the Machine' opens in Orinda on Oct. 20 for at least one week. It is brought to Orinda by the nonprofit The International Film Showcase. Tickets at www.orindamovies.com

August 1978, in a steel factory in communist Bulgaria, inmates from a high security prison go about a difficult but typical work day when they discover a bird stuck in a piece of machinery. From this strange situation, the dynamic of the group begins to spiral more and more dangerously, especially for the prisoners.

'In the Heart of the Machine' (V s?rtseto na mashinata) by Martin Makariev is a very well-told story of men placed in an impossible situation, where nothing is black or white, but who nonetheless embark on an almost sacred quest for redemption.

Practically the whole movie develops in real time. Little by little, the reality surfaces about who these men really are: the prisoners, their crimes, real or not; the wardens more or less decent; and the military that represent the Bulgarian order of the time in all its brutality.

There is a hostage situation, there are really bad people on both sides of the equation, and really decent ones too. The atmosphere is dark, the colors in grey shades, and it is clear from the start that this cannot end well.

The opposition between the prison administration and the military force sent to end the crisis at any cost, illuminates the political atmosphere of the time. The story of the bird, that the prisoners want so desperately to free, is hardly believable but symbolically perfect. It is their ticket to salvation; saving the bird is like saving their soul.

The actors on both sides give very convincing

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA