

*Not ready for what's coming,
but bring it on, life, you cant*



**Disco
Party**



**FOCUS
POCUS**



Logline

What if you were pushing a wheel on a stick, but the others saw a car? What if you were a woman but lived like a man? What if you were in prison but could go anywhere? And what if injustice was rampant, but you disagreed?



Location reference

Synopsis

MARKO (20) is a neurodiverse young man. His world revolves around a single object: a 2-meter-long stick he perceives as his car. He is perfectly integrated into his slum community. Everyone treats him with respect, he “drives” the car only he can see, and everyone around pretends the “car” is real. Marko “drives” on the streets, parks his “car,” fills the “car” with “petrol,” takes the “car” to a car wash and a repair shop, the policeman writes him a ticket whenever the “car” is not parked correctly...

Marko’s social inclusion has been carefully nurtured by his grandfather, VASIL (65), a reclusive, anti-capitalist film sound designer with an outdated home studio and almost no clients.

Marko’s life changes dramatically when he wins the lottery, offering hope for an expensive personalized medical treatment, but requiring his genetic

profile and those of his closest relatives—Vasil and an estranged Maternal Grandfather. (Marko’s parents died in an accident.)

The person closest to a friend in Marko’s life is ARTA (35), an immigrant from northern Albania who is renting a room in Vasil’s rundown house. Bound by the ancient “sworn virgin” custom (in an absence of a male heir, the youngest daughter adopts a male role to avoid losing the family property to distant male relatives), Arta was raised as a boy. Now, she grapples with her suppressed biological identity, yearning to reclaim it for inner peace and happiness.

STEFAN (40), a member of the Government’s PR team and a shady manipulator, inherits five houses in the slum. He plans to demolish them to build an apartment complex. He uses an ongoing political scandal as an opportunity to propose a crackdown on crime in the neighborhood, thereby defocusing the public while simultaneously advancing his own gentrification agenda. Stefan also targets Marko, ostensibly viewing his presence as detrimental to the value of the developing real estate, but truly for entirely different reason, which become clear when it is revealed he has a sister in an asylum.

The genetic profile reveals that Vasil is not Marko’s biological grandfather. Stefan finds out about that and uses the fact to demand Social Services to place Marko in institutional care.

Vasil desperately battles the system to prevent Marko’s institutionalization. Despite his fierce efforts, legal hurdles prove insurmountable, and Marko is confined to a dangerous, underfunded, and understaffed mental health facility.

Facing defeat, Vasil turns to an unconventional ally: his old friend ISKRA (65) and her anarchist group of retirees (a lady who just had a surgery, a man in a wheelchair, and a little person, all of them 65). They help Vasil to orchestrate a ridiculous but masterful kidnapping of Stefan, forcing him to cancel Marko’s institutionalization.

Vasil retrieves Marko, and amidst the chaos, rekindles a romantic connection with Iskra.



Location reference

Theme

The apparent theme of *I Disagree* is the inability of neurodivergent people to lead a normal life in a dysfunctional society without their family and friends making superhuman efforts.

Another equally important theme of this film is the moderation of reality, that is, the control over the narratives.

The information that reaches us creates the dominant narratives. Although it might look like we live in an era of abundant information, the information that reaches most people originates from a small number of outlets, moderated by strictly controlled algorithms or by the editorial policies of the traditional media, which imposes the dominant narratives in unison, rather uncritically, and often for lucrative reasons only.

This pattern of spreading information gives the financially powerful (states, political entities, and large corporations) easy control over the narratives, whose goal, apart from satisfying their mostly lucrative and power-grabbing interests, is establishing unofficial norms and shaping the world.

All major characters in *I Disagree* either moderate reality or are the victims of the moderated reality.

Vasil moderates Marko’s reality in the favela-like neighborhood where they live. He manages to control the narrative about the wheel-stick-car.

Marko is a victim of his own narrative that makes him see his wheel-stick as a car, which then makes him even more different and more difficult to be accepted by the community, which is a victim itself of the primitive narrative that neurodivergent people should be institutionalized, isolated, and made invisible.

Arta is a victim of a traditional narrative that proscribes female children from inheriting their parents’ property. Eventually, this injustice will be ritually “righted” by forcing her to live like a man (sworn virgin), trapped in the opposite gender identity against her will.

Iskra and the pensioners’ anarchist organization stage sabotages of political and business events and processes to subvert their political and business narratives, expose them, and publicly ridicule them.



Location reference

Stefan is a professional controller of narratives and a moderator of reality – a PR expert.

If reality has already been transformed into a battlefield of malevolent and controlled narratives, whose victims we all are as passive consumers, do we have any other non-violent option left but to start controlling the narratives in our

own micro-communities in the interest of their well-being?

This story is deeply personal and is a product of a lifelong relationship between a parent and a neurodivergent child, and of the struggle to prevent society from destroying the happiness in the child's life.



Location reference

Genre

The genre of *I Disagree* is a contemporary social drama with strong dark comedy elements. The director's no-compromise artistic approach will

include elements of understated quirkiness, grit, suspense, dark humor, and a touch of cerebral quality.



Location reference



Location reference

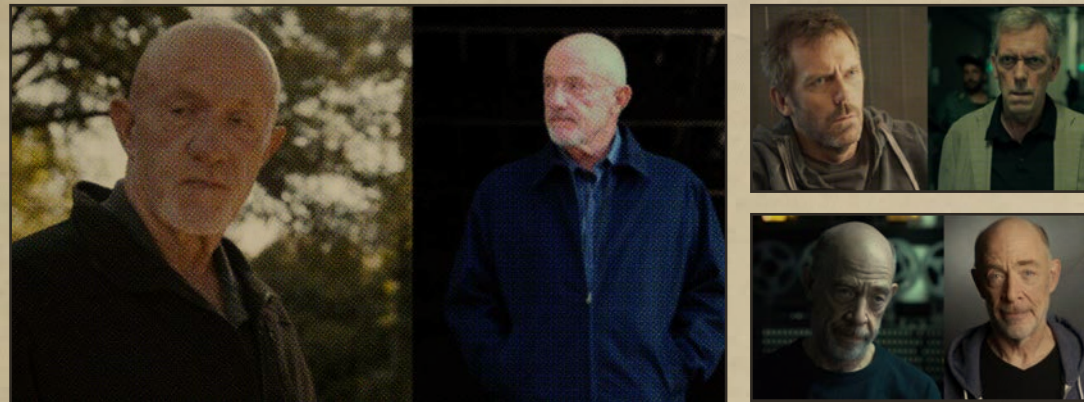
Tone

Humanism will permeate the emotional tone of the film, and the ending of this dark story will leave room for hope. Hannes Holm's *A Man Called Ove* and Alexandre Koberidze's *What Do We See When We Look at the Sky?* can serve as relevant references for the emotional tone of the film.

The intention is to craft a storytelling that will make the audience soundly identify with the main characters, to empathize with them, cheer for them. The dominant feeling will be empathy, not pity.

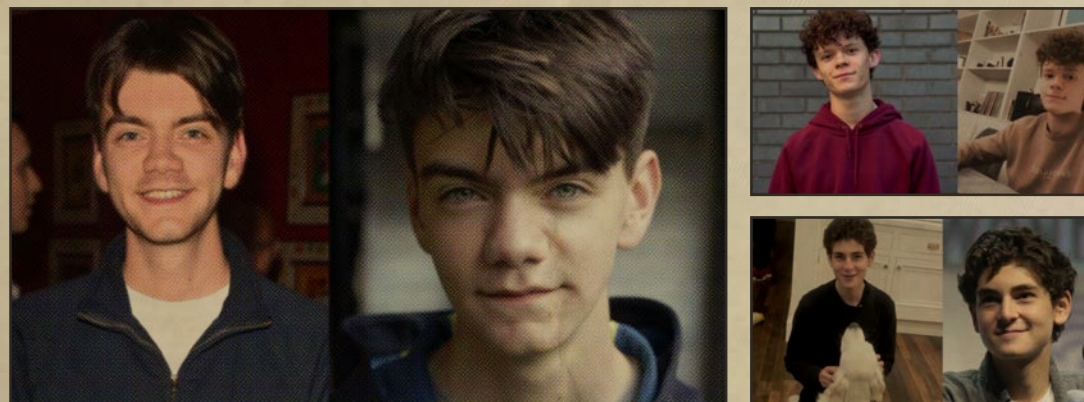
Casting references / character descriptions

VASIL (65)



Moral absolutist, anticapitalist, introvert, unpretentious but rigid and unyielding, skinny, sinewy, fit, the ascetic type

MARKO (20)



Neurodivergent, good natured, child-like honest, all his emotions are visible on his face, authentic (does not have a persona)

ARTA (35)



Pretty but weathered face, as if exposed to harsh weather conditions for too long, unruly hair, some of her gestures and grimaces are masculine, her body seems used to hard physical labor

STEFAN (40)



Sharp, handsome, shady manipulator with little empathy

ISKRA (65)



Vibrant, cheerful, naturally youthful, beautiful face without make-up and with the usual artifacts that come with age, healthy-looking gray hair, undyed, slender figure, in great shape

Look

Visually, the film will be cinematic, taking stylistic inspiration from the 1970s New Hollywood movement. It will employ two distinct looks: a look of normalcy (from the beginning to the inciting incident and from the resolution to the end) and a look of crisis (from the inciting incident to the resolution).

The look of normalcy will be summery and sun-drenched (as most scenes are daytime), with medium contrast, and a strong shift of the gamut of the mid-tones and highlights towards yellow. An extreme example of this procedure can be found in Fernando Meirelles's *City of God*, though more nuanced references are select shots from John

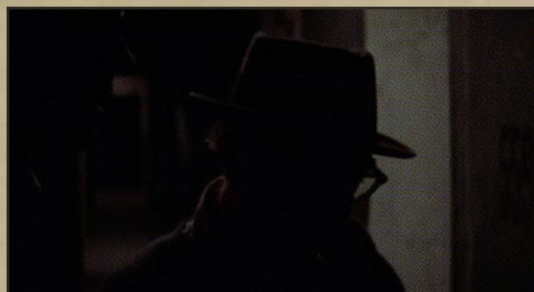
Huston's *Fat City* (1972, cinematographer Conrad L. Hall) and Ulu Grosbard's *Straight Time* (1978, cinematographer Owen Roizman).



From the inciting incident, the look of normalcy will start to morph into the look of crisis, which will transform the same environment. The daytime scenes will still be summery and sun-drenched, but now with a lot of black color within the frame, characters will often be in a shade, even in the exteriors, with high contrast and deep blacks; night-time scenes will be particularly dark, often utiliz-

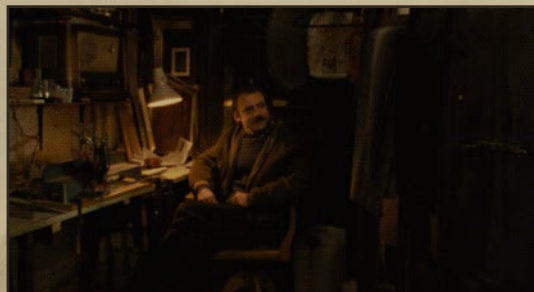
ing backlight, silhouettes, shadows that cover parts of the faces, practical lights, awkward framing, high contrast, and deep blacks. A relevant (gritty) reference is Alan J. Pakula's *Klute* (1971, cinematographer Gordon Willis), though a tad more poetic reference is Wim Wenders' *The American Friend* (1977, cinematographer Robbie Müller).





The cinematic elements will be: use of cinematic lenses that differ the most from the vision of a human eye (wide angle and telephoto-lenses); use of anamorphic lenses to achieve the most cinematic aspect ratio (2,39:1), that differs the most from what the human eye sees (about 1,53:1); maximum emphasis on the shaky but fluid camera movement through frequent use of Steadicam and making the camera the conveyor of the visual language of

the film; bold framing; high contrast photography with a deep black and a strong shift of the gamut of the mid-tones and highlights towards yellow in order to avoid the white color; in the night scenes, complementary colors will be used to light the foreground and background; in a nutshell - gritty, grainy, not very sharp, high-contrast, more saturated colors, deep shadows, and yellowish highlights and midtones.



Kristijan Risteski

Screenwriter / Director



Kristijan Risteski is a film director, screenwriter, and producer who graduated in Film and Theatre Directing from the Faculty of Dramatic Arts at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje.

Risteski's feature debut, "Snow White Dies in the End," premiered at the 2022 Slamdance, had its European premiere at the 2022 Moscow International Film Festival, and won the Gold Remi Award for Best Black/Dark Comedy at the 2023 WorldFest Houston.

The critics wrote that "Snow White..." "is a beautiful mosaic reminiscent of PT Anderson's Magnolia" (Slug Mag), "wonderfully off-kilter and possessing its own sense of reality" (Unseen Films), "one of the more unique movies made in the last several years" (Houston Chronicle), that "this story isn't like much that you're likely to have seen, which is a recommendation in and of itself" (Movie Boozar), and that Risteski "can sniff out the glim-

mering weird in dull normality like a pig hunting truffles" (Film Threat).

His short, "Remain Upright!," premiered at the Sarajevo Film Festival and has been screened at Palm Springs IFoSF, San Francisco IFF, Melbourne IFF, Brussels SFF, and Molodist Kyiv, among others.

He is also a screenwriter/director of another narrative short and two documentary/mockumentary TV series, and a director of a narrative medium-length TV film and over fifty TV ads.

Risteski's professional experience includes producing 10 films and over 200 TV ads, directing over 20 theatre performances, and serving as an executive director of the International Cinematographers' Film Festival Manaki Brothers.

SNOW WHITE DIES AT THE END

<https://vimeo.com/505312978>

Password: 7dwarfs

Darko Popov

Producer



Darko Popov graduated in Film & TV Production from the Faculty of Dramatic Arts at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, and holds a master's degree in Creative Production at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade. He is an EAVE

graduate and was a Macedonian representative at the Producers on the Move in 2011.

Films that Darko Popov produced (nine narrative features, four narrative shorts, two feature-length documentaries, and an animated short) were select-

ed and won awards at festivals such as Karlovy Vary International Film Festival ("Punk's Not Dead," 2011 Best Film in the East of the West competition), Rotterdam IFF, Annecy IAFF, Shanghai IFF, Moscow IFF, Thessaloniki IFF, WorldFest Houston ("Snow White Dies at the End," 2023 Gold Remi for Best Black/Dark Comedy, "M," 2024 Gold Remi for Best Fantasy/Horror), IFF Cottbus, etc.

Darko is an owner of the production company Focus Pocus Films. He served as an executive director of the International Cinematographers' Film Festival Manaki Brothers. Speaks English and Serbo-Croatian and is desperately trying to learn Greek.

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www.focuspocus.mk / +389 78 255 867 / daropopov@focuspocus.mk
Vladimir Komarov 33-2/1, 1000 Skopje, RN Macedonia