



OFFICIAL SELECTION

40TH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ROTTERDAM

# OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

A DOCUMENTARY BY DIETER AUNER



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Documentary film by Dieter Auner

Produced by Siún Ní Raghallaigh, Cristian Mungiu & Dieter Auner

## TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Ireland, Romania 2011; Documentary; 35mm; 87 minutes; aspect ratio 1:1,85; Dolby SRD; original language Romanian; available with English subtitles

## SYNOPSIS

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK chronicles a world, untouched for centuries, struggling with profound change. Since joining the EU, Romanians are free to work as agricultural labourers and earn more in one month than a year in their traditional occupation, as shepherds.

Against this changing landscape, Dieter Auner's documentary introduces us to Albin Creta, a teenage Romanian shepherd from Northern Transylvania. We experience a year of his life as he works shepherding, cutting hay, making cheese and dipping sheep, and the dark nights on the Transylvanian mountain. In this sensitive documentary, the drama is observed in the minute: the selling of the lambs, the purchase of a car, the departure for Germany. Albin and his family adapt to each trial, changing to meet the new demands asked of them. One can feel the loving attention to detail to the world of the rural Romanians – who seem entirely oblivious to the documentary production documenting the small changes in their lives.

Small changes, yet the harbingers of a new world.



## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The profound changes undergone in the West during the past century - changes in perceptions, expectations, sensibilities - seem to be reaching the last corners of the developing world. Our story is set in a village from the North of Romania, far away from the stress of modern life. The streets are buzzing with horse carts coming and going, children laughing, working and strolling. Lately the shepherd's home has become place to show off acquisitions from the golden West: flashy mobile phones and fancy cars. This Transylvanian village is an ideal example for a rapidly changing world, contrasting old traditions with modern progress. Shepherding has given an enduring integrity to the human spirit of the place, but for how much longer? J.L. BORGES says: "If we know what we have lost, we will know what we will gain."

I emigrated from Romania to Germany, after the collapse of Communism, in the year 1990. This move from behind the 'Iron Curtain' to the promising West, was followed by a drastic culture shock and sense of displacement. While trying to cope with inner changes, I learned the importance of identity and belonging. My search for a new home brought me to Galway, the West of Ireland, in 1996. Yet, throughout the booming years of the Irish Economy, I felt being cut off increasingly from the relationship with other people, from the simplicity of life, and from a sense of responsibility. Why?

I tried to understand this phenomena by exploring the modern life in rural Transylvania. I lived with the shepherds over a long period. This experience made me understand their culture and mentality, and created trust for my creative intentions. In 2008 we started to document the life of Albin's family. I wanted to make a cinematic essay that is parochial but universal, simple and engaging. My dream was to create a human story, bringing us into the reality of the subject matter with a wondering smile. We filmed the shepherds for more than one year, and we learned why they are eager to enlist on the Western 'go-grab-it-battalions'. What is to be done?

As a storyteller, I believe that it is more important to raise questions than to shape answers. It happens too often that the modern media does the opposite, and creates confusion underneath the umbrella of political correctness. I hope that trough the recent burst of the 'Bubble' a new social consciousness will emerge, and that we understand the color of greed. Yet, what will remain true for modern progress?

Perhaps the story of the shepherds OFF THE BEATEN TRACK could teach us a small lesson in finding our own answers. And hopefully, some of these answers could lead us to a more balanced future.

Dieter Auner



#### DIETER AUNER

Dieter Auner was born in 1970, then communist Romania. After being released early from the military service, he emigrated in early 1990 to Germany following the mass EXODUS of his people, known as the Transylvanian Saxons. He studied physics at the University in Bonn and emigrated to Ireland in 1996. Since then he developed as a photographer and film maker, focusing on Romania, his 'lost' homeland. Some exhibitions and publications followed: "Romania Photographic Exhibition" Ireland 1996; "Art Exchange", New York 1997; "Have You Seen Dracula?" Ireland 1998; "[Frame]words", Ireland 2001. All this years Dieter officially documented the major Arts events in Galway, his adopted home, and contributed to many national and international Film productions as a stills photographer.

The departure of his last Saxon relatives from Transylvania, led to his first feature documentary film, entitled LEAVING TRANSYLVANIA in 2001 . This documentary premiered at the Astra Film Festival 2006 in Romania, and won a prestigious award from The Romanian Institute of Culture. Shortly after Dieter started a new creative documentary film entitled OFF THE BEATEN TRACK.

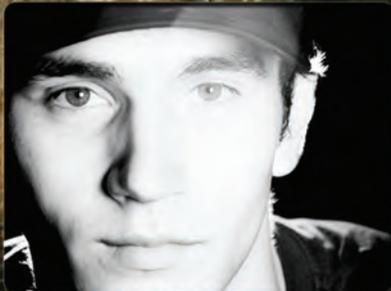
## NORA AGAPI

Director of Photography

Nora Agapi graduated from the University of Drama and Cinematography, Romania in 1998 and became an academic assistant at this prestigious film school. Her early work won the Jury Prize for best Photography at the International Student Film Festival 'Cinemailubit', Bucharest.

For over ten years Nora proved her creative talent in still photography, fashion photography, short and feature length films, award winning documentaries around the world and reportage for ZDF, ARTE. Her work was published in many high profile magazines and personal exhibitions. Nora's versatility and experience in film lead to the success of "LOW COST" a feature documentary for ARTE France and TV Romania. This project gave her a recognized status as Director of Photography with an original color composition, a distinguished style that is able to frame characters and situations in their flood of emotions. Nora Agapi currently lives in Greece and finishes her MA in Digital Art in Athens.





## ALEXANDRU BRENDEA

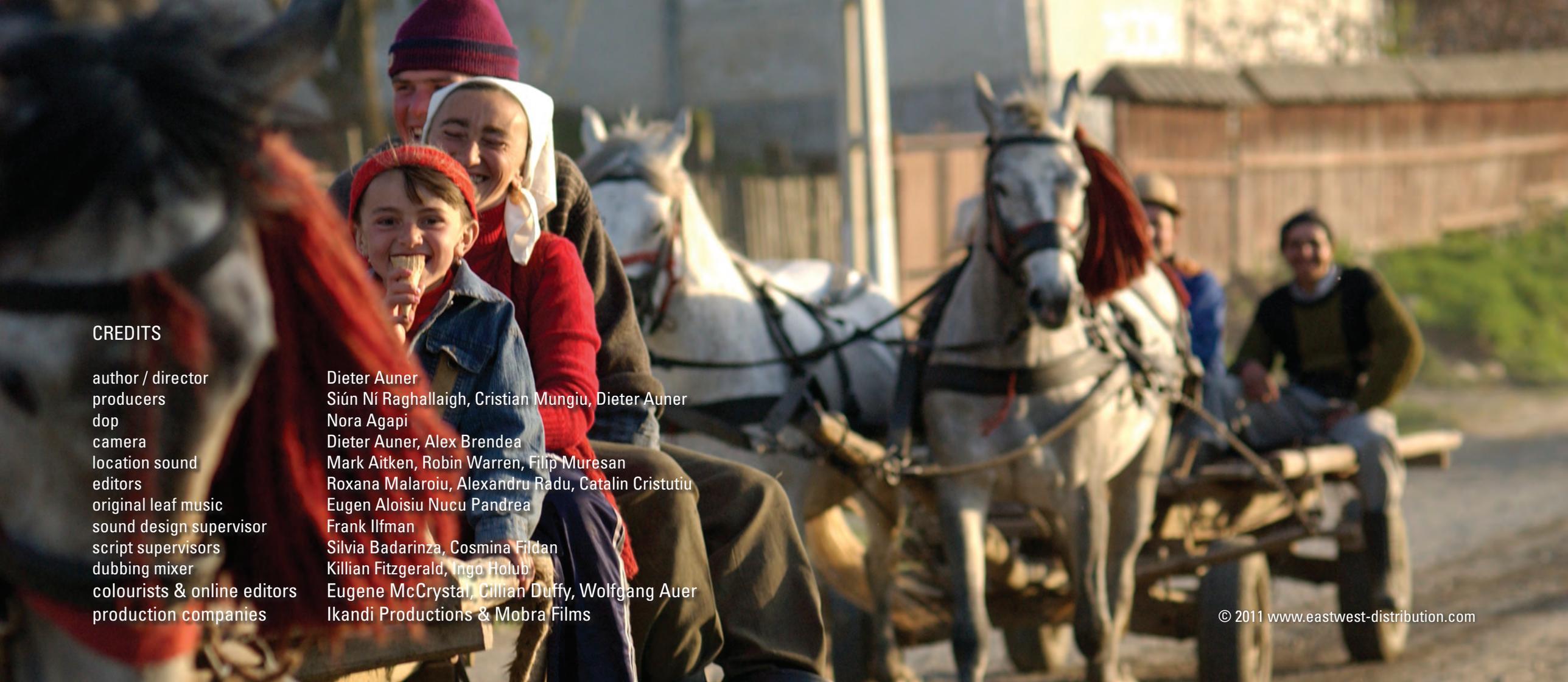
Camera and additional photography

Born in 1987, Bistrita, Romania, Alex started studying Photography at 15 years of age. After finishing high-school he studied cinematography at "I.L.Caragiale" University of Drama and Filmmaking Bucharest. In his young career Alex has gained impressive experience with feature and short films, both on 16mm and 35mm, commercials, music videos and documentaries shot on the latest digital support. Passion for photography and outdoor activities is an ideal combination for Alex. Furthermore, his understanding of new technologies proved to be vital in the creation of the feature documentary film OFF THE BEATEN TRACK.



CAST

ALBIN CRETA	the shepherd
MIREL CRETA	the brother
GAVRIL GORDON	the chief
RAFILA CRETA	the mother
PETRUC CRETA	the father
MARIUTA CRETA	the grandmother
ANGELA GRODON	the sister
DINU GORDON	the brother in law



## CREDITS

author / director

Dieter Auner

producers

Siún Ní Raghallaigh, Cristian Mungiu, Dieter Auner

dop

Nora Agapi

camera

Dieter Auner, Alex Brendea

location sound

Mark Aitken, Robin Warren, Filip Muresan

editors

Roxana Malaroiu, Alexandru Radu, Catalin Cristutiu

original leaf music

Eugen Aloisiu Nucu Pandrea

sound design supervisor

Frank Ilfman

script supervisors

Silvia Badarinza, Cosmina Fildan

dubbing mixer

Killian Fitzgerald, Ingo Holub

colourists & online editors

Eugene McCrystal, Cillian Duffy, Wolfgang Auer

production companies

Ikandi Productions & Mobra Films

# OFF THE BEATEN TRACK



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