

QUO VADIS, AIDA?

Bosnia (2020) 101 minutes

Director: Jasmila Žbanić

Cast: Jasna Djuricic (Aida)
Boris Isakovic (General Mladić)



Screening 1st February 2023 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

Aida is a translator for the UN in the small town of Srebrenica. When the Serbian army takes over the town, her family is among the thousands of citizens looking for shelter in the UN camp.

Reviews



More than 8,000 Bosnian Muslims were murdered by units under the command of General Ratko Mladić. Yet if that makes *Quo Vadis, Aida?* sound like an unbearably tough prospect, be reassured that in the hands of writer-director Jasmila Žbanić, who won a Berlin Golden Bear for her 2006 debut feature, *Grbavica*, this horrifying tale is lent a profoundly human heart, ensuring that we keep on watching.

Jasna Đuričić, feted for her role in 2010's *White, White World*, is utterly convincing as Aida, a translator working at a UN base near Srebrenica, who sees first-hand the failure of peacemakers to prevent an unfolding catastrophe. 'Will anyone in the world witness this tragedy, this unprecedented crime?' pleads a voice on a radio. Yet it's clear that, despite being an alleged 'safe zone', nobody is ready or willing to protect this area. Instead, thousands are forced to flee to the UN encampment, where the Dutch authorities promptly close the gates on thousands more.

Mark Kermode, The Guardian

In July 1995, the Bosnian Serb army, under the command of General Mladić, over-ran the town of Srebrenica, which had been declared a safe haven by the United Nations. Muslim civilians sought refuge at a nearby U.N. base, but were handed over to Mladić's soldiers, who separated them by gender and loaded them into buses and trucks. Around 8,000 men and boys were murdered, their bodies buried in mass graves, in one of the worst atrocities of the Yugoslav wars.

At the time, many in the West wondered how this could happen — how genocidal violence could erupt in Europe barely 50 years after the end of World War II. *Quo Vadis, Aida?*, Jasmila Zbanic's unsparing and astonishing film, shows precisely how. This isn't the same as explaining why, though Zbanic's granular, hour-by-hour, lightly fictionalised dramatisation of the events leading up to the massacre sheds some glancing light on that question.

General Mladić is an unnervingly familiar figure. A self-infatuated bully who travels everywhere with a cameraman. But the movie isn't really about him. The viewer suffers through it in the company of Aida Selmanagic (Jasna Duricic), who works as a translator for the U.N.

In her previous life, Aida was a teacher. Her husband, Nihad (Izudin Bajrovic), was the principal of the local high school. At one especially tense moment, she and a Serb soldier exchange polite greetings: he's a former student, who sends regards to Aida's sons. That encounter is one of several reminders of the prewar normal, when Serbs and Muslims lived side by side and Aida and her family pursued an uneventful middle-class existence.

A.O. Scott, New York Times

Film Facts

- Jasna Djuricic, who plays the main role, is the wife of Boris Isakovic, who plays General Mladić. They often work together in film and theatre, but in this film they don't share any scenes.
- Official submission of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the 'Best International Feature Film' category of the 93rd Academy Awards in 2021.
- One of former President Barack Obama's 14 Favourite Films of the Year 2021.

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