



20.
Sarajevo
Film Festival
OFFICIAL SELECTION



Festival del film Locarno
Piazza Grande

ARIANE ERMIN ADA
LABED·BRAVO·CONDEESCU

Love Island

A film by
Jasmila Žbanić



Synopsis



Grebo and his very pregnant wife Liliane are taking a well-deserved vacation at a popular Adriatic seaside resort. All inclusive! All the sun, swimming and fun that their hearts desire. What could possibly go wrong on such an idyllic holiday?

At open-mike night, Grebo seduces the resort crowd and reminds his loving French wife of the Sarajevo rocker she fell in love with. But the evening's big surprise is the young couple's meeting with mysterious Flora. The charismatic young woman will soon put their young marriage to the test. Past secrets cannot stay hidden for long on Love Island.

Summer fun at a seaside resort and a bold look at modern relationships from Jasmila Žbanić, director of *Grbavica* (2006 Berlinale Golden Bear), *On The Path* (*Na Putu*) and *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*.

Main Cast



Ariane Labeled
as Liliane



In only a few years, actress Ariane Labeled has established a truly international film career, performing in Greek, French, English and even some Croatian and Bosnian. She burst onto the scene with Greek director Athina Rachel Tsangari's *Attenberg*, which won her the Venice Film Festival's Best Actress Award in 2010. In addition to Bosnian director Jasmila Žbanić's *Love Island*, Ariane's other feature credits include US director Richard Linklater's *Before Midnight*, Canadian director Guy Maddin's *Spiritisme* and French director Fabienne Godet's *Une Place Sur La Terre*. Ariane played a determined gymnast in Yorgos Lanthimos' *ALPS* and she will soon be seen in that Greek director's upcoming English-language feature *The Lobster*.

Ariane was born in 1984 in Athens, Greece, to French parents. She grew up between Greece, Germany and France. After studying dance for 10 years, she studied "Practice and Theory of Art" at the Université de Provence.

A founding member of Vasistas Theatre Company, she has acted in all their productions. She has also performed in Yorgos Lanthimos' New End Theater production of *Platonov*, and Argyro Chioti's *Faust* at the National Theater of Greece.

Ermin Bravo as Grebo

For those who have not been fortunate enough to see him in live theater, Ermin Bravo's film career is a testament to his wide range as an actor. He recently played Mehmet in Angelina Jolie's *In The Land Of Blood And Honey*, which won the 2012 Cinema for Peace Award for its cast. In addition to playing loving husband Grebo in *Love Island*, Ermin also appeared in two other films directed by Jasmila Žbanić: as a fundamentalist in 2010's *On The Path (Na Putu)* and a concerned teacher in 2006's Berlinale Golden Bear winner *Grbavica*. Ermin's other feature film credits include Danis Tanovic's *Circus Columbia* and Dino Mustafic's *Remake*.

For the past decade, Ermin has had an outstanding theater career. He has won numerous awards as the leading role in *Helver's Night*, and also for his performances in *How I Learned To Drive*, *The Lonesome West*, *The Beast On The Moon* and *Huggers*. He recently played Father Flynn in *Doubt*. Born in Sarajevo in 1979, Ermin is a 2003 graduate of Sarajevo's Academy of Performing Arts, where he works today as a dramatic arts professor.



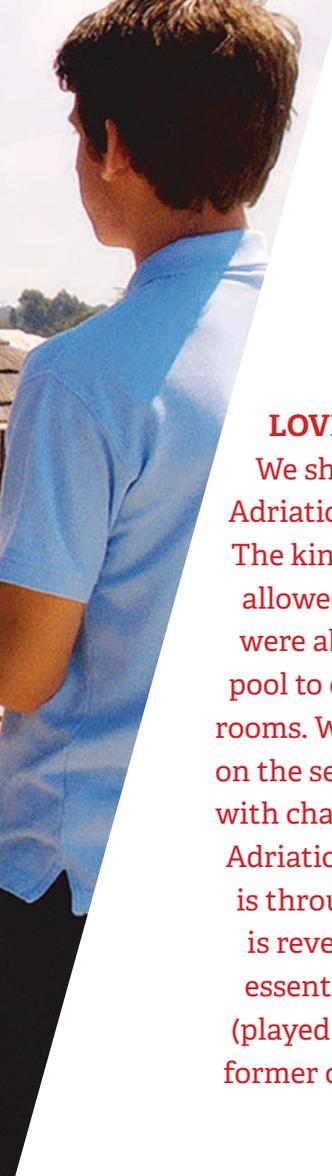




Ada Condeescu as Flora

Ada Condeescu made her screen debut in Florin Serban's award-winning *If I Want To Whistle, I Whistle* which premiered at the 2010 Berlinale. She followed this with another two lead roles: in Catalin Mitulescu's *Loverboy* (Cannes 2011 - Un Certain Regard) and Bogdan Mustata's *Lupu (Wolf)*. In 2013, Ada was selected for the European Film Promotion's prestigious Shooting Stars. Ada is a graduate in Acting from Bucharest's National University of Theatre and Film.





Comments From Director Jasmila Žbanić

LOVE ISLAND

We shot the film on beautiful St. Nikola Island in the Adriatic Sea off the Istria peninsula near Porec, Croatia. The kind people from Valamar Isabella Island Resort allowed us to use the location much like a studio. We were able to block parts of the beach and swimming pool to create our own sets like the hotel terrace and rooms. We even invited real hotel guests to be with us on the set as extras. We were looking for a seaside resort with character, atmosphere and energy. Beauties of the Adriatic are an important dramatic aspect in the story: it is through them that the beauty of the lead characters is revealed and their story is told. Both sea and sun are essential dramatic catalysts. We also created a character (played by Franco Nero) based on Marquis Polesini, former owner of the island.

GETTING NAKED

I am amazed how some places and special times can drastically influence and change human beings. That is very obvious during seaside holidays when people get “naked.” Spending so much time in swimsuits helps cast aside social and conventional barriers. We work all year to earn a well-deserved vacation and we want it to be special. A holiday vacation is the time of year, time of life, when we rest from our everyday lives, ourselves and our daily routine. We become more relaxed, more ourselves, funny, silly, more human and more lovable. I wanted to capture this chemistry. Also, I chose to place the film in a vacation resort because of my interest in the dynamics of communal living - eating and spending time with bunch of unknown people, the kind of people that you don't really meet in your everyday life. I have been fascinated by this phenomenon since childhood.



HUMOR

Humor enables us to see ourselves as something relative, something without the certainty of a promised paradise. The face of a laughing human being is both beautiful and heretical. Humor takes us to another dimension, where we perceive things differently. In *Love Island*, we tried to discover humor through the characters, situations and details. For example, deriving joy from the way the characters are dressed, from what they think about themselves, how they perceive themselves, younger or older than they actually are, from their belief that certain items of clothing make them look better, or give them the strength to be what they are not but would have liked to be, or to be what they really are but always lacked the courage to do openly.

A DIFFERENT REALITY

Living in Bosnia I have been emotionally involved with the horrible times of post war society. It touched me deeply, personally. But, at the same time, life here in Sarajevo is not

only about sadness and war. My everyday life is full of love and humor and I feel I can share joy, too. The fact that *Love Island* became my fourth film has more to do with production financing than anything else. Actually I wanted *Love Island* to be my second film as a parallel exploration of two very different worlds that are close to me.

But I think the timing for this film is perfect. Now, more than ever, we need to share the film's idea of solidarity. *Love Island* is not intended to be solely an entertaining attempt to escape hard reality. It's a vision of a different reality and an attempt at awareness that this utopia can be reality too.

THE PAST IS A SEDUCTIVE WOMAN

We, the people of the Balkans, tend to take our past way too seriously, and we experience it in a mythological way. In *Love Island*, I wanted to see the past as a seductive woman who comes on a day when she's least expected and certainly not wanted. How does this change us and how do our relationships change? How do we deal with the past and the "others" from our past? How is the

past transformed into a new context, especially if it has to do with our sexuality? The past is, in many ways, a topic in all my films. It defines my characters and their lives, depending on how they deal with the past. They are surprised by it, sometimes they deny it, but they must eventually acknowledge it as a way to move forward.

LOVE EXPERTS

For years I wanted to work with the great Bosnian-American writer Aleksandar Hemon. I shared my idea about a family who is both challenged and transformed during their vacation. That was the spark and we started working on the story. Aleksandar was in the US so we worked together mostly virtually, but we actually met twice at a similar hotel resort and once in Sarajevo. Aleksandar jokes that we wrote this script because we are love experts. Of course it is not only us. All human beings are love experts because we all have the ability to love, to be loved, to be hurt, and we learn soon enough how all that is very complicated.

SEXUALITY AND SOCIETY

Sexuality and society is the focus of *Love Island*. This was also prevalent in my films *Grbavica*, *On The Path (Na Putu)* and *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*, but in a very different way. This time it's through a story about a young couple on holiday. Control of sexual behavior through family values defines our political thinking and the degree of our human and political limitations. *Love Island* might seem to be far away from current political issues, but to me, the subject of family and sexual relationships remains an essential political topic. Also, the method in which this subject is treated in *Love Island* is a political attitude: nothing is static, human values are not set in stone. They can be interpreted in more than one way.

ARIANE LABED AS LILIANE

I saw Ariane Labed in Athina Rachel Tsangari's wonderful film *Attenberg*. I asked Ariane to do a video audition. What she sent us was so funny that we kept watching it over and over again. I asked her to come the very next day to Zagreb to see how she would work with Ermin Bravo (as Grebo) and Ada Condeescu (as Flora).

She said: "You're crazy!" and I replied "Yes, so are you." She came the next day and she was cast as the pregnant and conflicted Liliane. Ariane is deep, sensitive, smart, and a great actress. We are going to see great art from her in the future. She also has her theatre company in Greece and they experiment and travel. She is alternative in her thinking and her acting. She asked me why I wanted her for this part because she felt "I am not motherly type." I told her that's exactly why. Pregnant women are very often portrayed in a stereotypical way. Ariane is not stereotypical in any way and that is why I adore her art.

ERMIN BRAVO AS GREBO

I first met Ermin Bravo when he was teenager. He came to volunteer in Peter Schumann's theatre show for the Bread and Puppet Company, which I was a member of. Ermin showed such incredible dedication and passion on stage. I remember thinking: this guy is really something. He has made a phenomenal career in theater. He has been playing in *Helver's Night* with Mirjana Karanovic (who plays Esma in *Grbavica*) for 10 years in repertory and buying a ticket is still a fight. Ermin played in two of my other movies – a teacher in *Grbavica* and the

fundamentalist Bahrija in *On The Path*. In our region he is known as actor of very serious dramas. I was so happy to discover his funny side. If you look at his performances, you can see how amazing his range is. He is outstanding in his ability to transform and to bring forth deep emotions. He can sing and dance and he has a wonderful sense of humor. He has everything it takes to have an international career.

ADA CONDEESCU AS FLORA

I saw Ada Condeescu in the excellent *Lover Boy* by Catalin Mitulescu. Ada's eroticism really gets under your skin in a subliminal way. When I actually met her at the Sarajevo Film Festival, I was surprised to see that she looks like a child without make-up. This big huge difference really shows off her range. I met her again in Berlin when Ada was a Shooting Star and I was on the jury. I asked her to audition. I was convinced after seeing her do only one scene from the film. She is very warm and human, but she can transform into sexy and distant and dangerous – all this was necessary to reincarnate Flora. Ada could play a young teenager or a middle-aged woman and you would believe her.



LEGENDS

Italian actor Franco Nero is a true legend in Yugoslavia. He played in our partisan movies that we watched as kids. When I met him, he told me stories about meeting Tito. He said he taught him photography, because Franco had been a photographer before going into acting. And Franco has worked with Buñuel, Fassbinder, Tarantino ... I had the feeling I was having lunch with cinema history itself! I am very happy he agreed to do the cameo part in *Love Island*. I have never seen such a face that the camera adores so much. All lighting fits his beautiful eyes. Equally great was Branka Petric, the wonderful Serbian actress who kindly agreed to support *Love Island*. Branka was our queen. All of us were enchanted by her charm. It was a real treat to see how their generation can still find pleasure in the playground that a film set can be. We learned so much from both of them.

THE CREW

Director of photography Christine Maier and I have worked together since our student days. *Love Island* is our fourth feature film collaboration. She is involved in my script from the first idea and she is a part of all

decisions. In this film she was also an executive producer, investing both time and money because she believed so much in the project. She brought on editor Isabel Mayer and that was such great luck for me. When the editor is in love with the film, like Isabel was with *Love Island*, it gives the director a strong feeling of security. I'd like to mention my friend director and actress Lee DeLong whose amazing talents and great spirit rocked *Love Island*. Lee wore so many hats on the shoot: acting in the film, dialogue coach for non-English speaking actors (which means for all of them!), songwriting, choreography, working with the extras and even dubbing Flora's song. By chance, a lot of my key team were women, but not all. Actor Leon Lucev has been in all of my films and this time he is producing as well with Damir Ibrahimovic. Both of them took a huge risk making this low budget movie look very extravagant. This requires a team that invests not only their skills but also lots of love, creativity and sometimes a little craziness.

THE SCORPIONS' WIND OF CHANGE

At first, we wanted a song for the character of Grebo that would not only be the expression of his rocker taste, but could also allow him to charm the resort's open-mike

audience. The song ended up becoming his trademark, so we had it referred to a few times in the story. At the same time, the Scorpion's Wind of Change is a significant song for us, people coming from socialism. After this song became a hit our world collapsed. Some of my German friends said: "Do you understand it would be so embarrassing to have this song in the film?" But that's the point. Grebo is probably not representative of highbrow taste and he's not very politically correct. He can even be embarrassing at times. And that's why we love him. It was only when we heard the acapella version that we realized how beautiful the song actually is, how important it is for Grebo's character. It is the soundtrack for his transformation.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

In *Love Island*, music is part of the hotel resort's daily routine. More importantly, I wanted the music to help tell us about the characters and intrigue. Sometimes I used a musical number instead of dialogue. The karaoke or performances are part of the actual environment, and they are always used to move the story forward. For Flora's big seduction number, the song *Island Of Love*

was written expressly for the film (music by Balz Bachmann, lyrics by Aleksandar Hemon & Lee DeLong). We knew it had to be very seductive but also it had to stay on the lighter side, like the other songs as well. Finding the right tone and mood for the film was key. I hope audiences will leave humming the songs with a feeling of joy!





Jasmila Žbanić

Director

Born in Sarajevo in 1974, Jasmila is a graduate of her native city's Academy of Dramatic Arts, Theatre and Film Directing Department. Before filmmaking, she also worked as a puppeteer in the Vermont-based Bread and Puppet Theater and as a clown in a Lee DeLong workshop.

Her feature debut *Grbavica* won the 2006 Berlinale Golden Bear (as well as the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury and the Peace Prize), the AFI (American Film Institute) Fest Grand Jury Prize, Grand Prix Odyssey of the European Council and was sold to 40 territories with great success. *On The Path*, Jasmila's second feature film, premiered at the 2010 Berlinale, in the Competition section.

The film had worldwide distribution on 25 territories and won numerous awards including Filmkunstfestival Schwerin Award for Best Director, Golden Apricot IFF Yerevan – FIPRESCI Prize, Pula Film Festival 2010 – Golden Arena for Best Director, Nomination – European Film Award for Best Actress. Jasmila's third feature, *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*, made its world premiere at the Toronto Film Festival and won the 2013 Femme de Cinema Award at Les Arcs European Film Festival. All her films were produced through Deblokada, an artists' association that she founded.

Jasmila's films and video works have been displayed at dozens of art exhibitions worldwide such as Manifesta 3, the Istanbul Biennial, Museum Fridericianum Kassel, Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation, New Museum in New York... She is the recipient of the 2014 KAIROS Prize which honors European artists whose work is judged to have a major cultural and social impact.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- 2014 *Love Island*
- 2013 *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*
- 2009 *On The Path / Na Putu*
- 2008 *Participation* (short, part of the omnibus *Stories On Human Rights*)
- 2007 *Builder's Diary* (documentary)
- 2006 *Grbavica*
- 2004 *Birthday* (short, part of the omnibus *Lost And Found*)
- 2003 *Images From The Corner* (documentary)





Main Crew

Main Cast

Liliane – *Ariane Laped*
Grebo – *Ermin Bravo*
Flora – *Ada Condeescu*
Marquis Polesini – *Franco Nero*
Stipica – *Leon Lučev*
Madame Henzl – *Branka Petrić Fehmiu*
Cruella – *Lee Delong*
Nina – *Bojana Gregorić Vejzović*
Lucija – *Nadija Husetić*
Adam – *Aleks Rakoš*

Director – *Jasmila Žbanić*
Screenplay – *Aleksandar Hemon, Jasmila Žbanić*
Director of Photography – *Christine A. Maier*
Art Director – *Željka Burić*
Costume Designer – *Lejla Hodžić*
Editor – *Isabel Meier*
Make-up/Hair designer – *Ana Bulajić Črček*
Sound Designer – *Igor Čamo*
Music Composer – *Balz Bachmann*
1st AD – *Aldo Tardozi*
2nd AD – *Lee Delong*
Re-recording Mixer – *Markus Krohn*
Casting – *Timka Grahić, Oriana Kunčić*
Casting Germany – *Ulrike Müller*
Producers – *Damir Ibrahimović, Leon Lučev*
Co-producers – *Janine Jackowski, Maren Ade, Jonas Dornbach, Andrea Štaka, Thomas Imbach*
Executive producers – *Fred Roos, Franco Nero, Džemila Arnautović, Erika Maier, Christine A. Maier*
Commissioning Editors – *Jörg Schneider (ZDF), Doris Hepp (Arte/ZDF)*
Produced by: *Produkcija Živa (Croatia), Komplizen Film (Germany), Okofilm (Switzerland), Deblokada (Bosnia & Herzegovina)*

Love Island was filmed on location at the fabulous Valamar Isabella Island Resort in Croatia.
www.valamar.com/en/valamar-isabella-island-resort



Komplizen Film



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TECHNICAL DETAILS

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