

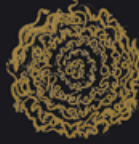
***Zift*: A Surreal Noir Vision in Bulgarian Cinema**

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Black and white film *Zift* (2008) by Javor Gardev

Source- YouTube/ Miramar Film



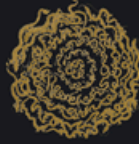
Bulgarian cinema has expanded its horizons and embraced a range of genres, with neo-noir thrillers making a notable impact. These films blend classic noir elements with modern issues, creating a distinct cinematic experience. A prime example is *'Zift'*, a 2008 film directed by Bulgarian theater director Javor Gardev and adapted from a novel by Vladislav Todorov, who is also the writer of the script.

'Zift' is shot in black and white, blending the 1940s and 1960s. It is a fusion of modern neo-noir with classic noir influences. The film centers on the character Moth, played by actor Zahary Baharov, who is released from prison after serving time for a crime he didn't commit. The narrative unfolds over his release day, with flashbacks revealing the events leading to his imprisonment. Moth encounters key figures from his past, including Ada played by actress Tanya Ilieva, his former love who is now a nightclub singer, and his ex-partner, Slug.



Ada played by Bulgarian actress Tanya Ilieva

Source- YouTube/ Miramar Film



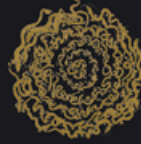
The film is unconventional and described as a mood piece with deeper meanings. It presents a challenging yet thought-provoking experience. 'Zift' features black-and-white cinematography, a non-linear narrative, and a mix of noir and dark humor. Thematically, it explores themes of culture shock, political commentary, and a pervasive sense of corruption and despair. The tone shifts from serious to black humor, creating a disorienting experience that reflects Moth's internal dilemma.



A noir visual scene from the 2008 film *Zift*

Source- YouTube/ Miramar Film

Moth's journey in 'Zift' involves reconnecting with his former lover, Ada played by Tanya Ilieva, who has become a disillusioned femme fatale, a classic noir character type. Moth's prison time symbolizes his failed life and the surrounding moral decay. However, the film's overall impact has faced certain criticism because of the lack of authenticity and excessive profanity in dialogues.

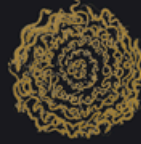


The film's black-and-white cinematography deliberately intensifies its noir elements and simplifies the depiction of period authenticity. This stylistic decision not only pays tribute to classic noir films but also deepens the film's noir characteristics, such as the focus on shadows and contrasts. The visual style establishes a moody, oppressive environment to show the protagonist's sense of alienation. For instance, the high-contrast lighting used in the scenes of the club and hospital, enhances the despair, with sharp lines and deep shadows amplifying the noir ambiance.

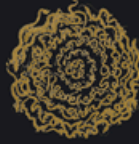


Bulgarian neo-noir thriller film *Zift*

Source- YouTube/ Miramar Film



Javor Gardev's cinematic style is deeply influenced by his theater background. Both his dramatic and post-dramatic theater style significantly shape his approach to filmmaking. His work often adapts to the cultural and social context in which he operates. *'Zift'* reflects this approach, blending neo-noir and dramatic surreal elements. The film highlights Gardev's exploration of physical and metaphysical dimensions. The fragmented and non-linear narrative structure has established it as a significant neo-noir contribution to Bulgarian cinema.



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