



INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
ROTTERDAM

PITY

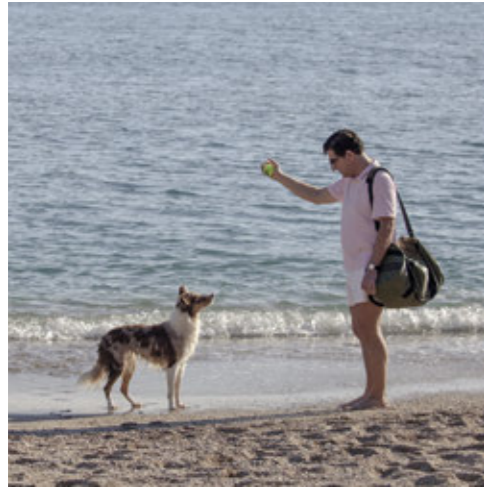
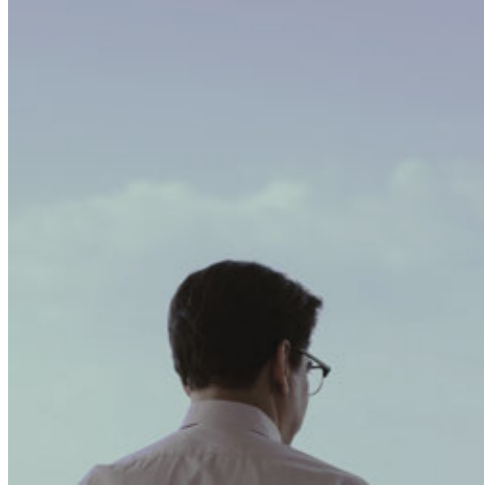
BY BABIS MAKRIDIS
GREECE, POLAND 2018



LOGLINE

The story of a man who feels happy only when he is unhappy: addicted to sadness, with such need for pity, that he's willing to do everything to evoke it from others. This is the life of a man in a world not cruel enough for him.





SYNOPSIS

A man of about 45, the Lawyer, lives with his teenage son in a well-off home. He is healthy, with a pleasing face, good manners and is generally well maintained. His hair is perfectly cut and groomed. His wife, however, has been in a coma and has been in a private hospital for some time following an accident. The sadness caused by this event has become the Lawyer's main and most vital element of life, giving him a sense of pleasure that becomes an addiction. His grief has also suddenly made everybody have compassion towards him: the neighbor bakes him a cake, the dry-cleaners give him a discount, and he shares an emotional moment with an employee. His life has never been better than it is now that he is a sad, pitied person. Then one day, his wife wakes up from the coma. Her return home radically changes his recently established everyday life of pity and sorrow. Sadness is now replaced by joy and he is overwhelmed by a yearning to go back to the previous, mournful state. He begins to invent ways to attract the pity that he has come to enjoy so much. He makes sure to destroy any happy moment that arrives, at first as part of a master-plan, but gradually with more frivolity and naiveté he totally loses control of himself.





INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR

by Marta Bałaga

While its subject is serious, at times *Pity* is also surprisingly funny. Was it something you anticipated?

What can I say – I am a funny guy [laughter]. I always say that for me, the script is a work in progress. When you work on something for a few years, you change as a person. You start putting in new ideas, so until the final mix anything can change. But with Efthimis Filippou (co-writer), we wanted the script to have a bit of humour because in our eyes, every movie is a comedy. So that's exactly what we told our crew. I would like to think that *Pity* has some Jacques Tati in it. I am a huge fan and when I shoot, I always feel he is right next to me, giving me advice. Or Buster Keaton! He influenced my previous films as well.

Buster Keaton was famous for always keeping a straight face. Your lead character, the lawyer, is like that as well – it's hard to figure out what is going on in his head.

I like mysterious characters, because that forces the viewer to make an effort and try to understand what is

happening. That's the beauty of cinema: everybody can read it in his own way. I like to go out the door thinking about what I just saw. If you forget it after 5 minutes, it's a bad movie. The way I see it, films should only ask questions, not give answers. The other part – that's what Hollywood is for.

Just like your previous film, *L*, you co-wrote *Pity* with the celebrated screenwriter Efthimis Filippou. He is mostly known for his work with Yorgos Lanthimos – the figurehead of the so-called 'Greek Weird Wave'. Do you see yourself as a part of that movement?

I don't like to put labels on films. Greek film industry can offer so much nowadays: social dramas, family films and comedies. We are so much more than just this one movement.

When we finished the script for my first film with Efthimis, after a year or so we started to talk about what our next project could be about. Ultimately we settled on *Pity* – it just seemed like the most interesting subject. We read some books about it, like for example Stefan Zweig's *Beware of Pity*. It was great, but it didn't bring us any closer to what we had in mind.

You are showing that for some people, grief can easily turn into pleasure.

When I was young, it felt so good to listen to a melancholic song at a party. Just to have some preoccupied girl come over and ask: "Are you ok?" In those days, that's how you would get girlfriends [laughter]. It's not something we like to admit, but as human beings, we revel in other

people's pity. It makes us feel important; like we are the centre of the universe. That being said, I believe there are two kinds of pity. One happens when you see a homeless person on the street, so you give him some money and you feel good about it. You – not him. The other kind is the one I decided to explore in the film. It's about the pity we are trying to get from the others and how far we are willing to go in order to get it.

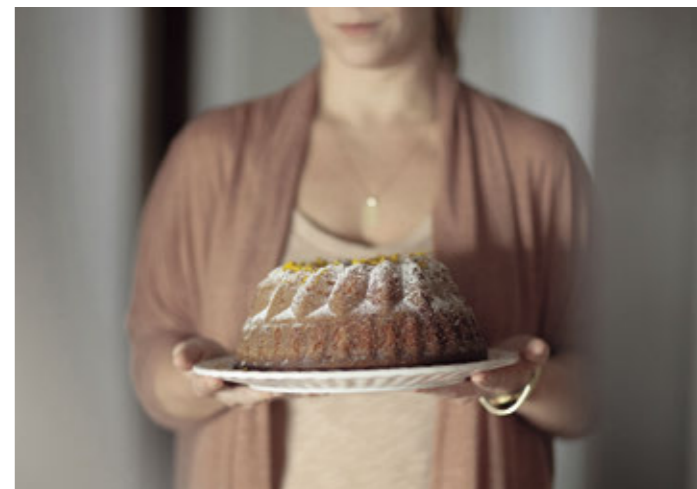
Have you actually met people like that?

Oh yes. Which is also why I think that in comparison to my previous film, this one is much more realistic. Some people develop this need very early on. Imagine that you are 3 years old and your cat dies. Everyone around you suddenly starts to pity you, which to a child can mean that they are very nice and give you sweets or presents. This feeling is just like any other addiction – you can become used to it and then you can't live without it anymore. And that's when people start lying.

Is that why you are not telling the viewer where to look? In most takes, the camera is completely still.

I like when the camera doesn't participate in the action. I want it to watch, not interfere. With this film it was extremely important, because I didn't want to give too many clues. But I also didn't want people to leave the cinema thinking: "What the hell was that?" So I added some intertitles, which we wrote together with Efthimis. I didn't want to use a voiceover, but those sentences add







something special to the film. They help you understand what is going on.

And so does the music. Did you always want it to be such an integral part of the film?

I used to say that this film reminds me of the opera – it's the music that draws you in. In the first part, what plays in the background is Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*. So you have this man that seems to be so sad, but the music is uplifting. In the second, when he has all the reasons in the world to be perfectly happy, it's Mozart's *Requiem* – the saddest music in the world. This contradiction shows you precisely what is really happening. It tells you what he feels.

Do you sometimes play something to the actors as well?

When we met for the very first time, I made them listen to a song by The Residents – this experimental band from the 70s. It was called *Breath and Length*. No one knows who they are – they always wear masks. But their music is funny and tragic; it has everything I needed for this film. I think the actors immediately understood what I was going for. Sometimes we would also play some music during the shoot, trying to help them to get in the right mood. I don't like to talk too much about the characters and their previous experiences, all that crap. I don't do rehearsals either. I trust my actors, especially because so many of them are friends of mine. They know my style and I let them do whatever they want, because I like when an actor comes to the set not knowing too much about what he is going to do. When they do, it often comes off way too stiff.

In the film, very often we hear the main character before we can actually see him. You are focusing on palm trees and the sea, but he can be heard in the background, crying. Why?

When you see a beautiful landscape and then hear someone cry, it's no longer beautiful – it's tainted. It's summer, everything is nice and he has a lovely house near the sea. Everything around him is beautiful. But he doesn't want beauty – he wants destruction. He likes to be sad. He is jealous of the sadness of others. Which is also why we decided to make him a lawyer, and not a musician or a teacher. This job is based on pity – you always try to get people feel sorry for your client.

Is that why you decided to include a scene in which he talks about the famous weepie *The Champ* by Franco Zeffirelli?

It was Efthimis's idea and I just thought it was very funny. It's such a sentimental film, *The Champ* – everyone cries when they watch it. So it was a perfect fit, because he really, really wants to cry. This scene is actually very important – it says so many things about the film. It's a turning point in a way, because that's when you realise he actually *misses* being sad. If *The Champ* would suddenly hit cinemas again, he would be there every day. Watching it in a loop and just crying his eyes out. Still, I do think that in the end, *Pity* is an optimistic movie. You will understand when you see the ending [laughter].



YANNIS DRAKOPOULOS
LAWYER

Yannis graduated cum laude from the New Greek Theater Drama School and the National Technical University of Athens. He has been working as an actor and director in theater, film and television, having participated, during the last twenty years, in over forty theatrical productions, seventeen short and feature films as well as twelve television productions. He has worked with directors such as Giorgos Armenis, Diagoras Chronopoulos, Lee Breuer, Athina Tsangari, Tasos Psaras, Nikos Perrakis, Vardis Marinakis, Damianos Konstantinidis, Nikos Zapatinas, Yorgos Servetas, Kostas Gakis and Vasilis Vafeas. From 1995 to 2010 Yannis delivered a series of seminars on theater games and pantomime, for the theater groups of the Athens University of Economics and Commerce, University of Piraeus and the National Technical University of Athens. He is also a contributing writer for *Nea Politiki* magazine in charge of the theater column.



EVI SAOULIDOU
WIFE

Evi was born in Kavalla in 1977 and attended the Drama School Theater of Northern Greece on a scholarship from the School. Evi has been working in theater in Athens since 1999, appearing in countless productions of classic and contemporary plays both with Greek and foreign directors and she has also appeared in the ancient theater of Epidaurus. She has appeared in cinema in Pantelis *Voulgaris' Brides* (2004), Alexandros Avranas' *Without* (2009) and Christos Dimas' *Pokerface* (2011). Evi was awarded the prestigious Melina Merkouri Prize for her role in *Bella Venezia*, in 2007, and she has also been awarded the Best Actress Award for *Without* and Best Supporting Actress Award for *Brides* at the National Film Awards.



EFTHIMIS FILIPPOU
CO-WRITER

Efthimis Filippou was born in January, 1977. He is a writer, a screenwriter and a playwright. Oscar nominated for *The Lobster* (2017). He has worked as a freelance journalist for various magazines and newspapers. Films he wrote include *Dogtooth*, *Alps*, *The Killing of a Sacred Deer* (all co-written with Yorgos Lanthimos), *Chevalier* (co-written with Athina Rachel Tsangari) along with *L*, which like *Pity* was co-written with Babis Makridis.



BABIS MAKRIDIS
DIRECTOR
CO-WRITER

Babis was born in Kastoria, northern Greece, in 1970. He studied film direction at the Stavrakos Film School in Athens. He started working as a director in 2000 and since he has directed countless commercials and video clips. His short film *The Last Fakir* (2005) won the Newcomer's Prize at the Drama short film festival, Greece. His debut feature *L* (2012) was presented in competition at Sundance Film Festival, Rotterdam Tiger Awards and many other international festivals. *Pity* is his second feature film.

PRODUCERS

NEDA FILM

Neda Film was established in Athens in 2014 by producer Amanda Livanou as a vehicle for the production of feature and documentary films as well as for international co-productions filmed in or with Greece. In addition Neda produces commercials and corporate videos for select clients. Amanda had previously produced a number of features and documentaries including Babis' debut feature *L*. Neda's first feature film *Park* by Sofia Exarchou premiered in Toronto Film Festival in September 2016 and went on to win the Best Director Prize at the San Sebastian Film Festival New Director's section and has been a big success in the festival circuit. Neda also produced two video art pieces by Eva Stefani for documenta14 in Kassel and Athens. Currently in post-production are the new documentaries by Eva Stefani and Panagiotis Evangelidis, while other projects are in various stages of development.

FALIRO HOUSE PRODUCTIONS

In 2008, Christos V. Konstantakopoulos founded the Athens-based production company Faliro House Productions. He has since been involved in more than 40 films, including *Song to Song* by Terrence Malick, *Infinity Baby* by Bob Byington, *Golden Exits* by Alex Ross Perry, *The Founder* by John Lee Hancock, *Voyage Of Time* by Terrence Malick, *Little Men* by Ira Sachs, *Midnight Special* by Jeff Nichols, *Chevalier* by Athina Rachel Tsangari, *The Lobster* by Yorgos Lanthimos, *Before Midnight* by Richard Linklater, *Stratos* by Yannis Economides, *Miss Violence* by Alexandros Avranas, *Only Lovers Left Alive* by Jim Jarmusch, *Take Shelter* by Jeff Nichols, *Park* by Sofia Exarchou and *Attenberg* by Athina Rachel Tsangari. Upcoming projects include *The*

Names by Alex Ross Perry and based on the book by Don DeLillo, *The Tunnels* by Paul Greengrass, *Membrane* by Yannis Veslemes, *Stranger Here Myself* written by Emma Doxiadi, *Pity* by Babis Makridis, *Ballad For A Pierced Heart* by Yannis Economides and *Love Me Not* by Alexandros Avranas. In February 2014, Faliro House Productions partnered with FilmNation, to create a development fund for the international sales company's productions. In June 2015, Christos launched Oxbelly, a by-invitation-only film symposium for film industry professionals from around the world, which took place in Costa Navarino, Greece. In June 2016, Faliro House in association with Athina Rachel Tsangari, partnered with Sundance to create their first Screenwriters Workshop in Greece, designed to support emerging filmmakers from Greece, Spain, Italy, Portugal and Cyprus.

MADANTS

MADANTS Ltd. is an independent production company founded in 2015 by Klaudia Śmieja and Beata Rzeźniczek, both of whom had previously had experience in film development and production. Madants aims to focus on projects with international potential for festivals and distribution all over the world. Stories that they choose to produce are authentic, unconventional and question reality. Since its establishment, Madants has worked with art house cinema directors. The first project the company co-produced was Sofia Exarchou's debut *Park*, awarded in San Sebastian. The second project with a festival release was *Porto*, directed by Gabe Klinger and starring Anton Yelchin and Lucie Lucas. They are currently involved in several upcoming productions: Haffstein Sigurdsson's *Under The Tree*, Janis Nords' *Hearts and Fangs* and Claire Denis' *High Life*. At the start of 2017 they set up the distribution company MADNESS, which is dedicated to art house cinema.

PITY

FESTIVALS

World Premiere: Sundance Film Festival
World Dramatic Competition

European Premiere: IFF Rotterdam
Big Screen Competition

FILM INFORMATION

Original title: Oiktos (Οίκτος)

English title: Pity

Genre: black comedy

Country: Greece, Poland

Language: Greek

Year: 2018

Duration: 99 min.

Picture: color

Aspect ratio: 1.85 : 1

Sound: 5.1

Available format: DCP

CAST

Yannis Drakopoulos	Lawyer
Evi Saoulidou	Wife
Nota Tserniafski	Sister
Makis Papadimitriou	Dry Cleaner Owner
Georgina Chryskioti	Neighbor
Evdoxia Androulidaki	Secretary
Nikos Karathanos	Brother

CREW

Director: Babis Makridis
Screenplay: Efthimis Filippou,
Babis Makridis

Cinematography: Konstantinos
Koukoulis

Editing: Yannis Chalkiadakis

Production Design: Anna Georgiadou

Sound Design: Leandros Ntounis

Production companies: Neda Film, Faliro House,
Madants, Beben Films

Producers: Amanda Livanou,
Christos V.

Konstantakopoulos,

Klaudia Śmieja,

Beata Rzeźniczek

Co-Producers: Onassis Foundation/
Anthony Papadimitriou,
Afroditi Panagiotakou

Peter Carlton,

Magdalena Zimecka,

Jacek Kulczycki,

Stanisław Dziedzic

In co-production with: Onassis Foundation,
ERT, Greek Film Center,

Studio Produkcyjne

ORKA, Film Produkcja,

Foss

Co-financed by: Polish Film Institute

Supported by: Eurimages

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