



**WOMAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA POWERED BY JAGUAR PRESENTS
ORDINARY PEOPLE, EXTRAORDINARY LIVES
THE CINEMA OF MÁRTA MÉSZÁROS**

Riddance (Szabad lélegzet)

Woman with a Movie Camera presents the world restoration premiere of Riddance + pre-recorded extended intro by Márta Mészáros.

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

Riddance is a thoughtful, observational drama about a young woman's fight to retain her integrity despite falling in love. Jutka is an independent young textile worker – free, but mindful of social prejudice. When she falls in love with a university student she faces a test of honesty.

Informed by her experiences researching a documentary, Mészáros examines youthful identity and integrity. The beautifully observational camerawork from Lajos Koltai is often in close-up, but never with judgement.

bfi.org.uk

The attractive and smart weaver Jutka is breaking up with Laci, a married workman. She meets András, an undergraduate in his fourth year, at a university club. She's worried that he will look down on her so she lies and tells him she is also a student, in her first year. Their love affair is blighted from the start by this lie, which later on András insists on sticking to in order to meet the expectations of his first-generation intellectual parents. When the two families get to meet each other, they become entangled in the lies.

The presentation of female weavers' lives at the time is sociologically authentic. Márta Mészáros already mapped out the lives of women workers in a weaving mill in her documentary *A lörinci fonóban (At The Lörinc Spinnery, 1971)*. In this film, the characteristic dramaturgy structured on moods and passages, with which the director concentrates on the psychology of her protagonist and the intimacy of her relationship, is already strikingly outlined. Although the girl acquiesces to the immutable circumstances of her working class environment, still she wages the freedom fight of the soul with this environment.

**Eszter Fazekas, *Restored Films of Márta Mészáros*,
National Film Institute Hungary – Film Archive**

It is the first of many such sensual moments in Mészáros's cinema when a woman finds refuge in the cleansing solitude of a shower, the image that had so captivated Agnès Varda. A counterpoise to preceding scenes of psychological or physical distress, these scenes are remarkable, among other things, for the way in which Mészáros presents the female body, imaged – but not, I think, fetishised – through the purificatory ritual of bathing, either alone or in the company of other women.

**Catherine Portuges quoted in Eszter Fazekas, *Restored Films of Márta Mészáros*,
National Film Institute Hungary – Film Archive**

Riddance (1973) casts a caustic eye on a class system that notionally shouldn't exist in socialist Hungary, via the relationship between ambitious university student András and factory worker Jutka. Jutka initially pretends to be a fellow student, which flowers into a more elaborately fictionalised backstory when she meets András's parents, developed further when she persuades her father to play along, only to find him enjoying the conceit a little too much when he starts adding his own improvised family subplots.

Michael Brooke, *Sight & Sound*, Summer 2021. With thanks to Márta Mészáros, Jákob Ladányi and the Hungarian National Film Archive.

The work of Hungarian filmmaker Márta Mészáros is intricately entwined with Europe's socio-cultural history. Mészáros, born in 1931, has been making films since the 1950s, and has over 15 features, plus numerous shorts and television films to her name.

Mészáros has been quoted saying that she is not a feminist, but that's a bit of a misunderstanding. During our conversation in Berlin, she said that although she has never been active in the feminist movement, she has always stressed the importance of women telling their stories, and having the industry's support.

In fact, Mészáros's own life embodies women's artistic emancipation. Mészáros was born into a creative family; her father was a sculptor. Her parents immigrated to Kazakhstan, but as Hungarians found themselves in danger when Hungary allied itself with the Nazis. Mészáros's father was arrested in 1936, and murdered; her mother disappeared in 1942, and died in mysterious circumstances.

Mészáros returned to Hungary. She always loved cinema, but was told that directing wasn't a suitable profession for a woman. Unable to study in Budapest, she enrolled in the State Cinema Institute (VGIK) in Moscow, which encouraged filmmakers from new socialist countries. She was accepted on probation, because the Soviets, as Mészáros told me jokingly, thought that the Hungarian comrades had sent her by mistake. 'I was 18 but looked 12,' she said (petite Mészáros retains a youthful air even now).

Upon graduation, Mészáros returned home where she had more artistic autonomy. 'When I asked for technical support, the Hungarians couldn't really refuse to help me, because I had studied in the Soviet Union, and that impressed them,' she joked. Mészáros made documentaries focusing on women, particularly lonely mothers, who at that time were rarely portrayed as protagonists.

Now that Hungarian National Film Fund is restoring most of Mészáros's films, viewers will be able to trace this rich history directly via Mészáros's cinema.

Ela Bittencourt, *Sight & Sound*, March 2019

RIDDANCE (SZABAD LÉLEGZET)

Directed by: Márta Mészáros
Production: Mafilm Studio Hunnia
Head of Studio: Istvan Nemeskurty
Production Manager: György Onódi
Assistant Director: Lajos Fazekas
Screenplay by: Márta Mészáros
Story Editor: Gergely Bikácsy
Director of Photography: Lajos Koltai
Assistant Camera: Imre Varga
Edited by: Zoltán Farkas
Costume Designed by: Géza Hiling
Music by: Levente Szörényi
Sound by: György Pintér, György Kovács

Cast

Erzsébet Kútvölgyi (*Jutka Szabó*)
Gábor Nagy (*András Molnár*)
Mariann Moór (*Zsuzi*)
József Székhelyi (*Laci*)
Melinda Máriáss (*Erzsi, Jutka's friend*)
Teri Foldi (*Mrs Molnár*)
Lajos Szabó (*Molnár*)
Ferenc Kállai (*Szabó*)
Gyöngyi Bürös (*Mrs Szabó*)
Mari Szemes (Jutka's mother)

Hungary 1973
77 mins

ORDINARY PEOPLE, EXTRAORDINARY LIVES THE CINEMA OF MÁRTA MÉSZÁROS

The Girl (Eltávozott nap)

Mon 5 Jul (preceded by 'Introducing Márta Mészáros' talk);
Fri 16 Jul 20:50

Binding Sentiments (Holdudvar)

Tue 6 Jul 20:50; Sat 17 Jul 15:20

Don't Cry, Pretty Girls! (Szép lányok, ne sírjatok!)

Wed 7 Jul 17:40; Sun 18 Jul 18:40

Woman With a Movie Camera Presents: the World Restoration

Premiere of Riddance (Szabad lélegzet)

Sat 10 Jul 17:30 (+ pre-recorded extended intro by Márta Mészáros);
Wed 21 Jul 21:00

Adoption (Örökbefogadás)

Mon 12 Jul 18:00 (pre-recorded intro by Selina Robertson,
Club des Femmes); Thu 22 Jul 20:30

Nine Months (Kilenc hónap)

Tue 13 Jul 17:40; Sun 25 Jul 12:30

The Two of Them/Two Women (Ők ketten)

Wed 14 Jul 20:50; Mon 26 Jul 18:10

The Heiresses (Örökség)

Sun 18 Jul 15:20; Tue 27 Jul 20:30

Diary for My Children (Napló gyermekeimnek)

Sat 24 Jul 14:10 (+ pre-recorded extended intro by Márta Mészáros);
Wed 28 Jul 17:50

Diary for My Loves (Napló szerelmeimnek)

Sat 24 Jul 17:30; Sat 31 Jul 20:30

Diary for My Father and Mother (Napló apámnak, anyámnak)

Sat 24 Jul 20:45; Sat 31 Jul 14:40

The restorations in this season were made from the original camera negatives, original magnetic tape sounds and positive prints, supervised and presented by the National Film Institute Hungary – Film Archive. The restorations were carried out at the NFI Film Archive and Filmlab.

T A P E PRESENTS: BUT WHERE ARE YOU REALLY FROM?

Eyimofe (This Is My Desire)

Thu 1 Jul 20:30; Fri 9 Jul 17:40

Black Girl (La noire de...)

Sat 3 Jul 11:40; Mon 12 Jul 18:20

Burning an Illusion

Sat 3 Jul 14:20; Thu 8 Jul 17:45

While We Live (Medan vi lever)

Sat 3 Jul 17:30; Tue 20 Jul 20:30

Binti

Sun 4 Jul 18:20; Mon 19 Jul 20:40

Pinky

Sat 10 Jul 20:50; Sat 24 Jul 11:40

Head-On (Gegen die Wand)

Sun 11 Jul 18:30; Tue 27 Jul 20:40

The Namesake

Wed 14 Jul 17:40 (+ live spoken-word performance); Wed 21 Jul 20:40

What Will People Say (Hva vil folk si)

Fri 16 Jul 20:30; Sat 31 Jul 17:30

In Conversation with Nikesh Shukla

Fri 23 Jul 18:20

Lilting

Sat 24 Jul 17:20; Fri 30 Jul 20:40

Shoot the Messenger + Q&A with director Ngozi Onwurah, hosted by T A P E's Angela Moneke

Thu 29 Jul 17:45

Culture Shock: Short Film Programme + Q&A with UNDR LNDN

Fri 30 Jul 17:40



In cultural partnership with



Hungarian Cultural Centre, London

BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk



Woman with a Movie Camera is powered by Jaguar and generously supported by Jane Stanton

BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

Programme notes and credits compiled by the BFI Documentation Unit

Notes may be edited or abridged. Questions/comments? Email prognotes@bfi.org.uk

The British Film Institute is a charity registered in England and Wales No. 287780