



SZERELEM / AMOUR / LOVE
a film by Károly Makk

Hungary, 1971, 92 min., B&W, 1:1.66

One of the *12 Best Hungarian Films of All Time* voted by the Hungarian Film Critics' Association in Budapest in 2000

International premiere of the original version:

1971 Festival de Cannes – Official Selection – In Competition
Jury Prize (ex-aequo), Special Mention – Un Certain Regard, OCIC Prize

World premiere of the restored version:

2016 Festival de Cannes – Official Selection – Cannes Classics

Presentation of the Hungarian National Film Fund and the Hungarian National Digital Film Archive and Film Institute (MaNDA).

A 4K Scan and Restoration from the original 35mm negatives. Digitization and restoration of the sound from 35mm magnetic tapes.

Restoration made by the Focus-Fox Studio and Hungarian Filmlab.

“Makk's haunting, atmospheric and beautifully performed film, brilliantly shot by Janos Tóth, captures exactly the fear and uncertainty of the time.”

Derek Malcolm's Top 100 Movies, [The Guardian](#), 2001

“Subtle, rich, reserved, even elegant, it is a beautiful movie.”

Roger Greenspun, [The New York Times](#), 1973

“un chef-d'œuvre de délicatesse et de sensibilité, en même temps qu'une inoubliable leçon de dignité humaine”

Jean de Baroncelli, [Le Monde](#), 1972

Directed by Károly MAKK
Screenplay Tibor DÉRY
DOP: János TÓTH
Music by András MIHÁLY

CAST
Lili DARVAS (the old lady)
Mari TÖRŐCSIK (Luca, her daughter-in-law)
Iván DARVAS (János, her son)

PRODUCTION

MAFILM Studio 1., Budapest

WORLD SALES

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SYNOPSIS

Budapest, 1953.

The old lady is lying in her bed that she only rarely leaves, she still wants to live – expectation keeps her alive. She is waiting for her son.

Her daughter-in-law fills her life with the most important events. She comes every day, bringing fresh flowers and her favourite salty savouries, and also money for the modest household...

Before she enters the house, she casts a glance in her mirror, ensuring that her tears did not leave marks on her face, and she concentrates like an actress before ascending the stage, or as a weightlifter, before lifting the heavy weight above his head.

The old lady believes that her son is in America, working on some film. She must not find out that her son is in prison – as a victim of the show trials during the period of the personality cult, and many years have to pass before he will be released. Even if she lived to be a hundred, as the doctor promised, according to the daughter-in-law, it would not be enough.

And the young woman plays her role day after day, to keep the old lady alive...

Budapest, 1953.

Une très vieille femme dans sa chambre encombrée de meubles désuets de la fin du siècle. Elle ne se lève plus que rarement pour une brève promenade. Mais elle veut vivre : l'attente lui en donne les forces. C'est son fils qu'elle attend. Les visites de sa belle-fille, belle jeune femme aux cheveux roux, sont les grands événements de sa vie. Elle vient chaque jour. La vieille femme croit que son fils est en Amérique où il travaille sur un film. Il ne faut pas qu'elle apprenne que son fils est en prison – condamné sur des accusations dénuées de fondement dans un des procès de l'époque du culte de la personnalités – et qu'il faudra encore de nombreuses années pour qu'il en sorte. La jeune femme joue la comédie pour la maintenir en vie. Mais la pneumonie sera la plus forte. La vieille femme meurt.

Et quelques jours plus tard son fils est appelé au bureau de la prison. On lui dit qu'il est libre. L'homme part vers la ville, hésitant. Il ignore ce qui l'attend chez lui. Sa femme, cependant, a gardé pour lui son amour inébranlable et immuable.

Peut-être... Mais non, il est certain qu'ils pourront recommencer leur vie...

LOVE, a film by Károly Makk

Derek Malcolm (The Guardian), [Century of Films](#)



Directors fighting seemingly insuperable odds often make their finest films. This was frequently true of the film-makers of eastern Europe, where the authorities took pride in supporting film but where there was also constant political censorship.

"It's dangerous," the great Polish director Andrzej Wajda once said, "but there are ways to get round political censorship. There are no ways to get round the censorship of

money that you have in the west, which is much stronger."

Károly Makk's *Love* did so with particular success. Makk had to wait five years before he could make *Love*, one of the most moving commentaries on life under political tyranny that I have ever seen.

The tyrant concerned was Rakosi, one of the last of the Russian puppets who ruled Hungary with a rod of iron and made political opponents disappear. One such prisoner is Janos, in jail on a trumped-up charge. His wife and sick mother await his return home.

His wife, in order to sustain the old lady, tells her that Janos is pursuing a career as a Hollywood director. She herself has lost her job because of her political beliefs. We never quite know whether the old lady believes her or not, or whether her tales of a glamorous childhood in Vienna are fantasy.

Finally, Janos is freed, and he travels home almost in dread of what he might find there.

Makk's haunting, atmospheric and beautifully performed film, brilliantly shot by Janos Tóth, captures exactly the fear and uncertainty of the time. It is, above all, a treatise on how such times affect fidelity, faith, illusion, love. It deals specifically with Hungary but has an absolutely universal appeal.

Lily Darvas, in the role of the mother, is superb, and rightly won golden notices. But Mari Torocsik is also totally believable as the wife, as is Ivan Darvas as the sick and greying prisoner.



The film is tough as old boots and completely unsentimental, but catches precisely what its characters face and how they feel. But it is sometimes quite difficult to bear because of the nature of the truths it tells. During the prisoner's journey home, for instance, Makk and his actor express perfectly not just the joy of freedom but the fear of finding that those he loves have forgotten or somehow freed themselves from him.

Makk did not make such an outstanding film again, though he was never anything but a capable director. Perhaps it is true sometimes that a film-maker has one classic in him, in which everything he wishes to say is said almost perfectly and in a way it is impossible to repeat.
