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'Train Driver's Diary' a bittersweet tale at the Orinda Theatre

By *Sophie Braccini*

image provided

become a train driver, to Iija's dismay.

"Train Driver's Diary" grapples with a very real issue: how train operators deal with fatal accidents caused by the train they drive. In the 2014 article "Part of the Job: How Engineers Deal With Death on the Railroad" by Darren Orf, published on PopularMechanics.com, the reporter quoted statistics, stating, "It is not so much a matter of if an accident will happen, but when." The film meets the topic head-on, but treats it with irony and black humor, cutting through the drama. For example, Iija, after a particularly gruesome accident, meets with two railroad psychologists, but ends up being the one helping the two professionals cope with the reality he describes.

Sima has also been through a lot. He was allegedly dropped in front of an orphanage in a banana crate by parents "who did not love him and had no use for him." He somehow grew up next to the closed-up Iija and his friends, who are all train drivers. They live in an unlikely village made of train cars very creatively converted into unique lodging units. The little tribe's members support each other in order to survive the dramas they have all suffered. Solidarity and love seeps through these gruff characters. They do not judge, they seldom blame and they deeply care.

In an interview given to CineEuropa at the end of last year, Director Radovic said that the subject matter could have been made into a tragedy, but also into a tragi-comedy. He chose, in his own words, to make a film that would be touching, warm, gracious, tragic, and funny -all in one movie.

The actors are all very powerful, including newcomer Petar Korac who plays Sima. He portrays the candor and naivety needed for this touching character. Korac is supported by strong, professional well-cast actors.

"Train Driver's Diary" was selected as the Serbian Academy of Arts and Science's submission for the Academy Awards Best Foreign Language Film category, and received the audience award at the Moscow International Film Festival in 2016. The film is a welcome respite from a formatted big production, and is a fine example of Eastern European movie productions. It will open at the Orinda Theatre for one week, starting Sept. 15. For more information, visit lamorindatheatres.com.

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