

WEGA FILM

presents

RISSE IM BETON

(Cracks in Concrete)

a film by

UMUT DAĞ

Austria - 2014 – Color – 1:1,85 – SRD – 1h45'46"

ARRI Alexa Pro Res 444 HD (1080p/24)

Screening Format: D-Cinema (DCP)

www.cracksinconcrete.com

facebook.com/risseimbeton

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SYNOPSIS

Ertan leaves jail after 10 years as a broken man and tries to settle back in society. 15-year-old Mikail spends his time with parties, drugs and dreaming of a life as a rapper.

Ertan is looking for Mikail. Mikail doesn't know Ertan.

Soon they both have to face a harsh reality.

INTERVIEW WITH UMUT DAĞ

The title of the film refers to a very hard material. *Cracks in Concrete* tells the story of an extremely relentless milieu. Was the hardness a leading motif in this story? What attracted you to this world?

The hardness was definitely one of the leading elements, one of the core points that aroused my interest in this milieu. I wanted to look behind the facades of these people, people we think we know from the media, and instead of allowing myself to be palmed off with the superficial, clichéd hardness I wanted to tell a story that can show it creaking open a little. I was already familiar with this milieu from my music videos and a documentary film.

The milieu of rap music or of petty crime ?

Often isn't possible to draw a clear dividing line: the two areas merge together. You hear a great deal of German and English rap in the milieu of petty criminals, maintaining repeatedly that the criminal element is necessary because it's the only way out of a hopeless life. That constituted one of the starting points for me. I myself listen to hip-hop, and I know people from my school days who very quickly gave up all hope because they got to the age of 20 and neither had graduated from school nor had they any interest in doing so. It staggered me to see people giving up on themselves like that, clutching hold of certain values and just find no way out. The aim in this milieu is to get hold of some money quickly without appearing subordinate to anyone. Being subordinate, either at school or in a job, is absolutely unthinkable, which means all these people are in a Catch-22. They end up in an existence where criminality isn't questioned, because it's part of everyday life. Thinking about the situation, and the desire to work again with Murathan Muslu - who played the leading role in *Papa*, my short film - prompted the scriptwriter Petra Ladinigg and I to develop the story, which initially seemed very complicated and intricate. It could actually be seen as an unofficial sequel to *Papa*.

Your feature film debut, *Kuma*, presents a mother figure with a complex family structure woven around her. In *Cracks in Concrete* we see a father/son relationship with no integrated structure at all: on the contrary, the characters are complete loners without any emotional network to hold them together. Were you making an attempt to tell a story that was fundamentally different from the first film? Or on the other hand, were there things which you consistently continued?

I don't know whether I was trying to continue anything. For me, *Kuma* was an extremely enriching and formative experience in every way. I'm really glad the film enjoyed such international success; that gave me the opportunity to make a second film. And I made use of the freedom I was given this time to make the film according to my own concepts. Our approach was very unconventional, not least because we were using a large number of non professional actors. My premise was that we should subordinate ourselves to the actors in order to discover from them what kind of film would be necessary to tell a story we might only have been previously familiar with from prejudices and clichés. In order to break away

from that you may have to tell the story as uncompromisingly realistic as possible, so that it won't be doubted. The only way of doing that was by means of the actors.

The actors obviously form the backbone of the story; where did you find them?

We started casting as soon as we had a first, very rough version of the script, because it was obvious that it would be a long search. Eva Roth und Alev Irmak were on board at a very early stage, and then we spent six months in Vienna looking at hundreds of kids. I wanted to find young people who knew what we were talking about. The dialogues have been written in advance, but I wanted them to say the words the way they would normally speak. We auditioned kids between 14 and 16, but it turned out that generally the 14-year-olds were a bit too young and the 16-year-olds slightly too old. That cut down the possibilities and didn't exactly make things easier. I was really pleased when we finally found people who brought the film to life, in the way they acted and in their authenticity. I didn't have to explain much to them. In fact, I learned from them.

Where were they from?

Alechan, the second leading actor, is Chechen. One of the others also comes from Chechnya, and the others from Croatia. We weren't looking for people from certain countries or with particular accents. I didn't mind where they came from. I would also have liked to have an Austrian with a stronger Viennese accent. It was notable that a lot of people who came to audition were second or third generation immigrants. That surprised me a lot. Incidentally, there were also people who decided not to come into the audition when they read the name of the director. Of course, casting the children of immigrants gives the film a slight feeling of the second/third generation, of "a film about people from an immigration background". Alechan was the best possible person; he himself had very similar experiences. He is simply the person I made the film for. Young people like him are the reason why it was so important for me to tell the story. I myself sense a feeling of impotence, of being unable to do anything to shake these kids awake.

The dialogue was set down, but it was modified by the actors. Did the rhythm of rap music also influence the way the dialogue was spoken?

This quick, abbreviated style of speaking is simply the way young people talk. I mean, there isn't one homogenous language of youngsters, but there is a way of speaking for a certain milieu, and that's how they talk. The scenes were written clearly and simply. We had a particular idea of how each scene should go. Then we revised the dialogue in long, intensive rehearsals, and went through it sentence by sentence, trying it out, playing around and then rewriting it and modifying it. It was a long, drawn-out process that took place during the shooting. It would have been ridiculous to make the boys learn something that isn't the way they are, and it would have made the film unwatchable. At the beginning the boys didn't have the courage to throw themselves into this process completely. Often they hesitated to say something, because they're from a milieu where they are constantly being told that whatever they do is wrong. Suddenly they were confronted with people who said: "You can't possibly do anything wrong." For them it was a new experience, and they had to get used to that.

Murathan Muslu seems to have become your favourite actor. What is it that fascinates you about him, as a director?

He's the best male actor of his generation, in my view. He has something very deep inside, something instinctive, and I know he could play anything. I'm lucky in that he is often cast as a baddie in television productions, but I want to use and will use him for different parts. Nobody else would have cast him for the part of the father in *Cracks in Concrete*. That's because his appearance and the charisma he has makes him seem very suitable for evil characters. For *Kuma* I auditioned for a very long time, in Turkey as well, but I only found the depths and the latent quality I wanted with him. Michael Haneke once said what fascinates him about a good actor is the mysterious quality buried inside him. He saw a very early rough cut of the film and was extremely impressed by Murathan, comparing him with Marlon Brando and Javier Bardem. I'm really pleased I was able to discover and encourage him. I hope this film will represent the next step in his career.

The film features a rap concert. Why did you choose the rapper Azad?

The boy in the film dreams of giving Azad a mix tape he's made, which is going to be the climax for him. It was important for me that it should be a rapper who isn't a popstar, like Bushido or Sido, for example. They might be idols for our protagonists in terms of their material success, but not for their authenticity. Since our boy was going to be as real as possible, it had to be a rapper who could embody his dreams. In the mid to late 1990s Azad began to make a special kind of rap music. He brought something more raw and less playful to the scene. He was one of the people who invented the German version of street rap. I wanted a veteran who has been successful, still is successful but hasn't become detached. I was pleased that the concert scene worked, although I wouldn't film it that way again. We organised it like a regular concert of Azad's, with a real audience, and we only had an hour to film the whole scene.

You have already shown very clearly, with *Kuma*, that you refuse to be pigeonholed as someone who makes films about problems of immigration and integration. *Cracks in Concrete* is a film about sheer survival, and it isn't at all significant that the film is set in Vienna. It could be anywhere else.

It was important to me that it should be a universal film. Although *Kuma* was successful, it featured a phenomenon that hardly anybody would know about unless they were familiar with a certain cultural background. This time I wanted to tell a story that didn't need any explanations. The idea was to make the story more universally comprehensible. At the same time, the risk of failure was greater with *Cracks in Concrete*, because it didn't have the bonus of that exotic aspect.

In *Kuma* female characters are the centre of attention. In *Cracks in Concrete* they are "marginalised" and the absence of female characters in this male-dominated world damages men as well as women. How do you regard your female characters?

In *Kuma* the women played the main roles, but at the same time they were victims of their own patriarchal society. They had internalised the rules to such an extent that although they

structured the family like a matriarchy for all outward appearances, it was based on a patriarchy. The women in *Kuma* were victims of a male-dominated system. And, as I hope is apparent in *Cracks in Concrete*, they are the ones who suffer within a milieu and a system which is dictated by men. Naturally they aren't victims in essence. But in the milieu where we set our stories, where people have to have two jobs in order to bring up children as single parents, where you always owe money and never have time to think about your own life in a socio-political context you're just happy when you get home and can get some sleep, well, they are. Ertan's mother weeps because she is impotent. In *Cracks in Concrete* the women try with all the means at their disposal to achieve something in bringing up their children – and they do not succeed. It would be very presumptuous to condemn these people for that.

The gloomy world of the protagonists in *Cracks in Concrete* is reflected directly in the camerawork. You use a lot of dark, dimly-lit scenes, and when there is daylight, it's a harsh light. What was the camera concept ?

I was very keen to work with Georg Geutebrück, after making *Papa* with him. I quickly developed a common language with Georg, and we had film examples that showed which direction we should adopt. I'm a great fan of *Un Prophète*, *Fish Tank* and *The Wrestler*. It became clear that the film needed a raw quality, but also spontaneous reacting to the actors, and I didn't want the film to appear bleached, pseudo-documentary; I wanted it to have a colour aspect that you just don't get with desaturating images. Achieving all this was quite a challenge. We did some things that an experienced cameraman probably wouldn't have done. Combining all these sometimes contradictory aims was incredible, and George devoted himself to this amazing challenge for seven weeks, carrying a camera weighing 25 kg around on his shoulders. It was a huge challenge, and it made everybody on the set and in the production team nervous, because for a long time they couldn't see where the journey was heading. It wasn't until the first rough cut that it became clear how everything was coming together – the effort we put into it, the concept we'd been following from the first version of the screenplay. Everything.

UMUT DAĞ

Director and Author

Born on 1982, Umut grew up as the oldest child of a Kurdish immigrant family in Vienna's district Brigittenau. After finishing the Vienna Business School, he began to study international development, theology and pedagogy.

After some time he more and more concentrated on his short films but also worked at the same time in the Austrian Film Industry for several Feature Films for example *Die Fälscher, Ein Augenblick Freiheit, Der schwarze Löwe, Freundschaft* etc. and for about 50 advertising films. Since 2006 he studies directing at the Vienna Film Academy under Peter Patzak and Michael Haneke.

On 2011 his film *Papa* won the First Steps Award for the best medium-length film. His first feature, *Kuma*, was presented on Berlinale 2012, Opening Film Panorama. *Cracks in Concrete (Risse im Beton)* is Umut Dag's second feature.

Filmography:

Risse im Beton / Cracks in the Concrete, Feature Film, Script: Petra Ladinigg
WEGA-Film (Director, Co-Author)

World Premiere Berlinale 2014, Section Panorama

Kuma, Feature Film, Completion 2012 together with Co-Author Petra Ladinigg,
Support for Script Development ÖFI December 2008, Support for Project Development Dec.
2009, Support for Production ÖFI & ORF 2010, WEGA-Film (Director, Co-Author)

World Premiere Berlinale 2012, Section Panorama

• *Lobende Erwähnung Szenenbild Spielfilm (Special Mention Production Design) - Katrin Huber (Graz, Diagonale)*

• *Best Feature Film - Prize of the Official Jury + Best Feature Film -*

Prize of the Web-Jury (Salerno, Linea d'Ombra Festival Culture Giovani)

• *Special Audience Prize (Lecce, Festival del Cinema Europeo)*

• *Special Mention (Trencianske Teplice/Trencín, Art Film Fest)*

• *Grand Prize/ Sony D-Cinema Award (Saitama, Skip City International D-Cinema Festival)*

• *Golden Goddess for Best Director - ex aequo (Prishtina, PriFilmFest)*

• *Golden Starfish Award Narrative Feature (Hamptons International Film Festival)*

• *Grand Prix - Golden Angel ((Torun, TOFIFEST)*

• *Honorable Mention For Best Actress - Begüm Akkaya (Philadelphia Film Festival)*

• *Jury Diploma/Special Mention for Begüm Akkaya*

PAPA, A 2011, 40min, DVCPROHD, Color, Short Feature Film, (Concept, Director)

Best Austrian Short Film 2011 DIAGONALE 2011, In competition Max-Ophüls Preis 2011, First Steps Award 2011

101010 – Ich bin Wien, for SPÖ-Wien, A 2010, 4 min, HD, Music Video (Director)

R, for AQIL, A 2010, 5min, DVC-Pro HD, Color, Music Video (Author, Director, Production)

Kick Off, for SUA KAN, A 2010, 3:40, HD, Music Video-Trailer for the same titled Cinema Documentary Film by Hüseyin Tabak, (Author, Director)

Wer!, for SUA KAN, A 2010, 3:30 min, HD, Music Video, (Author, Director)

Aus eigener Kraft, A 2009, 45 min, Digital Betacam, Color, Documentary (Author & Director)

Audience Award at the 14th International Filmfestival Filmacademy Vienna

Radioaktiv, for SUA KAN, A 2009, 4 min, DVC-Pro HD, Music Video (Author & Director)

Wann, for Rudolfsheim Fünfhaus, A 2009, 4 min, 16 mm, Music Video (Author & Director)

Selam, for Mevlut Khan, A 2008, 4 min, DVC-Pro HD, Color, Music Video (Author, Director, Production.)

Golden UTV Award 2009 and UTV Audience Award 2009 for the best MusicVideo.
Participation at **Babylon Feature Film Development Workshop** Rotterdam Film Festival 2008

Todesnachrichten, A 2008, 23 min, HDCAM, Color, Short Film (Director & Co-Production)

Vienna Independent Shortfilm Festival - A 2008 (Audience Award Austria Panorama) Diagonale, Graz - A 2008 (National Premiere)

Arthouse, A 2008, 11 min, 16 mm b/w Short Feature Film (Author, Director & Editor)

Ein Märchen aus 1001 Nacht, A 2007, 5 min, 16 mm, Short Feature Film (Author, Director & Editor)

Schatten, A 2007, 11 min, 16 mm, Documentary (Author, Director, Cinematographer & Editor)

3. Türkenbelagerung, A 2006, 25 min, MiniDV (Author & Director)

7th sequel for Sitcom Okto Television Broadcaster.

Hänsel und Gretel, A 2005, 4 min, MiniDV, Short Feature Film (Director)

Festival Berlin36 - D 2005

Ende der Kindheit, A 2005, 7min, MiniDV, Short Feature Film (Author, Director, Cinematographer & Editor)

9. Video & Filmdays Vienna – A 2005

CAST

ERTAN . Murathan Muslu

MIKAIL . Alechan Tagaev

DEJAN . Ivan Kriznjak

MURAD . Shamil Iliskhanov

DANIJEL . Daniel Mijatovic

DARIA . Magdalena Pawlus

YILMAZ . Mehmet Ali Salman

KEMAL . Erdem Turkoğlu

ANDREA . Martina Spitzer

ERTAN's MOTHER . Elif Dag

SANJA . Ines Wallner

DRAGICA . Aleksandra Markovic

ŞIRIN . Waly Hatamy

ERTAN's BROTHER . Aydemir Gündüz

AZAD . Azad Azadpour

METH . Yüsa Durak

RICH BOY . Laurence Fleissner

WIKTOR `s BOY #1 . Magamed Masajev

WIKTOR's BOY #2 . Alexandar Mraovic

CREW

DIRECTOR : Umut Dağ

WRITTEN BY : Petra Ladinigg

STORY BY : Petra Ladinigg & Umut Dağ

DoP : Georg Geutebrück

SOUND ENGINEER : Sergey Martynyuk
Peter Rösner

SOUND MIXER : Bernhard Maisch

MUSIC : Iva Zabkar

EDITOR : Claudia Linzer

PRODUCTION DESIGNER : Katrin Huber
Gerhard Dohr

COSTUME DESIGNER : Cinzia Cioffi

MAKE UP : Michaela Payer

CASTING : Eva Roth
Alev Irmak

COLORIST : Willi Willinger

TECHNICAL SUPERVISOR : Herbert Fischer
POSTPRODUCTION

PRODUCTION ACCOUNTANT : Christa Preisinger

PRODUCTION MANAGER : Ulrike Lässer

SUPERVISING PRODUCER : Michael Katz

PRODUCERS : Michael Katz
Veit Heiduschka

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