



Locarno Film Festival
CONCORSO INTERNAZIONALE
OFFICIAL SELECTION

TOXIC

A FILM BY SAULÉ BLIUVAITĖ

PRESS KIT

A PRODUCTION OF

**AKIS
BADO**

WITH THE SUPPORT OF

LRT





FILM INFORMATION

Original title: AKIPLĖŠA

International title: TOXIC

Country of production: Lithuania

Year of production: 2024

Duration: 99 min.

Technical details

Screening material: DCP

Screen ratio: 1.85:1

Speed: 24 fps

Sound: 5.1

Color: Color

Dialogues: Lithuanian

Subtitles: English



LOGLINE

Dreaming of an escape from the bleakness of their hometown, two teens form a unique bond at a local modeling school, where the promise of a better life pushes girls to violate their bodies in increasingly extreme ways.

SYNOPSIS

Abandoned by her mother, 13-year-old Maria is forced to live with her grandmother in a bleak industrial town. During a violent clash on the street, Maria meets Kristina, a girl of the same age who is striving to become a fashion model. Trying to get closer to her, Maria enrolls in a mysterious modeling school, where the girls are preparing for the biggest casting event in the region. Her ambiguous relationship with Kristina and the intense, cult-like environment of the modeling school force Maria on a quest to discover her own identity.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

TOXIC follows the lives of young girls navigating through toxic landscapes, toxic beauty standards, and toxic relationships. As I myself grew up in a bleak industrial area, I was living with the thought of escaping - not just from my surroundings, but also from my body. I was very thin, trying to enroll in modeling agencies around my town, but I was constantly told some parts of my body were too big to fit the standard. I kept pursuing it, seeking validation in places where I couldn't find any. This film is based on my own experiences as a 13-year-old girl and on the events that unfolded around me at that time.

The core subject of this film is the human body. It explores the ways we relate to our bodies and deal with our imperfections.

The way the body is a product, currency, an object of desire, the way the body is a human being, a unique creation. Tackling this subject through teenage characters, I aim to paint a picture of beauty, finding its way into a harsh and toxic environment.



CAST AND CREW

Director-screenwriter: Saulė Bliuvaitė

Cinematographer: Vytautas Katkus

Production designer: Paulius Aničas

Editor: Ignė Narbutaitė

Composer: Gediminas Jakubka

Producer: Giedrė Burokaitė

Executive producer: Justė Michailinaitė

Cast: Ieva Rupeikaitė, Vesta Matulytė,
Giedrius Savickas, Vilma Raubaitė, Eglė Gabrėnaitė



DIRECTOR

SAULĖ BLIUVAITĖ

Biography:

Born in 1994, film director and screenwriter Saulė Bliuvaitė graduated from the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre's Film Directing program in 2018. Her recent short film „Limousine“ received the Best Short Documentary award at the Warsaw Film Festival. Saulė is the co-writer and co-editor of the historical drama „Isaac“, nominated for a FIPRESCI prize at the 2020 European Film Awards. TOXIC is her debut feature film.

Filmography:

LIMOUSINE, documentary, 15', 2021

PRODUCTION NOTE

“TOXIC” is the first feature-length film by director and screenwriter Saulė Bliuvaitė. Just like in her short films, in this new work Saulė continues exploring topics that are both universally relevant and close to her own heart: community and a sense of belonging. Through nuanced storytelling and compelling character development, she delves into the intricate dynamics of human connections and the quest for identity within a collective. The film’s characters yearn to feel a part of something, to adapt and find a sense of being included.

The idea of the film is to reveal the complex human path to understanding oneself and the world. The theme of the film has no nationality, it is about human nature. A person’s quest for perfection, has been manifesting itself in different forms throughout different times; yet it has never ceased to be relevant. Whether it is the desire to find the best partner, to build the most impressive building, to reach the pinnacle of one’s career, or to create a perfect body through plastic surgery. The heroines of “TOXIC” embark on a self-perfection “project” of their own to escape the prospectless life of their grim neighbourhood and to become models. Neglected by their parents, they try to find their way in the world as they understand it.

Film’s DOP is the young and promising artist Vytautas Katkus, who works not only as a DOP, but he also directed a few short films, which premiered in Cannes and Venice. His approach to search for new forms and experimenting with camera movement and framing was perfect for this project. During filming, Vytautas aimed at crafting unique cinematography to capture the essence of the atmosphere, the surrounding, and the heroines themselves. He focused on bold techniques and visual storytelling to reflect both the mood of the setting and the inner worlds of the characters.

The music was composed by Gediminas Jakubka, who has a background in electronic dance music. He perfectly maneuvered between the melancholic sounds of the district with the rhythmic dance music that the film’s heroines listen to on their phones.

We featured the voice of the renowned Lithuanian singer Sati, who was famous in the 90s. Her distinctive voice and wide vocal range, embracing styles from pop to progressive dance music, added a rich and nostalgic layer to the film’s soundtrack.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

AKIS BADO

COMPLETED

TOXIC,

2024, fiction, 99', dir. Saulė Bliuvaitė

ARRESTED,

2023, fiction, 20', dir. Indrė Juškutė

MORA MORA,

2021, animation, 10', dir. Jurga Šeduikytė
(in co-production with Meno avilys, LT)

FILM CREW IN QUARANTINE,

2020, animation, 1', dir. Robertas Nevecka

SNOW SHELTER,

2020, animation, 16', dir. Robertas Nevecka
(in co-production with Meno avilys, LT)

IN PRODUCTION

GLASS ELEPHANTS,

animation, dir. Vyktintas Labanauskas, Dominyka Adomaitytė

FISHING DOCKS,

animation, dir. Robertas Nevecka

FAMILY ALBUM,

animation, dir. Emilija Juzeliūnaitė

IN DEVELOPMENT

TEARS OF STARDUST,

animation, dir. Vilma Razmutė



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