

Transilvania IFF.23 kicks off with *Dogman* by Luc Besson

Cluj-Napoca, May 29, 2024. The thousands of spectators expected at the Opening Gala of the 23rd edition of the **Transilvania International Film Festival (Cluj-Napoca, June 14-24, 2024)** are in for an intense and memorable cinematic experience on the evening that marks the beginning of eleven days filled with films, cine-concerts, and special events. On Friday, June 14, at 8:45 PM, the legendary director **Luc Besson's** film ***Dogman*** (France, 2023) will be screened for the first time in Romania on the big screen in Piața Unirii.

Tickets for the Opening Gala are available for purchase online – TBD

Dogman, which premiered in competition at the Venice Film Festival, is constructed like a puzzle that pieces together, through flashbacks, the tragic fate of Doug, a young man who was thrown by his abusive father into a cage of fighting dogs he trained. Instead of tearing him apart, they became his family. Years later, Doug commits burglaries in the apartments of wealthy people, aided by an army of canine companions he calls his "children," and performs in a cabaret club. As a critic from The New York Times puts it, "it's a strangely wonderful story of resilience and revenge."

Considered the most Hollywoodian of French directors, Luc Besson began his career in the '80s and quickly gained popularity with ***Subway***, ***The Big Blue*** (screened at the closing of the 17th edition of Transilvania IFF, marking its 30th anniversary since its premiere), or ***La Femme Nikita***. Unlike his New Wave French predecessors, Besson has always boasted that he didn't finish a relevant degree and didn't start with a rich cinematic culture, but learned how to make a film on the go, on set.

European commercial cinema has never been the same after the appearance of films like ***Léon: The Professional***, which launched Natalie Portman's career, or ***The Fifth Element***, whose cast gathered global stars like Bruce Willis, Milla Jovovich, or Gary Oldman. From thrillers to biographical films (***Joan of Arc***) or sci-fi, Luc Besson hasn't shied away from anything, but that doesn't mean he prioritized commercial success above all else. "If action doesn't have soul or purpose, I'm not interested. If it's just action for the sake of action, I enjoy it like a cheeseburger. You eat it, then you're hungry again," the director declared in an interview.

Doug, the protagonist of *Dogman*, is the latest in a long line of memorable characters created by Luc Besson and is superbly portrayed by **Caleb Landry Jones**, known for films like *The Florida Project* (dir. Sean Baker), *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* (dir. Martin McDonagh), or *Nitram* (dir. Justin Kurzel), for which he was awarded at Cannes in 2021. "A captivating and chameleonic performance from Caleb Landry Jones, managing to be both touching and slightly frightening at the same time," said The Hollywood Reporter about his role in *Dogman*.



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In 2006, Luc Besson stated that he would only direct ten feature films, after which he would stop. It's true that he wouldn't have needed more to secure a stable place in pop culture, but after seeing *Dogman* at the TIFF.23 Opening Gala, you'll be glad he didn't.