

Katalin Varga

Romania / UK 2009

Director

Peter Strickland

Screenplay

Peter Strickland

Cinematography

Márk Györi

Original Music

Geoffrey Cox

Steven Stapleton

Cast

Katalin Varga

Hilda Péter

Orbán Varga

Norbert Tankó

Zsigmond Varga

László Mátray

Gergely

Roberto Giacomello

Antal Borlan

Tibor Pálffy

82 minutes Subtitles

Our next screening...

Ramchand Pakistani

Tue 8 February 2011

Dir: Mehreen Jabbar

Beautifully shot & moving drama around tensions on the Pakistan-India border.

Tonight we mark the season's half way point in style with *Katalin Varga*. The stunning second half of the season starts in two weeks time and features films from Pakistan, Israel, Japan, Germany, the US and the UK, and we're delighted to be able to offer half-season tickets (covering all eight films) for just £40 or £35 concessions. If interested please contact Ollie on 01962 880682, goldigoldi@o2.co.uk, or in the foyer.

Given the film's precise aesthetic and increasingly chilling, expressionistic feel, it comes as little surprise to learn that Peter Strickland's key points of reference for *Katalin Varga* were Werner Herzog and the great Russian film poets Tarkovsky and Paradjanov. Infusing his elegantly wrought images with a throbbing, electronic-choral score that is very much at odds with the naturalistic setting, Strickland is clearly more concerned with the human dimension of the morally intricate scenario. *Katalin Varga* often hits a note of genuine otherworldliness, and the power of this slow-burning, nightmarish tale is utterly compelling, contrasting with Strickland's modest expectations when making the film: 'I really thought we would fail,' he admits. 'But I also thought, if I screw up I might as well fail in style'.

Pamela Jahn, *Electric Sheep Magazine*

Aspiring British director winds up teaching English in Budapest, then inherits some money and stakes it all on a long shot – making a feature film in Hungarian. The film plays in competition in Berlin to rapturous acclaim, prompting much discussion about why it's increasingly the case that practitioners of art cinema have to leave Britain if they want to make something truly distinctive. Mind you, you can see why Strickland had to make his film in Hungary: this tale of revenge, shot among looming mountains and featuring much firelit dancing to gypsy violin, wouldn't have been nearly as convincing set in his native Reading. What's so fascinating about *Katalin Varga* is the singular feat that Strickland has brought off. He doesn't merely pastiche a certain old-fashioned strain of eastern European art cinema – the film could almost be a rediscovered gem of the Sixties or Seventies – but truly gets under the skin of the films that inspire him, so that *Katalin Varga* effectively becomes the genuine article. Strickland's film is, if you like, a forgery, in that it's not exactly what a British director would "naturally" produce. But, notwithstanding the anomaly that it represents, the proof of *Katalin Varga* lies in the dramatic chill that, little by little, this subtle but powerful film comes to impart.

Jonathan Romnev, *The Independent*

