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## Original Horror Twist Lurks in the Heart of "Shadows"

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### **Horror film import Shadows (Senki) defines and defies horror genre**

*By Michelle Foody*



HOLLYWOOD, CA (Hollywood Today) 3/26/08 — Sure, Hollywood loves a good horror film import. But not as much as it loves the remake, with a pretty American girl as the lead. The trend was established with films like Japan's "Ringu," which became a Naomi Watts vehicle in 2002 and hasn't slowed since.

The graphic flick "Shutter" flashed onto the silver screen with a \$10.5 million opening this past weekend, by way of its Thai origins. So watch out for the thriller "Shadows," aka "Senki." It was the Macedonian submission for the Foreign Language Oscar, and it may well await a similar fate. It's a genre shattering movie, one part scary ghost story, one part mind-bending psychological drama. So make a point to see it before dark, anti-hero star Borce Nacev gets replaced by a blond babysitter.

The film shattered all box office records in its home market, and then went on to kill at the Toronto Film Festival. Hollywood Today chatted with the writer & director of "Shadows", Milcho Manchevski, via phone from his desk at the Tisch Film School at N.Y.U. where he is currently teaching.

Although the director is no stranger to the Hollywood system, having directed episodes of "The Wire", and even an award-winning rap video, this movie is refreshingly, and often times shockingly, not Americanized. The film was shot in Macedonia and on a limited budget, but that only emboldened its director even more.

"Macedonia is a small country, it's the size of Vermont and there is not much money to spend on the arts and film," explained Manchevski. "So, its more rewarding

because the artist has more freedom, and it's not about making money. It's about creating with freedom, without studios giving you rewrites."

The story certainly doesn't feel sanitized by the Hollywood PC machine. There's plenty of sex, a heaping of death, and a main character that we aren't sure we like, who may or may not be going crazy. Which is why it's so intriguing. But don't come looking for cheap thrills or a formulaic horror film.

"It's a psychological ghost story, it's not one genre or the other. The idea was to do both," insists Manchevski. "When you start playing with archetypes, then it gets interesting. Its like a traditional scary film but then refracted through a psychological drama."

Also mixed into this Mediterranean stew of a thriller is Macedonia's own dark history—a nation only since the crumbling of Yugoslavia in 1991, the country has suffered through oppression from the Greek government, genocide and ethnic cleansing in its not-so-distant past. But *Shadows* is not a history lesson, however, nor is it looking to preach.

"That part of the recent history is a terrible tragedy, but it was by no means the central idea behind the film," Manchevski told *Hollywood Today*. "I try to make films about people, their loves, fears, and conflicts. I like the European way of making films, making something beautiful."

Let's hope that inevitable Hollywood remake keeps a piece of Manchevski's unique vision in mind.

"There is talk of doing a U.S. remake of 'Shadows', which is a funny thought," laughs the writer/director. "Maybe I'd like to, but it all depends on who you are doing it with. I'm all for collaborating with creative people... It's the [studio] suits, them, not so much".

Having already made the move to New York City, perhaps it won't be long until Manchevski gets swept up by the Hollywood movie-making machine. But for now, those NYU kids are pretty darn lucky.