

How Picasso volunteered for the Balkan's most expensive film

Autor Administrator
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Whether you are an old movies buff or just a passionate history connoisseur, there is one extraordinary place in Bosnia & Herzegovina that waits to be discovered. A place with an unexpected fusion of vibrant history, tremendous cultural heritage, but also stunning nature and delicious cuisine. This small town called Jablanica witnessed one of the most challenging partisans' victories of the World War II, followed by the shooting of the legendary "Battle of Neretva" movie, 25 years after. Back then, it was the greatest achievement of European cinematography, by many factors - the number of international movie stars and artists, as well as the budget allocated, just to mention some of them. It is an interesting fact that even one Pablo Picasso contributed to the triumph of this movie, that was also nominated for the Oscar. If you want to discover how Picasso volunteered for the Balkan's most expensive film, keep reading.

The most unlikely victory in the WWII Known as the most human conflict in the WWII, the Battle of Neretva was also the most unlikely victory. The Yugoslav partisans, led by their commander Josip Broz Tito, were five times outnumbered and outgunned by the Nazi, plus they had 4000 wounded. In spite of this, they have managed to win over the Nazi by blowing up the bridge on the Neretva River, while the train was crossing it. As a reminder of this grand partisan's victory, the leftovers of the bridge are still hanging from the high cliff, and the steam train is still there as well. Life-size bridge's replica constructed & destroyed twice This heroic event in Jablanica served as an inspiration for the true-story synopsis and the shooting of the "Battle of Neretva", the most significant movie ever made in Yugoslavia. This huge post-WWII project worth staggering 12 million dollars, was approved by president Tito himself and it 58 largest Yugoslav companies financed it. For the scenes of the railway bridge's explosion, a new life-size replica was constructed, twice. However, due to the thick smoke provoked by the first explosion, the footage was unusable, so the movie director decided to build the second replica. Unfortunately, the same problem occurred during the second explosion, and eventually, those scenes were shot using the miniature of the bridge. The Oscar's nomination for "the best foreign film" To date "Battle of Neretva" remains the most expensive motion picture project ever made in the Balkans. It gathered the most prominent international actors such as Yul Brynner, Orson Welles, Sergei Bondarchuk, Franco Nero, etc. In 1969 there was an official release of the movie, followed by the nomination for the Oscar in the category of "The best foreign film". The music was made by Bernard Hermann and London Philharmonic Orchestra. The most extraordinary contribution to the success of this movie gave Pablo Picasso, creating the poster for its English version, one of only two movie posters he has done in his career. In fact, he was a great fan of this film, and of Yugoslav cinematography in general, so he didn't want to take money for his work, but to get a box of Yugoslav's best wines. Yugoslavia's best wine for Picasso What is great about Jablanica, is that this place has it all. You can come and explore filming locations with the remnants of the destroyed bridge and the steam train, but you can also visit the War Museum and the War Memorial on the Mt. Prenj. Nature is too stunning here, so don't hesitate to chill out on the Jablaniëko Lake or hike Blidinje Nature Park. Finally, you can dine at an old German bunker on the river, transformed into a restaurant. Why am I mentioning this? Because, Jablanica is Balkan's capital of roasted lamb and some excellent drinks, so you have to indulge yourself in the local gastronomy. Even great Picasso knew it when he ordered his wine box in return for his volunteering for the Balkan's most expensive film. Ljiljana Krejic Itinary, March 2018. #Jablanica #BitkanaNeretvi #Battle of Neretva #JosipBrozTito #Jugoslavija #Yugoslavia #SFRJ #antifašizam #antifascism