



“ON THE LINE”

-AN INTERVIEW WITH SILVIA DE LEONARDIS



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Silvia de Leonardis's "On the Line" is a movie about a fragile relationship between mother and son, and their heartbreaks. The story is about Caroline Nowak and her son Raphael. Fifteen years ago when she lost her husband, Caroline started drinking to cope with all the miseries. At that time her son, Rapha, was only ten years old, and she failed to give him proper attention. Her son is now twenty-five years old, and after a fight with his girlfriend, he moved back to her. After a few days, Caroline finds out that her son is addicted to drugs. This movie portrays the problems of modern days families and frames the concept of addiction. We have prepared a bunch of questions for Silvia de Leonardis to get the best out of our curiosity regarding the movie.

1)Hi Silvia! Hope you are doing well. First of all, we want to congratulate you on your wonderful work. "On the Line" talks about some serious issues, would you like to share how the idea came to your mind?
Hello! Thank you very much for this interview and for your congratulations. Of course, I'd love to share that. As an actress and as a human being I was always curious about what drives people into being rude, cruel, cold or violent, and about their behaviors. When I was young, I was so scared to make bond with people, because I couldn't trust them. But as I started to grow I was able to overcome my inner blockages. Now, having an 11 year daughter on my own, who is the sweetest treasure of my life – I got scared again and this time I got sensing that I can't protect her forever. I wanted to protect her from any harm, any bad, anytime, everything. So, to go through the worst scenario and trying to heal this, I've made this short film. I needed to express my biggest fear to become able to let it go and believe in her.

2)Your story highlighted burning concepts like drug addiction and single parenting struggles. How long did it take to make the story on this concept?
Well, I guess just a few days. Because all the fears and feelings and pictures were already inside of me. I absolutely know how bad I am in writing, but there was no way hiring a writer to express what I feel. The other part, which is the acting part, is easy and cool for me, as I am well trained in acting. So, I've decided to write my story in my little, simple words. To be precise, I saw the pictures and felt the pain and then I opened my eyes and asked myself "What would they say?" and I wrote it down. I didn't think about going to festivals at that time. I just wanted to express this story.

3)"On the Line" -how did you choose the title?
I love titles with ambiguous meanings. "On the line" could be hanging on a line of cocaine. Also hanging "on the line" waiting for response, and also being on the line of life. I loved that and I thought it was so fitting.

4)Your story elucidates the relationship between Caroline Nowak and her son Raphael. Would you like to share whether the characters are inspired by real life or not, if yes, then who is the inspiration behind it?
Sure, this movie has also to do with my own childhood. My parents got divorced when I was twelve and my Mom was much too young and traumatized to be a loving and affectionate mother. So it is pretty much inspired in a double way: by my own life as a child and as a mother.

5)"On the Line" has a great storyline, what message do you want the audience to take away with them after watching the movie?
Well, I guess there are a few things. I tried to make Caroline as human as possible, so it is not easy to say who is the bad and who is the good one. The world doesn't work this way. And dividing people into good or bad makes us isolated or privileged – both not good for our souls and both not good for a loving and caring community. But I also wanted to express how hurt and pain can change people into lets say "little monsters". Another part was: Sometimes, the best help you can give to somebody is not helping them. A very, very hard part. Mostly judged by anyone. This scene, where Caroline didn't open the door for her son, was very exhausting for me to act. Because as a neglected child, it is almost impossible to let somebody down. It felt like tearing my heart and soul into pieces.

6)Your movie portrays the concepts of drug addiction. What suggestion do you want to give people of today's generation to handle problems like addiction?
That's a difficult question, because I never had any drug experience and I should stay quiet. But I wanted to express my respect to people in addiction, that I know it exists and that I see it. And I wanted to build a bridge to not addicted people – as Bastian is so handsome and sweet – to clear up the prejudices a bit in society. And of course, I also wanted to encourage addicted people to try to get help. Even though I know, that it is not always possible.

7)You made a short movie on a deep concept. A short also carries the same responsibility as a full-fledged movie but is bounded by a short span of time, do these things give any kind of pressure on you while making this movie?
Well, I didn't think about that to be honest. I just did it and it was clear that I can only spend a certain amount of time and money on my short. But the main thing is: I wanted to make something, and Bastian and my daughter Cecilia were in and also all of my friends and I gave my best, putting the strings together.

8) Can you tell us how you plan and organize the duration of your filming, especially for a short movie?And when do you say to yourself: "this is done".
Haha! You don't want to hear that... I've shot my short in 4 or 5 days. Day one was the uncle's birthday and I've shot it without a script, for which we have used Bastian's wonderful garden. At that time Bastian, Cecilia and I were just talking about the film. I must say, taking chances was again the key. Then I went on holiday and wrote the rest of the script in a few days. And when I got back, I've worked with the actors and one or two months later, we've shot all the other scenes perfectly prepared. We just needed to photograph them.

9) How did you come into the world of filmmaking? From whom have you got the inspiration to become an independent filmmaker?
No, no. I wouldn't consider me as a filmmaker yet, but I'm an actress. I always wanted to express the dark sides of life, which I need to show .Since I am not booked for roles which let me immerse myself in the socio-critical topics and that let my soul unfold – I do my own projects. When I had Opening Night in Los Angeles, where I first showed "On the line", I was very anxious. While cutting, I had to see the scenes over and over again, and seeing every single mistake made me very insecure. But when I looked around that night, I saw all these wonderful people being touched, listening, some had tears running, and it made me speechless and also relieved. And at the end, when a former addicted woman jumped up and said "That's exactly how it is. Exactly. This is so true!" I knew I did a good job. If you touch one person or can be the mirror for one person – especially for those who suffer – then for me it is what art is for, and this is where I got my inspiration from.

10) We would like to end our conversation by asking you about your upcoming projects?
Well, unfortunately due to Covid, earning money for a living, personal challenges etc, at the moment I don't have time and space to be creative. I have some ideas that I like - but honestly, I pray that a good film offer comes my way, where I can concentrate only on acting. If not – I'm sure "On the line" won't be my last film.

