

Persmap



THE CONGRESS

Een Film van Ari Folman (WALTZ WITH BASHIR) met Robin Wright en Harvey Keitel

Robin Wright is een werkloze actrice van midden 40 die moeite heeft zichzelf en haar gehandicapte zoon te onderhouden. Dan benadert de grote studio Miramont haar voor een grote klus met een enorm salaris. Haar lichaam zal gescand en gedigitaliseerd worden en de studio wordt eigendom van haar digitale emoties, bewegingen en karaktereigenschappen. Ze zal daarna nooit meer mogen acteren. Robin's besluit heeft verregaande gevolgen voor haar toekomst, die ze niet had voorzien.

Openingsfilm van 'Quinzaine des réalisateurs' Cannes Filmfestival 2013



Land: USA – Jaar: 2013 – Genre: Sciencefiction – Speelduur: 122 min.
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Distributie: Cinéart

Voor meer informatie over de film:

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*Persmap en foto's staan op: www.cinéart.nl
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Cast

Robin Wright	Robin Wright
Al	Harvey Keitel
Dylan	Jon Hamm
Dr. Barker	Paul Giamatti
Aaron	Kodi Smit-McPhee
Jeff	Danny Huston
Sarah	Sami Gayle
Steve	Michael Stahi-David
Maxi	Michael Landes
Michelle	Sarah Shahi

Crew

Director	Ari Folman
Script and dialogues	Ari Folman
Production designer	David Polonsky
Director of Animation	Yoni Goodman
Cinematography	Michal Englert
Studio Animation	Walking the Dog (Belgium)
Studio Special Effects	Mikros Images Liège
Editing	Nili Feller
Music	Max Richter
Sound	Aviv Aldema
Special Effects	Roli Nitzan
Script editor	Ori Sivan
Casting	Deborah Aquila, C.S.A
	Tricia Wood, C.S.A
	Erin Toner
Costumes designer	Mandi Line
Based on the book "The Futurological Congress" by	Stanislaw Lem

Director's note

In his novel *The Futurological Congress*, the great science fiction writer Stanislaw Lem foresaw a worldwide chemical dictatorship run by the leading pharmaceutical companies. Written in the late nineteen-sixties, the book depicted drug manufacturers' complete control of our entire range of emotions, from love and longings, to jealousy and deadly fear. Lem, considered sci-fi's greatest prophet and philosopher (alongside Philip K. Dick), could not have realized how prescient he was in predicting the start of the third millennium.

Into the psychochemical whirlwind foreseen by Lem, the film adaptation of his novel introduces the current cinematic technologies of 3-D and motion capture, which threaten to eradicate the cinema we grew up on. In the post-“Avatar” era, every filmmaker must ponder whether the flesh and blood actors who have rocked our imagination since childhood can be replaced by computer-generated 3-D images. Can these computerized characters create in us the same excitement and enthusiasm, and does it truly matter? The film, entitled *The Congress*, takes 3-D computer images one step further, developing them into a chemical formula that every customer may consume through prescription pills, thereby compiling in their minds the movies they have always wanted to see, staging their fantasies, and casting the actors they adore. In this world, these beloved creatures of stage and cinema become futile relics, lacking in content, remembered by no one. Where, then, do these actors go after selling their souls and identities to the studio devil? *The Congress* comprises quasi-documentary live-action sequences that follow one such actress, Robin Wright, as she accepts an offer to be scanned and signs a contract selling her identity to the studio, then transitions into an animated world that depicts her tribulations after selling her image, up until the moment when the studio turns her into a chemical formula. Only the mesmerizing combination of animation – with the beautiful freedom it bestows on cinematic interpretation – and quasidocumentary live-action, can illustrate the transition made by the human mind between psychochemical influence and deceptive reality. *The Congress* is primarily a futuristic fantasy, but it is also a cry for help and a profound cry of nostalgia for the old-time cinema we know and love.



Interview with Ari Folman (director)

THE CONGRESS was years in the making – can you tell us how you first came to the project and the journey of adapting Stanislaw Lem’s cult science fiction novel?

The first time I read Lem’s novel was when i was 16 years old and a sci-fi buff, I fell in love with it. The second time was during film school, where I decided for the first time, that I wanted to do something cinematic with the text. It was only after digging deep into animation while making *Waltz With Bashir* that I had a vision of how to adapt it. It took me a whole year to write the script and I went far away from the original text, but always came back to it when getting lost during the writing process. I think the spirit of the novel is a huge part of the final picture and for sure, it is very present in the animated section.

The novel’s hero Ijon Tichy was an explorer and scientist, so how did you decide to make the main character of your adaptation an actress?

Basically I feel that if you’re adapting a classic, you need the courage to be free and to not get trapped by the original text. I was looking for a new, more current dimension to the allegory of the communist era in the book. The chemical dictatorship in the novel was transformed during the writing process into dealing with dictatorship within the entertainment business, specifically, the film industry controlled by big studios. From there, the theme of an aging actress involved in the story was just a matter of process.

Why did you finally settle on Robin Wright to incarnate your hero? Tell us about the relationship between her real life career/persona and her fictional alter-ego in THE CONGRESS.

Thinking about the film, I always had the opening shot in my mind; where the actress is

being crucified by her long-term agent. During the winter of 2009, while attending a ceremony in LA, I met Robin Wright by chance and spent the entire evening sitting across from her. I couldn’t resist placing the image of her in that opening shot, it was a perfect match. The next day I pitched the project to her, along with some illustrations of her drawn by David Polonsky on the previous night. Robin committed herself on the spot and that was where we started a 4 year journey together.

THE CONGRESS presents a strongly dystopic vision of Hollywood and big studio movies – is that also how you view that part of the industry? Does your film reflect a fear for the future of cinema?

While searching for a suitable location in LA to shoot the scanning room scene, I was shocked to learn that such a room already exists. Actors have been scanned for a number of years now – this technology is already here. Flesh and blood actors are not really needed in this “post Avatar era”. I guess its economics now that dictate whether the next generation of films will be with scanned actors, or with a completely new generation of actors “built from scratch”. As an optimist, I think the choice for a human actor will win out and I hope *The Congress* is our small contribution toward that goal.

So many details in THE CONGRESS are “futuristic” yet still very current – do you see any positive aspects of living in another reality, behind an online avatar for example? Do you think it approaches the film’s idea of choosing your own reality?

I think the chemical world outlined in Lem’s novel and in the film is a fantasy, but at the same time its still a major fear for those of us who travel in our imagination and our dreams. I have always had the feeling that everybody, everywhere lives in parallel universes, one, were we function in real time and

the other, the universe where our mind takes us – with or without our control. Combining the two worlds into a one, is for me the biggest goal of being a filmmaker.

The film is unique but features what seems like an encyclopedia of significant references in terms of cinema and otherwise. Were there key films or other influences that served as guides or inspirations as you made this movie?

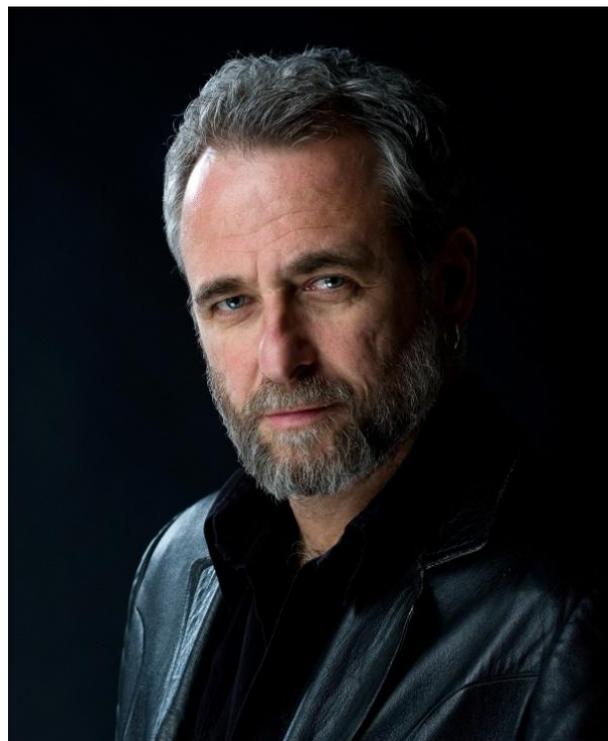
The animated part is a tribute to the great Fleischer Brothers' work from the 30's. It's hand drawn, made in 8 different countries and took two and a half years to create 55 minutes of animation. It was by far the toughest mission of my life as a director. The team back home, led by the director of animation, Yoni Goodman were working 24/7 to ensure the animation from a number of different studios had a consistency in the characters from scene to scene. During the process we discovered that sleep is for mortals and animation for the insane! Elsewhere in the movie I try to pay tribute to my idol Stanley Kubrick twice; once with a reference to Dr. Strangelove and another to 2001: A Space Odyssey, still my favorite sci-fi movie ever.

Age, free will and mortality are among the deep philosophical questions running through THE CONGRESS – what do you want your audiences to take away from the film?

I think this is the beauty of filmmaking; once you finish your work, its not up to you any more, its up to the audience. All i need to do now is sit back and listen to them, maybe you'll have a chance to learn what you really did.

Filmography

2013	THE CONGRESS
2008	VALS IM BASHIR (DOCUMENTARY)
2001	MADE IN ISRAEL
1996	CLARA HAKEDOSHA



List of characters

Robin Wright

A major American actress who was a rising star in her twenties, playing leading roles in films such as *The Princess Bride* and *Forest Gump*. In *The Congress*, Robin plays herself in quasi-documentary fashion. She must contend with Miramount Studios' surprising offer to purchase her cinematic identity. According to the deal, Miramount will have exclusive ownership of the character known as "Robin Wright" and have the right to re-create her forever in their movies as a 3-D computer-generated character. Robin, in turn, will remain an eternal thirty-something in all Miramount films, but is also forbidden from acting on any other stage, anywhere in the world, forever. The contract is valid for 20 years. Robin eventually signs the deal because she is an actress – and in the new economy of scanned actors – this is the only way to survive. In addition to that, she must take care of her son, Aaron, who suffers from a rare disorder known as Usher's syndrome, a disease that manifests itself in adolescence with symptoms such as loss of hearing and balance, and usually ends with total blindness and deafness. Twenty years later, Robin is an anonymous older woman in her sixties when she comes face to face with the screen character created by Miramount's computers, who is now idolized as a goddess. Robin goes through yet another ordeal when Miramount transitions to the chemical method, whereby she will no longer be a computerized image, but a chemical formula free for anyone to consume. The Robin Wright of *The Congress* is an animated tragic figure: she will be forced to give up not only her identity, but also her son and only true love, in order to attain the film's final catharsis.

Aaron Wright

The movie begins with the emergence of his rare condition, Usher's syndrome, which causes partial hearing loss that gradually deteriorates into total deafness and blindness. Aaron is convinced that he is the heir to the Wright Brothers and compulsively builds huge kites. He dreams of smashing a kite into a real passenger plane because the day this happens, he believes, he will be cured. His disease forces his mother, Robin, to give up her acting career, and the entire family to live in a distant, surreal spot in California, literally right next to a large airport. Aaron's condition worsens as the movie unfolds, and his mother gives up everything to stay with him until the inevitably tragic end.

Jeff Green

CEO of Miramount Studios, a cold, cynical, evil and frighteningly sharp money man. He is the executive who convinces Robin Wright to sign the contract in which she sells her identity and her soul to the studio. Jeff reappears twenty years later, both in dreams and in reality, in an attempt to extend Robin's contract with the studio and turn her into a fantasy that can be consumed chemically, in return for a fair price.

Dylan Truliner

The animator who invents Robin on Miramount's computers. He is head of the "Robin Wright department" at the studio. For twenty years, his life has been devoted to manipulating her computerized image in order to create the Triple R movies, a sci-fi series starring Robin that has become a huge cash-cow for the studio. Over the years, Dylan has fallen in love with Robin's animated character, his own creation, and now attempts to save her life in the hallucinatory, chaotic world of Miramount Nagasaki. Dylan fulfills his dream (and the dream we all have): he meets the object of his fantasy, falls in love with her, and then makes her fall in love with him. But he will

ultimately pay a high price for this love, as his destiny becomes intertwined with the tragic course of Robin's life.

AI

Robin's agent. Aging, old-school, he is the one who has been with Robin through thick and thin for twenty-five years – at once her agent, her best friend, the father she never had, and the man who has secretly loved her for years. Now he will also be the one to lead her from the bygone era into the world of illusions that emerges once she decides to sell her image to the studio.

