

APPLES



directed by Christos Nikou



Synopsis

Amidst a worldwide pandemic that causes sudden amnesia, middle-aged Aris (Aris Servetakis) finds himself enrolled in a recovery program designed to help unclaimed patients build new identities. Prescribed daily tasks on cassette tapes so he can create new memories and document them on camera, Aris slides back into ordinary life, meeting Anna (Sofia Georgovasili), a woman who is also in recovery.

Through images deadpan, strange and surreal, Greek writer-director Christos Nikou posits a beguiling reflection on memory, identity, and loss, exploring how a society might handle an irreversible epidemic through one man's story of self-discovery.

Are we the sum of the images we compile and display of ourselves, or are we something richer, and deeper?

Director's Note

How selective is our memory? Do we remember what we have experienced or only what we have chosen to remember? Can we forget the things that hurt us? Could it be that deep down we don't want to forget painful experiences because without them we lose our existence? In the end, are we simply the sum of all those things we don't forget?

When I had the first idea for what became APPLES, about eight years ago, I was trying to get over the loss of the closest person to me, and all of these questions regarding identity and loss, memory and pain were very much on my mind.

APPLES is an allegorical comedy-drama. It is at its core an effort to explore how our memory functions. As a reflection on identity and loss, on memory and pain, APPLES also explores what - and who - makes you the person you are, how much of this is authentically you and how much is imposed or created by others. It is exciting, and, in a way absurd, how quickly time passes from the moment we enter adulthood: how fast we forget the most important events or people in our lives, when at the same time we might very clearly remember insignificant details and sensations.



I also wanted to explore how emotions affect our memory, and how nowadays our memory is affected by technology, which makes it all too easy to record and store information. Could it be that all these technological advances have made our brain “lazier” and thus we recall fewer and fewer events, fewer and fewer emotions? Making your life revolve around goals and aims set for you by a self-appointed external authority is at the heart of social media use, be it Instagram campaigns or Tik Tok challenges. Have we submitted our memories and emotions to these authorities? Could it be that we have ended up living “less”?

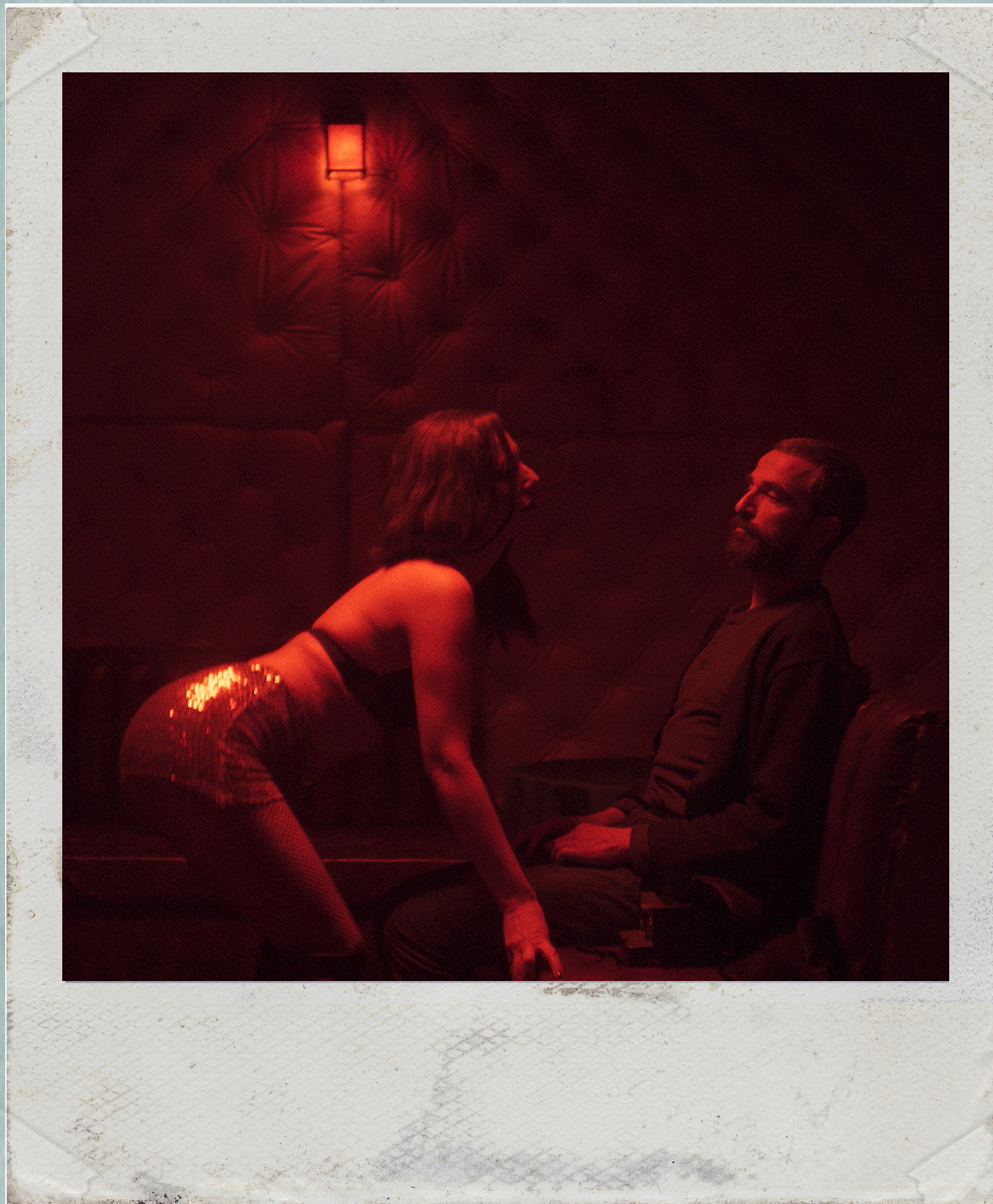
The tasks my characters are told to do as part of their therapy are commonplace. Take having to ride a bike, for example. That is something that is very hard to forget once you have learned how to do it. It's a symbol of a remembered experience, a memory that is re-created by external forces, by other people. I think this happens to all of us - we are often not living our own lives, and we imitate things others do. Technology and social media have made this much easier. You don't need to keep things in your mind anymore, you store your memories in your computer or publicly in your social media feed.





I am drawn to films that create entire worlds, something we recognize but that also feels a little surreal. Films like *Her* by Spike Jonze or *Holy Motors* by Leos Carax. And, of course, everything by Charlie Kaufman, who has this gift of looking at the world at a different angle. This distancing effect can make you more creative but, at the same time, you have to keep a sense of the real world. At the end of the day movies are like fairytales, the most important thing is having a compelling story. Something clever, something smart and unpredictable that pushes the audience to think further.

So my intention with *APPLES* is to create a familiar world in a recent past, in a society where technology is not so present and everything is analog. A society of lonely people where amnesia is spreading like a virus. This virus, this pandemic of unknown origins, is a well-known literary trope, from Camus' *The Plague* to Saramago's *Blindness*. These are stories, like *APPLES*, where the sickness is not important in itself, not even in its impact on society; it is merely a device to talk about what could grandly be called the human condition at the individual level.



APPLES, which starts in a dystopian environment, very soon shifts to a more anthropocentric approach.

The visual style allowed me to focus on the physical and existential isolation of the main character. To follow his emotions up close, we used the 4:3 aspect ratio, a format which serves as a direct reference to a recent past which is clearly related to the polaroid photos that are a very significant element of the story.

Within the narrow frame of APPLES, we experience our main character's surreal, sad, sometimes comical existence. I always sought to place him in a world rife with dramatic irony and double meanings. Though this is not comedy, several surreally comical scenes break what might otherwise be a very depressing take on the human condition. The main actor's performance was a key element in bringing all these tonal elements together; the measured restraint of his performance is enhanced in the few scenes in which he does the unexpected, for example the rather sad dance night in which he starts to do the twist. In these moments, his physicality hints at a person that remains elusive.

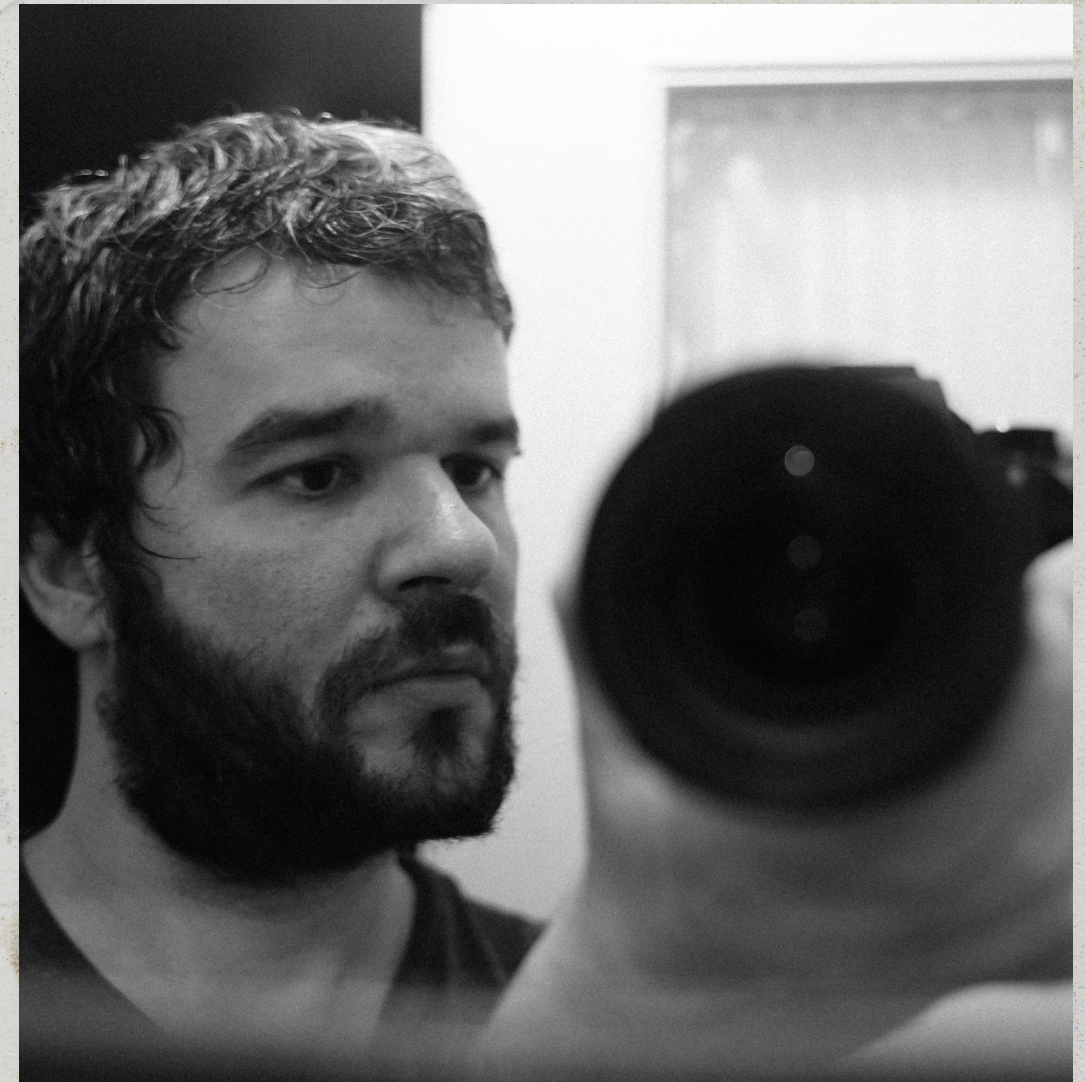
Biography

Christos Nikou was born in Athens in 1984.

His short film KM participated in over 40 international film festivals, including Rotterdam, Stockholm, Palm Springs, Sydney, Tallinn Black Nights, Interfilm Berlin, and winning the Best Short Film Price at the Motovun Film Festival of Croatia.

For the past ten years, he has worked as an assistant director on many feature films like DOGTOOTH (Yorgos Lanthimos) and BEFORE MIDNIGHT (Richard Linklater).

APPLES is his first feature film.



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Aris Servetalis
Sofia Georgovasili
Anna Kalaitzidou
Argiris Bakirtzis

director of photography Bartosz Świniarski
edited by George Zafiris
original score The Boy
casting director Stavros Raptis
line producer Sevi Morou
sound designer Leandros Ntounis
sound engineer Kostas Koutelidakis
art direction Efi Birba
costumes Dimitra Liakoura
make up Kiriaki Melidou
production manager Teta Apostolaki
world sales Alpha Violet
associate producers Virginie Devesa, Jerome Duboz, Antoine Simkine
co-producers Ales Pavlin, Andrej Stritof, Stefanos Ganos, Stavros Raptis
executive producers Cate Blanchett, Coco Francini, Andrew Upton
producers Iraklis Mavroidis, Angelo Venetis, Aris Dagios, Nikos Smpiliris, Mariusz Włodarski, Christos Nikou
written by Christos Nikou and Stavros Raptis
directed by Christos Nikou



Telluride
Film Festival

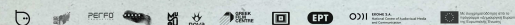
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APPLES

a film by Christos Nikou

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PRODUCTION DESIGNER: LEANDROS NTOUNIS
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WRITER: KIRIAKI MELIDOU
PRODUCTION MANAGER: TETIA APOSTOLAKI
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EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: CATE BLANCHETT, COCO FRANCINI, ANDREW UPTON
PRODUCED BY: IRANIS MAVRODIOU, ANGELO VENETIS, ARIS DAVIOS, NIKOS SIMPLIRIS, MARIUSZ WLODARSKI, CHRISTOS NIKOU
WRITTEN BY: CHRISTOS NIKOU AND STAVROS RAPTIS DIRECTED BY: CHRISTOS NIKOU



How selective is our memory?



Technical Information

Length: 90'

Genre: Comedy, Drama

Aspect Ratio: 4:3

Sound: 5.1

Language: Greek

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