



GIORNATE
DEGLI AUTORI
VENICE DAYS

YOU NEVER HAD IT

An Evening with Bukowski

Directed by
Matteo Borgardt

Produced by
Silvia Bizio
Paola Ferrari De Benedetti
Alex García
Santiago García Galván



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SYNOPSIS

This short documentary is based on a video interview conducted by Silvia Bizio in January of 1981 with writer Charles Bukowski at his home in San Pedro, California. It was a long night of smoking cigarettes and drinking wine with Bukowski and his soon to be wife, Linda Lee Beighle, talking about all kind of subjects, from writers to sex, love and humanity. The interview was shot on Umatic tapes which have been digitized and edited along with new shots in Super8 of scenes of Los Angeles today and poems read by the same Bukowski.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

When we found the old tapes of my mother Silvia Bizio's interview with Charles Bukowski, we knew we had in our hands an important piece of history. I wasn't Bukowski's biggest fan at that time, but after listening to his words for countless hours I realized the power of his work.

I was trying to find the most original and unique way to portray this piece of history. There had already been a couple of biographical documentaries about Bukowski's life, and I felt that I could not have done a better job of telling that story. I wanted to let people create their own idea of who Bukowski was just by listening to him. I wanted the audience to feel as if they were part of that evening, as if they were sitting on the couch besides Bukowski drinking and listening to his thoughts.

By mixing his poetry with images of the Los Angeles he was connected to, I wanted to let his artwork be the pauses in the film to allow the audience to stop and reflect about what they were hearing. I wanted to shoot those images of L.A. with a Super 8 camera to keep the same frame size of 4:3 of the Umatic old tapes, and to best match

the faded look of the original footage. And just like finding those precious videotapes in our garage, I got lucky with the shots I wanted.

In the process of making the film I was offered by my friend Eric Cannata, member of the thriving California bands Travelers and Young the Giant – and a Bukowski's fan himself - to help me with the original score, which he composed along with three other members of the two bands. They were able to find an expression in the music that fit the mood so perfectly, and this really gave the film an important final touch.

Matteo Borgardt

PRODUCER'S NOTES

Silvia Bizio

The title of this documentary film, "You Never Had It – An Evening with Bukowski", takes its inspiration from the final line of a Charles Bukowski's poem, "Those Sons of Bitches" from the collection "Mockinbird Wish Me Luck" (1972) This film is based on a long video interview I did with him back in January 1981, when Bukowski was at the top of his literary fame and success.

At that time I was at the start of my journalistic career in Los Angeles. I had just received my PhD at UCLA, and I was writing as a U.S. correspondent for the Italian daily Il Lavoro di Genova, and contributing to a few American outlets such High Times, The Los Angeles Times, The L.A. Weekly. I loved "beat generation" authors such Jack Keruac and Allen Ginsberg, and I also liked John Fante and Bukowski, to whom I was previously introduced by my dear friend and mentor, writer Fernanda Pivano - we dedicated the film to her.

I was assigned from Italy to contact and possibly interview Bukowski: so I wrote a letter to his publishing company, Black Sparrow

Press, requesting an interview, and soon after I received an answer written by the same Bukowski: at the bottom of the letter there was his trademark drawing of the little man smoking with a bottle at his feet, his usual signature.

We agreed upon the interview, which it would eventually become the first of many to follow, giving way to a long lasting friendship... until the birth of my son Matteo Borgardt, 30 years ago, put inevitably an end to many nights of wine and cigarettes (or the Indian Bidi, which Bukowski chain-smoked): it was impossible not to abandon yourself to either/or in his presence.

Hank, as he was known by his friends and family, and his then girlfriend Linda Lee Beighle, who soon thereafter became his wife, lived in a comfortable house with a view on the San Pedro's harbor (the port of Los Angeles); it was a two-story house on a quiet street, with a big backyard. A bohemian kind of house, with a large, comfortable sofa, armchairs, a big coffee table filled with ashtrays, bottles of wine, candies. The shelves were filled with books, mainly Bukowski's own novels and collection of short stories and poetry, all the foreign editions in the different languages he was in published around the world. The drawings which Bukowski used to make for every book he wrote were everywhere. There's was a large kitchen opening up on the living room, while the dining room was full of plants and pots with ferns hanging all over. I remember a lot of cats, freely hanging and going in and out. Bukowski loved cats.

At that time Linda Lee had an organic sandwich store (it was the beginning of the "organic/healthy food fashion - her shop was called The Dew Drop Inn, in Redondo Beach). Redondo Beach, by the way, is the place where Bukowski held his last public poetry reading, in 1981: he made his grand entrance with Wagner's music in the background, greeted by an enthusiastic, rioting, loud crowd, yelling fans with whom he would soon engage in spats and bickering, mainly playful (not always - after a few drinks Bukowski could become aggressive). During those messy readings he always had a smirk on his face: once he agreed to a reading he would manage to have a good time.

In the course of that evening in January 1981, Hank opened up with me as rarely he did, revealing aspects of himself that I could not

fathom, as the celibacy choice he and Linda had made, and certain comments about other writers (he generally hated them, and only few of them would pass his test: Celine, Dostoevsky, D.H. Lawrence, Camus, John Fante, that was about it). We talked about the racetrack, the vitamins Linda Lee forced him to take, about death and the book he was in the process of writing at that time: "Ham on Rye", then published in 1982; the most difficult book, he said, about his ugly, violent childhood, and his abusive father, a U.S. Army man sent to Germany after World War I (that's where Hanks was born in 1920).

Two years ago, 20 years after Bukowski's passing (1994), I found almost by chance the 9 Umatic video cassettes containing that interview with Hank: hours and hours of talk almost forgotten amidst the shelves in the garage of my Los Angeles home, where I've been living for 40 years. My son Matteo, a filmmaker, had the idea of making a documentary after we had them digitized. Many of the interview's images and sound were damaged, terribly scratched, incomprehensible; yet others were just grainy, matted by time, therefore usable.

I owe the making of this film to Paola Ferrari De Benedetti; we found an immediate, reciprocal understanding, and she never wavered from her commitment; she always allowed us total freedom in the realization of the project. A young Mexican producer, Santiago Garcia Galvan, another hard-core Bukowski's fan, got involved with his Mexico City based Itaca Films for the post-production.

In over 30 years as a correspondent for Italian daily Repubblica and newsweekly L'Espresso, I believe I interviewed every single Hollywood celebrity; yet my encounter with Bukowski that night will always remain a very special moment in my life and career, one of those about face where there's no barrier, no holds barred, where everything at stake is put into play. I feel very fortunate to have found those dusty video-cassettes before the inexorable passing of time would obliterate them, and being able to share my extraordinary evening with Bukowski.

SILVIA BIZIO

CAST

Charles Bukowski

Linda Lee Beighle

Silvia Bizio

Frances Schoenberger

Michael Montfort

James Borgardt

CREDITS

Directed By

Matteo Borgardt

Produced by

Silvia Bizio

Paola Ferrari De Benedetti

Produced by

Alex García

Santiago García Galván

Edited by

Cristina Sammartano

Matteo Borgardt

Music by

Eric Cannata

Aidin Sadeghi

François Comtois

Josh Stein

Executive Producer

Andrea Manni

Executive Producers

Araceli Velázquez

Andrés Tagliavini

1981 Crew

Camera operator
Sound mixer
Assistant camera

Bryan
Jim
Mickey

Photographs by

Michael Montfort

2016 Crew

Camera operators

Gianfilippo DeRossi
Anastasios

Papapostulou
Claudio Santini
Matteo Borgardt

Assistant director
Production assistant

Lorenzo Grassi
Sara Lazzaro

Post Production

Post Production Company
CEO
CFO

Cinema 305
Mark Liwerant
Miriam Hernández

Executive Producer
Program and Production

Luis "Chino" García
Andrea Casanova

Senior Digital Colorist
Baselight Assistant
VFX Artist

Heather "La Güera" Hay
Javier Leal
José Pablo Ramírez

Motion Graphics

Alberto Santos
José Pablo Ramírez
Carlos Méndez Tello

Credits Design
Digital Administration

Carlos Méndez Tello
Javier Leal

Administration Dept.
Assistant

Adriana Valencia

BIOGRAPHIES

Matteo Borgardt, Director

Matteo Borgardt was born in Los Angeles, California (USA). He studied film editing and directing at the IED (European Institute of Design) in Turin, Italy. He directed the "Behind the scenes" material for the short movie "The Night Shift Belongs to the Stars" by Edoardo Ponti, and many web videos. This is his first documentary. He lives in Los Angeles, California.

Charles Bukowski, Writer

Charles Bukowski (1920-1994) is the eminent Los Angeles writer, its damn bard. He grew up in Mid City, moving slowly East and then South (to San Pedro): everything he wrote is set in L.A. (only "Factotum" is partly set in New Orleans). He worked for decades as a Post Office employee, while furiously writing short stories and poems at night. He recounted this blue collar experience in his first novel, "Post Office" (1971), published by Black Sparrow Press, a small company who wisely bet on Bukowski and made it big. Bukowski then published a number of poetry collection ("Mockinbird Wish Me Luck" and "South of No North" among many), and a travel book, "Shakespeare Never Did This" (1979) accompanied by Michael Montfort's photographs, the novels "Factotum" (1975), "Women" (1978), and short stories collections such as "Tales of Ordinary Madness" (Marco Ferreri did a film adaptation),

and "Diary of a Dirty Old Man". In the mid '70s he started getting a lot of attention in Europe (and finally stopped working as a postman and was able to make it as a writer), and by 1980 his fame in the US grew exponentially. His riotous poetry readings were something of a legend. In 1989 he published the semi-autobiographical novel "Hollywood", in which he recalled his surreal and tragicomic experience with Hollywood at the time of the making of the Barbet Schroeder film "Barfly" (1987) - with Mickey Rourke as Bukowski literary's alter ego Henry Chinaski; Bukowski wrote the film's script on assignment. He died at 73. Until then he lived in San Pedro with his wife Linda Lee and their many beloved cats.

Silvia Bizio, Producer

A journalist, she writes about film from Los Angeles for the daily newspaper "La Repubblica" and the weekly magazines "L'Espresso" and "D", and is a member of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association. Graduated in Literature and Philosophy from the University of Rome, she earned her PhD in Sociology and Mass Communication at UCLA. She has written several books including "Los Angeles Babilonia" and "Cinema Italian Style" a history of Italian Cinema at the Academy Awards. She has been the artistic Director of Cinema Italian Style, a series of contemporary Italian movies produced with Cinecittà Luce and the American Cinematheque, from 2004 to 2010, and is now director of Italians in Film. Her first short movie as a producer, "The Night Shift Belongs to the Stars", directed by Edoardo Ponti, with Nastassja Kinski, Julian Sands and Enrico Lo Verso, was shortlisted for the Academy Awards, and was the winner as best short at the Tribeca Film Festival. This is her first documentary.

Paola Ferrari De Benedetti, Producer, Alevi

Journalist Paola Ferrari has worked for RAI Italian television since 1990, becoming the first woman to conduct a major sport program on Italian

TV, La Domenica Sportiva. She was the anchor of TG 2 broadcast news from 2000 to 2004, from the Twin Towers attack to the Afghan war. She's now conducting 90° Minute, the leading Sunday afternoon soccer TV program in Italy. A member of the Comitato Etico della Lega Calcio Pro (Ethic Committee for Soccer Lega Pro), Paola Ferrari De Benedetti is the spokeswoman for the National Observatory against bullying and doping. She's the President of Visibilia Holding, publisher of monthly magazines Ciak, Ville e Giardini and PC Professionale. Married to Marco De Benedetti, she's a mother of two, Alessandro and Virginia.

Alex Garcia, Producer, Itaca Films

Alex García is one of the most prolific movie producers and investors in Latin America today, having produced well over 75 projects throughout the American continent. His holding company, AG Studios, is home to Itaca Films in Mexico, U.S.A., Colombia and Brazil, Latam Pictures, his distribution and international sales arm and AG Content, an IP holding company. Under the AG umbrella, Garcia is able to cover development, production, postproduction and distribution.

Santiago Garcia Galván, Producer, Itaca Films

In 2011, García Galván, in collaboration with the prominent producer Alex García, founded Itaca Films. That same year, he produced, along with the famous Colombian actor Manolo Cardona, “The Snitch Cartel”, based on the most famous TV series in Colombia that broke records at the Colombian box office. In 2012, he was the Executive Producer of Carlos Cuarón’s “Sugar Kisses”, and that same year, he produced Guillermo Arriaga’s segment (“Gods Blood”), of the choral project “Words with Gods”. With Itaca Films Garcia Galvan has also produced “The Jesuit”, written by Paul Schrader, “El Cumple de la Abuela”, “Captive”, starring Kate Mara and Michael K. Williams, and the directorial debut of the Academy Award nominee Demián Bichir, the

upcoming “A Circus Tale & A Love Song”. Galvan is executive producer on “Fast 8” and co-producer on “Transformers 5”.