

Bulletin

ORGANIZATIONS OF FILM AUTHORS IN SERBIA



CONVERSATION
WITH THE AUTHOR

Maja Radošević

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INTERVIEW:

Bela Banhegyesi

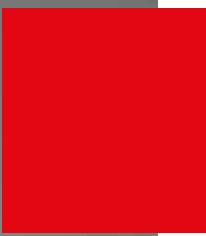
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EDITORIAL

Photo: Vojislav Golevski



Stefan Gelineo

Director of UFUS AFA

Editorial

At the end of 2025, UFUS AFA signed a contract with the cable operator SBB, thereby completing the organization's coverage of the entire cable operator market in Serbia. The obligation undertaken by the company's new owners to pay regular monthly fees to authors and rights holders will significantly increase the royalty fund, given that, according to the latest reports, SBB holds 30.3% of all cable subscriptions in the country.

This major step came after years of legal proceedings with the previous owners of SBB, who had refused to pay the statutory fees for the rebroadcast of film and television works on their channels, thereby depriving authors of more than 16 million euros in royalties, not including the compensation for damages, which is significantly higher. UFUS AFA has so far won four lawsuits related to unpaid royalties, while the remaining cases are still ongoing. UFUS AFA's work in 2025 was marked by the election

of a new Board of Directors and by the strengthening of international cooperation. We became a member of AVACI, the global umbrella organization, signed reciprocal representation agreements with numerous collective management organizations across Europe and worldwide, and our representatives participated as panelists at regional and European conferences. All of this contributes to the growing recognition and reputation of UFUS AFA on the international stage.

On the internal front, the organization achieved all of its planned goals – and even exceeded some of them. Film authors in Serbia are now significantly better informed about their rights and about the work of UFUS AFA. This is reflected in the fact that, over the past two years, the number of authors and rights holders who have placed their trust in us has doubled.

We are particularly proud of the strong social dimension of our work. Film authors have recognized this important role of UFUS AFA and are well aware of the support and assistance our organization provides. Throughout the year, the Social Assistance Fund Committee met almost continuously, approving financial support aimed at improving poor social conditions, covering medical treatments and surgeries, supporting members upon the birth of a child, assisting retired members, as well as providing aid to families with preschoolers.

At the end of this year, our organization also suffered a personal loss – Aleksandar Saša Ivanjikov (1950 – 2025), our dear colleague, a great connoisseur of film, and the first director of UFUS AFA, passed away.

With a clear awareness of the challenges ahead, but also with a strong sense of the results we have achieved, we close the year convinced that solidarity among authors and the consistent protection of their rights is the only path toward a stronger and fairer position for film creators in Serbia.

INTERVIEW



Béla Bánhegyesi

CEO of the Hungarian collective management organization FilmJUS

“We can never say the work is done when it comes to authors’ rights”

The Hungarian collective management organization FilmJUS, with which UFUS AFA recently signed an Agreement on Reciprocal Representation, was founded in 1996 and represents numerous film and television authors.

For the Bulletin, its CEO, Béla Bánhegyesi, speaks about the challenges FilmJUS is facing, its relationship with the Hungarian government, the importance of international cooperation, as well as the future of the film industry and the role of

collective management organizations in protecting authors’ rights in the age of artificial intelligence.

Are you satisfied with the scope of collective protection for film authors in Hungary, and how close (or far) is it to best practices in other EU countries?

I think we can never be fully satisfied or feel that the work is done. The current situation in Hungary contains many positive elements, but there are also serious disputes and challenges. The current situation contains many positive elements in Hungary, but we have serious disputes and problems with it on several points. Hungary made a major step forward in 1999 with the new Copyright Act, followed by the Collective Management Act in 2016. These laws have been amended several times—sometimes to the detriment of authors.

So while we do have a functioning system, including cooperation with music and other repertoire CMOs, we still face political headwinds that prevent us from reaching our goals. I would say we’re about halfway between the strongest collective management countries, such as France, and the newcomers just starting to build their systems, for example some former Soviet states.

What is the nature of the cooperation between FilmJUS and the Hungarian government? Do they understand the challenges faced by filmmakers and collective organizations?

In short: poor. The Hungarian government seems to view us as simply wanting more money, and they appear



“The Hungarian government seems to view us as simply wanting more money, and they appear eager to shield economic actors from what they see as ‘unnecessary’ copyright-related costs”

eager to shield economic actors from what they see as “unnecessary” copyright-related costs. So in their minds, it’s just a financial issue. Although the relevant department was once led by an excellent copyright lawyer who understood our proposals, the higher levels of the Ministry - and the Minister himself - did not find them acceptable. This became especially clear when our proposed 2024 royalty tariffs, submitted jointly by five CMOs, were rejected, leading to litigation.

What are the main challenges that FilmJUS currently faces in protecting authors' rights?

I see three major challenges ahead. The biggest one concerns content-sharing platforms such as Netflix, MAX, Disney+, and others, which seem unwilling to acknowledge that their products are created by film authors whose rights remain valid even if streaming rights have been acquired. It’s a hot topic, but we don’t yet see a solution.

The second challenge is the AI revolution. AI can already replicate almost any audiovisual creator, and it’s unclear how this will affect our operations — or even our entire industry.

The third issue is fair compensation. In Hungary, regulations allow us to increase royalties only based on the inflation rate from two years earlier. In theory, that might be acceptable, but over the past six to eight years, it has proven insufficient, leading to growing frustration among authors. So we find ourselves fighting both the government and our own authors at the same time. There’s no real and clear solution yet.

Could you tell us about the current situation of the film industry in Hungary? On average, how many Hungarian films are produced each year and how long does the production process take?

The Hungarian film industry is currently polarized into two main segments. The larger one is state-supported and receives funding from the National Film Institute, the only source of substantial financing for film production. According to producers and screenwriters, access to this funding is somewhat politically influenced.

The smaller segment is financed by major television companies, primarily RTL and TV2, which focus on producing TV series and entertainment shows. Independent studios and producers are underfunded. Some manage to secure international support, but it’s rare, for example László Nemes Jeles after “Son of Saul”. As for timelines, it varies greatly depending on funding. A TV-financed series is usually completed within one year, while a documentary could take one to two years. In some cases, even script development alone can last three to five years.

“Streaming platforms use our work, but refuse to recognize its creators”



“AI will reshape filmmaking faster than the law can follow”

FilmJUS and UFUS AFA recently signed an Agreement on Reciprocal Representation. Do film authors from the region face similar problems, and could stronger regional cooperation improve their position?

I believe our historical backgrounds are quite similar—as reflected in our new series Hunyadi . Regional cooperation is definitely a good idea. I think the most effective way to strengthen our position is through coordinated action within CISAC, leveraging its scale and international network.

The development of artificial intelligence is progressing much faster than the corresponding legislation. How do Hungarian filmmakers view this conflict between AI companies and the misuse of authors' work? Are they concerned?

So far, we haven't seen widespread concern in the Hungarian film industry. Some filmmakers are

experimenting with AI, while others are simply too busy with their daily work and teaching responsibilities to engage with the issue.

In your opinion, what will copyright protection look like in ten years?

I'm not a fortune teller, so I can't predict the future. Honestly, I wouldn't try to forecast even two or three years ahead. What I do know is that AI will play a significant role in filmmaking. It will make some jobs easier and faster, while rendering others obsolete. I expect one-person studios to become more common—where a single skilled individual, equipped with AI tools, can produce an entire animated film. The legal framework will struggle to keep up, moving slowly. Eventually, we'll need to rethink what constitutes a “work,” what deserves protection, and how to determine whether something is truly original or just a derivative copy.





Regional Seminar in Skopje, Photo: Jove Angeleski



Regional Seminar in Skopje, Photo: Jove Angeleski



Regional Seminar in Skopje, Photo: Jove Angeleski

CONVERSATION WITH THE AUTHOR



Maja Radošević

Director of photography

AI is a great tool, but in certain forms, it becomes dangerous because it erases the line between what is real and what is generated

Maja Radošević, director of photography, belongs to a rare artistic group in Serbia, but also in Europe – women cinematographers. Through her work, however, she has earned a prominent place in Serbian film and helped pave the way for her younger female colleagues. Her signature can be found on acclaimed films such as *Vlažnost* (Humidity), *Ajvar*, *Pored mene* (Next to me), as well as on the series *Klan* (The Clan), *Tunel* (Tunnel), *Drim tim* (Dream Team), and others. She has also worked on regional and international productions, including the films *Only Human* and *Quintet*.

These days, Maja is wrapping up work on the film *Bibijaka i Dobošar* (Bibijaka and the Drummer) and is awaiting the premieres of two mini-series she shot with director Boban Skerlić – *Smola* (Resin) and *Škripac* (In a Tight Corner).

The interview for the UFUS AFA Bulletin began with a conversation about documentary film. Our interviewee worked on documentary filmmaking during her collaboration with Vice, and, as she admits, she genuinely misses it.

“Documentary work awakens all your senses – your speed of thought, your reflexes, your awareness of space, how you use natural light, how you react in the moment. It teaches you speed, responsibility, and the ability to recognize the given moment. That experience is invaluable for anyone working in film. On set, things rarely go exactly as planned – situations change fast, and you’re often forced to respond instantly and find an alternative solution. Documentary filmmaking gives you a kind of creative freedom you rarely get in fiction, and it takes you to places that narrative film rarely reaches.”

You’re currently finishing the shoot for Ivica Vidanović’s film *Bibijaka* and the Drummer, and two of your mini-series, *Resin* and *In a Tight Corner*, which you worked on with Boban Skerlić, are awaiting their premieres. When can we expect them to be released?

We have just a few more shooting days left now in December. *Bibijaka* tells the story of the rise of a Romani orchestra – you could almost call it a musical, with plenty of comic moments. *Bibijaka* and the Drummer is also a kind of fairy tale, and like any fairy tale, it can’t exist without magic – both the musical kind and the one rooted in Romani mythology (in the legend of Bibijaka). Although working on the film was inspiring, it was also a little challenging. We were short on time and didn’t have as many shooting days as we really needed to find the right balance in the work. A special quality came from collaborating with professional actors alongside children who were stepping in front of a camera for the first time,



“Documentary film awakens all your senses – it teaches you speed, responsibility, and the ability to recognize the given moment.”

as well as non-actors from the Romani settlement.” The mini-series Resin deals with revenge pornography. Looking back at my body of work, I realize that I've mostly focused on socially engaged films – and personally, I've always been that kind of person, so perhaps it was a natural path. I try to contribute as much as I can, both in real life and through film, to projects that aim to make a positive change. I'm surrounded by people who think similarly, and that's why I end up working on projects like these. Revenge pornography is a serious crime with long-lasting consequences, and it deserves to be punishable – just like femicide, which is the subject we tackle in the mini-series In a Tight Corner. It's already been two years since we shot it, and the series will finally be broadcast on the Vovo platform, because the national television stations aren't interested in topics like this. I'm extremely proud of both series, as well as the film Humidity and the series The Clan, which is one of the most demanding projects I've ever worked on. That project really brought to the surface everything I mentioned earlier about what's essential in this business – resourcefulness, creativity, adaptation, and reacting in the moment to unexpected circumstances, which are simply part of working on a production of that scale.

“I do my best, as much as I can and as much as my finances allow, to work on scripts that interest and inspire me, that spark creativity and new ideas in me, but that is not always possible.”

In recent years, the focus has shifted from film to television and streaming platforms. From the outside, it seems like film authors have many more professional opportunities today. Is that the case in practice?

Series have effectively filled the gaps and long pauses that used to exist between film productions. Due to limited resources and a small market, our cinema would be very poor without strong regional cooperation and co-

productions. Also, we don't have the financial power for expensive film projects or a larger-scale film production, nor do we have an audience for that. That's why series have been crucial for the survival of the profession – they have allowed authors and industry professionals to keep working, earn a living, and continue developing and gaining new experience. What worries me is the fact that, in three months, Netflix earns more than the annual revenue of all the world's cinemas. It's hard to predict what will happen next, what the future of film will look like, and what kind of content younger generations will end up watching. A wide selection creates a paradox: we end up spending more time searching for content on platforms than actually watching what we choose. There's also the question of whether we still have the focus and concentration for a fiction film that lasts two or two and a half hours. Today, people are obsessed with pretty images, short videos, and endless scrolling. It seems to me that at some point people will get tired of all this short-form content – reels and other formats – but the question is whether our attention span has been irreversibly damaged.

Do you have the luxury of choosing the projects?

I do my best, as much as I can and as much as my finances allow, to work on scripts that interest and inspire me, that spark creativity and new ideas in me – but that isn't



Photo: Private archive



“At some point, people will get tired of short-form content – reels and other formats – but the question is whether our attention span has been irreversibly damaged.”

always possible. It's difficult to get everything to line up: to genuinely like the idea, to be on the same page with the director, the crew, the production, and to avoid misunderstandings and disagreements. But you can always take something valuable from every project and always learn something new. If you're a professional, no matter what kind of project you're working on, you give it everything you have.

Are you following the debates around the (mis)use of artificial intelligence in film?

AI is fantastic as a tool, but it's worrying that, if we look at social media, we can see that people can no longer tell the difference between a real image and one generated by AI, between reality and imagination. When it comes to film post-production, artificial intelligence definitely makes things easier, and in some cases even reduces costs, which is positive – but on the other hand, it takes work away from people, and the need for certain positions disappears, especially in the areas of animation and CGI effects. Screenwriters are also under pressure; they have to fight for their copyright and for the recognition of their creative work, especially in the face of the production of

AI-generated scripts. What we need is a system capable of identifying and protecting authors' works.

Has the job of a cinematographer changed, and to what extent, given the technological advances?

The entire filmmaking process has sped up, especially in pre-production and post-production. For example, in pre-production, you can now create a storyboard much faster thanks to new software. In post-production, a great deal has improved and accelerated as well, both in terms of special effects and color grading. Our biggest problem is the chronic lack of time, since the time frame for work has been reduced to a minimum, from pre-production all the way to shooting. At the same time, production crews have gotten smaller, and overall project budgets have also been reduced. A lot has changed, but not yet to the extent that cinematographers can be replaced by machines. Authorship and authors' imagination can't be replaced – at least not yet. I think people will continue to use artificial intelligence as a tool, and talented individuals will still be able to create meaningful works of art with its help. Even future AI-made films will be possible to create only by a limited number of people, because, first of all, every prompt has a cost and requires and consumes



The Clan, photo: Private archive



Photo: Private archive

“It is extremely important to address the issue of royalties being paid by financially powerful entities such as AI companies and streaming services. For them, those allocations are negligible compared to their percentage of profit, yet they mean a great deal to authors.”

enormous energy resources – something we don't really think about when we use ChatGPT or similar tools. We need to be careful and pay attention to what's happening in larger countries and bigger productions, and to how places like America or the European Union are addressing the problem of AI.

How important is it for you to be part of the team during pre-production, to take part in the earliest discussions?

I've had different experiences, and one of the best has been working with Boban Skerlić. Our collaboration grew into a friendship and a deep understanding – both in front of and behind the camera. But it isn't always like that; sometimes you encounter misunderstandings, both with directors and producers. Preparation is very important to me – reading the script on multiple levels, talking with the other co-authors, deciding together how we want it to look, and surrounding myself with colleagues I genuinely enjoy working with. Pre-production gives you more time and creative freedom on set, because with good preparation, you're more confident in what you're doing. Otherwise, the already limited time you have on set is wasted if you're not prepared. Unfortunately, more and more films are being shot without adequate preparation.

When it comes to women on film crews, European statistics show that they are still far from equal to their male colleagues. Women cinematographers make up only about 12% of film crews in Europe, while that number is even smaller in Serbia?



Humidity, photo: Private archive

Together with Bojana Andrić, Tanja Krstevski, and Jelena Stanković, I belong to the generation of female cinematographers who broke through and helped open up space for younger colleagues. Every project by any one of us, every instance of visibility in the film world, gives strength to younger generations, pushes boundaries, and shows that female cinematographers, directors, and women authors in general are essential to cinema. It's encouraging that outstanding female cinematographers around the world are coming to the forefront and receiving awards, but it is still disheartening that in a respected magazine like Cinematographer you can read lines such as 'this woman is the first to use this or that camera,' something that is quite discouraging for the 21st century. I'm glad that there are more and more women working on film crews, and that their presence is no longer limited only to costume and makeup departments, which are traditionally viewed as 'women's' jobs in filmmaking.

Are you satisfied with the work of the UFUS AFA organization?

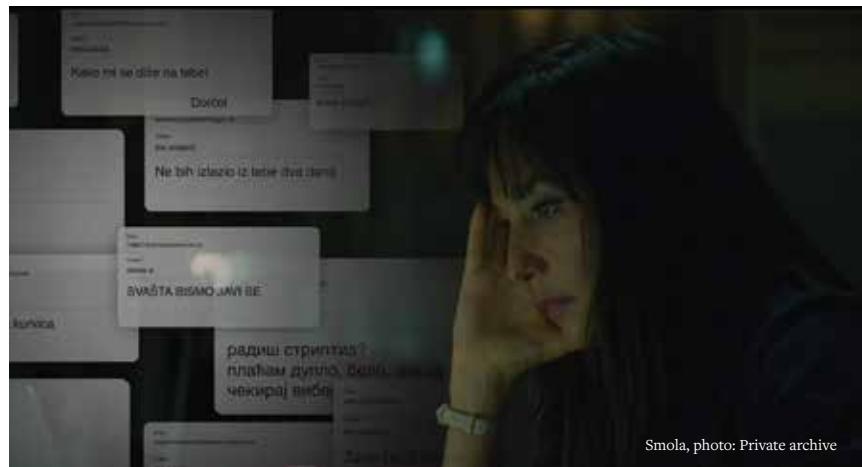
UFUS AFA supports authors and encourages them. In addition to the royalties we receive, they also help us secure good contracts – something that wasn't the case before, when we would, out of lack of knowledge, sign unfavorable

contracts with production companies. Besides that, the organization also helps with the realization of certain artistic projects and provides important social assistance to authors who find themselves in difficult situations. A lot has been achieved so far, but new battles are ahead of us – fighting for a better Copyright Law and broader protection. But to be honest, no one is truly happy or satisfied; this is a difficult time for culture on a global level. Even in America, film workers are vulnerable; there is less and less work, and co-productions are becoming more common – it's no longer just a single studio behind a film. That's why collecting copyright royalties from financial giants, such as AI companies and streaming services, is extremely important. For them, the payments set aside for copyright are negligible compared to their profits – it's merely a symbolic acknowledgment of someone's work. Tech companies and streaming platforms would hardly even notice that amount, while it means a great deal to the authors. Many of them are retired or no longer able to create new works, so any compensation for their previous work means a lot. Film workers are mostly freelancers, and their pensions are low, below the average – and who knows what they will even look like for my generation in ten or fifteen years.

Photo: Private archive



Skripac, photo: Private archive



Smola, photo: Private archive

LEGAL ADVICE

Photo: Aleksandar Carević



Stevan Pajović

Attorney, "T-S Legal" Law Office

The Historic Ruling of the Regional Court in Munich in the GEMA vs. OpenAI Case on Copyright and Training Artificial Intelligence

The German collective management organization for music authors' copyright (GEMA) filed a lawsuit with the Regional Court in Munich against OpenAI, accusing the company of using protected lyrics from nine popular German songs without authorization in the training of its large language models, GPT-4 and GPT-4o. Among those songs are "Atemlos" by Kristina Bach, "Männer" by Herbert Grönemeyer, and "Über den Wolken" by Reinhard Mey.

GEMA argued that these lyrics are stored in the model's parameters and can be reproduced almost identically, which would constitute unauthorized recording and

reproduction under the provisions of the German Copyright Law. OpenAI, on the other hand, maintained that these models do not store specific texts or data, but instead reflect statistical patterns learned during the analysis of the entire dataset. According to their interpretation, the content the models generate is the result of user prompts, and control over that content does not rest with them. OpenAI also stated that its practices fall under the exceptions provided by the Directive on Copyright and Related Rights in the Digital Single Market (EU) 2019/790 (the CDSM Directive), which regulates exceptions for text and data mining, and that these exceptions cover the training of AI models.

The first-instance ruling in this case is of great importance, as it largely upheld GEMA's claims, including prohibiting further reproduction and public communication of the content, as well as awarding damages. The court stated that simple user prompts can lead ChatGPT to reproduce large portions of the original texts almost identically. Although some "hallucinations" were observed in certain responses, the court held that this does not diminish the identifiability of the original texts, since the memorized content had not changed in any substantial way, and the differences were mostly limited to introductory or concluding parts of the texts. The scope and complexity of the generated content demonstrated that this was not a matter of coincidence. In fact, the parties agreed in this proceeding that the song lyrics were used in training the models, but they disagreed on whether, from a legal standpoint, this constituted authorized recording, reproduction, and public communication of the works.

The court relied on scientific studies in the field of information technology, which indicate that training data can exist within a model's parameters and remain accessible – a phenomenon that GEMA referred to as memorization. According to the court's findings, if content can be fixed in a mathematical form, whether



through numerical probability values or by some other technical means, such fixation (recording) can be considered reproduction, that is, copying of the work. The court further established that simple user requests – such as “What are the lyrics to the song [title]?” or “What is the chorus of the song [title]?” – can lead to reproduction of the content, and this fact was decisive in the conclusion that such activities by OpenAI also constitute the recording of a copyrighted work. Rejecting OpenAI’s claim that GEMA must identify the specific parts of the text stored within the model, the court emphasized that it is sufficient for the model to be able to generate statistically likely sequences that recognizably reproduce the song lyrics based on patterns learned during training.

As mentioned earlier, based on these findings, the court concluded that memorizing song lyrics within the parameters of an artificial intelligence model is equivalent to the recording of a work, and that reproducing such content through ChatGPT constitutes the acts of reproduction and public communication. Given that OpenAI did not obtain authorization from the rights holders, its activities in the process of training AI models, as well as the subsequent use of those models by users, constitute unauthorized reproduction and public communication of copyrighted works.

As we mentioned at the beginning, OpenAI also based its defense on the exceptions provided by the CDSM Directive, claiming that training AI models is covered by the copyright exception for text and data mining. In practice, in the absence of other regulation, the rule suspending copyright for the purpose of text and data mining (TDM) is often applied to the training of artificial intelligence. TDM is the process of automatically or semi-automatically analyzing large volumes of texts or data in order to discover patterns, information, or knowledge that are not immediately apparent and that can provide useful insights for scientific and other forms of research. Thus, Article 3 of the Directive provides that research organizations and institutions such as universities and museums may, for scientific purposes and without the permission of rights holders, perform text and data mining. Article 4 extends this possibility to commercial text and data mining, provided that the content has been lawfully obtained and that the rights holders have not

explicitly prohibited such use, for example, through machine-readable terms. In short, these articles allow for scientific, research, and even commercial text and data mining, subject to certain conditions and with respect for the rights of content owners.

However, the court concluded that the suspension of rights for text and data mining cannot be applied in this case, since the training of large language models does not consist solely of data analysis, but also of their direct reproduction. Exceptions in the legislation are intended for processes of research and information analysis, not for recording and reproducing specific protected works, which is the case here. The memory of an artificial intelligence system, which enables the reproduction of copyrighted works through simple prompts, exceeds the scope of the purpose these exceptions are meant to serve, and therefore, the court considers that their application is not justified.

It was also emphasized that responsibility for such activities cannot fall on the users of the model, but rather on the development teams and the companies that develop these models. In addition, it was emphasized that it is difficult to remove specific data from already trained models, but that it is nevertheless necessary to establish measures to prevent future violations, such as internal guidelines, filters, additional licenses, or retraining of the models.

Based on these legal interpretations, the ruling is expected to influence the legal framework governing the development and use of artificial intelligence in the future, particularly concerning the use of protected content without permission. Although the situation is still uncertain and far from final, as OpenAI has announced that it will appeal, GEMA is at the same time conducting another lawsuit against the company Suno AI, which concerns music generated by artificial intelligence.

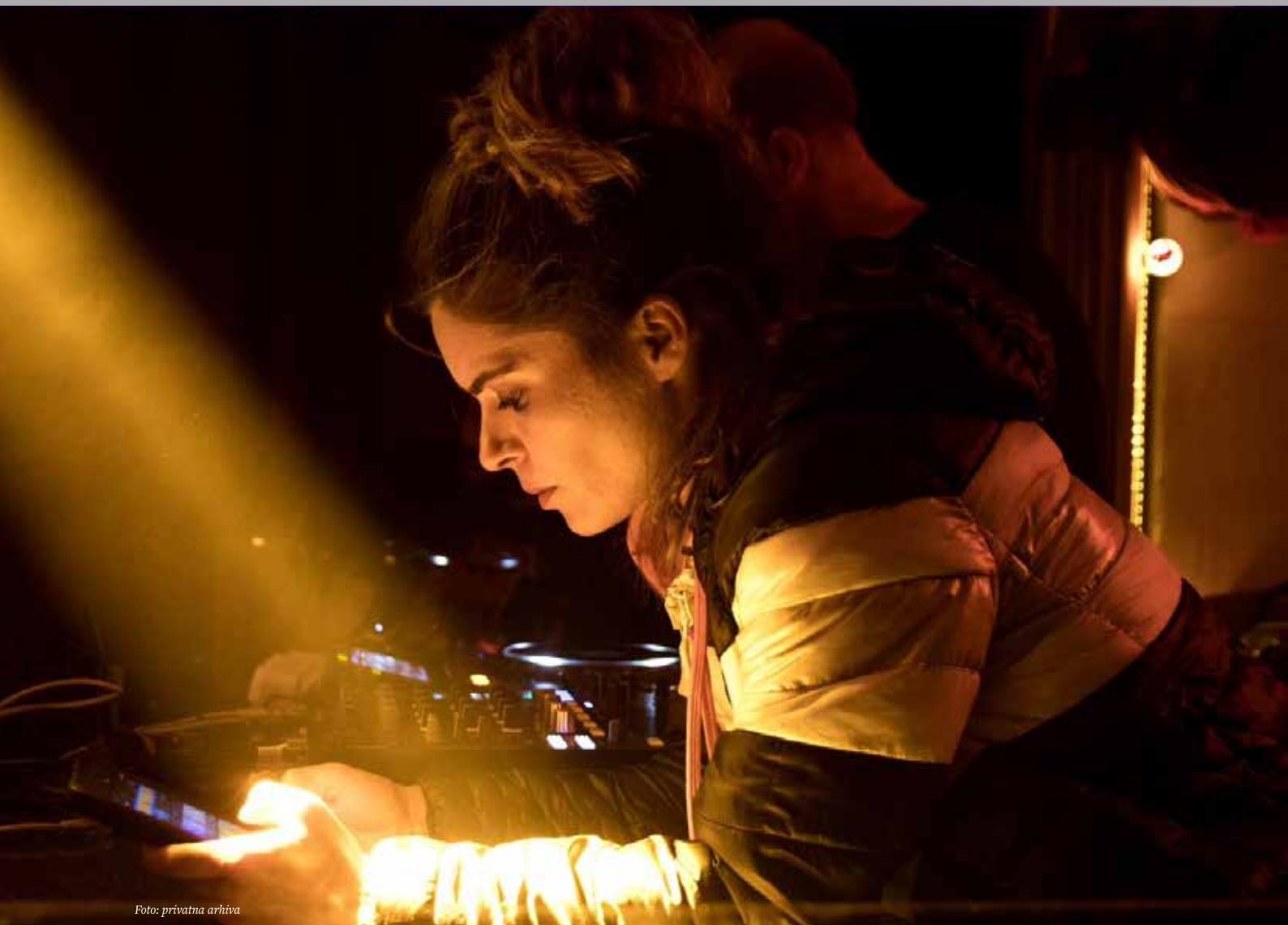


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