



## BORDERLINES FILM FESTIVAL

### **WANDA** (15)

Director: Barbara Loden

Starring: Barbara Loden, Michael Higgins

US, 1970, 1 hour 43 minutes, English

This once forgotten, now cherished classic of feminist cinema is Barbara Loden's only feature film as director. Having been restored in 2010 by the UCLA Film & Television Archive, the film has been recognised in recent years for its intimate depiction of a lonely drifter, an atypical and intriguing heroine.

In rust-belt Eastern Pennsylvania, we encounter Wanda sleeping on her sister's couch having abandoned her husband and children. After losing her job, she seems to meander aimlessly, seeking connection with men who treat her as if she were disposable. When she inadvertently falls in with a bank robber, Norman, she finds herself dragged into his criminal exploits. Together they hit the road to keep Norman's past crimes from catching up with them.

This patient character study is inspired in part by Loden's own feelings of aimlessness. In a 1971 interview at the American Film Institute, Loden said 'It was sort of based on my own personality...A sort of passive, wandering around, passing from one person to another, no direction—I spent many years of my life that way and I felt that... well, I think that a lot of people are that way. And not just women, but men too. They don't know why they exist.' This sense of despondency, while achingly relatable, has rarely been captured so effectively on film.

The film's cinéma vérité style, using real world locations, improvisation, and non-professional actors (with the exception of Loden and Higgins), create a sense of believability and gritty authenticity that would go on to influence a generation of American Independent filmmakers.

*"The fullness of Wanda, her complexities and nuances, springs from Loden's complete embodiment of the character, spun from but a few components into a woman simultaneously so realistic, yet unknowable, making this one of cinema's great performances."* (Elissa Suh, Mubi Notebook)

Notes compiled by Emily Mason (Radix Film Club)

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**MURDERING THE DEVIL** Long forgotten, recently restored, Ester Krumbachová's directorial debut is an exuberant, biting feminist satire.