

Manifest Film & My Accomplice present

SOMETHING FAMILIAR

A FILM BY RACHEL TAPARJAN

Romania / UK, 2026, 89 min.

World premiere



PRESS NOTES

Press materials can be downloaded [HERE](#)

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Logline

While helping a woman search for her birth mother, a filmmaker is drawn into her own family history, uncovering a dark legacy that has loomed over its women.

Short synopsis

While helping a woman search for her birth mother, a filmmaker is drawn into her own family history, uncovering a dark cloud that has long hung over its women. Through filmmaking as both inquiry and a gesture of care, she explores whether self-authorship can rewrite inherited family narratives.



Synopsis

The hope of finding a mother is long gone for me. So what should I do with all this longing?

After Mihaela reaches out to filmmaker Rachel Taparjan to help her find her birth mother, they set off for Romania, returning to the orphanage where they were both adopted. What Mihaela uncovers in the search makes her question her entire identity. It also draws Rachel into her own journey through her family's past, unveiling a painful legacy that has loomed over its women, which they shared despite the separation.

However, reality comes with a sense of loss. When Rachel finally meets her family, it's unlike the imagined scenarios she once had. Seeking to linger in the world of possibility, and perhaps find some clarity or catharsis, she enlists actresses to sit in for her mother. In the intriguing exercise, multiple 'mothers' fill the empty chair across from her.

Using filmmaking as both inquiry and a gesture of care, Rachel traces absence, trauma, and the bonds of family. She asks: Can self-authorship rewrite familiar narratives?



Director's statement

My first steps were filmed on a local news station. The story was one full of promise, a Teesside couple return home with a 'Romanian orphan' (me!) less than a year after their own child died on a family holiday when she was just 14. The problem with unresolved grief is that it has a way of resurfacing. When I turned 14, the same parents who once chose me reached the point where they felt they could no longer take care of me. After years of managing to fly under the radar and 'do my own thing' AKA sofa surfing, skipping school, and partying, I was eventually put into emergency foster care.

The challenges involved with inhabiting the role of filmmaker and subject has presented a familiar but unique challenge. How can I be your reliable narrator in a documentary film, when I don't trust reality? How can I be open and authentic on camera when hiding and shape shifting has kept me alive? In other words, how can I achieve the impossible? On reflection I realise that I've often used filmmaking as a way to achieve something, to work something out, a way to learn something – to re-experience something familiar to me – but at a safe distance. This film feels like an extension of that, but this time I am not hiding behind the camera and the relationship between me as the storyteller and the story I am choosing to tell is explicit. As a filmmaker I want to usurp pre-existing narratives about my chosen subjects, be it sex work (*Mind the Gap*), poverty tourism (*Where Are You Coming From?*), or indeed – Romanian orphans (*Something Familiar*).

In making an explicitly personal film, I have experienced the alchemical potential of self-authorship in the face of a traumatic past – a way to reimagine adversity as adventure, a way to make something familiar feel brand new. A way of offering yourself a story you can bear to live with! In the words of George Bernard Shaw wrote: "If you cannot get rid of the family skeleton, you may as well make it dance." The ultimate triumph over trauma is play!



About the director

Rachel Taparjan

Dr Rachel Taparjan is a British Romanian filmmaker and academic. She lives in the north east of England and is a senior lecturer in social work at Teesside University. She has directed documentary short films selected for Sheffield DocFest, the East End Film Festival, and SEE Film Festival. She is a member of the Documentary Association of Europe (DAE).



Her debut feature documentary *Something Familiar* has received development funding from the British Film Institute, the Romanian National Film Fund, and Creative Europe MEDIA. She was selected for the CIRCLE Women Doc Accelerator programme 2022 and subsequently awarded the Cineuropa Marketing award. *Something Familiar* was also selected as one of the five finalists for Whickers 2024 and Presented at Cannes Docs 2025 as part of the CIRCLE Showcase of Docs-in-Progress where she won the Chicken & Egg Vision Award.

Something Familiar will celebrate its world premiere in the International Main Competition at CPH:DOX 2026.

Filmography

Something Familiar (2026) - documentary feature
Selected for the DOX:Award Competition at CPH:DOX

Where Are You Coming From? (2014) - short film
Sheffield DocFest Short Doc Jury Award

No Regrets (2013) - short film

Heal Our Women (2009) - short film
Selected for the East End Film Festival and SEE Film Festival

About the production company

Manifest Film (Romania)

Manifest Film is an award-winning production company based in Bucharest, Romania, run by experienced producer Monica Lăzurean-Gorgan. Producer Elena Martin of Manifest Film works alongside Lăzurean-Gorgan. The company focuses on producing daring and creative documentaries and fiction films that bring inspiring stories with strong social and personal impact to the screen. Manifest Film's productions have been awarded or selected at major international festivals such as Sundance, Berlinale, Toronto, IDFA, and CPH:DOX, among others.

The feature-length documentary *Acasă, My Home* (dir. Radu Ciorniciuc, 2020) premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, where it received the Special Jury Award for Cinematography, and went on to win over 40 international prizes. The film was also nominated for Best Documentary at the European Film Awards. The feature documentary *Tata* (dir. Lina Vdovii & Radu Ciorniciuc, 2024) was selected for the Toronto International Film Festival and awarded Best Documentary at the Trieste Film Festival and Verzió International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival. The archival documentary *Bright Future* (dir. Andra MacMasters, 2024) was selected for IDFA, DMZ FF, and many others. The feature documentary *Tooth and Nail* (dir. Mihai Dragolea & Radu Mocanu, 2025) premiered at the Krakow Film Festival, while *Imaginary Youth* (dir. Ruxandra Gubernat, 2024) debuted at One World Romania. *The Living Ones* (dir. Anca Hirțe, 2025) premiered at Astra Film Festival, and the powerful short film *Between the Edges of the Day* (dir. Andreea Lăcătuș, 2023) traveled festivals in 2024-25.

In 2018, *Timebox* (dir. Nora Agapi) was awarded Best Documentary at Ji.hlava IDFF and received a further seven international awards. In 2016, *A Mere Breath* (dir. Monica Lăzurean-Gorgan) won the Heart of Sarajevo for Best Documentary Film at Sarajevo FF, the Gopo Award for Best Romanian Documentary, and was later screened on MUBI and Amazon. In 2026, director Rachel Taparjan's (Close) *Something Familiar* was selected for the International Main Competition at CPH:DOX.

About the production company

My Accomplice (UK)

Founded by Jamie Clark, My Accomplice is a London-based production company known for its commitment to diverse voices and cultural credibility across a slate of documentary and scripted film and TV.

Under the creative leadership of Aleksandra Bilić, a BIFA and Grierson nominated producer, who joined in 2018, My Accomplice has produced award-winning documentaries and scripted films, including BIFA-nominated *Nascondino* (BFI Doc Society), EMMY and BAFTA-nominated *The Great Hack* (Netflix), *8 Bar: The Evolution of Grime* (BMG, BBC Film), and Thea Gajić's debut fiction film, *Surviving Earth* (BFI/FILM4), which premiered at SXSW and the Edinburgh International Film Festival in 2025.

The company is currently in production on BAFTA-winner Chez Oteka's *Gay Games* (BFI Doc Society, Together Films), Piers Dennis's *How Can I Help You* (Mercury Studios), and Rachel Taparjan's (Close) *Something Familiar* (CNC, BFI Doc Society). Their scripted development lineup includes Lottie Graham's debut feature *Jem* (BFI), Mathy Tremewan & Fran Broadhurst's *Estren Hi* (Screen Cornwall & BFI), Ajuán Isaac-George's *Duppy*, and Nathan Newman & Arnold T. Rice's *Andy & Orson*.



Credits

CREW

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Director | Rachel Taparjan |
| Director of Photography | Andrei Oană |
| Editors | Alice Powell |
| Sound Design | Nikola Medic |
| Music by | Quinta |
| Executive Music Producer | Hannah Peel |
| Production Company | Manifest Film (Romania) |
| Producers | Monica Lazurean-Gorgan Elena Martin |
| Co-producer | Aleksandra Bilic, My Accomplice (UK) Dermot O'Dempsey, Shudder Films (UK) |
| Executive Producers | Luke W. Moody Jamie Clark |

Supported by the BFI Doc Society Fund, Romanian Film Center, and Creative Europe MEDIA

Finalist for The Whickers' Film & TV Funding Award

Developed through the CIRCLE Women Doc Accelerator programme

Presented at Cannes Docs as part of the CIRCLE Showcase of Docs-in-Progress

Support provided by Chicken & Egg Films



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