

## Document Citation

Title	<b>Youth without youth</b>
Author(s)	Jay Weissberg
Source	<i>Variety</i>
Date	2007 Oct 29
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	49
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Youth without youth, Coppola, Francis Ford, 2007





Alexandra Maria Lara gives Tim Roth a second chance at love in "Youth Without Youth," director Francis Ford Coppola's first film in 10 years.

## ROME

# YOUTH WITHOUT YOUTH

(ROMANIA-FRANCE-ITALY)

A Sony Pictures Classics (in North America)/BIM Distribuzione (in Italy) release of an American Zoetrope presentation of an SRG Atelier (Romania)/Pricel (France)/BIM Distribuzione (Italy) production. (International sales: Pathe Pictures Intl., London.) Produced by Francis Ford Coppola. Executive producers, Anahid Nazarian, Fred Roos.

Directed, written by Francis Ford Coppola, based on the novella by Mircea Eliade. Camera (color/B&W, widescreen, HD-to-35mm), Mihai Malaimare Jr.; editor, Walter Mureh; music, Osvaldo Golijov; production designer, Calin Papura; art directors, Ruxandra Ionica, Mircea Onisoru; set decorator, Adi Popa; costume designer, Gloria Papura; sound, Mihai Bogos; sound designer, Pete Horner; associate producer, Masa Tsuyuki; assistant director, Anatol Reghintovschi; second unit director, Roman Coppola; casting, Florin Kevorkian. **Reviewed at Rome Film Festival (Premiere), Oct. 20, 2007. Running time: 124 MIN.**

Dominic Matei ..... Tim Roth  
Laura/Veronica/

Rupini ..... Alexandra Maria Lara  
Professor Stanculescu ..... Bruno Ganz  
Dr. Josef Rudolf ..... Andre M. Hennicke  
Woman in Room 6 ..... Alexandra Pirici

With: Marcel Iures, Adrian Pintea, Florin Piersic Jr., Matt Damon.

(English, German, Sanskrit, Italian dialogue)

## By JAY WEISSBERG

**N**ot just fans of Francis Ford Coppola will be disappointed by the mishmash plotting and stilted script of "Youth Without Youth," the master's first helming effort in 10 years. Overly talky tale spans the mid-20th century, following an elderly professor whose miraculous return to youth offers the chance to complete his magnum opus and rediscover lost love. Attempting to harness multiple genres, pic is brought down by ponderous dialogue (much of it dubbed) and an inability to connect with its characters. Limited bicoastal opening is set for Dec. 14, though "Youth Without Youth" will translate to cinemas without audiences.

Long stuck on completing his unrealized "Megalopolis" project, Coppola found Romanian philosopher/author Mircea Eliade's novella about the limitations of time a compensating balm for his own frustrations. Perhaps Eliade's investiga-

tions into Jungian theory and a nascent form of New Age spirituality also appealed, not to mention the excitement of getting back to the kind of artistic control only possible with low-budget filmmaking.

Decamping to Romania (with a small section shot in Bulgaria), Coppola used mostly young local talent and had the Balkan nations stand in for Switzerland, Malta and even India. Unfortunately, the results are as phony as the back projection and lack the kind of Eastern European magical realism that would have made it resonate.

On the eve of WWII, brilliant Professor Dominic Matei (Tim Roth) despairs at ever finishing his life's work, a study of the origin of languages. Still grieving for Laura (Alexandra Maria Lara), who broke off their engagement 40 years earlier, Dominic journeys from his home in northeastern Romania to Bucharest, where he's struck by lightning right before a suicide attempt.

Not only does he miraculously survive, but Dominic's whole body reverts from his 70-year-old state to the youthful, priapic self he was decades earlier. His doctor, kindly Professor Stanculescu (Bruno Ganz), is keen to study this remarkable transformation, but as word spreads, the Nazis come calling, in the guise of a voluptuous woman known simply as the "Woman in Room 6" (Alexandra Pirici). Stanculescu is suspicious; could it be that subtle swastika on the woman's garter belt?

Meanwhile, out of Dominic's fevered dreams comes another Dominic, a doppelganger representing his purely scientific side. Like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde if the two ever spoke directly, the "good" Dominic becomes enthralled by his crueler, colder other half, who views his regeneration as a means of accomplishing the Faustian goal of achieving all knowledge. Soon Dominic merely has to pass his hand over a closed book — to the cheesy accompaniment of unearthly light and electric sizzles — and the contents are transferred to his advanced brain.

But the Nazis are in pursuit, so he heads off to Switzerland, helped by a border guard who assures him, in just one of numerous stilted lines, "My cooperation with the Nazis is only symbolic." All this added intelligence turns Dominic into a Jason Bourne of sorts as he expertly forges new papers for himself (but wait, here's Bourne

himself, as an uncredited Matt Damon unsuccessfully offers the protection of the U.S. government).

Jump to 1955, and Dominic chances upon a dead ringer for his lost love, now named Veronica, cowering in a cave after a car crash and speaking only Sanskrit. Discovery forces Dominic to choose whether or not to seize the opportunity to complete his research, at the expense of Veronica's ability to lead a normal life.

By the time this stage is reached, the serial-worthy plot has moved through any number of genres without holding onto any of them. Perhaps Coppola's affinity for a character obsessed by unrealized projects was too close to allow him to see the piecemeal nature of his script, bogged down by endless chatter. Immortality and the ramifications of eternal life, on both ethical and emotional levels, have been dealt with much more effectively in works varying from "The Picture of Dorian Gray" (referenced toward the end) and Janacek's superb, emotionally resonant opera "The Makropoulos Case," a far more powerful analysis of the cruelty of time.

Presumably, Coppola chose to dub most of the film because the non-native English speakers needed help to make their lines clear, but the device, though generally well done, does nothing to help lackluster delivery in the minor roles. Roth certainly knows how to hold the screen, though surprisingly for such a fine actor, he resorts to lip-curling and similar tics to signal the difference between the two Dominics. Ganz has little to do, while the lovely Lara ("Downfall") struggles not to appear ridiculous as she spouts ancient tongues in scenes that could have come from old Universal "Mummy" flicks. Just like Virginia Christine, she deserves better.

Shot largely with a fixed camera, lensing by young Romanian d.p. Mihai Malaimare Jr. favors basic but not dull formats, with many scenes either bathed in a golden light or a moon-blue glow. While Balkan locations don't completely convince as Malta or India, that's a minor quibble, especially considering pic's overall deliberate, often attractive artificiality. Occasional sideways and upside-down shots, however, contribute nothing, while Osvaldo Golijov's overly sweet orchestrations give too much away too soon.

Print screened in Rome lacked closing credits.