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18TH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL OF ASIAN PACIFIC COUNTRIES IN VLADIVOSTOK



**PEOPLE DO NOT
LIVE BY BREAD**



ECHOES OF LOVE

The project "Echo of Meridian", which started this year, is a kind of greeting from the main Far Eastern film festival to the whole Primorye. It will take place in Arseniev, Bolshoy Kamen and Artem. "There will be mini-star carpets, a combination company show traditionally accompanying the "Pacific Meridian" festival, and there will also be one of the movies of the film festival, – says the head of the organizing committee of the film forum Yefim Zvenyatsky. "We have completely fallen into the Krai, and that is delightful."

And this program does not at all duplicate the Kinoturs, which started on October 5, where famous Russian film actors Yulia Kuvarzina, Oleg Kharitonov, Sergei Koshonin, Olga Khokhlova take part.



THE KING OF VLADIVOSTOK AND HOLLYWOOD

The jubilee – the 100th anniversary of the birth of the famous Hollywood actor Yul Brynner – has become one of the significant events of the cultural program of the film festival. Brynner readings in the Clio salon of the Arsenyev Museum, screening of films in the park near the ancestral home of the Briner family, and finally, the exhibition "Yul Brynner – a king and a vagabond from Vladivostok", which opened the contemporary art gallery "ARKA".

The exposition consisted of more than three dozen photographs and two unique exhibits – Yul's hat and a plate with a painting based on the movie THE KING AND I (the role of the King of Siam in this film in 1956 won Yul an Oscar for Best Actor) from a limited edition. All materials for the exhibition were taken from the funds of the museum. The Briner family made a huge

contribution to the development of the Primorsky Krai and the Russian Far East. That said, Vladivostok can be proud not only of the fact that in 1920 the baby was born here, many years later becoming the only Russian-born actor who received both Tony and Oscar. But also of the fact that in 1874 a new resident appeared in our city – a native of Switzerland, Julius Briner. A founder of the dynasty and grandfather of the future Hollywood celebrity.

The story of the Briner family, partially reflected in the photographs at the exhibition, is similar to the stories of dozens of other families, whose names are inscribed in golden letters in the history of Vladivostok and Primorye. These were unique people – adventurers in the best sense of the word.



DRAWING TOGETHER

A series of master classes dedicated to film professions was started by a Russian animation director Dmitry Geller. The track record of the apprentice of Fyodor Khitruk, Yuri Norshtein, Eduard Nazarov and Andrey Khrzhanovsky includes participation in major exhibitions, prizes at international festivals and cooperation with the largest studio "SHAR". A special place in Dmitry's professional life is occupied by his work at the Jilin Animation Institute, where he has been teaching since 2011. Namely this experience Geller talked about in his master class entitled "Chinese Seasons".

When the Chinese film school invited Dmitry to teach there, he replied that he was not a pedagogue. Instead, he proposed his own simple scheme for transferring experience: he creates cartoons, and the students watch and provide all possible help. Geller is sure that it is impossible to teach how to make a movie. Moreover, in animation, where experience means nothing – every film requires starting from scratch. "This is exactly what happens to me every time, and I am horrified to think that nothing will work out," he added. "Probably, that is why it does work out."

At the Chinese Animation Institute, this thesis was especially confirmed. Together with local students, Geller made several very different and original films, imbued with both national culture and the author's vision. Dmitry showed the resulting motion pictures to the audience at the master class, accompanying them with a story about their creation and even funny details. For example, the first film of the "Chinese seasons" was the work I SAW MICE BURYING A CAT, which in Chinese was called I SAW JERRY BURIED TOM. This is because a cat in Chinese is "mao". So the original title of the painting would have easily brought confusion and turned it into an anti-ideological manifesto.

Using the example of other paintings – A LITTLE POND BY THE GREAT WALL, dedicated to the great animator Te Wei, a free film adaptation of Paul Eluard's poem THE FISH, THE SWIMMERS, THE BOATS and a sketch from the life of artists TEN THOUSAND UGLY INK DOTS – Geller told how Chinese

students showed themselves. Their participation grew every time: whether they got down to painstakingly draw details – leaves and blades of grass sagging from drops, or they illustrated verses line by line, or they collectively chose references, from spots in a microscope to images of Chinese workers.

After Dmitry's story, it was impossible to avoid the conclusion: in the process of teaching, not only students learn from the teacher, but he also learns from them. So Geller learned a lot of nuances about Chinese culture, realized

that you do not have to hone the film to infinite perfection, but even on the contrary, adding some spectacular negligence to it and being able to "let go" in time is preferential. Also, I faced incredible reverence for the teacher. For example, I found out that former students can easily quit all their business and, at the first call, come to the mentor to help him work on a new film. The pedagogue himself should be a model of calmness and endurance. For example, Geller's expressive attempts to demonstrate how a mouse should paddle on water confused young animators and even baffled them.





DMITRY DAVYDOV

Director of SCARECROW

— When you were making SCARECROW, “without any false modesty” you promised the journalists that the film would become an event. What did you mean?

— Yakut journalists asked me if the film would become an event. Most probably, it will – at the territory of the Republic. Because it’s my new film. Maybe it will be an event in terms of festival promotion. It will have its own story there.

— Festivals are being cancelled and shifted. What is your plan?

— Valerya Motoryeva, a festival agent from Eastwood Agency, is working on that. Kinotavr was an opening festival, it’s very important for us. And then, winter-spring is our festival period.

— Foreign festivals or Russian ones?

— I can’t say yet but we are being considered for participation in many countries.

— It’s your third film. What experience did you have when you started it? What mistakes are you going to avoid now?

— Last year a private foundation for supporting the Yakut filmmaking was established. We have SINET, a group of IT companies, that established the foundation and ran a contest – pitching of projects – one of them was mine – and allocated a part of the required funds for production. The

rest came from my money. Our final budget was not big – 1.5 million rubles. We rented and brought equipment from St. Petersburg as there is a shortage in Yakutia: many films are being made. My team was the same as in my previous films. It’s a small group of about 9 people who know each other well.

— You posted some backstage materials on YouTube where we see that everything fit into a small minivan. Are the videos about the film a conscious part of film promotion?

— No, we sometimes record something just as a keepsake – more for ourselves. To watch it and remember in a few years. And sometimes our friends ask us what we are doing. So they can see the process. We don’t really expect to be distributed in Russia; most probably the film will be shown in the Republic only. Probably next fall. Promo offerings are mostly for genre films. I have never seen that anybody would do the same for independent films.

— Last year you made two feature films and one short film while working as a teacher. You were very busy!

— In September THERE IS NO GOD BUT ME was released; before there was a short film RIVER. In November we made SCARECROW. But RIVER was made in 2017; there were issues with funding. And this summer I made one more film. I will probably be fired from school soon but I keep making films while I have time.

— Your films are «18+»; maybe you have shown them to your pupils?

— I teach in elementary school. My pupils even don’t know that I make films. They are so far from all that. Some parents, my neighbors, know. I have been teaching in the school for 15 years.

— What subjects do you teach?

— Everything, except for PE, Art and Music. I am an elementary school teacher...

— To what extent does the filmmaking process resemble the school life? Do they have anything in common?

— Filmmaking requires organizational skills, but it involves working with adults, professionals; I don’t have a habit of giving orders. On the contrary, I more often ask for their advice. Some of them are much older than me having completed 18-20 projects.

— But most often you hire non-professional actors, don’t you?

— I like to work with amateurs. In SCARECROW there are no professional actors. They are my friends, my compatriots. The main character was played by Valentina Romanova. She is a famous singer, a real actress. It’s her first role in a film.

— Did you write the scrip having her in mind?

— Not really, I first wrote the script and then started looking for the person who could play it. I failed to find one among my compatriots. The role involved a lot of exposure. And at last I knew about this singer, listened to her songs – there are very interesting ethno motives there. I offered her the role and she agreed immediately.

— Probably later she regretted a lot; the role is very challenging.

— She didn’t tell me anything but probably thought some-

thing like that (*Laughs*). She had read the script; before shooting we talked a lot on the phone and I went to meet her in Yakutsk. And during the filming I gave the actors the opportunity to open their character. They are not professionals and cannot get into characters. That’s why they are their real selves on the screen. Valentina was happy with the result.

— They say that sometimes, when actors play mystic personalities, something mysterious happens to them. Has anything like that happened to your actors?

— Not really. But there is shamanism and there is traditional medicine. I tried to keep away from shamanism. It is not about talking to spirits. Medicine men use different cures; some of them use herbs; this woman uses her body. Valentina, as a musician, has an image of a shaman woman. No, there was no mysticism in the film. The theme is special but we were very careful not to hurt anybody’s feelings.

— How did you manage to shoot the whole film in 11 days?

— We worked 10 shifts. And one more day to get to this village from Yakutsk. That’s how it was. My previous films took me 14 shifts at the most. But sometimes I make 15 takes, all without any rehearsals – I don’t like them. All of my stories are chamber stories, filmed in the same location.

— And you work 18 hours a day?

— I do. We start at 8 a.m. and finish at 3 a.m. Something like that. It’s all about financing. For example, the equipment is rented for a limited period and the cameraman is scheduled to start a new project soon. Sometimes they start the next project right away.

— Have you ever considered working with foreign partners?

— I have. I have four scripts now and I will try to introduce them at film festivals when I go there with SCARECROW. And I can promote them at film pitching events. The challenge is to explain it to foreign partners why it is needed there, abroad. What is their interest? Besides, they usually require that we invest our money as well. I do invest, but my million or a million and a half is nothing for them though it is what I pay for the whole film.

— THERE IS NO GOD BUT ME brought 2.5 million rubles. Does it mean that you are a commercially-successful director?

— It’s true, the producers of that film returned their money – that was half of the profit. When SCARECROW is released I hope I will make some money.

— Your situation is unusual. You make Yakut films but you are not of a Yakut origin, you don’t even speak the language, only understand it. Do you have any syndrome of an outsider?

— Not really, I feel quite comfortable. I just make films and try to avoid any associations to have freedom to do everything my way. I am lucky; I have my team and everything works great.

— Your film starts as a private story about a healer woman but then turns into an apologue about the relationship between Man and God. People run from the healer when they don’t need her help; after they get help they turn away from her again. This metaphor is understandable in any country, it is quite universal...

— I originally wanted to focus on the idea of a white crow, of an outcast. I was interested in this idea, I wanted to make a

story about it. If people don’t understand something, they begin to fear it. That’s why they all push the main female protagonist away.

— Was there a living inspiration?

— There wasn’t. But I came up with this idea somewhere in 2009; it was about a woman healer who sacrifices herself. I tried to write a story, thought about that, then forgot and started making other films. But last year I finally made this film. I had realized that I had to do it.

— Yakutia is going through a real filmwave. What is the attitude of the Yakut people to the fact that another film is being made? It is ironic?

— Not at all. They usually try to offer help. I make films in my neighborhood where there are many people who know me. If I need to film somebody, I go and ask and they agree, as a rule. Many people want to act. When I make a new film many people even get upset when I didn’t ask them. People like when films are made where they live and later these films are shown where they live and they can see themselves on the screen.

— Why do you prefer wide shots? Is it the influence of Kariismaki and Virasetaku?

— I don’t know, I am not sure myself. I prepared documents for the screening certificate and postproduction scripts and I saw that I had very few far distance shots or wide shots, mostly general shots. It seems to me that when I make films I place my camera to see what I see. It’s more comfortable to me. That’s how it works. It is not intentional. I don’t make shooting sheets, I just go to the site and start filming. It all comes in the process.

— Are you giving credits to your cameraman?

— He hates it. He just takes the material and tries to do everything his own way. We understand each other very well and he knows what I want. He comes with ready-to-use ideas and all we have to do is discuss and make a decision.

— Has anybody suggested making a genre film?

— They have, and not only Yakut producers but Moscow ones as well. The terms were good. But I am not sure. I don’t think that I make real genre films. Films have to be viewer-oriented as they have to be distributed. It means that I have to find the borderline. And when we make a film we ask ourselves a question if it will be watched. Many films are being released; next year about 30 films are planned for release in Yakutia. So I have to stand out somehow.

— Usually when one makes a mystic film they run out of money right away – for sound and visual effects. Was the shortage substantial this time?

— My sound engineer has done a great job. Of course, had I had more money I would have had everything done in professional studios. But we have to work with what we have. And we do.

— Can you tell us anything about your next film that you have just made?

— It is a more viewer-oriented film, an almanac of seven short stories about relations between the people who live next door. They can be the family members or neighbors. The stories are different, funny or tragic. I filmed it together with a famous Yakut director Stepan Burnashev. We made it with no money, from scratch. I think we’ll be able to arrange the first run in winter.





PHILIPP YURIEV

Director of **THE WHALER BOY**

— **What were your thoughts on Grigory Dobrygin's SHEENAG67 that came out last year and is quite similar in some plot twists and details to your film?**

— I knew about it long before; Grigory and I have a common friend who told me that he had been mulling over a similar story. I was quite surprised by the coincidence. But, honestly speaking, this idea is quite obvious and up for grabs. It is easy to construct a concept around sex chats, there is nothing complicated about that. This topic has already been explored in many films, *IMPORT/EXPORT*, for one. Then I thought that it is impossible to make completely identical films, since each of us wanted to say something personal

with their work. People told me that a character in that film also learns English, just like in mine, and tried to talk to me into watching it, suggesting that if would be a disaster if my film had the same scenes. It seemed that only one film with this plot would be able to survive in the closed environment of Russian cinema. But my thought was that if I watched it, my story could become far-fetched, and I will deliberately start to avoid using some methods. That is why I have not watched it yet, only the trailer. I made my film the way I planned to, and I notice that people, who have seen both, do not tend to compare them; these works are completely different in terms of the message they deliver.



— **Are you planning to watch it someday?**

— Maybe. I have been retold scenes from there so many times that I am not sure I will. But I am still curious.

— **When you are not busy shooting your debut film, you make commercials. Are there any new formats in this field that could be used in filmmaking?**

— Commercials are very different from films. This understanding comes over time. In commercial videos an image is more important than an idea. The visuals are all that matters, and the content is not that important. Cinema exposes you completely, there is nothing but actions and their meaning, script and characters. Experiments with camera movement, shapes, color, setting, making the picture prettier – all this works in shooting a commercial. Cinema can do without those tricks, and they will not hold the audience for long because even a pretty picture is not able to capture your attention for more than two minutes if your interest is lost. Cinema should have an idea, a dialogue with the audience: if there is none, you have nothing to conceal it, and all those techniques I have learnt while making commercials, might not work.

— **Why have you chosen Chukotka as your location? Did you intend to distance yourself from your previous experience as far as possible?**

— I was aware that such a vibrant and cinematically challenging location is basically a film on its own already. This

decision was sort of my personal downshifting. It was pretty clear that none of my usual techniques were going to work in this setting. And this is really good; it provides you with a clean slate in terms of how to make a film. A perfect start to find your new voice. Nothing to fall back on. No previous experience (it was no use in that case), no tricks with camera, no actors and their professionalism since I had no actors. Everything was real there – settings, landscapes. Originally I thought that the film would be very scenic due to the nature, but it turned out quite a chamber one, even in terms of the camera work. And it is also a rather reserved work, where landscapes and setting are not in the forefront. The film has nothing but the film itself, its story. And it is this place that helped to make it happen.

— **As soon as it got around that you are shooting in Chukotka, everybody decided that we knew what to expect: workshop of Alexey Uchitel, Flaherty-like manner, romanticism... Right?**

— When we first got there, I thought that the film should be treated as a documentary. A character is immersed into the environment, and there is only camera in between them. But it turned out later that this back-to-basics approach would not work since it makes the story look artificial. Whereas the techniques of a fiction with their unusual angles, bizarre setting and set-ups were more than appropriate. The film already had a documentary part in it, we did not have to create it – the nature was real, people playing the characters lived

in similar conditions and portrayed pretty much themselves. There was no use in making the film more of a documentary than it already was, so many scenes did not even make it onto the screen. For instance, it took much time to shoot the whale hunting, there were about ten different scenes. But in the end all this raw documentary material was not used, apart from one tiny scene. The story itself did not want to be told in this documentary language. That was a lesson that I have learnt.

— **So you had a chance to show the whale hunting as a pretty National Geographic-styled picture, but you left your audience high and dry?**

— Yes, and we also had a scene with walrus hunting, but I edited it out. Honestly, all documentary-like scenes moved the main storyline to a dialogue, to a discussion about the way people live in this place. But the film itself is about a certain boy, about adolescence, first love, dreams, even home. Our film is devoid of an ethnographic component. Shooting in Chukotka, I met a person who came there to write a book about the Russian North traditions. And there is still a picture in my head: boys riding motorcycles, someone is smoking, someone is drunk, kids dragging a rusty bucket, a man stirring something in a pit. And amid all this there is a smart-looking alien who exclaims, "Where are the things I am looking for?" But having seen that I realized I did not want to be an alien like this. I do not want to go through dusty brochures to find something that this place

does not really have. You cannot see any special cultural heritage or unique traditions there anymore. I was more interested in the now.

— **Sergei Ursuliak said something similar about working in AND QUIET FLOWS THE DON. You go to a place “with history”, but it is already full of chain stores. Have they come to Chukotka too?**

— No, they have not. These symbols of modern world have not yet appeared in Chukotka. Especially in those places where we were filming. One of the highlights in our story was that wireless connection became available. Recently they have got mobile connection too. But usually things, like mobile phones, motorcycles, food, come from Vladivostok on a barge. What else do they do? They listen to the Russian rap music, just like any other boys. Unfortunately, Internet is not that fast, so one music track takes a couple hours. It

at night, knocking on the windows, you take a kid back to his house where his mother is drunk and out like a light. These people are slaves to the alcohol. They were not brought to heel in the times of Catherine the Great, punitive squads of Cossacks were completely defeated by the locals, who were the only ones not paying the taxes. Unlike dumb characters of famous Soviet jokes, Chukchi are very powerful and strong people. They are almost like Vikings who always invaded the neighbouring territories. It was the Soviet Union that broke them when they were deprived of their national trades, united into kolkhozes, herded into clubs, fed, had their children taken away to schools. That was when their identity, their spirit was broken. Natives were prohibited to hunt the whales, fleet and Soviet-Norway enterprises appeared. So locals started to forget this trade, even though it used to be not just an activity, but a way of life. It took three generations to forget who they were, what they believed in,

— **The opinion is not unanimous, is it?**

— It is not, but people remember and respect him. This man came with no promises or speeches, but for the first time in their lives they saw that something was being done for them. It was very unexpected, like a deed of a good wizard. And he disappeared just as unexpectedly. But there were houses, schools, kindergartens, hospitals left. Hunters received boats, other people got motorcycles, everybody had something from him. And they still use those things, take care of them. Chukotka was a “land of possibilities” when Abramovich was in charge. It was hustling and bustling, some weird businessmen appeared with their projects and ideas. Another funny thing is that there is a whole generation born from Turkish construction workers. That time several thousands of Turks came to Chukotka, they lived there and did some construction works, so the result was basically a creation of a new population. These kids are very cute-looking, a mix of Turkish and Chukchi blood, now they are about seven or eight years old.



is funny that they listen to songs about driving a Bentley or partying in a club without having ever seen expensive cars and all this glamorous life from songs. The major entertainment is to ride a motorcycle up to the hot springs and take a swim there (there is a scene about it in the film). But not many people want to leave, they stay in their own universe of sorts. Chukotka is a very remote region that still exists on its own terms. Just like in many remote areas in Russia, nature is beautiful, but life is hard. All this creates a strong emotional background for the whole place, and we chose not to emphasize it in the film.

— **Is there alcoholism?**

— Yeah, everywhere, along with a poor standard of living, shabby houses and furnishings. Sometimes children wander

what language they spoke. Chukchi language, that you can hear in the film, is spoken by dozens, in other words, almost by no one.

— **Were there any premises for a cultural renaissance?**

— There was a short renaissance when Roman Abramovich was a governor. But now the language is used quite provisionally, for appearances sake. Maybe they still use it somewhere, in schools, in Anadyr (it is a small town people founded there). But usually, even in villages, nobody remembers Chukchi language.

— **Did Mr. Abramovich watch the film?**

— Not sure, I think he was given a copy. But in my time there I heard a lot about him from people.

— **Sounds like an idea for a new film. The Russian title of the film [KITOBOY] puts more emphasis on the boy, not the whales...**

— Choosing a title was a bit challenging for us. The original one was THE WHALER, and everybody liked it – it was short, eye-catching and memorable. The box-office title was THE WHALE HUNTER, and it was also very well-received. But I had a feeling that this movie should be titled differently, because the film is about a character, not the whales or ethnography. So my compromise was the title of THE WHALER BOY, meaning a boy who is a whaler, and for the Russian audience this title was transliterated in Latin alphabet. The title is also a reference to chat rooms where everyone uses aliases. It looks similar, doesn't it?



MARIA IGNATENKO

Director of IN DEEP SLEEP

— **You have mentioned that your film was shown in Berlin a few times and each time the reaction of the viewers was different, so the reaction of Russian viewers is even more difficult to predict. In your opinion, to what extent is the cinema language universal and does it have any national coloring?**

— I think the cinema language is connected with the reality it describes. It can also be defined by the choice of the theme and location. Russian reality is unique; it has been described not once in books and less often in films. So I do think that the Russian cinema should have a specific language, although not many directors develop it. It was important to me

not to make the film universal. I wanted it to be obvious: it was made in Russia.

— **Let's talk a little bit about the story. Your producer Katerina Mikhailova says that it's almost a real story that happened in a Kazakh village where everybody fell asleep.**

— (*Smiles.*) When I started writing a script I knew nothing about this Kazakh village. But Katya, being an experienced producer, found a connection between my idea and the real events that are happening in the world. I was shocked when I knew about this village where everybody fell asleep. But in my film the sleep is a metaphor.

I like when the girl turns into a chair as she feels like a chair in the world of her relatives and friends. And I also like when the flood destroys the city, the main hero looks for the woman he loves and understands that she has drowned. But at some point we can't understand whether this disaster is happening outside or inside the hero. I like these metaphors that erase the borders between external and internal worlds.

That's why everything started from the idea: what if the whole city was asleep? If a man was asleep in a red chair, if a strip dancer was asleep while hugging her pole, what if the cars had stopped and the passengers were asleep? I started telling my friends about my idea and learnt about the film by Rene Clair PARIS WHICH SLEEPS, about the film LOVE SONGS where there is this motive. And I heard about

will leave the hall with a full understanding of the events but with no feelings.

— **Why did you decide to make a full feature film out of it? You film lasts a little over an hour. And the story develops pretty slowly. It is probably the question about the relevance of pacing in you film.**

— You know it takes time to get immersed into the human internal world and see it in detail. Such trip is impossible in a short feature film. In our film this slow pace probably disrupts the habitual pace of film-watching but make this immersion deeper.

— **You have verses in the film. Can you tell us how you chose them? And don't you think they add some unnecessary emotions to the film?**

— I thought about that when I was compiling the film. For example, when I listen to this song with lyrics by Lorca I realize its sentimentality but I don't want to give it up – it is a part of my world.

In general, verses and songs for me are a tool that is much more understandable than speech, than dialogues or monologues. That's why the proportion of verses in the film is higher than the proportion of dialogues.

All verses in the film have their backgrounds. For example, let's take the first one that a sailor recites on the black background. On the 19th hour of his shift on the ship he left his

— **You are saying that verses and music are more important than dialogues. You have a short film YUKHA where the character played by Galina Lebedinets sang a song with lyrics by Tatyana Snezhina "Take me along".**

— I do see the connection between the character of Galya Lebedinets from YUKHA and Lyudmila Duplyakina from IN DEEP LEEP: they are both in a very artificial environment of a karaoke-club, they are both dressed off-key but their faces are absolutely helpless. And they sing their songs from the inside, despite this falseness of their surroundings and clothes, they convey themselves through their masks. You see I used the same method in IN DEEP SLEEP; though Lyudmila Duplyakina sings better in real life than in the film, she has a very strong, trained voice. The people who can sing usually feel very relaxed while performing. And when people use throaty singing they get tense and their discomfort adds a proper emotional condition.

— **Snezhina has one line in her song: "Night goes down on a sleeping city". What does the motive of sleep mean to you?**

— As Heraclitus once said about the sleep: "The waking has one common world, but the sleeping turn aside each into a world of his own". I understand that. The theme of dreams seems very ordinary on the one hand, but on the other hand, every night we can face this sacred feeling, look at the sleeping relative or just immerse into an unusual world, hide

understandable for me. Though there is no much difference for me: there are actors who are extremely artistic and there are actors who play out of tune.

I have some instruments of working with them. For example, I try never to build a set-up together with the person who is involved in the filming process. I invent all moves with the stunt workers; when the actor comes it is already obvious what he or she has to do. When you and your actor try to figure out where and how to get a pack of cigarettes it takes a lot of energy. I also try to avoid praising the actor after a take. Actors simply lose concentration after hearing the words "It was cool". And though I often give up and praise them, I later regret doing that. This support is absolutely improper. I also never ask the actor to do anything that I cannot show myself. If I can show how I can burst into tears, I don't see the reason why other people cannot do it.

— **Why was the main role played by Vadik Korolev but not by Dmitry Kubasov?**

— (*Laughs.*) An excellent question. There are very few people in Russia with whom I want to work. That's why the same group of actors works in my films. The reason for that is that there are few people who possess existence. And there are even fewer people who are disciplined and interested in the filming process. That's why when you start working on a new film, there is a feeling that there are only a few people whom

— **How do you evaluate the influence of this Moscow School on you?**

— I finished the school that had a distinctive paradigm and vision. It is obvious in my works.

— **Can you tell us in more detail about this paradigm of the Moscow School of New Cinema?**

— First, we study the narrative and how to work with it. In this context, for example the film CALENDAR by Igor Poplaukhin (the winner of the contest of student films in the Cannes Film Festival, first prize at Kinotavr. Shorts in 2018) is one of the most successful examples of how the graduates of our school work with the narrative. Second, we look for visual, plastic tools that can convey the content, the state of the world and the hero in their paradoxical and mythological nature. And the search itself, the changeability and the attempts to capture and describe the world – are very typical features of our school.

— **To what degree could you call these postulates a manifest? Are you for or against something?**

— I would call it a vision.

— **Does this vision change in the time? In the film by Mamuliya ANOTHER SKY there was a feeling of a documentary film; but now, there is a feeling of magic realism in you film.**

So the shift was logical. I started writing scripts and started talking about them with neophyte directors and realizing that what they were telling me was not close to me. And I realized that I had some ideas that I wanted to realize myself.

— **Are you going to make films more often than Dmitry Mamuliya?**

— The point is not in the quantity.

— **Do you keep filming now?**

— I am making the second film and I was supposed to do some reshoots in July but it was shifted to October for a very strange reason: the sailor who played in IN DEEP SLEEP and will play in a new film is away in the sea.

— **Did he fail you?**

— He did: we were supposed to start filming the following day, 60 people were ready and then we were told that the borders were opened and he departed.

— **Did he have to do it or he just preferred the sea voyage to the filming?**

— Our actor is a boatswain and he had to be there to make it possible for the vessel to leave.

— **Wasn't it possible to find a substitute?**



the Kazakh village. And I realized how wonderful it was: this motive exists both in reality, in poetry, in culture. There is a context and I am becoming part of it.

And only then there was a plot that is not high-priority here as you have noticed.

— **So first you created the form and only then the plot, right?**

— Right. The form was born and then I tried, as clearly as I could afford, to build this form into the plot. The point is that when I think how to tell a story, I concentrate on doing it in a plastic and visual way. As Carlos Reygadas once said, "If I want to hear a story I call my Granny". So I write the script trying not to turn it into a radio performance. I begin to think about visual equivalents of a story and how to make dialogues descriptive, how to create a condition and describe the world. That is how to turn the story into one of the film's organs and not into its crutches.

I clearly understand that the plot of IN DEEP SLEEP is not that obvious. Even in Berlin people kept asking me at Q&A: what happened? Whom did he kill? What is the trial? Why did he kill? A skill of casting a right shadow onto the story is what a director never stops learning in the course of their creative lives; probably there is more darkness in my film that I may want. But it is better for me to create a solidly narrated story that could be just heard with eyes closed in a movie theatre than the story after which the spectators

cabin and recited those verses. During the whole filming process I remembered this moment and those lines. The most wonderful thing is that we even made a video of this moment but only the sound remained. And it was for the better: everything would be different if I had seen his face (he wasn't sober). But I heard the sound only and was so impressed by the depth of his speech, by that intonation that I understood: that has to be the beginning of the film and give it sincere and, at the same time, sentimental intonation.

The second verse was read by Dima Kubasov in the cabin. In a small cabin filled with smoke there were men, deep in their thoughts, who were listening to a text. We filmed this episode and I didn't know which text would have such a strong impression. I wrote several letters for this episode. First, they were lyrical letters written to the sailor by his wife and his letters to her. The sailors were laughing when they were reading those letters. Then I tried erotic letters, even a pornographic letter in the style of Odysseus's letters to his wife – and they laughed again.

I was really upset – so much effort to write letters in the necessary intonation. Then Dima sang songs – they worked better but not ideal. But when he started reading a verse by Georgy Ivanov, the sailors went silent, stopped laughing and started listening. It was a really deep moment. Dima chose the verse himself and I relied later on this verse while cutting the film and shooting other episodes. Those are wonderful moments on the set, when people become part of the atmosphere and begin to create and say the text. So everybody turns into co-authors.

there from the everyday routine. In reality, it is our everyday encounter with the transcendental. I can't say that I am interested in dreams and research this topic from the Freud's point of view; I am just fascinated that there is the territory that we don't control and can barely remember when we wake up.

— **What were the most insane interpretations of your film that you heard after your film was shown in Berlin?**

— There were no insane interpretations at all. My teacher, Valery Alexandrovitch Podoroga, who passed away in August, had seen a part of the film and said that he liked the elements that I described. And he added that he would like to watch the film where there is nothing happening but raging waves. He remembered Moby-Dick – I thought that it was an interesting impression.

— **It turns out that when the viewer is watching your film they turn aside into their world like in a dream. Did the sailors who played in your film ask you to explain it to them what the film was about?**

— I honestly told them everything like I am doing it to you. I didn't look for any special words – they were all surprised.

— **Do you have your own rules of working with non-professional actors?**

— I almost always work with non-actors, it's easier and more

you can shoot. Kubasov is undoubtedly the person number 1: he has a magnetic effect on me. However, in this film it was important for me to find a new face that will first disappoint me but fascinate later. I have been watching Vadik Korolev for a long time, I have been to his concerts. (OQJAV band). When we met and started talking about the film I felt that he had a proper excitement and mood, and I realized that his inexperience and personality which are still incomprehensible to me would work in this film.

— **Galina Ignatenko is...**

— ...my mother.

— **Did you film her in an episode?**

I did. There were quite a few of my relatives and friends in my film – it was easier to arrange it as the filming process was quite chaotic and spontaneous.

My mother has a very regular face and good acting skills. That's why I chose her. And then Galina Ignatenko played in a short film of Anya Sobichevskaya THE ESCAPING AUGUST – and the film was great.

— **What was the mentoring of Dmitry Mamuliya, the artistic director of the Moscow School of New Cinema?**

— We called each other and talked. Dima read the script and watched the drafts of film cutting. His opinion really mattered in the process of working on the film.

— In the course of seven years the school has gone through different stages and the becoming is still in process. But these changes seem to be connected with the changing times and not the changing school.

— **You were a student of the Faculty of Journalism in the Moscow State University. Did you have a chance to work as a journalist?**

— I wrote reviews to the Literaturnaya Gazeta, then I worked in the Center of Political Studies within the Academy of Science: I adjusted the scientific texts for the website by making them more publicist.

— **And how did you switch to making films?**

— I graduated from the department of literary and art criticism; that's why culture and text have been part of my world from the very beginning. My teacher and research supervisor Oleg Lekmanov was also always interested in filmmaking; we talked a lot about it. I wrote texts and even scripts and was thinking of entering the Russian State University of Cinematography to the Faculty of Script Writing but I didn't understand why I needed that. I already lived in the environment connected with culture and literature. I also worked in the 24-hour bookstore Pir.O.G.I at Nikolskaya Station, in Bilingva where, as you remember, very interesting people got together: people came there at 1 a.m. to finish their vodka and talk about poetry.

— We were given a list of documents that a boatswain was supposed to have and we realized that it was impossible to find a replacement person in YouDu.

— **What was the film about? If it can be retold.**

— The working title is FIRE. Every time when I talk about it I can't explain what it is about. I read the book "Our people" by Ruta Vanagaite and came across one line about the archive data: a Lithuanian collaborationist soldier shot himself in the mouth and died. The archives describe this case as an accidental gunshot. And I was shocked to understand that we would never know what it was in reality – suicide or an accidental shooting while cleaning the weapon. Probably his conscience made him commit this act. But the history covered it all with so many layers of soil that the act of his all life (or an accident) has remained an ephemeral event for us. Or even not an event. In the film I am focused on the question how the distance between the event and the present time will destroy the content of the very event.

— **Will there be the motives of sleeping there?**

— There will be. There will be sleeping motives and another layer of reality.

— **And what about karaoke?**

— There won't be karaoke but there will be a song there.



PAVEL LUNGIN

Director of ESAU

The second opening film of the Festival was the movie **ESAU** by Pavel Lungin. The famous director personally introduced it to the audience and admitted that working on this motion picture became special for him in many ways. Many things were new for him.



— **“You conceived it, you practically endured it in agony, and then it begins to live its own life.” – that is what you said about your films. Is Esau already living its own life?**

— I am really looking forward to the audience's reaction, especially since this is the first movie that I have made in English and filmed in Israel with the participation of leading Israeli actors and the great Harvey Keitel. This is a new experience for me, I am very excited.

— **Why did you make the movie in Israel?**

— Because this is a story about Israel, including about emigrants from Russia. It is a saga that stretches back in time from the beginning of the twentieth century. And since the author of the saga Meir Shalev, wrote it in Israel and about Israel, I decided that I would make a film where the story was born and conceived. I like this writer and his work.

— **ESAU is not even a novel, but a saga. Was it difficult to fit it into the frameworks of movies?**

— Very difficult. And, unfortunately, a lot had to be removed – not only at the stage of script writing, but also later, during editing. A whole layer of phantasmagorias that are in the novel was not involved in the movie.

I shot a huge amount of material that didn't make it to the final edit. Honestly, I could do four episodes, rather than a two-hour motion-picture. Or more specifically, I made a four-part version, and it will hopefully be shown on some online platform. We also offer producers in the West particularly a mini-series – a family story that takes place at three periods, covers almost a century, the story of three generations. By the way, one of the American companies took ESAU for distribution.

— **Your characters in your film do not give the impression of being happy people.**

— This is how the novel was written, this is a story of a difficult family relationship, about two twin brothers who cannot share this life. It turns out that one steals from the other both love and family business. This is a story that there are situations in life that you cannot change and fix. And when the hero returns to his homeland after 30 years of absence, there is not much he can do to change it. Yes, my characters are not the happiest people. But cinema often examines life in not its best, trying to understand the problems, to find out where the mistakes were. It seems to me that the state of unhappiness is characteristic of our time. Everyone visits psychologists, drinks antidepressants, complains of energy deficiency. This is shown, for in, in the films by Andrey Zvyagintsev and Kantemir Balagov. They are not filled with happy people either. Cinema is interested in situations of separation, difficulties, those in which a person manifests itself from a strong and extreme side. And filmmakers believe that if some of the viewers feel the character's pain on themselves, share it, then perhaps they will personally feel a little easier, their life will get better.

— **Would you agree that the bread in your picture is another full-fledged hero?**

Yes, the symbol of eternal life, eternal rebirth, renewal. Do you know – “give us this day our daily bread”? Remember where it came from? This bread is a symbol of hope that no matter how bad it is, there is always a continuation of life ahead. The beautiful breads that ripen in the oven in the movie, aren't they lovely?

At the same time, bread is both a labour of love and a curse: sleepless nights, when you need to bake in order to carry hot rolls for sale early in the morning, and the heat in your face, and exhausting working with dough. Just try kneading a huge vat of dough, you will understand.

But with that, bread is also a miracle, the most real, when from a small amount of water, yeast, flour suddenly appears so much. The wonder of abundance.

And no matter how difficult it is for the characters of the film, no matter how they live, they are again and again at the oven, again the bread is ready, it is crispy and beautiful. Life is again.

— **Has this oven already existed or did you build intentionally?**

— Intentionally.

— **Your labour of love is cinema. Do you often feel the pain of creativity?**

— There are different films, there are those that literally flutter out, easily, like birds. Just like TAXI BLUES, for

example, or THE WEDDING. THE ISLAND, oddly enough, turned out to be a film that seemed to have formed on its own. And then there are tapes that are severe, excruciating, which make you take up the task over and over again. But I adore the shooting process, those moments when you, together with the actor, grope for the truth that should be in the frame. When you manage to translate what is written on paper into three-dimensional space. In a word, I love all this so much that difficulties do not frighten me. Neither do pains. It is like baking bread, really. Such a joy when the film is being edited. This is comparable to the joy of a parent when he looks at his child. What does the child bring to the parents more – joy or worries? It doesn't matter, the one is loved anyway.

— **You have already become a regular guest of the Pacific Meridian and have repeatedly confessed your love for Vladivostok.**

— I really love this city. And I would gladly make a film here – if there is a suitable project, if I understand that I can give Vladivostok something with my film. You have such a rich history, so many plots, especially in the 20s of the last century. We need to find something catchy. I'll think about it.

— **Would you include Efim Zvenyatsky in picture?**

— Of course, he would look great in my shot, because he is a wonderful actor.





THE VOICE OF REASON

A regular guest of the Pacific Meridian film festival is Aleksey Ryazantsev, general director of the KARO Premier film company, producer, screenwriter and – don't be surprised – dubbing actor. Professor Severus Snape, Aragorn and many other charismatic blockbuster characters spoke in his voice. This year in Vladivostok, Aleksey presents the film *Love with No Limits*, which is to be widely released just in October. He also conducts a master class on the art of dubbing.

– With whom, if not you, to talk about the situation that has developed as a result of the pandemic in the film industry, film business. Will the pandemic change the cinema production as such? Will “post-pandemic” cinema become even more spectacular in order to attract the viewer, or will it reverse its direction to meaningfulness, comprehension of what happened?

– I do not think we watched meaningless movies before the pandemic. Each epoch dictates its own themes, and cinema responds to them. And even more so, I do not think that it is necessary to somehow specifically cover the problems of a pandemic, quarantine and so on in cinematography. As for the current crisis, over the long history of cinema, it has gone through so many difficult periods, and much more difficult and terrible than the one we are living through today. So, it is definitely not worth worrying so much. By the way, each of these periods was later reflected in films. But it did not become the main theme, replacing and substituting other classical genres – comedy, thriller, and so on. It is clear that during the quarantine period there was just a giant surge in the popularity of watching movies online and all streaming resources got rich in the number of new subscribers. And although there was a lot of talk about the fact that as soon as the cinemas open, people will return to them immediately, giving up online viewing, this did not happen. Perhaps because there is still no avowed vaccine and people are not sure that going to the cinema will be completely safe for them and, most importantly, for their children. Yes, over the past 10 years, it is the family cinema attendance that has grown. A family trip to the cinema became one of the main drivers of box office receipts. It was family trips to the cinema that helped many Russian films – T-34, for example, GOING VERTICAL and so on – to gain an audience and collect a larger than expected box office. Today we see that family screenings are virtually absent, and many are afraid to take a child with them to the cinema. And it is important to bring back this particular audience... But I think that no matter what efforts we make, the family will not go to the cinema until its adult members are sure that it is completely safe. How to make it like this is the question. I sincerely believe and know that today going to the cinema, to the theater is safer than traveling by public transport or having dinner at a restaurant. And for me it is absolutely incomprehensible why such a stereotype is formed among the population, such a prejudice that it is risky to attend a cinema, theater, concert. Thank God, cinemas are not closing massively yet, but I know examples when in some cities they are closed on Saturday and Sunday, for example. This is terrible nonsense.

– How long will the film industry get out of the situation in which the pandemic has plunged it?

– The pandemic affected not only the cinema. This affected all entertainment institutions – theaters, concert halls, sports facilities. I am sure that the situation will not be stable until the moment when the coronavirus becomes an ordinary seasonal infection, that one can get vaccinated against. On the other hand, mankind is accompanied by a mass of mortal diseases against which one does not and cannot have a vaccine. But this does not mean that everyone will go home and stop going to the cinema. The film industry in our country has gone through a lot. Suffice it to recall the times of the collapse of the USSR, when it became clear that the state did not need cinema and cinemas. Remember how everything was closed, how furniture in cinemas was sold? But we overcame this too, over time everything stabilized: today cinemas are 99% private initiative, entrepreneurial activity. Private business has revived an entire industry. And the state does not take part in the life and development of cinemas, but takes part in their closure, and this is a paradox. After all, cinema is not just a spectacle, it is a huge industry that employs many people. There are cities in which the cinema is practically a city-forming enterprise, and if it closes, there is no leisure at all. How is it possible to ignore such an obvious thing? Yes, the way of consuming of a film product will change, online platforms will not disappear. Large film studios, both American and Russian, will have a new strategy, when some mega-large projects will be shown in cinemas, and smaller ones will go online. And if cinema technologies in modern cinemas do not find a new, more interesting way, then a certain audience loss will occur. After all, today at home you can see three-dimensional cinema and set up a home theater, so film distributors and filmmakers need to think about changing the format that will bring people back to cinemas. And this story has nothing to do with either the pandemic or the quarantine. If we are able to offer people some new and interesting format for watching films, then it will work out.

– Will the new rules for Oscar nominations affect common interest in Hollywood cinema? We are laughing at the black knights of the Round Table and everything. Will the new rules discourage you from watching films made under mandatory conditions?

– It seems to me that the Oscar committee simply consolidated and strengthened the rules that have existed for a long time. Much to the delight of all sorts of minorities.

But all this took place earlier, and we saw all of this. This is not a revolution, but evolution. Besides, this rule is not obligatory for everyone, only for those who want to be nominated for an Oscar. Even in the United States there are excellent masters of cinema who have been always filming movies without any conditions there, just knowing that they will not receive an Oscar. But they will receive love and respect from the audience. That will make happy the studio where the film was filmed with a huge box office. The Oscar seems to be a fetish rather than a pinnacle.

– Let's talk about your hobby – dubbing. You have a wonderful baritone, but Severus Snape spoke in a completely different voice in the film. Do you adjust the timbre of your voice for a specific character?

– The main person in dubbing is the director. He roughly knows what timbres the characters have and how they should speak. And yes, the dubbing actors follow the character. It is worth noting that in Russia many films are shown without dubbing, in the original language, with subtitles, and many viewers prefer this kind of cinema, because they want to hear the real voice of their favorite actor, practice their language, and so on. However, most of the audience still prefers dubbing, and the main thing here is not to spoil either a character, or all the more so a film.

For me dubbing is really a hobby, I don't get paid for it. And I would not take away the bread from many excellent dubbing actors who make money. Therefore, I take on a task only when I understand that I can do it efficiently, without puffing myself out, but giving priority to an actor and their character first.

In general, a lot of funny things are connected with dubbing. The actor, whose voice sounds off-screen, does not have to visually resemble the artist he is voicing, and even more so the character. I remember how we, the dubbing actors, were invited to the stage at the premiere of one of the parts of THE LORD OF THE RING. And a young fangirl of Viggo Mortensen, who played Aragorn, was, as she later wrote in social networks, terribly disappointed to see on stage an elderly man with glasses. She could not believe that such a beautiful voice belonged to someone so different from Viggo Mortensen.

That is why the dubbing actors, to the point, are not really advertised. It is right. Why disappoint the viewer? We stay off-screen.



Love With No Limits



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