

Vladimir Perisic's 'Ordinary People' looks at the dehumanizing impact of war

By John Petkovic, The Plain Dealer

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"Ivan, where are we?" Dzoni asks his comrade.

"I don't know," says Ivan.

There's very little Ivan and Dzoni do know about in "Ordinary People" -- their location, mission or place in life.

We're in the same boat.

Vladimir Perisic's minimalist portrait of the former Yugoslav war doesn't even identify what side the young recruits are fighting on -- and the biographical data are as sparse as the dialogue. (In the film's most interesting scene, it's a radio announcer doing most of the talking, as soldiers stare blankly.)

We do know that Dzoni -- as in, "Johnny," an ethnically neutral name that belongs to none of the warring parties -- enlisted when he couldn't find work. That he was asked to stay on and said, "Why not?" That his feelings of reluctance and trepidation morph into a numb acceptance of killing.

We also know that this existentialist portrait of "ordinary people" feels like a page out of Albert Camus.

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REVIEW

Ordinary People

What: A stark look at the dehumanizing impact of war. (2009/Serbia) 79 minutes. In Serbian, with English sub titles.

When: 9:20 p.m. Tuesday and 2:10 p.m. Thursday.

Grade: B

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