

Review | Ordinary People (unrated) ***

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Ordinary People

In an unnamed country, soldiers -- including the young and inexperienced Dzoni (Relja Popovic) -- are roused from their barracks and informed that terrorist attacks are on the rise, a national state of emergency has been declared, and special forces have been deployed. The soldiers are driven by bus to a remote, deserted outpost where they sit around, smoking and engaging in small talk, and wait for orders.

When those orders finally arrive, they are horrifying. "We're taking care of the enemy," their stern captain (Boris Isakovic) growls. "I can't," Dzoni pleads. But he will.

By purposely omitting the locale of his story, Serbian writer-director Vladimir Perisic rids *Ordinary People* of political slants and focuses instead on how the brutal acts war requires inevitably rob men of their humanity.

Set over the course of a day and using the same long takes and lingering pace of Gus Van Sant films such as *Elephant*, the movie tracks Dzoni's loss of innocence as he is ordered to shoot unarmed prisoners of all ages who look suspiciously like normal citizens who may have just been in the wrong place at the wrong time. He shoots them in the back.

At first, Dzoni can't even bear to keep his eyes open when he pulls the trigger. But as the day stretches on, and load after load of suspects are brought to the death camp, the baby-faced soldier becomes exceedingly good at his job. After one round of executions, the camera stays trained on Dzoni's face as he tries to process what has just transpired.

He looks just as he did before, except he's completely different. The unadorned simplicity and calm mood of *Ordinary People* boils war down to its most harrowing and corrosive essence: The taking of human life.

Cast: Relja Popovic, Miroslav Stevanovic, Boris Isakovic.

Writer-director: Vladimir Perisic.

Producer: Anthony Doncque, Milena Poylo, Gilles Sacuto.

Running time: 80 minutes. In Serbian with English subtitles. Brief violence, adult themes.
Plays at 5:45 p.m. Saturday and 6:45 p.m. Monday at Regal South Beach.

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