

SFIFF: 'Ordinary People'

Mick LaSalle

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*France, 80 minutes*

9 p.m. April 30 and 7:15 p.m. May 5 at the Kabuki, and 8:55 p.m., May 3 at the PFA

This film - technically French, but spoken in Serbian - does not exactly make for a jolly evening at the movies, though it is one of the best presentations of how human atrocities come about from the standpoint of the foot soldier involved in the commission of them. The film tells the story of a new recruit who arrives at a rural location with several other men. A busload of prisoners pulls up, and the soldiers are informed that they are to line these men up against the wall and kill them. The recruit doesn't like the idea of it, but he reluctantly goes along with it, feeling that he has no choice. And then more and more busloads keep piling up. There's no drama to this. There's no soundtrack commenting on the action. It's just another day on the job, but, of course, it's not. The recruit is becoming gradually coarsened, then hardened. He will never be the same; neither will the other men, and, needless to say, neither will their victims. Directed by Vladimir Perisic, the film takes as its inspiration the history of ethnic cleansing in the region of the former Yugoslavia. But the scenes depicted here might apply to any number of wars.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/04/18/PKLN1CR4T4.DTL>

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