

Ordinary People

Directed by Vladimir Perisic
Serbian, with subtitles in English
Serbia, 2009, 79 minutes

STORY

Logline:

One quiet afternoon, a busload of young soldiers is unexpectedly forced to question the morality of their profession after being enlisted to execute civilian prisoners at a remote facility in the Serbian countryside.

Synopsis:

On a seemingly average day, a busload of young soldiers is sent to a remote location in the countryside and given a macabre task: the execution of a number of civilians. Dzoni, a green recruit, initially objects, but as he moves from one killing to the next, he is swept up by the spectre of military authority, and quickly becomes desensitized by the apparently routine nature of his task. As he nears the end of his assignment, the quiet horror of the day slowly begins to affect him, forcing a painful reconciliation with his actions. Set in an unspecified time of conflict in the Balkans, director Vladimir Perisic's highly attuned and unsentimental lens captures the psychological toll of war on its participants, and the universal struggle of all soldiers to reconcile morality with action.

CAST

Dzoni
Kouki

Relja Popovic
Boris Isakovic
Miroslav Stevanovic
Vladimir Devic
Dejan Spasojevic

CREDITS

Director
Writer
Producer
Co-Producer
Cinematographer
Editor
Sound

Vladimir Perisic
Vladimir Perisic
Alice Winocour
Anthony Doncque
Milena Poylo
Gilles Sacuto
Nadezda Perisic
Pierre-Alain Meier
Vladimir Perisic
Simon Beaufigl
Martial Salomon
Frédéric Heinrich

Sound (post)
Production Designer

François Méreu
Diana Radosavljevic

Distributed by The Global Film Initiative

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR: VLADIMIR PERISIC

Vladimir Perisic was born in Serbia in 1976. He studied film direction at the Faculty of Drama Arts, Belgrade and at La Femis, Paris, receiving his diploma from the Directing Department. He has directed several short films including *Realitatvirtust* and *Miloch*. His graduation film, *Dremano Oko*, was selected for Cinefondation at the Cannes International Film Festival in 2003. *Ordinary People* is his first feature film.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

To say that the crimes were committed by "monsters" is like saying they were brutal acts of individuals and not crimes that were planned and organized by a State, as was the case in my country, in ex-Yugoslavia. So, if these criminals are not monsters, if they are not "abnormal," if they are not psychopaths but "ordinary men" who have committed barbarous acts under certain conditions, what does that tell me about myself? About others? It is upon this feeling of fright that I want to construct the film. I want to film how the interdiction to kill can be erased in a man, how the humanity of a man can be erased. By making this film I am not trying to show or to explain, but to see: trying to see into the darkness.

ABOUT THE FILM: ORDINARY PEOPLE

REVIEWS

"A laureate of Cannes' Cinefondation program, Serbian-born Perisic reveals both the subtle beauties of a quiet afternoon in the country and the way in which something as horrifying as mass execution can appear, on the surface, to be completely banal. By documenting Dzoni's every last gesture, Perisic pushes the viewer to search for meaning or morality behind his character's acts. But the only conclusion seems to be that such acts are hopeless, unfathomable and beyond human control."

-Variety

"Thoughtfully handled and packaged...Perisic proves a poised and precise crafter of images."

-Hollywood Reporter

"Filming almost entirely in long, static shots that study the silent faces, with the inclusion of a few, very beautiful travelling shots, Perisic (who also wrote the script) places the slow passage of time at the heart of his film. This creates a compelling atmosphere in which the natural beauty seems tainted by the harshness of the executions and the sound of explosions....This clinical description of a terrifying reality is explored in a realist style and looks at the symbolic initiation to evil, giving *Ordinary People* a universal and philosophical resonance."

–Cineuropa

“Offering a realist view of both the drudgery and soul-killing aspects of war, Vladimir Perisic’s carefully composed Serbian drama, “Ordinary People,” charting the course of one day in the life of a young Serbian soldier, won the festival’s “Heart of Sarajevo” awards for Best Film and for Best Actor for understated yet powerful lead Relja Popovic....Perisic’s jury winner is as notable for its long stretches of silence and inaction as it is for the regular punctuations of matter of fact violence its young lead is forced to mete out to prisoner after prisoner. Following Popovic’s Dzoni from the time he and his troop awake, through their deployment to an abandoned farm, the execution of their mission, and the end to a long day, the audience becomes witness to, and complicit with, the job of a soldier.”

–indieWire

“This powerful Serbian film has an English title which succinctly sums up its subject: soldiers who violate international law during wartime without self-judgment, viewing their acts as banalities on the same level as smoking a cigarette or brushing their teeth. Perisic does not depict these young men as monsters, but as uninteresting products of a system of rigid discipline that, over time, eradicates one’s sense of self as well as one’s conscience...he treats this heavy, horrid subject poetically.”

–Screen Daily

“One of the best presentations of how human atrocities come about from the standpoint of the foot soldier involved in the commission of them....He will never be the same; neither will the other men, and, needless to say, neither will their victims.”

–San Francisco Chronicle

“Serbian writer/director Vladimir Perisic’s debut feature is quietly devastating; a slow-burning fuse, that ends with an implosion of the heart and mind... Perisic’s thesis is simple, but powerfully constructed... Economical, restrained storytelling, and with a real eye for composition.”

–The Brag

“A chilling, unflinching look at a raw recruit’s evolution into a killing machine, visualized in a minimalist, matter-of-fact style, *Ordinary People* promises to inspire much discussion...this disturbing film has a universal resonance.”

–San Francisco International Festival

“...Serbian-born Perisic reveals both the subtle beauties of a quiet afternoon in the country and the way in which something as horrifying as mass execution can appear, on the surface, to be completely banal.”

–Variety

“...thoughtfully handled and packaged...Perisic proves a poised and precise crafter of images...”

–Hollywood Reporter

“Wholly unsentimental and occasionally very unsettling, ‘Ordinary People’ combines elements of Claire Denis’ ‘Beau travail’ and Bruno Dumont’s ‘The Life of Jésus’ into a compelling allusion to the recent struggles in Eastern Europe.”

- Cinema St Louis:

“...it possesses the power to engross and mesmerize”

-We Are Movie Geeks

FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

2009

Heart of Sarajevo for best film, SARAJEVO FILM FESTIVAL

FIPRESCI Prize, SARAJEVO FILM FESTIVAL

Best Actor, SARAJEVO FILM FESTIVAL

Official Selection, GASPARILLA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Official Selection, MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Official Selection, MIAMI INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Official Selection, CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Official Selection, SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Official Selection, INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ROTTERDAM

Official Selection, Critics’ Week, CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

Official Selection, ZAGREB INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Best Film, Special Mention, TRIESTE FILM FESTIVAL

CineEuropa Prize, MIAMI INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

New Directors Section, SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Bronze Horse Nominee, STOCKHOLM FILM FESTIVAL

U.S. AND CANADIAN DISTRIBUTOR: THE GLOBAL FILM INITIATIVE

Ordinary People is part the Global Lens film series and can be seen through public screenings of Global Lens 2010 at participating venues across the United States and Canada. After 2010, *Ordinary People* and all Global Lens 2010 films will be available in home video, television, educational, internet and airline markets.

The Global Film Initiative is a U.S.-based not-for-profit organization specializing in the support of independent film from Africa, Asia, Central & Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. Founded in 2002 to promote cross-cultural understanding through the language of cinema, the Initiative awards numerous grants to deserving filmmakers from around the world each year, and supports a touring film series entitled Global Lens. For more information about the Global Lens film series or Global Film Initiative programs, please use the following links:

Global Lens 2010
Global Film Initiative programs

www.globalfilm.org/calendar.php
www.globalfilm.org/programs.htm

Contact:

GLOBAL LENS 2010

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