

KINO LORBER
i n c o r p o r a t e d

MY JOY

A FILM BY SERGEI LOZNITSA

*Germany–Ukraine–Netherlands / 2010 / 127 mins. / 2.35:1 / Color / Dolby SR / Russian with
English subtitles*

A Kino Lorber Release
from Kino Lorber, Inc.
333 W. 39th St. Suite 503
New York, NY 10018
(212) 629-6880

Publicity Contact: Rodrigo Brandao
Kino Lorber, Inc.
(212) 629-6880 ext. 12
rodrigo@kinolorber.com

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Truck driver Georgy sets out on a provincial Russian highway for a routine delivery, but a series of chance encounters see his journey spiral out of control. A roadside police check, a war veteran, and a young prostitute lead him to a village from which there appears to be no way out – where the locals struggle to survive a tough, elemental world, and the past holds a grip on their everyday lives. Caught in a merciless dead end, Georgy's unexpected fate is the crux of award-winning documentarian Sergei Loznitsa's unique and original feature debut, *My Joy*. Based on true stories the director encountered during his decade-long pilgrimage by road through Russia, *My Joy* is a daring and haunting parable from an arresting new voice in feature filmmaking.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Russia, present day, summer.

Truck driver Georgy picks up his latest load and heads off for the highway, stopping off first at home, where he avoids contact with his wife. His journey is interrupted by two traffic police at a checkpoint. When he evades their seemingly unnecessary attentions and returns to his cab, he finds an old man sitting in the front seat. The man asks for a lift, and in return, tells Georgy the sobering story of his return from the German front in 1946.

After the old man disappears, Georgy drives into a traffic jam on the main road. A teenage prostitute appears and offers to show him a short-cut – along with her services – and they end up at a village market. There, hurt by Georgy's attempt to show her some kindness, she abandons him.

Leaving the market, Georgy continues his journey alone and ends up lost in a field. By now, night has fallen and his truck has broken down. Three tramps appear out of the darkness, planning a robbery. They invite Georgy for a meal by a roadside fire and offer him a drink. Georgy refuses alcohol and asks for directions back to the highway, but the meal ends violently and abruptly...



FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

Cannes Film Festival 2010, France

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2010, Czech Republic

Sarajevo Film Festival 2010, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Pusan International Film Festival 2010, South Korea

Toronto International Film Festival 2010, Canada

Jerusalem International Film Festival 2010, Israel

Grand Prix for Best Film VOICES Vologda Independent Cinema from European Screens
2010, Russia

Best Director KINOTAVR Film Festival 2010, Sochi Russia

Award of the Russian Guild of Film Critics "White Elephant" KINOTAVR Film Festival 2010,
Sochi Russia

Best Script KINOSHOK Film Festival 2010, Anapa Russia

Silver Apricot in the category Best Feature Film GOLDEN APRICOT - Yerevan International
Film Festival 2010, Armenia

Grand Prix for Best Film MOLODIST Kiev International Film Festival 2010, Ukraine

FIPRESCI Award MOLODIST Kiev International Film Festival 2010, Ukraine

Wroc#aw Film Festival 2010, Poland

Melbourne Film Festival 2010, Australia

New York Film Festival 2010, USA

Chicago Film Festival 2010, USA

Goa International Film Festival 2010, India

Thessaloniki International Film Festival 2010, Greece

Zagreb International Film Festival 2010, Republic of Croatia

(CONTINUED)



(CONTINUED)

Recife Cinema Festival 2010, Brazil

Vancouver International Film Festival 2010, Canada

DOCLISBOA International Film Festival 2010, Portugal

Filmfest Hamburg 2010, Germany

Cottbus Film Festival of the East European Film 2010, Germany

BFI London Film Festival 2010, United Kingdom

Sao Paulo International Film Festival 2010, Brazil

Stockholms International Film Festival 2010, Sweden

Grand Prix for Best Film LISTOPAD Minsk International Film Festival 2010, Belarus

Grand Prix for Best Film BLACK NIGHTS Tallinn Film Festival 2010, Estonia

Tbilisi International Film Festival 2010, Georgia

Best Debut Russian Guild of Film Critics Award "White Elephant"

Trieste International Film Festival 2011, Italy

International Film Festival Rotterdam 2011, Holland

Dublin International Film Festival 2011, Republic of Ireland

INDIE Lisboa International Film Festival 2011, Portugal

KINO LORBER

i n c o r p o r a t e d

CREDITS

Written and Directed by
Sergei Loznitsa

Produced by
Heino Deckert and Oleg Kokhan

Executive Producers
Olena Yershova and Od Howell

Co-Producers
Leotine Petit, Marleen Slot and Joost de Vries

Associate Producer
Valery Kulyk

Director of Photography - Oleg Mutu (RSC)
Production Designer - Kirill Shuvalov
Sound - Vladimir Golovnitski
Editor - Danielius Kokanauskis

MAIN CAST

Georgy
Viktor Nemets

Major from Moscow
Vlad Ivanov

Gypsy woman
Maria Varsami

Old Man
Vladimir Golovin

Girl Prostitute
Olga Shuvalova

Young Lieutenant
Alexey Vertkov

One-Armed Man
Yuriy Sviridenko



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Ten years ago, I was working at the Documentary Film Studios in St. Petersburg, travelling to locations throughout Russia by car. We made frequent stops on the way to take photographs of people; it's a very common sight, people journeying by foot along the main roads.

Once we pulled up to photograph a man with a worn-out face, dressed in a shabby jacket and a ragged sweater, carrying a slim bag. He peered inside our car, examined its contents and asked for food. We gave him what we had. He neatly packed the food into his bag and asked me: "Haven't you got any apple jelly?"

"No. Why?" I asked.

"They always gave us apple jelly in prison," he said.

Since then I kept a packet of apple jelly in my car. But we never saw that man again, and other people did not ask for it. So I got the idea of making a film about apple jelly.

During my travels through provincial Russia – I made most of my films in the provinces – I collected lots of stories of this kind, and, I guess, they were bursting to get out of me. I decided to write a script.

The best chance one gets to describe a place is if one travels through it. The best chance one has to study a place is if one gets stuck in it. This is why my film has such a structure. The film's ending is logical, as it is a clear manifestation of the qualities of the place.

On the market square of a small town a man came up to me. "Listen, bro, how is it going in our hometown?" he asked. He had seen the St. Petersburg registration plates on my car. The man told me a story, which I used as a basis for this script. When he finished his story he asked me, "Do you think I'll be killed?"

"You will be killed," said I.

"Then give us a fag!"

We smoked together in silence, and then he left without saying good-bye.

And his story remained.

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

There are many strands to My Joy, and all the stories you tell on screen feel real; are they true, and how did you encounter them?

I'd been travelling around Russia since 1997 making documentaries, mostly in the provinces. From St. Petersburg to the Urals, we travelled, by car, and of course from every journey like this you come back with stories. Sometimes they just appear – a man comes up and talks to you for no reason – and sometimes you become part of the story yourself. Sometimes you stop to take a photo of a person and he starts to talk to you. Very quickly you hear whole life stories. Eventually, I accumulated enough material; I thought I could make a feature.

My Joy is an unusual title for this film...

When I started to write the script, I selected as my main story that of a driver who sets out with a load of flour and gets stuck somewhere. He's beaten up, and wakes up in a strange woman's house. He starts to fall in love with her. He sells the flour to make a living and then he sells off the truck. But she disappears. It's a real story. He starts living like a tramp – he can't go back to his old life., he has sold a truck that wasn't his, he's a criminal. Originally I had a sentimental ending where he keeps thinking about the woman, believing she will come back one day. And the title comes from that original idea. Now that it's applied to the current version, it's a bitter irony. So I wanted to make a film about love. But as usually happens with Russians, whatever you start to make, you end up with a Kalashnikov.

The characters I had met on my journeys started knocking on the door. And in the end, only one little story remained from the original, and the rest was a scary fairy tale. Strange shadows crept out from the corners of my subconscious and began to speak.

The characters you have written seem to be lost, constantly looking for directions.

The road system in Russia is built like a tree – out from the large towns to the small towns and to the villages, smaller villages, and from there is no way forward except to go back. It is very possible that there will be a village 5 kilometers away, but there won't be a road connecting them. One village may be in one administrative region and one is in another and the only way to connect them is to go back to the city.

This road structure reflects the structure of thinking, the mental structure. There is a center, and then there is a cluster of small dots which are of no significance whatsoever. And only one road connects to the center. So there is this hierarchic structure where you only have one point of truth and everything else is totally subordinate. You live next to something, but you don't notice it, you don't see it. It happens very often that you can find yourself at the end of the road, the beginning of nowhere. The devil's dead end, as they call it.

(CONTINUED)

(CONTINUED)

You left Russia in 2001; was it necessary to leave in order to make a story like this?

I had an opportunity to move to Germany and I took it. For people who lived in the former USSR this subject is sore. It is hard to explain what it feels like not to be able to travel just because you feel like it. Until 2001, I had to change my passport annually – I spent at least two weeks of every year in various embassies, getting stamps, until the pafes ran out and I had to get a new one. I hated this bureaucracy. I try to do everything I can to have the most freedom possible. Living in a different country and experiencing a different country gives you a different perspective and point of view. I can't say I've lived in Germany for a long period of time – maybe two or three months of the year and the rest of the time I've travelled. For the last two years I've spent most of my time in Ukraine making *My Joy*. Moving gave me the ability to cross borders.

It's a Russian story, but you shot in Ukraine.

Because we were partially financed by a Ukraine company, we needed to shoot in Ukraine, otherwise I would have filmed in Russia and I think the story would have gained through that, but we couldn't find financing there. We shot in the North of Ukraine near the Russian border. Obviously, we were looking for a spot that would resemble Russia.

You mixed an international cast with local non-professionals. How did you find the three peasants in the pivotal robbery scene, for example?

They came from the place where we filmed, a small town called Schors. I was driving in the middle of winter on my way to a village, when I saw these two men on the road. I stopped because – well, they looked like they do in the film, and they were very merry. Drunk, really. Dancing in the middle of the road! So I took out a camera and started taking pictures. I told them I was making a film about love and they laughed for a long time and said they'd like to be in a film about love.

On the one hand, they seemed very nice, happy. On the other, there was a danger coming from them. And I remembered them very well. We still looked for professional actors, because I didn't believe they could remember the dialogue. Also, they were constantly drunk! I came back in March and started in a very roundabout way to seduce them on board. We had 15 rehearsals and then they were ready. And the third character, the mute, I found in a different village. He does not have a fixed address, so very often we had to physically search for him; he wasn't where he was supposed to be.

The film seems to follow a very deliberate, almost mathematical, multi-layered structure – can you talk a little about this?

Because my task is to connect many different stories in order to show the whole palette, I need to devise a structure and I had particular elements which would create the recurring
(CONTINUED)

(CONTINUED)

motifs such as the house, the soldiers, different stories but similar characters, an old man who appears in the beginning and at the end. These things are there throughout the film and they're necessary to support the structure but also so the elements of the story can communicate with each other.

There are two central flashbacks, but they talk about the same thing. In the first story, the young lieutenant is active in defending himself, defending his dignity. In the second story, the father is passive in his actions but active in his thoughts. He says he's not capable of killing. The soldier asks him, what would you do if the enemy was at your doorstep? The teacher says it's an individual decision for which the person will be held responsible. But the officer cannot understand the whole concept of personal responsibility, tolerance. This is basically what happened in Russian history. The possibility of accepting a different point of view, of hearing a different point of view, even co-existing with a different point of view was unthinkable, and the result was destruction and a degradation, a thing out of the human material.

How did you connect with Oleg Mutu to become your director of photography?

I was looking for a DoP and everyone I had in mind, I have them *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* as an illustration of what I wanted. But I couldn't find anyone. Then my casting director said, why not go straight to him? We found his details on the Internet and sent him the script and he said right away he was interested. It turned out he was born in Moldova and speaks Russian – we had no idea!

He was a perfect match. His style is similar to mine, he is extremely scrupulous. Perhaps the reason for this is our first professionas – Oleg studied physics and I studied mathematics.

You seem to like being in control yet surely being a documentary maker means being more spontaneous in your approach – was My Joy different in that respect?

This is an illusion! I control everything. Everything that ends up in my films comes under my total control. In documentaries, no matter what the subject is or the surrounding you're in, you control the camera, frame, sound, editing, the timing. And they can change everything. The main thing is that the material you are filming should go along with the idea you are building. The idea comes first and for me it is the meaning of any film.

KINO LORBER

i n c o r p o r a t e d

THE DIRECTOR

SERGEI LOZNITSA

Award-winning documentarian Sergei Loznitsa was born on September 5, 1964, in Baranovichi, Belarus (former USSR). He grew up in Kiev, Ukraine, where he graduated from the Kiev Polytechnic Institute with a degree in engineering and mathematics. He worked for several years at the Institute of Cybernetics as a scientist involved in the development of expert systems and artificial intelligence.

In 1991, Sergei entered the Russian State Institute of Cinematography in Moscow, graduating in 1997., and eventually started producing his films at the prestigious Documentary Films Studio in St. Petersburg. In 2001, he moved with his family to Germany.

Sergei has made three full-length documentaries and eight shorter titles, winning awards at festivals in Oberhausen, Leipzig, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Madrid, St. Petersburg, Karlovy Vary, Vila de Conde, and Krakow.

In 2010, he completed his first dramatic feature, *My Joy*, which has been selected for Competition at the 63rd Cannes Film Festival.

FILMOGRAPHY

Today We Are Going to Build a House (1996, 28 mins)
Life, Autumn (documentary, 1998, 34 mins)
The Train Stop (documentary, 2000, 25 mins)
Settlement (documentary, 2001, 80 mins)
Portrait (documentary, 2002, 28 mins)
Landscape (documentary, 2003, 60 mins)
Factory (documentary, 2004, 30 mins)
Blockade (documentary, 2005, 52 mins)
Artel (documentary, 2006, 30 mins)
Revue (documentary, 2008, 83 mins)
Northern Light (documentary, 2008, 52 mins)
My Joy (feature, 2010, 127 mins)

THE CREW

OLEG MUTU (Director of Photography)

Born in Moldova in the former USSR in 1972, Oleg Mutu moved to Romania in 1993, where he trained at the Academy of Theatre and Film in Bucharest. Oleg worked with Cristi Pulu on the award-winning short *Cigarettes and Coffee* in 2004 and shot to international attention the following year with the same director on *The Death of Mister Lazarescu*, which won the Prix Un Certain Regard at Cannes. Oleg worked with Cristian Mungiu as a producer as well as a cinematographer on *4 Months, 3 Weeks And 2 Days*, which won the Palme D'Or in 2006, and the portmanteau *Tales From The Golden Age*, which premiered at Cannes in 2009.

Selected filmography:

As director of photography and producer:
4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days (2007)
Tales From the Golden Age (2009)

As director of photography:
Cigarettes and Coffee (2004)
The Death of Mr. Lazarescu (2005)
What Means Motley? (2006)
My Joy (2010)

KIRILL SHUVALOV (Production Designer)

Born in Perm in 1969, Kirill now lives and works as a video artist and designer in St. Petersburg, where he graduated from the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts and Industrial Design. He has participated in several international exhibitions with his experimental films and video installations. His previous film work includes *Shultes* (2008), *Rusalka* (2007) and *Simple Things* (2007).

VLADIMIR GOLOVNITSKI (Sound Director)

Vladimir Golovnitski has run his independent sound recording studio, Gutara, in Vilnius, Lithuania since 1994, and has worked closely with Sergei Loznitsa on the last six of the director's documentaries.

A graduate of the Institute of Cinema Engineers in Leningrad (now the St. Petersburg State University of Film and Television), Brest-born Golovnitski worked at the Belarusfilm Studios in Minsk for 16 years.

(CONTINUED)

(CONTINUED)

Apart from collaborating closely with Loznitsa and Lithuania's Sharunas Bartas (on the director's last six films), Golovnitski also worked on 2010's *How I Ended the Summer* by Alexey Popogrebsky, which won two awards at the Berlin Film Festival.

DANIELIUS KOKANAUSKIS (Editor)

Born in Vilnius in 1978, Danielius Kokanauskis is a graduate of the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre with a degree in audiovisual arts. He has been working as a film editor since 2006 and his credits include *You Am I* by Kristijonas Vildjunas, *Whisper of Sin*, by Algimantas Puipa, *Perpetuum Mobile*, by Valdas Navasaitis, *Eastern Drift* by Sharunas Bartas, and *My Joy*, by Sergei Loznitsa.

MARE RAIDMA (Costume Designer)

Tallinn-based Mare Raidma works with various theater companies in Estonia, where she designs costumes for film and TV productions.

THE CAST

VIKTOR NEMETS (Georgy)

Born on November 30, 1974 in the small city of Baranovichi, western Belarus, Viktor Nemets studied acting in Minsk and worked with the Belarusian Youth Theatre between 2001 and 2008. Moving to Moscow in 2009, he has appeared in small parts on film and TV; the role of Georgy is his first major film role.

VLAD IVANOV (Major from Moscow)

Internationally acclaimed for his portrayal of the abortionist Doctor Bebe in Cristian Mungiu's Palme D'Or winning *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (for which he won the Best Supporting Actor award from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association), Vlad Ivanov was born in Botosani, Romania in June 1969 to a family with Russian roots. A leading light at the Bucharest National Theatre Company, he has been a staple of the Romanian new wave of cinema, including lead roles in the portmanteau *Tales from the Golden Age* (2009) and *Police, Adjective* (2009). Vlad Ivanov's international successes have included *Mar Nero* and *The Concert*, and he will appear in *The Whistleblower* later this year.

MARIA VARSAMI (Gypsy woman, Maria)

Born in 1970 in Constanza, Romania, Maria Varsami studied acting at the Academy of Theatre and Film in Bucharest and is currently working with a small independent theater company in the Romanian capital. This is her first major cinematic role.

VLADIMIR GOLOVIN (Old Man)

Born in April 1940, veteran Russian actor Vladimir Golovin first studied his craft at the Moscow State Institute of Theatrical Arts (GITIS) before embarking on a long and successful career on stage and screen. For years the director of the Chekhov Theatre in Kishinev, Moldova, as well as Moscow's Mossovet Theater, Golovin also has a lengthy list of big- and small-screen credits, including *The Cold Summer of 1953*, directed by Alexander Proskin, and the 1981 TV Drama *December, 20*. Having recently turned 70, Vladimir came out of retirement to take the pivotal role of Old Man in Sergei Losnitsa's feature debut, *My Joy*.



THE CAST (CONT'D)

OLGA SHUVALOVA (Girl Prostitute)

Now aged 24, Olga Shuvalova began working as an actor at the age of 15 and has appeared extensively on film and television. *My Joy* marks her second time in Cannes, after the 2008 Critics Week title *Everybody Dies But Me*, directed by Valeria Gai Germanica.

ALEXEY VERTKOV (Young Lieutenant at Train Station)

Alexey Vertkov was born in 1982 in Novosibirsk, Russia's third largest city, where he studied acting at the Novosibirsk Drama School. Moving to Moscow in 2001, he studied with renowned stage director Sergei Zhenovach at the State Institute of Theatrical Arts (GITIS), and is now the leading actor in Zhenovach's Moscow theatre company. His film roles have been rare and carefully chosen, including Andrei Zvyaginstev's *Banishment* (2007) and Karen Shakhnazarov's *Ward No. 6* in 2009.

YURIY SVIRIDENKO (One-Armed Man)

Born in 1969 in Schors, where *My Joy* was shot, Yuriy Sviridenko is the son of a watchmaker and attended a local school. He is not in regular employment and survives, like most villagers, on picking berries and mushrooms in the local forest. Spotted by director Sergei Loznitsa on the highway late one night (see director's Q&A), Yuriy was eventually cast in one of *My Joy*'s pivotal roles, his first appearance on screen.