

Filmmaker Balabanov Dead at 54

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Alexei Balabanov, a filmmaker whose rebel-like film character became a role model for thousands of Russians a decade ago, died Saturday in his home in a suburb of St. Petersburg, Russian television reported, citing family members.

He was 54.

Balabanov died after collapsing, his close friends said, RIA Novosti reported Saturday.

The Rosbalt news agency reported Saturday that the cause of death was heart failure.

Earlier reports said that Balabanov knew he was gravely ill with cancer, however, and that he made no point to hide it, according to friends and co-workers.

A flamboyant film-director who made more than 20 movies, from a film about the Chechen war to a gangster comedy, Balabanov was most famous for making Brat (Brother) and Brat 2 (Brother 2).

Brat 2, released in 2000, tells the story of a young man who travels to the United States to save his brother from the hands of the mafia.

The main character is played by the late actor Sergei Bodrov. The film, seen by hundreds of thousands, became a favorite among many politicians, who saw Bodrov as an iconic symbol of the entire country.

Late Hermitage Capital lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, whose death in detention in 2009 became a symbol of injustice, was among many Russians who was inspired by the film, his friends said.

The film was critical of the American way of life, though it also portrayed ordinary Americans who helped the main hero. Many of the film's lines became popular quotes.

Balabanov's many films were often part of national discussion and were highly debated by critics and lawmakers.

His 2007 film Cargo 200, which tells the story of a brutal and sadistic police officer who operates in a grim Soviet environment in the 1980s, was shown on television only once due to its violent scenes.

Balabanov has reportedly said that he doesn't care about the reaction to his films. He said that he liked to work with non-professional actors and based most of his films on real life stories he'd heard while meeting with people.

"Going off of my own experience, other people's stories, that's how I invent films," he said in a 2010 interview.

Renowned film director and actor Nikita Mikhalkov, who played an eccentric gangster in one of Balabanov's films, called him an "outstanding filmmaker"

"He was a planet of his own," Mikhalkov said in televised comments on Vesti television on Saturday.

Funeral arrangements have not yet been disclosed, but a farewell ceremony will take place Tuesday at Lenfilm studio in St. Petersburg.

He is survived by his wife and two sons.

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