

## New Zvyagintsev Film Hits the U.S. Festival Circuit

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Director Andrei Zvyagintsev **Ali Sar / MT**

HOLLYWOOD—Russian cultural and political leaders might not like director Andrei Zvyagintsev’s new movie “Loveless,” but Russian moviemakers and their overseas counterparts seem to be excited about it.

“We’re gearing up for the awards season,” producer Alexander Rodnyansky told The Moscow Times.

“Loveless” is already gaining traction in the North American awards circuit. Following its premiere in Cannes, the film is on its way to American and Canadian festival audiences.

“Our first North American stop is the Telluride festival, and after that we’re off to the Toronto Film Festival after that,” Rodnyansky said.

“Loveless” first caught the attention of critics in Europe. The Los Angeles Times writer wrote that this “new film about the failed institutions in and of the Russian state couldn’t be more

timely.”

The movie industry’s main publication Variety went even further, describing it as “an ominous, reverberating look at corruption in Russia as a society, rather than in its politics.”

The plot revolves around two separated parents in the process of divorcing. They are temporarily brought together after their only young child goes missing.

Politics play a role in the story as local police’s efforts to locate the boy prove to be ineffective. “The modern-day police don’t care about people,” the prolific director said.

Rodnyansky said, “the film is envisioned as Russian life, Russian society and Russian anguish.”

Russian officialdom took a similarly dour view of “Leviathan” with its portrayal of a corrupt local official’s attempt to confiscate a piece of property for his personal use in a fishing village.

All the same, Zvyagintsev insists: “I’m really not a political person.”

But since “Leviathan” evoked such strong disapproval in the government, Rodnyansky said he decided to privately finance the film instead of seeking economic support from the Ministry of Culture. Each of these films reportedly cost \$5 to \$6 million to produce.

Unlike “Leviathan,” “Loveless” was released in Russia well in advance of the awards season — Oscars and Golden Globes — to keep it from becoming a victim of piracy. Before its official release, “Leviathan” had been downloaded nearly 10 million times, making the film “a public event,” according to its producer.

Following a nearly \$2 million gross in Russia, makers of “Loveless” have high hopes in the international market with Sony Pictures handling the distribution.

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