

JUMP MAN

BY IVAN I. TVERDOVSKY



Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival
Official Selection – Competition



SYNOPSIS

Denis grew up in an orphanage, where his mother left him soon after his birth. He is a special boy, who due to a rare illness, is immune to pain. This makes him popular among other boys, who take bets on how long he can endure cruel physical games. One day his mother turns up out of the blue and takes him to Moscow, where he becomes part of a gang that extracts money from wealthy people. Denis becomes a "jumpman" – someone who jumps in front of cars to blackmail the drivers. Reunited with his mother, Denis feels that this new life is a dream come true until one day... he starts feeling pain again.

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR

by Marta Bałaga

After *Zoology*, where you showed a woman with a tail, in *Jumpman* you talk about a boy who feels no pain. Why are you interested in people who stand out like this and are often rejected by others as a result?

I am always interested in extraordinary, unusual characters in cinema. People who are different from most of us or have some special characteristics, which make them unique. They are the ones that change our reality. For me, Denis [played by Denis Vlasenko] and the woman with the tail in *Zoology* can be viewed as very different forms of grotesque. Mostly because these are two very different stories which touch upon two very different types of problems haunting our society.

One could say that Denis doesn't feel pain because he belongs to a generation born during a certain political period, under a certain president. These kids tend to distance themselves from any aspects of social and political life. In the meantime, the society has taught them how not to take any moral responsibility for their actions. In other words, a son of a police officer or a government official knows perfectly well that his father is taking bribes, but he doesn't blame him for it – it's just a part of their lifestyle. For them, behaviour like that is just a natural course of action.

Denis uses his unusual "skill" to jump in front of driving cars, in order to scam people for money. Such cases have already been quite well documented in Russia. What drew your attention to it?

The concept of such scams and of people jumping in front of the cars comes from the material I was gathering for my documentary. According to my research, they are quite common – and not just in Russia by the way. But I realised that if I would decide to make a documentary about it, I could never really show it. Here, I used this set up as the basis for my story, but then of course it all went much further. In this film, I am trying to understand how today's world is reflected in our society.

You start the film with a scene that's quite difficult to watch – a mother leaves her child in a so-called baby box in the middle of nowhere. How often do people abandon their kids like that?

Baby boxes were created because of too many deadly incidents. Mothers were trying to abandon their children under very different circumstances. They would just leave them out in the cold, throw them in the garbage... So on one hand, baby boxes have a positive social function – at least this way, these abandoned kids have a chance to survive. But on the other, knowing about this option can encourage some women to do with much less hesitation. Even those that otherwise wouldn't dare to go through with it.

After many years have gone by, they do meet again. How did you develop this relationship between a mother and a son she left behind? Often, they feel more like siblings.

My intention was to create a somehow atypical relationship between a parent and a child. She vaguely remembers how she left him and growing up, he almost never saw her. They are both





complete strangers to each other, but as our story unfolds, their relationship finally starts developing. They both start having feelings for one another but because of those sudden emotions, my protagonist loses his unique ability. The very same one his mother desperately needs and wants to keep exploiting for her own gain. For me, this is the real culmination of their relationship. And a very emotional one.

The mother, Oxana doesn't really know what it means to have and to love a son, so they don't really have what you could call a "normal" connection. The whole concept of being a mother is just completely alien to her. What she does and how she behaves might seem inappropriate at times, but for her it's the only way to manifest love and tenderness towards Denis.

You used to shoot documentaries before you moved onto features. Does it influence your filmmaking style even now?

I haven't abandoned documentaries for good. For four years now, I have been shooting a documentary about Russian police. The film is not finished yet, but it's a massive fresco depicting the current social reality and corruption in Russia. It's a very complicated body of work. While working on this film, I started to feel that I would like to analyse the time we live in also in a fictional form.

Also because I am sure that this period will ultimately go down in history as the time when it was ok to steal.

I don't think that corruption is an eternal problem that exists in all countries all the time. I think that it exists only in those places where people allow for it to exist – because of their morality or the lack thereof. In today's Russia, a school teacher doesn't feel ashamed when she is extorting money from the parents of a small child. And a doctor is not ashamed to extort money before saving a life. We are all "jumpmen" just like Denis. We can easily lie, steal, betray and destroy the most important social norms – all with a smile on our faces. This is what my film

is about, and my documentary work pushed me to explore this concept even deeper.

You said once that you are not interested in cinema as entertainment, but as an artistic statement. Is that still the case?

Of course it is. This is why *Jumpman* is not pure genre entertainment. Through using some references to comic books and certain superheroes like Batman, Superman or even Birdman, I want to speak about very serious and disturbing things.

Denis is a bit of an anti-superhero. Superheroes in comic books always have these supernatural powers and they are using them to fight against some struggles they are facing. But the tragedy of Denis lies in the fact that unlike them, he isn't really able to change anything. Despite his "supernatural" powers, he can't even leave a mark on the world that surrounds him. The deeper he dives into it, the more he finds out about it, the weaker he becomes and starts to lose the one thing that made him so special in other people's eyes. In the end, he loses his ability to become a superhero.





DENIS VLASENKO
ACTOR

Denis Vlasenko was born on December 18, 1997 in Kursk. He studied acting and directing at Russian State Institute of Cinematography in the workshop of Sergey Soloviev. *Jumpman* is Denis' feature debut.



ANNA SLYU
ACTRESS

Anna Slyu graduated from Shukin Theater Academy in Moscow. Feature film works include *Night Watch* and *Daywatch* by Timur Bekmambetov, *Open Space* by Denis Neimand, *Lovers* by Nikolai Khomeriki, *Dyadya Sasha* by Alexander Gordon and *Jumpman* by Ivan I. Tverdovsky.



DANIIL STEKLOV
ACTOR

Graduated from the studio of Moscow Art Theater in 2013 and since then has been working in Chekhov Moscow Art Theater. His previous film works include *The Hope Factory*, *Light it UP*, *Nearest and Dearest*.



IVAN I. TVERDOVSKY
DIRECTOR

Ivan I. Tverdovsky graduated from the Russian Institute of Cinematography. He directed the documentaries *As If Waiting for a Bus* (2009), *Pianism* (2012) and *Space Dog* (2013) and the features *Corrections Class* (2014) and *Zoology* (2016). Both his feature films participated in over 30 international film festivals, including Karlovy Vary, Toronto, Busan, London, Gothenburg, Cottbus, Fantastic Fest Austin and many others, winning awards.

PRODUCERS NEW PEOPLE COMPANY

New People is a Russian film production company established in 2005. The company produces director-driven festival films (Kirill Serebrennikov, Ivan I. Tverdovsky), mainstream films with international appeal (*Battle for Sevastopol*) and childrens' films (*My Father Baryshnikov*).

FILM AND MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

Mike Downey and Sam Taylor founded the UK-based independent production house Film and Music Entertainment as part of an IPO on the Frankfurt DAX. Film & Music Entertainment films have been screened at Sundance, Berlin, Cannes, Venice, San Sebastian and Toronto film festivals. The first 18 years of F&ME's existence saw it entering into production on 60-odd co-productions with a total budget of EUR 210 million involving 132 production companies from all over Europe. It now has a catalogue of rights in over 50 features including Academy Award Nominee and Venice Golden Lion winner *Before the Rain*, Academy Award Nominee Mohsen Makhmalbaf's Venice opener *The President*, box office horror hit *Deathwatch*, Sundance South African hit *Son of Man*, Jason Biggs starrer *Guy X* and Dinard winner *White Lightning* as well as 2012 Berlinale Audience Award Winner *Parada* by Srdjan Dragojevic. Currently in production is *How to Sell a War* by Rudolph Herzog, *The Disciple* by Ivan Ostrochovsky and *Streetkids United III-The Road to Moscow* by Jacco Groen.

TREMORA

TREMORA is an independent production company involved in production and distribution of films and original film projects. The company strives for the realization of new concepts in film production and distribution. Tremora produced such successful feature films as *The Collectress* (by Kristina Buožytė), *Low Lights* (by Ignas Miškinis), *Anarchy in Žirmūnai* (by Saulius Drunga), *Vanishing Waves* (by Kristina Buožytė), *Kings' Shift* (by Ignas Miškinis) and co-produced films as minor producer *Kharms* (by Ivan Bolotnikov), *Jumpman* (by Ivan Tverdovsky), *Namme* (by Zaza Kharvashi). All films participated in numerous international film festivals – Karlovy Vary, Moscow, San Sebastian, Busan, Montreal, Rio De Janeiro, Seville, Hamburg, Cairo, Sitges, Fajr, Goa, Doha, Tokyo, Shanghai and Warsaw among others. Company's productions gained a fair amount of national and international cinema awards. Tremora continuously looking for interesting projects for is co-production. Company already co-produced as major or minor co-producer with Germany, France, Belgium, Russia, Hungary, Georgia.

ARIZONA PRODUCTIONS

Arizona Productions, Paris based, is led by Guillaume de Seille to mainly produce art-house feature films directed by non-French emerging talents. *Zoology* (2016) by Ivan I. Tverdovsky (Russia), *The Gentle Indifference of the World* (2018) by Adilkhan Yerzhanov (Kazakhstan), *Jumpman* (2018) by Ivan I. Tverdovsky (Russia), *The Man Who Surprised Everyone* (2018) by Natasha Merkulova & Alexei Chupov (Russia).

JUMPMAN

FESTIVALS

International Premiere:
Karlovy Vary IFF 2018

FILM INFORMATION

Original Title: Podbrosy
English Title: Jumpman
Genre: Drama
Country: Russia, Ireland,
Lithuania, France
Language: Russian
Year: 2018
Duration: 90 min.
Picture: Color
Aspect Ratio: 2.39 : 1
Sound: 5.1
Available Format: DCP

CAST

Denis Vlasenko
Anna Slyu
Pavel Chinarev
Vilma Kutavivcuite
Alexandra Ursulyak

CREW

Director: Ivan I. Tverdovsky
Screenplay: Ivan I. Tverdovsky
Cinematography: Denis Alarcon-
Ramirez

Editing: Ivan I. Tverdovsky
Production Design: Olga Kovalenko,
Ekaterina Sheglova
Sound Design: Jonas Maksvytis
Music: Kirill Richter
Production Company: New People
Company, Film
and Music

With support of: Ministry of
Culture of Russia,
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Center, Eurimages

Producers: Natalia Mokritskaya,
Uliana Savelieva,
Mila Rozanova,
Mike Downey,
Samantha Taylor,
Ieva Norvielene,
Guillaume de Seille

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