


MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE
D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2018
Official Selection

THE MAN WHO SURPRISED EVERYONE



A film by **NATASHA MERKULOVA & ALEKSEY CHUPOV**

Starring **EVGENIY TSYGANOV NATALYA KUDRYASHOVA YURI KUZNETSOV PAVEL MAYKOV** Costume Designer **ANNA BARTULI** Make-up Designer **TATIANA KOLOMITSEVA** Production Designer **SERGEY AVSTRIEVSKIKH** Edited by **VADIM KRASNITSKY**
Director of Photography **MART TANIEL** Produced by **KATIA FILIPPOVA (Russia)** Co-producers **ALEXANDER RODNYANSKY (Russia) KATRIN KISSA (Estonia) GUILLAUME DE SEILLE (France)** Written and directed by **NATASHA MERKULOVA & ALEKSEY CHUPOV**



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SYNOPSIS

Egor is a fearless state forest guard in the Siberian Taiga. He is a good family man, respected by his fellow villagers. He and his wife Natalia are expecting a second child. But one day Egor finds out that he has cancer and only two months left to live. No traditional medicine or shamanic magic can save him. Finally, left with no other options, he takes a desperate attempt to trick death. Egor chooses to take the identity of a woman as a way of fighting the disease. His family and the local society now have to accept his new self.

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DIRECTORS' NOTE

Natasha Merkulova and **Aleksey Chupov** are a married couple, who constantly work together, forming an amazing creative union.

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Alexey Chupov:

THE MAN WHO SURPRISED EVERYONE is a very personal story. The script of the film is based on childhood memories of one of the authors - the director Natasha Merkulova.

She grew up in a small Siberian village Yedogon, surrounded by hundreds of kilometers of great forests - the Taiga. She spent her childhood among people who looked like the characters of the film – strong Siberians living in severe climatic conditions. At that times Natasha heard the local legend about a man who once lived in this region, fell ill with cancer and tried to deceive death, completely changing his personality – turning into a woman. We have adopted this old legend to our days to get the opportunity to talk about topics that are of great concern to us today.

Natasha Merkulova:

The story is about how a person who is used to keep everything in his life under control suddenly faces an uncontrollable situation - a fatal disease. In this situation, he makes an unusual choice – to release control. However, losing control is a dangerous step if you live in a society with a communal way of life. Imminently there is a clash of individual choice and collective norms.

NATASHA MERKULOVA

THE MAN WHO SURPRISED EVERYONE, scriptwriter and director

Natasha Merkulova was born 19.09.1979 in Orenburg (Russia). She graduated from the Irkutsk University and from the High Courses for Scriptwriters and Film Directors of Moscow. Worked as a presenter on Irkutsk television.

Her debut feature film **INTIMATE PARTS** (2013) was critically acclaimed and gained over 30 awards and nominations at various Russian and international film festivals.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2013 **INTIMATE PARTS**, written and directed by
- 2015 **RODCHENKO'S STAIRS**, short, written and directed by
- 2016 **SISTERS**, short, written and directed by
- 2017 **SALYUT-7**, written by
- 2017 **GOGOL. THE BEGINNING**, written by
- 2018 **THE MAN WHO SURPRISED EVERYONE**, written and directed by



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ALEKSEY CHUPOV

THE MAN WHO SURPRISED EVERYONE, scriptwriter and director

Alexey Chupov was born 29.05.1973 in Moscow, graduated from the Moscow State University, studied Movie History at Wake Forest University in U.S. Started out as a TV journalist.

Together with his wife Natasha Merkulova he wrote the screenplay and directed the film **INTIMATE PARTS** – a critically acclaimed debut of 2013.

FILMOGRAPHY

2013 **INTIMATE PARTS**, written and directed by

2017 **SALYUT-7**, written by

2017 **GOGOL. THE BEGINNING**, written by

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MART TANIEL

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Mart Taniel is one of the most remarkable Estonian cinematographers. Several award-winning films have his handprint, including the Venice Orizzonti prize-winning **AUTUMN BALL** (2007, directed by Veiko Õunpuu) and **THE TEMPTATION OF ST. TONY** (2010, directed by Veiko Õunpuu), which premiered internationally at the Sundance IFF International Competition. Taniel is also the cinematographer of Rainer Sarnet's films **THE IDIOT** (2011) and **NOVEMBER** (2017).

Mart Taniel was born in 1976 in Tallinn. He graduated in cinematography from the University of Tallinn and Prague's FAMU Film School.

In 2017, Mart Taniel received the highest international honor given to cinematographers, the **ASC Spotlight Award**, for **NOVEMBER** (2017). That same film won Best Cinematography at the Tribeca IFF for its "particularly audacious [cinematography] and supreme command of its visual language."

He shot **FREE RANGE/ BALLAD ON APPROVING OF THE WORLD** (2013, directed by Veiko Õunpuu), which premiered at the Berlinale Forum and received the award for «the most beautiful film» from the Estonian Cultural Endowment. Taniel's other awards include the Black Nights Film Festival and Estonian Cultural Endowment prizes for Best Cinematographer of the Year, the 2morrow IFF/Zavtra Glass Eye Award for cinematography and the Best Cinematography Award from the Transylvania IFF International Competition.

THE MAN WHO SURPRISED EVERYONE is Taniel's second cooperation with directors Natalya Merkulova and Aleksey Chupov.

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CAST

Evgeniy Tsyganov – Egor

Natalya Kudryashova – Natalia

Yuriy Kuznetsov – Grandfather

Vasiliy Popov – Artem

Pavel Maykov – Zakhar

Aleksey Filimonov – Stepka

Elena Voronchikhina – Shaman Woman

Maksim Vitorgan – Professor

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NATALYA KUDRYASHOVA

Born in Nyzhny Novgorod.

Leading actress in the «School of Dramatic Art» theatre (dir. Anatoly Vasilyev)

Recent filmography: **SALUT 7** (2017), **PIONEER HEROES** (2015)

In 2015 she directed **PIONEER HEROES**, which was officially selected for the Berlin Film Festival («Best debut» nomination).

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EVGENIY TSYGANOV

Born in Moscow. Leading actor in the Moscow «Theatre Pyotr Fomenko Workshop».

Selected filmography: **BATTLE FOR SEVASTOPOL** (2015), **PITER FM** (2006),
DREAMING OF SPACE (2005), **THE STROLL** (2003).

The preparation for the main role in **THE MAN WHO SURPRISED EVERYONE** demanded from him enormous efforts – for instance he had to loose about 20 kilograms in three months before the shooting of the film.

PRODUCERS

Producer **Katia Filippova** (Russia)
Co-producer **Alexander Rodnyansky** (Russia)
Co-producers **Katrin Kissa** (Estonia)
Guillaume de Seille (France)

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INTERNATIONAL PRESS

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