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notes

We have lost founder committee member Adrian Wright who has moved to Derbyshire, and gained our new social media whiz Chris Mizzak who has extended our web reach into social media. Check out our new channels:

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# Tangerines

Zaza Urushadze, Georgia 2013

Original title: *Mandariinid*

Script by Zaza Urushadze

Lembit Ulfsak ..... Ivo  
Giorgi Nakashidze ..... Ahmed  
Elmo Nüganen ..... Margus  
Misha Meskhi ..... Nika  
Raivo Trass ..... Juhan  
Zura Begalishvili ..... Aslan  
Dato Khakhidze ..... Aslan's Soldier  
Jano Izoria ..... Aslan's Soldier  
Gia Gogishvili ..... Aslan's Soldier  
Vamekh Jangidze ..... Aslan's Soldier  
Aleko Begalishvili ..... Aslan's Soldier  
Temo Khutsishvili ..... Aslan's Soldier  
Giorgi Tsaava ..... Officer  
Denis Khlibov ..... Soldier  
Victor Gegeshidze ..... Soldier  
Genadi Levchenko ..... Soldier  
Kakha Arevadze ..... Ibragim  
Ann-Heliin Saadoja ..... Mari  
Producer ..... Ivo Felt  
Co-producers ..... Tatjana Mülbeier,  
Zaza Urushadze , Artur Veeber  
Music ..... Niaz Diasamidze  
Cinematography ..... Rein Kotov  
Film Editor ..... Alexander Kuranov  
Production Design ...  
Irakli Mchedlidze



*Tangerines* is the first Estonian movie ever nominated for a foreign-language Oscar. It is a simply told—though never simplistic—war movie about the 1992 conflict between the former Soviet countries of Georgia and Abkhazia, and a nearby neutral Estonian community whose residents have mostly chosen to flee to their ancestral homeland out of safety concerns.

Ivo (Lembit Ulfsak) is an elderly ethnic Estonian who, with his friend Margus (Elmo Nüganen), is a tangerine

farmer; they fear the fighting will destroy their entire crop. Disaster strikes, and Ivo finds himself having to offer tense hospitality to one wounded fighter from each side: Georgian Niko (Misha Meskhi) and Chechen mercenary Ahmed (Giorgi Nakhashidze) who has no great love for his Russian paymasters.

Although events unfold amid a gorgeous pastoral setting with rolling green hills and leafy trees, there is a silent starkness about this countryside that suggests Ingmar Bergman's use

of natural surroundings. Then there is Ulfasak: long and lean, with white hair and beard, and blessed with a visage that bespeaks of stoic nobility, a wry perspective on the world and innate compassion. This Estonian screen veteran cuts a striking figure of world-weariness that is akin to that of Bergman regular, Max von Sydow. Clearly, it will take much more than an encroaching civil war to shake him to his core.

Ivo's house becomes their demilitarised zone, and Niko and Ahmed must suppress their hatred of each other while Ivo suppresses panic about all his unpicked tangerines going to waste. It is tremendous storytelling: engaging, intelligent, and with some lovely touches. When Ivo and Margus push a soldier's van down a hill to hide it, they are disappointed it doesn't burst into flames, like in the movies. "Cinema is a great big fraud," says Ivo.

**Zaza Urushadze is a son of Ramaz Urushadze, famous Soviet football goalkeeper. He was born on October 30, 1965, in Tbilisi, Georgia.**

**He graduated in 1982-1988 at the directing department of the Shota Rustaveli Theatre and Film Georgian State University. In 2002-2004 he was the director of the Georgian National Film Centre.**

**His full-length debut film Here Comes the Dawn (1998) was very successful and participated in many international film festivals. It was Georgia's official Best Foreign Language Film submission at the 72nd Academy Awards, but did not manage to receive a nomination.**

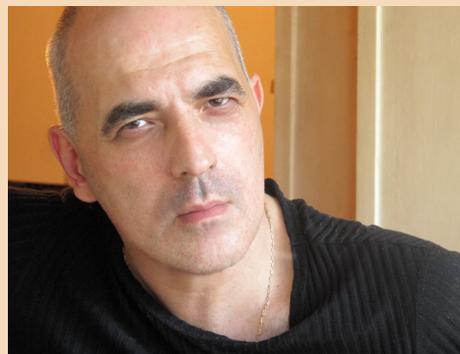
**From 2003 to 2006 he was director of the TV series Ckheli Dzagli. The project became successful, but the fourth season was banned by the Georgian Government because of its political themes.**

**Zaza's second full-length film Three Houses was finished in 2008: it participated in international film festivals (including Montreal World Film Festival). In 2009 the film opened the programme of Georgian Filmweek in Tallinn, Estonia. During a meeting with Artur Veeber and Tatjana Mühlbeier was born the idea to write the script of Tangerines.**



**Tomasz Piechal: Your new film *Tangerines* touches the subject of the**

**Georgian-Abkhazian war of 1992-1993. And although the film refers to the events going back 20 years, it leaves the impression that they are still a burning issue.**



**Zaza Urushadze:** But of course, the subject of Abkhazia stays important to Georgia. What is now happening in South Ossetia – the systematic shifting of borders, inch by inch, to Georgia's constant disadvantage – causes strong reactions among Georgian citizens. And, being a citizen of a small country, I cannot stay calm observing these attempts to deprive us of a part of our territory. However, my film should not be perceived as a statement or a form of engagement in political infighting between states. This film, above all, is a story about people who find themselves in a situation that is beyond their control, and forces them to renounce their human nature.

**While this film tells the story of a typical Caucasian conflict, you, quite surprisingly, made the main character an Estonian. What was the point?**

First of all, we should say that Ivo cannot be regarded as personification of a typical Estonian. This is a man who has deep roots in Abkhazia: he was born there, his family lived there for 100 years. In particular, this explains his decision not to leave for Estonia despite the war. He is an aged man closely connected to his land. Still – by virtue of his origin – Ivo, to a certain extent, is an "alien" for both sides of the conflict. But above all, he is a strong personality – against all odds, he still has common sense,

values, and morality in the world that simply goes crazy.

This morality pushes Ivo to giving a shelter to two wounded soldiers, members from the hostile camp – a Georgian and a Chechen mercenaries.

Ivo remains human. He retains all the features that distinguish humans from animals – leniency, willingness to forgive and to understand, tolerance, sensibility and empathy. He feels no envy and remains a man of great strength of mind, despite all the circumstances. This is what the film is about: humanity. We can easily forget, deny ourselves, and allow other people to manipulate us, which, in reality, is not a big deal. We easily forget that we are all humans. We can be of different origin, from different states, of different faith, but we are all humans. This is the main message of my film – that we should remember the most important thing: to stay human.

**Ivo repeatedly calls his "wards" enemies – with irony but also with reproach in his voice. You have created the image of a human community, but I was especially impressed by another scene with Russian soldiers who became a real threat to all the characters of the film. So even though you are trying to dissociate yourself from politics in the film, apparently it does not always work.**

But the film does not say directly who these soldiers are. It's your interpretation [laugh]. In the end, the mentioned scene mainly reveals the insanity of war and its brutal irregularity. That drunken officer could belong to any side of the conflict. I stress once again that I am trying to avoid politics. I want to show, first of all, one value which, in situations of a conflict, is frequently overlooked: the value of humanity.



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