

See You in Chechnya

A documentary film

by Alexander Kvatashidze

"If you go to war, the war will come home with you..."

Synopsis

When I was 22, I went to war. I went because I was in love. In Georgia in 1999, I met a photographer called Françoise who told me she was going to photograph the notoriously brutal conflict in neighbouring Chechnya. I decided I had to go with her, to protect her. I knew I could be kidnapped or killed, but desire outweighed fear. There I met war reporters for the first time : an exceptional tribe of idealists, battlefield veterans and adventurers who risk their lives and health to report the truth. Ten years later, I made contact again, to find out how the experience affected their lives.

STATEMENT

From darkness, a man watches slides. A young boy studying. Two kids standing next to a Christmas tree. Landscapes. The few images pass slowly.

This is how my film *See you in Chechnya* starts, as a personal story and an invitation to travel. A travel through the past, on the other side of the Georgian mountains. A travel to hell.

I was a naïve student in Fine-Arts when I met the woman through who everything happened. Her name was Françoise. She was from Paris and was staying in Tbilissi to prepare her way from Georgia to Chechnya. She was a war reporter.

Even if Chechnya was a neighbouring country, as Georgians, we had no reason to go there, unless we were suicidal. I wanted to prove to this seducing and talented woman I was not a kid, so I followed her, whatever the consequences.

I discovered war, fear, permanent insecurity, shred bodies, children corpses, and the pain of the survivors. Under these circumstances, I met a tribe of brave idealists, wise war veterans and eccentric explorers coming to risk their lives. I met people who made who I am now, uncategorisable people, sort of contemporary heroes. And my life was never the same again.

Everyone of them had different reasons to go there. Some had professional ambitions, others were fighting for ideas, others trying to prove something to themselves. Raisa was the only one who did not choose anything : the city she lived in was the centre of the

fight.

Anyway, for most of them, consequences were painful. Brice was kidnapped. He spent eight months in captivity and committed suicide when he came back. Antonio was murdered. Françoise developed a serious illness and almost died. Raisa had to flee abroad leaving her family behind. Did they know before going to war that this is a virus that never leaves you ? Did they know the price to pay was that expensive ?

Ten years later, I called back these people I had met and interviewed during the second war of Chechnya. I wanted to know what they had become and also try to understand what might have been their motivations to walk into the lion's den. I wanted to know how war had changed them, since it had changed everything for me.

This film is a crossed portrait of seven war reporters. Seven extraordinary people who were involved in the Chechnya conflict, and about my relation to them.

I took part in this conflict too. By casualty, or because of love maybe. I met war and I have been fascinated. I tried to stay, to become one of them, a war reporter. That did not happen.

They stayed. They saw war. They went through things I will never see nor live.

Did they understand things I will never understand ?

Exploring my characters' lives, I am looking for answers they might not have. Does this experience make you a better man ? Does war teach anything about mankind and its boundaries ? Or is it just the place of destruction ?

We all agree that war is horrible. And very attractive at the same time. My characters went there to testify, sound the alarm bells, try to stop things, fight for justice. When they came back home, they discovered something was irreconcilable. Their families were broken, as were their previous lives. Does war definitely change you ?

Why did they have to pay such a price ? For their beliefs ? For compassion ? For ambition ? For a taste for risk ? Boredom ? To escape ? Because of curiosity ? Because they wanted to play, somehow ?

Do they regret it today ? If I come back to the past, I have the greatest respect for all the moments I spent in this war and all the people I met in there.

Would I go back today ? I am not sure. But I insist : all the people who made my life what it is, I met them there, at war.

This film talks about Chechnyan war, a particularly bloody conflict, forgotten by the entire world. But this could be any war. It is just the story of a young boy who was randomly taken into the heart of hell and spent the rest of his life trying to understand it.

The director : Alexander Kvatashidze

Alex Kvatashidze was born in 1977 in Tbilisi, Georgia. In 1992-1996 he studied in Nikoladze Art College, where he gained a diploma of Artist-Sculptor. In 1996-2001 He studied in Tbilisi State University, where he obtained BA degree in Arts and humanities. From 2001 Alexander has worked as a DoP and/or Editor on local and international film and TV projects. In 2005 he won the Muskie Fellowship stipend, which allowed him to

take a graduate course at the Film department of the California State University in San Jose in 2005-2006. In 2007 Alexander together with his colleagues founded Monitor Studio, an investigative documentary program studio, which, according to the Open Society Institute survey, has the highest credibility among media experts in Georgia. In 2009 Alexander started Lokokina Studio, which produces and co-produces creative documentaries and fiction projects. Many of the films that Alexander worked on were selected for international film festivals such: AFI, Hotdocs, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, Toronto and other film fests.

Production Companies :

LOKOKINA

Founded in June 2009, Lokokina Studio is a media production company based in Tbilisi, Georgia. The studio produces and co-produces fiction and non-fiction films as well as commercials and educational videos. Recent works made with participation of Lokokina include: *See You In Chechnya* – documentary 2016, *Auditorium* – documentary 2014. *Botso* – documentary 2014. *Is there a theater up there?* – documentary 2012.

PETIT À PETIT

Petit à Petit Production was founded in December 2006 to produce creative documentary. *What matters to us and what convinces us is the look the authors give at the world and their cinematographic approach of their subjects.* We often accompany young authors working on their first films and developed a special focus on Russia and east european country. Recent credits include feature lenght documentary *We'll be alright* (Manuel de Libération), by Alexander Kuznetsov, Jury Award in Vision du Réel, 2016, and Prix Interreligieux, *The Empty Room* documentary by Jasna Krajinovic, ARTE, RTBF, Derives coproduction - - *Sleeping Souls*, documentary by Alexander Abaturov, 52 min, 2013, Prize of the French Institute in Cinéma du Réel 2013.

KEPLER 22

Juliette Cazanave and Cesar Diaz created the production company **Kepler 22** at the beginning of 2013 in the hope to develop and produce the films they would like to see, Their interests are broadly cast over such territories as Guatemala, Russia, Georgia, Irland, Germany and Algeria, always keeping in mind the search for a strong point of view. Since three and a half years, they have produced or coproduced mostly creative documentaries but also short and long features films like **The night is fading** by Cyril leuthy – Prix spécial « regard neuf » au festival de Nyon 2015, Prix du jury du festival Chéries chéris 2015 and more then 20 festivals. **The strange story of an urban experience** by Julien Donada, a Arte coproduction - Mention spéciale du jury and Grand prix France Télévisions/France3 Aquitaine au FIFAAC 2016. They have also collaborated

in the fiction film **Ixcanul** by Jayro Bustamente who won, over more than 20 other awards, the silver bear « Alfred Bauer » at the Berlinale 2015.

MADE IN GERMANY

MADE IN GERMANY Filmproduction is a Cologne-based production company funded by Melanie Andernach and Knut Losen, developing and producing high-quality feature films together with emerging filmmakers with an authentic vision and a strong artistic signature. MADE IN GERMANY is enthusiastic about producing films about exceptional human stories and socially relevant issues. Targeting the German and European audience, the company is also engaged in international co-productions, thereby working with European producers.

Since 2007 MADE IN GERMANY produced award winning documentaries and feature films. Those films were produced in collaboration with broadcasters (ZDF, WDR, WDR Arte, RBB Arte, Channel 8, Yes Docu, BBC) and funds, were screened at festivals like Berlinale, Locarno, Rotterdam, DOK Leipzig etc. and have been sold internationally. Recent credits include feature length documentary “Farewell, Herr Schwarz” (DOK Leipzig DEFA Award 2013) and documentary “Censored Voices” (Premiere Sundance Film Festival 2015 and Berlinale 2015)

KINOPORT

Kinoport Film, founded in 2012 is an Estonian based film production company. Our strength is an extensive knowledge on general business affairs combined with a network mixture of young talents with more experienced filmmakers from many parts of the world. We produce and co-produce creative documentaries and features worldwide and we offer production services in Estonia and Georgia. Kinoport’s recent production, feature documentary “Rough Stage” was premiered at IDFA 2015 in First Appearance competition.

Technical sheet

Title :

SEE YOU IN CHECHNYA

Director: Alexander KVATASHIDZE

Author : Alexander KVATASHIDZE

Script consulting : Rolf ORTHEL, Matthew COLLIN, Monika FRAN CZAK,
Jean-René LEMOINE

Image : Alexander KVATASHIDZE, Niko TARIELASHVILI

Sound ingenior : Leri KIKNADZE

Editing : Sophie REITER, Amrita DAVID, Alexander KVATASHIDZE

Editing assistants : Antoine PRÉVOST, Antoine FERRANDO

Sound design : Amelie Canini

Mixing : Amélie Canini

Color correction : Paul CHAMPART

Original Music : David MALAZONIA

Producers : Alexander KVATASHIDZE, Juliette CAZANAVE, Rebecca HOUZEL

Coproducers : Eero TALVISTU, Mélanie ANDERNACH

Year of production : 2016

lenght : 68'

Shooting langage : english, russian, giorgian, french, italian

Shooting format : HD

screening : DCP





