



THE ISLAND

(Ostrov)
A film by Pavel Louguine



Russia/2006/In Russian/112 min.
35 mm / 1:2.35/ Color / Dolby Stereo

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SYNOPSIS

From the famed director of “Luna Park”, “Taxi Blues” and “Tycoon: A New Russian” comes a subtle, personal take on what is both a spiritual character study about self-forgiveness, as well as a parable for life today in post-Perestroika Russia.

Somewhere in Northern Russia, in a small Russian Orthodox monastery, lives a very unusual man. His fellow-monks are confused by his bizarre conduct, and those who visit the island believe that the man has the power to heal, exorcise demons and foretell the future. However, he considers himself unworthy because of a sin he committed in his youth. He has decided to spend the rest of his life in repentance, atoning for this past wrongdoing, in order to rest in peace once he dies, but little does he know that he will find closure well before his death.

DIRECTOR’S NOTES

The screenplay was written by Dmitry Sobolev, Yury Arabov’s student in VGIK (State Institute of Cinematography). It got into my hands by chance and it changed my whole life. I immediately told my producers that I would not be doing this movie without Mamonov. In a way it was kind of about his life as well. He turned from being a rock musician, sometimes involved in scandals, into a believer. His talent is immense, and I would call him a rare individual. He is definitely unique.

The two other monks are played by Dmitry Dyuzhev and Viktor Sukhorukov. Three different characters that have three different types of faith. Father Iov (Dmitry Dyuzhev) is like an army officer making his career: faith isn’t something that comes easy for him. Father Anatoly suffers all his life for his sin, and his life now is full of repentance. Father Filaret, played by Sukhorukov, is like a child, whose faith is light and easy. It was Mamonov who suggested that I invite Sukhorukov. I met Dyuzhev a year ago and I liked him as an actor. He was not afraid to play a part very different from what he did before. All three of them were very supportive of the film, which is not the usual case with actors. My favorite actress, Nina Usatova, has a part in this movie, and there are some wonderful actors with whom I worked for the first time. My main discovery was Vika Isakova. You know, I love actors. They are not toys for me, but fellow-authors. We shot *The Island* on the shore of the White Sea, in very hard conditions. A lot depended on their selflessness and support. I am very grateful to all who endured this challenge with me.

Ships sail from this small port to Solovetsky Islands. We looked for a long time for such a location going first to Valaam, then to Seliger and on to the Ladoga lakes. We came across monasteries as big as towns. It was not what we needed: we needed half this size. We went further North to the White Sea, and we found the right place. We saw a sunken barge and a boillery on a tiny island nearby. It was a strange little house built with stone, with no windows, probably remaining from the Goulag times. We brought logs from old wooden houses on the mainland to build the church and monks cells ourselves, since we didn’t want anything to look modern.

CREDITS

Crew:

General Producer	Sergey Shumakov
Producer	Pavel Louguine
Executive producer	Olga Vasilieva
Director	Pavel Louguine
Script	Dmitry Sobolev
DOP	Andrey Zhegalov
Music	Vladimir Martynov
Art Directors	Igor Kotsarev Alexander Tolkachev
Costumes	Ekaterina Dyminskaya
Make-up	Valeriya Nikulina
Sound	Stefan Albine Vladimir Litrovnik
Editing	Albina Antipenko
Second Director	Natalja Lyaschenko
Casting director	Tatjana Maksakova
Cameraman	Yury Nilokaev
Production manager	Vadim Koryuzlov

Cast:

Anatoly	Pyotr Mamonov
Filaret	Viktor Sukhorukov
Iov	Dmitry Dyuzhev
Tikhon	Jury Kuznetsov
Nastya	Viktoria Isakova
Widow	Nina Usatova
Girl	Jana Esipovich
Woman with a child	Olga Demidova
Young Tikhon	Alexey Zelensky
Young Anatoly	Timofey Tribuntsov
Child	Grisha Stepunov
Adjunct	Sergey Burunov

FESTIVALS

WINNER – Best Film, Jury and Audience Award; Moscow Int’l Film Festival 2006

WINNER- Best Film, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Supporting Actor, Best Cinematography and Best Sound Editing; Nika Russian Film Awards 2006

OFFICIAL SELECTION – Toronto International Film Festival 2006

OFFICIAL SELECTION – Venice International Film Festival 2006 (Closing Night)

OFFICIAL SELECTION –Montreal World Film Festival 2006

OFFICIAL SELECTION – London International Film Festival 2006

OFFICIAL SELECTION – Sundance Film Festival, 2007

OFFICIAL SELECTION – San Francisco International Film Festival 2007

OFFICIAL SELECTION – Philadelphia International Film Festival 2007

OFFICIAL SELECTION –Seattle International Film Festival 2007

INTERVIEW WITH PAVEL LOUNGUINE

By *Andrey Plakhov*, "Kommersant"

When Pavel Lounguine made his directorial debut with the film "*Taxi Blues*" (1990), it was regarded as a metaphor for the period of 'Perestroika' in Russia, imbued within the context of urbanization and post-industrial culture. The mood of the film, equally lyrical and 'jazzy', portrayed the scene of Moscow's night-life as an island of lonely, lost souls swirling in an adrenalin rush amongst a rage of post-modernism, attempting to portray all metropolitan cities in the world, from New York to Tokyo, as being the same. Pyotr Mamonov, a pillar of Russian Rock music, played one of two main characters.

In Russian, the words 'rock' (as in Rock 'n Roll), and 'fate' sound the same. Ironically, fate plays an important part in the film "*The Island*". The main character is played again by Mamonov. Regardless of the fact that he is still connected to the 'evil business' of entertainment, the fate of this extraordinary man and his personal life-journey from show-business to religion, somewhat reflects the plot of the film. The scene of the film portrays a man who becomes a traitor and a murderer during World War II. Years later he attempts to redeem his guilt by living as a hermit in a monastery.

A monastery itself is similar to an island. The sanctuary in which our hero lives is geographically located on an island in the ice-cold waters of the White Sea, which is soon to be covered by ice. He is separated from the mainland, yet he still keeps in touch with clergy on the shore, who are preoccupied with the pettiness and intrigue that go on in church life. In order to hide himself from them, the hermit exaggerates in regards to his messianic powers and insanity, which are supposedly the source of his miraculous healing power. People believe in his sanctity, while he himself doesn't. The biggest trial that God provides him is when our hero faces his past in the Final Judgment.

In a certain sense this story is as much a symbolic work for Russia today as "*Taxi Blues*" was for Russia 15 years ago. At that time it seemed that the most important thing in the country was to become a member of what is called the civilized world, a desire which was mutual. Nowadays, more than likely it is considered more important to resolve inner problems – symbolically within the individual, as within a country. Paradoxically these personal and local problems seemingly could be considered by one to be universal in nature, avoiding the seemingly 'globalist illusion' of turning Moscow into a 'New York'. The concept of an island as a laboratory where a human is being tested in conscience and moral durability seems to be important to Lounguine, as well as to other filmmakers, who make an effort to create a model of the world by means of art.

- How can you explain the "religious" turn in your work?

I really don't know. This is a film about the fact that God exists. There comes a time in life when this becomes an important issue. Besides, I am trying to open up new genres

in film, in this case the genre of the lives of the saints. The way this film is shot by Andrey Zhegalov, who was d.o.p. in *The Cuckoo*, is not typical for me.

- So, in a sense this film stands apart from your other works...

Yes, indeed. In *Taxi Blues*, I tried to testify about the times and to fixate them within that period of change. Now it feels like the time of change is over, and society needs to think about eternity, sin and conscience. In the rat race for success and money these things have left our lives, but human beings cannot exist just for materialistic values. I made an effort to rationalize what one thinks and what one really wishes.

- Was this the same feeling with other creators of the film?

The process of shooting the film turned out to be extraordinary for the actors as well. It felt like we lived some special life together on the White Sea. Pyotr Mamonov said later that he changed after playing this part and that he felt an enlightened quietness. His theatrical shows are sometimes extreme, but he himself is a man devoted to church and he is a deep believer.

- Had you met with Pyotr Mamonov since “Taxi Blues”?

No, I hadn't. But his face is so amazing that I could not imagine another actor in his place.

- This is a special film for you. In what way is it different for Russian cinema? Priests have been played recently by Dyuzhev, Sukhorukov, Chadov in such films as “The Wonderer”, “Staying Alive” and “The Island”. These actors are popular with the young audience. Is there a tendency in this?

Don't forget about the film “The Return”. These films are not about religion, but they deal with man's place in the world. These movies are not about church dogmas.

- How do you position your film in international context?

As always the dynamics of Russian film is different and does not coincide with whatever is happening in world cinema. If you look at the recent Cannes festival, one might think of the return of Social Realism. Soviet films of the 1960's would have been well received in the West if they were shot now. Everybody discusses problems of social injustice and of the small man's will to survive.

There are no new ideas in the West and nobody knows in which direction the society is moving. The question about the existence of the soul is inevitably asked from the spiritual and mystical point of view.

- Does it mean that your film is part of a new ‘trend’?

I don't know. Probably nowadays this movie might seem too radical. But in perspective, the reign of individualism and the fact that the idea of personal freedoms have been taken to an extreme have led to the triumph of selfishness. As a result we are forced to turn back to dilemmas which seemingly have already been solved. When, why, and on what basis do we do something in contrary to our own gain, in accordance to an inner initiative, and do not do something based on our own personal interests – this is the fundamental question.

DIRECTOR'S BIO AND FILMOGRAPHY

Pavel Loungine was born in 1949 into a screenwriter's family. He graduated from the Mathematics and Applied Linguistics Department of Moscow State University in 1971, and in 1980 he graduated from the Film Director's Department of Higher Screenwriters and Directors Courses. Since the early 1990's Pavel Loungine has resided in France. His directorial debut, "*Taxi Blues*", was awarded Special Prize for Best Directing at Cannes in 1990. Ten years later, his film "*The Wedding*" won an Award for Best Acting Ensemble at Cannes. Several of his films have been box office successes in Russia. In 2005 he produced and directed "*Gogol's Dead Souls*", a TV series.

2006 "The Island", director
2005 "Roots", director
2004 "Gogol's Dead Souls", TV series, director
2002 "Tycoon", director, screen writer
2000 "The Wedding", director, screen writer
1996 "Line of Life", director, screen writer
1993 "Luna Park", director, screen writer
1990 "Taxi Blues", director, screen writer

CAST'S BIOS AND FILMOGRAPHIES

Pyotr Mamonov (Anatoly)

Pyotr was born in 1951. He is a musician, singer, actor, and was the leader of the cult rock group Zvuki Mu. Recognizable, original lyrics and manner of singing made him prominent in the music industry. Bryan Eno produced and released his album in England. Mamonov's one-man shows in Stanislavsky Theatre in Moscow in the 1990's were well received by critics and the public. After becoming religious he left rock music. For the last ten years he has lived in the country, 55 kilometers from Moscow. He is no longer a part of social and high life scenes, and he seldom gives interviews. He continues to perform in one-man shows.

Selected filmography:

2006 – "The Island"
2005 – "Dust"
1994 – "Time for Sorrow Hasn't Come"
1992 – "The Leg"
1991 – "Anna Karamazoff"

1990 – “Taxi blues”
1988 – “The Needle”

Viktor Sukhorukov (Father-superior Filaret)

Viktor was born in 1951. After graduating from Theatre Institute he joined Leningrad Comedy Theatre, and worked extensively in repertory theatre. Currently he acts in privately financed and produced shows. He has acted in movies since the early 1970’s, appearing in more than fifty films.. Viktor gained popularity after playing a gangster in Alexey Balabanov’s “*Brother*” in 1997. He mostly plays comic characters on stage and villains on screen.

Selected filmography:

2006 – “The Island”
2005 – “First After God”
 “Blind Man’s Bluff”
 “Graveyard Shift”
2004 – “Goddess: How I Fell in Love”
1997 – “Brother”

DMITRY DYUZHEV (FATHER IOV)

Dmitry was born in 1978 to a family of actors in Astrakhan. He graduated from Theatre Institute in 1995 in Moscow. He became famous after playing a charismatic gangster in “*Brigade*”, a TV series (2002)—it was his first major part. He has been seen in more than 30 films and played in numerous theatrical productions. He recently joined the Moscow Art Theatre. He earlier played a priest in Declan Donellan’s stage version of “*Boris Godunov*”.

Selected filmography:

2006 – “The Island”
 “It Does Not Hurt”
2005 – “Blind Man’s Bluff”
 “Rider Called Death”