



ZOOLOGY

A FILM BY IVAN I. TVERDOVSKY

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE
TO GROW A TAIL



Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival
Official Selection - Competition

LOGLINE

Middle-aged zoo worker Natasha still lives with her mother in a small coastal town. She is stuck and it seems that life has no surprises for her until one day... she grows a tail and turns her life around.



SYNOPSIS

Middle-aged zoo worker Natasha still lives with her mother in a small coastal town. As she struggles for independence, she has to endure the absurd reality of her life filled with gossip spread by the women around her. She is stuck and it seems that life has no surprises for her until one day... she grows a tail.

Embarrassed at first, Natasha decides to go further with the transformation and use it as an opportunity to redefine herself as a person and as a woman. With the new "accessory" she gets access to the life that she has never experienced before – she starts a relationship with a man, who finds her attractive, she goes out and allows herself to be foolish for the first time in her life. But her second puberty eventually comes to an end and Natasha has to make a choice between reality and illusion.

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR
IVAN I. TVERDOVSKY

Your previous film focused on the lives of teenagers, now you're portraying a mature woman – how was it to write about someone much older than you?

Both films are different – both in their subject matter and the age of their protagonists.

In case of *Zoology*, it was surprisingly easy for me to write a story about a middle aged woman, as we have quite a bit in common. I projected myself to the events that could have happened to her. In a way, I am even older than her.

In our film Natasha is kind of a virgin who encounters for the first time – at 55 years old – complexities of life, true feelings, conflicts and misunderstanding. These are her circumstances. Of course, my fellows and myself, we encounter those circumstances much earlier in life. But what is extremely important in this story is that a woman who has lived the longest part of her life already and who theoretically needs to start winding down her life, her feelings, this woman gets a second chance. She starts living a new and different life, getting into something she never had a chance to experience before. For me, this is a very interesting aspect of the dramatic composition here.



Your films give a voice to people who are different, „odd“, excluded from the society. Why do you have this particular interest?

Today the society that I live in and people who surround me are living in such a way that is different from something that was happening even five years ago. People don't crave their individuality anymore, instead they long for something universal. You need to buy your clothes in the popular stores, go to popular concerts, in your refrigerator there is a pre-set selection of food, the same as in your neighbor's fridge. If you go down into the subways wearing a colored T-shirt you inherently distinguish yourself from the black-and-white crowd, and so on.

Our film is primarily about self-identification in the space that surrounds you. And the finale of our movie, in my opinion, quite accurately reflects things that are currently happening in my country and in Russian society. I suspect that in a lot of less totalitarian countries, a resolution similar to the ending of our film would not be possible.

For me, this film is a method of fighting reality. I hope that *Zoology* will truly turn out to be an effective "medicine" against unification and standardization in any society.

The supernatural element of the tail really stands out in contrast to the realistic setting. Where did you get this idea from?

We did not want to make a science-fiction film. But of course, there is a fantastic element in the story. People don't grow tails, it's a scientific fact. But I wanted to imagine – hypothetically – how a tail would look like if every human being actually could grow one. I can hardly envision it being fluffy or beautiful. With our designers and VFX specialists, we worked on coming up with something realistic. Of course, some people may say that our tail looks hideous – maybe it would have been exactly that had we grown one. We don't ask whether our genitals look aesthetic enough or not. I think this depiction of a tail as a mere organ is realistic enough.

What does the tail mean to you?

The tail is a person's distinguishing trait, something special that each of us has. It can be anything – your political views, your taste in music or art, sexual orientation or racial profile. I view this very widely.

Our protagonist says at some point "We are all different" – and for me this is the main significance of the tail. Your tail that distinguishes you from millions of other people.

How did you make the actual tail? What was difficult about the shoot with such a prop?

It was an animatronic services by several technicians. Of course, we could

create the tail using VFX. But for me it was important that the actress, Natalia Pavlenkova, actually spends some time with the real tail and not sees it as something theoretical that will be added later in post-production. I needed her to physically feel it. I needed to have this actual tail on set. Moreover, we did not allow the actress to take it off. She had to live through the whole story wearing it. Otherwise, we would not have a realistic enough result on screen.

The film is shot in a specific location, it does not look like the gloomy outskirts that we can see in many films coming from your country, something more akin to Zvyagintsev's Leviathan. What does this location mean for you?

We specifically wanted to avoid those "gloomy outskirts". The story of *Corrections Class* happens in a mid-Russian provincial town, and I did not want to visit that terrain again. We chose a seaside town in the South of Russia.

Very surreal still – where else would you find an orthodox church located inside a grocery store or huge concrete sputnik belonging to a meteorological station. Nothing was built or faked – those are all real places. But we wanted this surreal place to be beautiful, and I hope that the seaside location helped achieve that result.



IVAN I. TVERDOVSKY

selected filmography

(born in 1988) graduated from the Russian Institute for Cinematography in 2011. His early documentary works won him multiple awards in Russia and at international film festivals worldwide. His fiction debut *Corrections Class* (2014), inspired by the novel by psychologist Ekaterina Murashova, won over 35 prizes worldwide, including East of the West Award (Crystal Globe) at the 49. Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (international premiere). *Zoology* is Ivan's second feature project. It was showcased both at the Paris Co-Production Village and Les Arcs in 2015 and received financial support from the Eurimages and Russian Ministry of Culture.

2009	As If Waiting for a Bus	documentary
2012	Pianism	documentary
2013	Space Dog	documentary
2014	Corrections Class (Klass Korrektsii)	drama
2016	Zoology	drama



NATALIA PAVLENKOVA

CAST

has been on stage since 1979 and is a well-known Russian theater actress. She currently works at the Stanislavsky Theater in Moscow. The part in *Zoology* awarded with the Best Actress Prize at the Sochi IFF 2016 (world premiere) is Natalia's first lead in a feature film. Until now she played memorable supporting characters in such films as Ivan I. Tverdovsky's *Corrections Class* (2014) and *Winter Journey* (2013) by Sergey Tarnaev and Lyuba Lvova.

DMITRY GROSHEV

is one of the leading actors of Lenkom Theater in Moscow. *Zoology* marks Dmitry's debut in feature cinema.

NEW PEOPLE FILM COMPANY

New People is a leading Russian production company. It debuted in 2005 with Kirill Serebrennikov's *Playing The Victim*, which won the Main Prize at the Rome FF 2005. Further titles include *Yuri's Day* (Locarno FF, 2008), *Four Ages of Love* (2008), *My Father is Baryshnikov* (2010), *Corrections Class* (2014, over 35 prizes in Russia and overseas) and *Battle for Sevastopol* (Russian box office hit released as #1 on box office charts on April 2nd, 2015 via 20th Century Fox).

ARIZONA PRODUCTIONS

Paris-based film production and distribution company led by Guillaume de Seille and Bénédicte Thomas focusing on art-house feature films directed by non-French emerging talents. Recent titles include: *Harmony Lessons* by Emir Bagaizin (2013), *To Kill a Man* by Alejandro Fernandez Almendras (2014), *Corn Island* by George Ovashvili (2014), *Paris of the North* by Hafsteinn Gunnar Sigurdsson (2014), *Los Hongos* by Oscar Ruiz Navia (2014), *A Corner of Heaven* by Miaoyan Zhang (2014), *The Magic Mountain* by Anca Damian (2015).

MOVIEBRATS PICTURES

MovieBrats Pictures is an independent film production house with offices in Berlin and Los Angeles, developing, producing and co-producing high-quality theatrical feature and animated films with a focus on English-language, genre-driven entertainment and high concept family films for global audiences. The people at MovieBrats Pictures combine over 15 years of hands-on experience in a variety of industry fields. Having overseen, produced and executive produced local and international co-productions in Europe, the US or Russia, their individual track record range from the US-German sci-fi comedy short *Asternauts* which premiered at Columbia Film Festival counting over 40 selections worldwide to Palme d'Or winner Mitko Panov's *The War is Over* to the recent mystery thriller *Lost Place 3D*. Its Berlin-based affiliate MovieBrats Studios is a one-stop shop animation and VFX studio offering a wide range of products and services in the field of 2D & 3D computer animation, visual effects and VR/360 production for feature films, television and the advertising industry.

NEW EUROPE FILM SALES

Boutique sales company based in Warsaw, working with international content. Founded in 2010 by Jan Naszewski, EAVE expert and former industry manager for T-Mobile New Horizons IFF. The company's feature film catalogue includes the Icelandic *Rams* (Prix Un Certain Regard in Cannes in 2015, sold to over 40 countries), *The Here After* (Directors' Fortnight 2015) as well as 9 Berlinale titles including the 2016 Silver Bear winner *United States of Love* and Generation winners *Violet* and *Mother I Love You*.

ZOOLOGY

FESTIVALS & AWARDS

International Premiere:
Karlovy Vary IFF Competition

27. Kinotavr Open Russian Film Festival /
Sochi – Main Competition: Best Actress,
Critics Prize

FILM INFORMATION

Original title: Zoologiya
English title: Zoology
Genre: drama
Country: Russia, France, Germany
Language: Russian
Year: 2016
Duration: 87 min
Picture: Color
Aspect Ratio: 1.85
Sound: 5.1
Available format: DCP

CAST

Natalia Pavlenkova as Natasha
Dmitry Groshev as Peter
Irina Chipizhenko as Mother

CREW

Director: Ivan I. Tverdovsky
Screenplay: Ivan I. Tverdovsky
Cinematography: Alexander Mikeladze
Editing: Ivan I. Tverdovsky,
Vincent Assman
Production design: Vasily Raspopov
Sound design: Frédéric Théry
Production companies:
New People Film Company, Arizona
Productions, MovieBrats Pictures
Producers: Natalia Mokritskaya,
Mila Rozanova, Uliana Savelieva,
Guillame de Seille, Esther Friedrich,
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