

WAITING FOR GODOT

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HELSINKI INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2013 YURI BYKOV, HEIR TO THE CROWN OF NEW RUSSIAN CINEMA? PART TWO

THE MAJOR (2013), 99 mins

Yuri Bykov's sophomore effort is an assured movie, a clear statement of a director hitting his stride. Bykov wears many hats from director, writer, editing, scoring and even acting in a major role in *The Major*. Without revealing too much about the plot, the film starts with a military police major (Sobolev / Denis Shevdov, who also played the lead in *To Live*) racing down the road in his SUV to get to the nearby hospital where his wife is giving birth. He

encounters a woman (Irina / Irina Nizina) and her seven year old crossing the road, Sobolev fails to avoid the boy, hitting and killing him. Rather than calling an ambulance Sobolev calls his colleagues, a lower ranking officer (Kroshunov / Bykov) and a uniformed cop (Merkulov / Ilya Isaev). When they arrive at the scene they go about covering up the scene to make it look like Sobolev is less to blame for his actions. From this first bad choice onwards the film escalates as the central characters continue to lie and cover up their actions leading to more bad decisions.

Bykov's *The Major* is a solid piece of work, this time around with a stronger script a more assured approach gets the most out of his actors, making for a solid thriller. Rather than showing mere stereotypes, this film's characters have depth and charisma. He makes no excuses for his characters, cops are thugs and corrupt and that's how life is in the world they live. The gritty world in *The Major* is made even darker by the almost monochromatic visuals and again the economical hand held cinematography, that and Bykov's own minimalist score make the surrounding world all the more miserable but compelling.

Verdict: One to watch
