

Local Auteur Reveals Formula for DIY Success

Russian immigrant director combines Tarkovsky, *The Red*, sex and simple drama to good effect

by Roger Rose

RUSSIAN-BORN LOCAL FILMMAKER Yuri Tsapaev spoke to *CineSource* as the first press communication for his visually stunning new film, “Contractor’s Routine.” Shot and produced almost entirely in San Francisco, the film follows a carpenter Jacob Borchovsky struggling to tamp down his psychological turmoil – personified in his mentoring alter-ego Esau – before it explodes into irreparable cataclysm. Tsapaev, who wrote, directed, and produced the debut indie is presenting his film – still without distribution – throughout the festival circuit. With impressive acting performances and skillful direction talent, the film is an obvious choice to be picked up by a leading indie distributor.

CS: Why did you choose to shoot in San Francisco?

I love San Francisco. There are so many fascinating places around here. I believe that every district, every building in San Francisco has its own subconscious life, which adds charm and spirit to the final product. Most importantly, using our locations here is drastically cheaper than in Los Angeles. With much more support from the local government, San Francisco should become the capital of indie filmmaking.

“Contractor’s Routine” contains a number of biblical references and symbols. Did your personal religious beliefs influence this project?

Yes. I do believe in God. At some point in my youth I was an atheist; it was the official religion in USSR. But as a mathematician by trade, it became so clear one day that a multi-lateral universe was planned very well. Spiritually, I consider myself a fatalist. Naturally, the whole movie has plenty of symbols and signs to invoke biblical themes. The meteorite shower, for instance, shows how the universe is connected even among strange people in one

particular city.

You created Paralux Productions, which worked on this film and other music videos. Why did you decide to form a production company to develop this film?

When I discovered the Red One camera I was no longer afraid of the high costs of shooting film. I shot some clips with the RED and fell in love with this intelligent device. We spent several months testing it on music videos and short films before we bought it. Also, I had no investors because I was too shy to ask for money for a project with an unknown director. We were able to do it from A to Z ourselves with Paralux Productions. I hope it’s going to be easy to talk to investors about upcoming projects, including “The Stake,” [Paralux’s next production] which is a drama about love, honor, and the stresses of social obligation.



A Sexy Setup leads to real heartbreak in Yuri Tsapaev’s “Contractor’s Routine.”

photo Contractor’s Routine LLC

How was the actual production different than you initially expected?

I was very happy with the Paralux crew: Line Producer Brooke Dooley, Editor & Cameraman Luke Rocheleau, and Cinematographer Isiah Flores. Flores is a very talented guy; I totally believe in his artistic eye. We discussed many times how the film should look at the end and discovered that we love the same movies, especially “Mirror” by Tarkovsky. No doubt he is one of the best cinematographers in the Bay Area.

A bigger challenge was the acting talent. Many people abandoned this project during pre-production. When we started shooting, we thought it would be just a few actors, with one lead actor. But, when we finished, there were actually about 40 actors and 60 extras involved. It was a real challenge to gain trust among crew and especially actors as a first-time feature length director. I guess, it seems like the story, and a RED camera in the hands of the right cinematographer work beautifully in San Francisco scenes.

CS