

NATASHA

A Film by David Bezmozgis
Based on the Book by David Bezmozgis



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SYNOPSIS

Log-line

Natasha is a story of forbidden summer love between a suburban Toronto teenager and his cousin by marriage, a recent émigré from Russia with a troubled past.

Short Synopsis

Natasha takes place over the course of one summer. It is the story of Mark Berman, 16, the son of Russian-Jewish immigrants living in the suburbs north of Toronto. When his uncle enters into an arranged marriage with woman from Moscow, the woman arrives in Canada with her fourteen year-old daughter, Natasha. Mark, a slacker, is conscripted by his parents to take responsibility for the strange girl. He learns that, in Moscow, she'd led a troubled and promiscuous life. A secret and forbidden romance begins between the two of them that has bizarre and tragic consequences for everyone involved.

Synopsis

Natasha takes place over the course of one summer. It is the story of Mark Berman, 16, the son of Russian-Jewish immigrants living in the suburbs north of Toronto. When his feckless, elderly uncle enters into an arranged marriage with a younger woman from Moscow, the woman arrives in Canada with her fourteen year-old daughter, Natasha.

Since it is the summer and the girl speaks no English, Mark is conscripted by his parents to take responsibility for her. Mark accepts this assignment reluctantly. He has plans of his own for the summer, mainly to read books and deliver drugs for his dealer, Rufus, a charismatic character, who is Mark's mentor and idol. Rufus is only 20, but he lives alone in a large house and, aside from dealing drugs, studies philosophy at the University of Toronto and runs some ambiguous Internet businesses.

Gradually, Mark warms to Natasha. He learns that, in Moscow, she'd led a troubled and promiscuous life, appearing in pornographic movies. More than this sordid fact itself, it is Natasha's casual attitude that intrigues Mark. She is mature and tough for a girl of her age and utterly without conventional inhibitions, and yet there is still something trusting and innocent about her. A secret and forbidden romance develops between the two of them.

Meanwhile, the marriage between Natasha's mother and Mark's uncle is foundering. Natasha blames her mother, whom she despises for taking her from Moscow and, generally, for being a manipulative, horrible person. Is this true? Is Zina, Natasha's mother, what Natasha claims she is? Or is it Natasha who is being manipulative? The rancour between Natasha and her mother comes to a head and threatens to destroy the entire family. Ultimately, Mark is forced to choose between his love for Natasha and his comfortable, safe suburban life. He makes the safe choice and is devastated when he learns—utterly unexpectedly—that Natasha has ended up with Rufus, who has coveted her all along.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Story

Natasha takes place over the course of one summer. It is the story of Mark Berman, 16, the son of Russian-Jewish immigrants who live in the suburbs north of Toronto. The action begins when Mark's uncle enters into an arranged marriage with a woman from Moscow, and the woman arrives in Canada with her fourteen year-old daughter. The girl, the eponymous Natasha, speaks no English. Mark, ostensibly unemployed for the summer, is conscripted by his parents into taking responsibility for her. He learns that, in Moscow, she'd led a troubled and promiscuous life, posing for pornographic photos and appearing in movies. Despite this—or partly because of it—a secret and forbidden romance begins between the two of them that has bizarre and tragic consequences for everyone involved.

The film is, at its core, a coming-of-age story. As with many coming-of-age stories, it is also a love story. But *Natasha* charts another conflict too, a conflict of a very particular type: between old immigrants and new.

The film opens with an epigraph, a quote from Heraclitus: *It is the opposite that is good for us*. This teasing paradox is at the heart of the film. Everyone wants what they aren't equipped to have.

Setting

The film is set in Toronto's Russian immigrant community. This community, like many of the immigrant communities in Toronto, has its identifiable neighbourhood. It sits at the northern edge of the city, though much of it has now crept farther north, where housing developments are consuming farm fields with alarming speed. In this neighbourhood, living side by side, are different strata of Russian immigrants: those who are more established live in houses; the newcomers live in apartment buildings. On the streets, you can discern these different classes of people by the cars they drive, the clothes they wear, and even by their postures and expressions—the faces they present to the world. The neighbourhood is also multi-generational—young kids and the elderly share the streets and the parks. Family bonds are strong.

This atmosphere and this sense is reflected in the film, which is the story of a community told through the prism of one particular family. As relates to this particular community—that of Russian *émigrés* in Canada—it is a story that has been largely overlooked in cinema. What has been shown instead are stock characters and stereotypes—gangsters or *other* gangsters. *Natasha* portrays these people and this community with intimacy, depth, and nuance. The short story upon which the film is based is also widely acknowledged as having done precisely this—providing Canadian and international readers with an authentic representation of this fascinating and misunderstood community. The film is faithful to the story while at the same time taking advantage of the opportunities provided by a different medium. In other words, the film is faithful without being beholden.

Those familiar with the short story will quickly notice the main way in which the movie departs from the book: whereas the short story was set in the 1990s, the movie takes place in the present day. And though I am the original writer of the story and also the one who adapted it for the screen, I made the decision to update the story, as it were, as the film's director. Bringing the action into the present day—other than

providing certain production benefits (dispensing with costly and niggling period issues)—allows the story to become more inherently filmic. Computers, the Internet, cell phones, Facebook—the existence of these things has made the world more image-based, visual and global. The Natasha of the 1990s could only tell Mark about the things she'd done in Russia; the Natasha of 2015 can show him. From a cinematic and storytelling perspective, this is a tremendous advantage. And, of course, by bringing the story into the present day it also makes it more immediate for the viewer, removing the retrospective element.

Further, by showing this community as it exists right now, it enables me to say something about the community and about the wider Canadian culture in which it resides.

To make a film about a contemporary reality is to capture and preserve that reality, to leave a record of it for posterity.

Characters

Natasha

Natasha is the enigma at the heart of the film. She is fourteen years old: is she a child or is she a precociously cunning young woman? In Russia, at an even younger age, she appeared in pornography. Her attitude about this is blasé, even prideful. On the subject of sex, she seems completely uninhibited, more grown up than most grown-ups. And yet she still retains the innocence and naiveté of a child about other parts of life. She has been raised by her mother, Zina, her father having left them. But she despises and resents her mother. She considers her deceitful, grasping, neglectful. She is furious with her for moving them from Moscow and from Natasha's friends. What Natasha wants desperately is a normal family life, like the one she finds at the Berman household. And the fact that she and Mark are having an illicit love affair doesn't seem to affect her dream, as though, in her mind, the two things don't necessarily cancel each other out.

Mark

Mark is a smart and rebellious sixteen-year old kid, stifled by the suburbs and the conventional expectations of his immigrant parents. The film takes place in the summer, and it finds him avoiding a tedious job at a call centre owned by his uncle. What he'd rather do is deliver drugs for his small-time pot dealer and guru, Rufus. Along with drugs, Rufus also gives Mark books to read, philosophical and existential works: Nietzsche, Camus, Kafka. Already, Mark believes he is more sophisticated than his parents and he is hungry for real experience. That experience comes in the form of Natasha. She ushers him into a darker, stranger, crueller reality. It's what he craved, but he learns that he isn't equal to it.

Zina

Zina is Natasha's mother. She is forty and she's been matched with Fima, Mark's hapless older uncle. She dresses flamboyantly and behaves ingratiatingly. She fawns over Fima in a way Mark finds nauseating and false, but he is surprised that his family is quick to accept her and overlook, what seems to him, her dubious character and intentions. Why has Zina agreed to marry a stranger fifteen years her senior? Can it be that she truly has feelings for him? Or is she using him to get out of Russia and into Canada? She is a slippery character. But she's lived a hard life and learned the lessons of self-preservation. And even if she is

calculating and vindictive, is it all her fault? How much is she a victim of circumstance and who, between her and Natasha, is telling the truth?

Fima

Fima is Mark's great-uncle, his grandmother's younger brother. He is an intellectual, who lives too much in his own head. In the modern parlance, he may even be slightly on the Asperger's spectrum. His personal life has been a failure. He has no children and two previous broken marriages. He is kind, earnest, and easily manipulated. The entire family pities him and wants desperately for this current improbable marriage to Zina to succeed. But Fima is overmatched by Zina and she is soon exploiting and humiliating him. She runs up a massive phone bill to Russia—calls made, according to Natasha, to Natasha's father, a drunk. She often forces Fima to sleep on the living room sofa. So what keeps Fima from leaving her? Is it just his own weakness, a reluctance to end up alone again? Or is there something more lurid? Does it have something to do with the sexual power Zina holds over him or, more disturbingly, the sexual power Natasha holds? In the end, Fima commits an act that Mark finds hard to fathom and this act destroys Fima's marriage and also puts an end to Mark's relationship with Natasha.

Roman and Bella

These are Mark's parents. They are hard-working Russian Jewish immigrants to Canada. They have been living in the country for fifteen years and have managed to attain an admirable middle-class stability. They are professional people but by no means intellectuals. They have conventional expectations of themselves and of Mark, their only son. After fifteen years in Canada, they retain some elements of Russian culture and mentality, but they have internalized something of their adopted country: they have shed some of their fears and neuroses, the animal instincts needed for survival in a harsh society like Russia's. Because they have relaxed they are vulnerable to the chaos Zina and Natasha bring with them from the old country.

Rufus

Rufus is 20 years old and is something of an enigma himself. A self-styled enigma. He lives alone in a large suburban house. He studies philosophy at the University of Toronto. He deals drugs to the local neighbourhood kids but also runs some other vague businesses. Mark and the other kids in the neighbourhood are in thrall to him, idolize him. But to Mark, it seems that he and Rufus share a special affinity. From Rufus he believes he is learning how to be worldly and complex, but the truth is that Mark is unable to practice what Rufus preaches, to be a true Nietzschean, to be unapologetic in his pursuit of what he wants. By the end of the film, Mark painfully discovers that Rufus is a true Nietzschean. So is Natasha. The two of them are made for each other.

Visual Style

Though the film occupies only a few locations—primarily the Bermans' house and the suburban streets around it—I think of it as inhabiting two worlds. Two worlds that share the same spaces. One world is the world of the Berman family—Mark and his parents, uncles, aunts, cousin and grandparents—and the other world is the world of Mark and Natasha. The world of the family is seemingly warm and stable; the world of Mark and Natasha is cool and kinetic.

This principle undergirds the film's visual style. Broadly speaking, there is a subtle but discernible difference between the scenes with the family compared to those with Mark, Natasha and Rufus. The way the film is structured, it opens on Mark, Rufus, and their friends sneaking into somebody's outdoor swimming pool at night. The camerawork for this is dynamic and handheld, reflecting the energy of youth and the excitement of breaking the rules. The look is as naturalistic as possible, neither overlit nor over-processed, so as to bring the audience as close as possible to the experience.

All of the opening scenes follow this same approach—the party at Rufus's house, Mark walking home at night through the deserted suburban streets, and Mark descending into his basement room to watch a pornographic video on his laptop. But in the morning, when Bella wakes Mark up to prepare for Zina's first visit, the approach will change. The camerawork is more fixed, more composed, and the colour is warmer and brighter. The film continues in this vein—making these subtle shifts between one reality and another—until the end when it gradually melds into one shooting style, more cool and kinetic, to reflect the triumph of this world view.

For visual references, I have in mind a number of films, mostly French, which share a certain sensibility with *Natasha*. These are films about ordinary people set in marginal or unfashionable suburbs. I think of the films of the Dardenne brothers, *La Promesse*, for example. I think also of *The Dreamlife of Angels*, by Erick Zonca, a film that is now nearly 20 years old but which made a very deep impression on me. I think also of a few American independent films, *You Can Count on Me*, by Kenneth Lonergan, and *The Exploding Girl*, by Bradley Gray. All of these films are meticulously crafted but almost invisibly so. They achieve a very naturalistic look, but are at the same time undeniably beautiful and visually rich. It is a beauty and richness that is attained by rejecting all artifice and depicting reality as faithfully as possible. It is a type of filmmaking that values the dramatic, often domestic, struggles of ordinary people, and which privileges the story and the actors' performances above all. That was the goal for *Natasha*, to fashion a shooting style that will complement—but never overshadow—the story.

The Final Product

The story of *Natasha* has been with me for more than a decade. I wrote the original short story in 2001. Since then, I have continued to tell stories about this particular community. They were the subject of all the stories in the first collection; of my first feature, *Victoria Day*; and of my first novel, *The Free World*. I know this world very well and have an intimate connection to it.

But, of all the stories I have told about this community, none has had the impact of *Natasha*. It is still the story of mine that people reference most and one that continues to be read in high schools and universities across North America. People have a fascination with the tragic love story of Mark and Natasha. I admit that I still do too. There is something mysterious at its core that I've never worked out. It's a mystery that, ultimately, can't be worked out—which is true of life's most persistent mysteries.

Over the years, people have approached me to inquire after the rights, but I have always resisted. None of the offers seemed appropriate. Yet the more people inquired about it, the more convinced I became that a film could be made out of the story, and the more convinced I became that I was the person to do it. And so making *Natasha* turned into something of a fixation for me. For years I contemplated how I might best

adapt it until I finally arrived at the idea of bringing the story into the present day. That was the key to transposing the story from the page to the screen. This way, it seems to me, the film is able to have its own distinct identity while at the same time remaining true to the original. The film is at once new and familiar, which, to my mind, is the point of a screen adaptation. And, because I have returned to this story ten years older and wiser, I also believe that the film is in fact better, stronger, and deeper than the original.

BIOGRAPHIES

CREW

David Bezmozgis – Writer/Director

David Bezmozgis is an award-winning writer and filmmaker. David's stories have appeared in numerous publications including the New Yorker, Harpers, Zoetrope All-Story, and the Walrus.

His first book, *Natasha and Other Stories*, was published in 2004 in the US and Canada and was subsequently translated into fifteen languages. *Natasha* was a New York Times Notable Book, one of the New York Public Library's 25 Books to Remember for 2004, and an Amazon.com Top 10 Book for 2004. *Natasha* was nominated for the Guardian First Book Award (UK), the LA Times First Book Award (US), and the Governor General's Award (Canada). It won the Toronto Book Award and the Commonwealth Writer's Prize for First Book.

David has appeared at The New Yorker Festival, The UCLA Armand Hammer Museum, and the Luminato Festival. His work has been broadcast on NPR, BBC, and the CBC, and his stories have been anthologized in The Best American Short Stories 2005 & 2006.

In 2006, David was a screenwriting fellow at the Sundance Labs where he developed his first feature, *Victoria Day*. The film premiered in competition at the Sundance Film Festival in 2009, had a theatrical release in Canada, and received a Genie Award nomination for Best Original Screenplay.

In the summer of 2010, David was included in the New Yorker's 20 Under 40 issue, celebrating the twenty most promising fiction writers under the age of forty. *The Free World*, David's first novel, was published in 2011 in the U.S. Canada, the UK, Holland, Germany, Italy, France, Israel and Spain. It was a New York Times Notable Book for 2011 and a Globe and Mail Best Books Title for 2011. It was also shortlisted for the Scotiabank/Giller Prize, the Governor General's Award, The Trillium Prize, and won the Amazon.ca First Novel Award.

The Betrayers, David's second novel, was published in the summer of 2014 in Canada, UK and the U.S. It was a lead fiction title for HarperCollins Canada and Little, Brown U.S. with national press coverage, a six-city U.S. tour, a four-city Canada tour and an appearance at the prestigious Edinburgh International Book Festival.

He received a 2016 Canadian Screen Academy Award Nomination for Best Adapted Screenplay for *NATASHA*.

Born in Riga, Latvia, David lives in Toronto.

Bill Marks – Producer

Bill Marks began publishing the science fiction magazine *Mirriad* in 1979, printing early works by writers who would go on to become some of the most prominent in the genre, including Hugo-winner Robert J. Sawyer, Charles de Lint, S.M. Stirling and Tanya Huff.

He founded Vortex Comics Inc., in 1982 and built the company to be one of the top-ten publishers of English-language comic books in the world. Vortex is the winner of over 50 industry awards for excellence in content and sales. Vortex published such notable titles as Mister X, Black Kiss, and Yummy Fur, and brought to light such mainstays of the field as Neil Gaiman, Chester Brown, Seth, Maurice Vellekoop, Fiona Smyth and Gilbert and Jamie Hernandez, as well as publishing significant works by many of the industry's established stars. In 1989 Vortex published the hugely popular car-racing comics Legends of NASCAR, which were consistently among the 10 best-selling comics in North America during the entire run of the series.

In 1984 Marks co-founded Modern Imageworks Design with Dean Motter. This design and marketing company serviced a broad range of corporate and entertainment industry clients, and produced over 200 album covers, winning three Juno Awards for Best Album Cover Design.

Attending the Canadian Film Centre in 1994 as a producer resident, Marks produced numerous short films and directed the short films *The Lie* and *Jack Makes a Painting*.

He produced the feature films *Stolen Heart*, starring Randy Hughson, Lisa Ryder and Gary Farmer, and *Enter... Zombie King*, which he also wrote, winning the award for best screenplay at the Buenos Aires "Rojo Sangre" film festival. *Stolen Heart* was the winner of the award for Best Canadian Feature Film at the Victoria Independent Film Festival.

Marks has had an exceedingly prolific production 12 months or so, having produced six new feature films: *A Dark Truth*, starring Andy Garcia, Eva Longoria and Forest Whitaker, written and directed by Damian Lee and distributed by Magnolia Pictures; *Compulsion*, starring Heather Graham and Carrie-Anne Moss, and directed by Egidio Coccimiglio; *Breakout* starring Brendan Fraser and Dominic Purcell; *Swarnet*, starring the former Trailer Park Boys; Sidney J. Furie's *A Pride of Lions*; horror film *The Returned*; and *A Fighting Man*, starring Dominic Purcell, James Caan, Famke Janssen and Lou Gossett Jr..

Prior, Marks produced the film *Casino Jack*, starring Kevin Spacey, which was a Gala Premier at the 2010 Toronto International Film Festival. He produced and directed the feature films *14 Days in Paradise* and *Curse of the Iron Mask* as well as line produced *The Story of Luke*, starring Seth Green and Cary Elwes, and *Collaborator*, directed by Martin Donovan. Additionally Marks has line produced the feature films: *Terminal Rush*, starring Roddy Piper; *Moving Target*, with Billy Dee Williams; *Say Nothing*, starring Nastassja Kinski and William Baldwin, *Stormy Weather: The Music of Harold Arlen*, and David Bezmozgis' debut feature *Victoria Day*.

Deborah Marks – Producer

Deborah Marks has an extensive career in physical production, project development, and producing. She has produced both independent features (*The Third Eye* with Alan Hawco and Tara Spencer-Nairn, *Production Office* with Maury Chaykin and Shauna MacDonald) and US Cable TV movies (*Holiday Help* with Alicia Witt and Wallace Shawn, *Be My Valentine* with Billy Baldwin, *Silent Witness* with Dermot Mulroney and Anne Heche, *Salem Falls* with James Van Der Beek and *Double Wedding* with Tia and Tamera Mowry). She has worked for Universal Pictures, Studio Canal +, Disney, Lifetime Network, Hallmark Channel, TNT, and the Canadian networks Showcase and CBC.

Marks was awarded Best First Feature at the Raindance Film Festival for *Production Office* and the Directors Guild of Canada Award for Best Production Team for *John A: Birth of A Country* and produced the indie horror feature *WolfCop*, which had the 2nd highest per screen average in Canada on its opening weekend. Most recently, she produced the feature film *Natasha* directed by Canadian literary treasure and Giller prize nominee David Bezmozgis, based on his New York Times Notable Book.

Daniel Ostroff - Executive Producer

Natasha is Daniel Ostroff's eighth film as a producer. As the grandson of Russian Jewish immigrants, he is pleased to be part of the great team that is bringing this story to the screen. His other production credits include the award-winning *Of Two Minds*, which starred Kristin Davis and Tammy Blanchard, *12 Mile Road*, which starred Tom Selleck, *The Missing*, which was directed by Academy Award winner Ron Howard, and the acclaimed documentary, *Dogtown & Z-Boys*. Ostroff was nominated for an Emmy for his first film, *Snow in August*, which was based on the best-selling Pete Hamill novel. His movie *I Was a Teenage Faust* received a Writers Guild of America nomination for Best Script, and a Directors Guild of America nomination for Best Directing.

Julia Rosenberg – Co-Producer

As Head of Production and Development at Serendipity Point Films, Julia Rosenberg worked directly with Robert Lantos in guiding the production and development of several notable feature films. She is the co-producer of *Being Julia*, directed by István Szabó and starring Annette Bening; the Canadian box-office hit, *Men With Brooms*, directed by and starring Paul Gross; and Bruce McDonald's *Picture Claire*. Additionally, Julia was associate producer on Norman Jewison's *The Statement*, Atom Egoyan's *Ararat* and Istvan Szabo's award-winning *Sunshine*.

Julia is the producer of the first season of the Serendipity Point/Barna Alper co-venture *G-Spot* (2004), a television series starring Brigitte Bako; and associate producer of Atom Egoyan's *Where The Truth Lies* (2005), starring Kevin Bacon, Colin Firth and Allison Lohman.

After a decade of independent production in Montreal and another decade of feature film production in Toronto, Julia Rosenberg launched January Films, a boutique production company, in 2005. January Films' first production was the feature documentary *The Bodybuilder and I*, which won Best Canadian Documentary at Hot Docs 2007. The film, by first time director Bryan Friedman, received significant critical acclaim, a domestic theatrical release and notable festival placement, including a US premiere at the prestigious Palm Springs Film Festival.

Julia Rosenberg is co-producer of Jeremy Podeswa's *Fugitive Pieces*, which was the Opening Night Film of the Toronto International Film Festival, 2007 and the recipient of numerous important awards such as Best Actor at the Rome Film Festival, 2007.

Julia premiered *Real Time*, starring Randy Quaid and Jay Baruchel, as the opening night film of the Slamdance Film Festival and then to home audiences at the Toronto International Film Festival. Both actors received strong critical praise, with Randy Quaid recently winning the best actor award from the Vancouver Critics Circle.

At TIFF, Julia also premiered the feature documentary by painter Margaux Williamson, *Teenager Hamlet* as part of the Future Projections program.

In November, 2013, a film Julia developed for over two years that was eventually produced by her original German co-producers, *Omamamia*, was released to a general wide release in Germany. Julia is Executive Producer.

In 2013, Julia completed Alan Zweig's new documentary feature *15 Reasons To Live*. It premiered at HotDocs and was released theatrically in Canada in October, 2013.

January Films' slate encompasses feature, documentary and television projects. Drawing on her relationships at home and abroad, Julia is producing with both Canadian and international talent and financing.

Guy Godfree – Cinematographer

Guy Godfree's parents must have done something right to foster creativity in his family's home, as he is a sibling to both an accomplished stage actor and a singing major. Not to be outdone, Guy has established himself as a visionary cinematographer—a leading talent who puts purpose to his work, carrying his creative convictions in tow.

Guy makes filmwork to behold. He possesses the uncommon skill for subtlety: affecting moods without posing distractions to the audience. Guy is all too aware that film can alter one's perception of the world, and consequently he works with a strong sense of pedagogical responsibility for what the culture of films and media communicate. He wants to make films about people. Humans. The stories that ought to be told.

Guy's feature cinematography work includes *Patch Town*, directed by Craig Goodwill, which premiered at the 2013 Whistler International Film Festival, and *Nocturne*, with director Saul Pincus.

His work on the short film *Frost* won him the award for Best Dramatic Short Cinematography at the 2013 Canadian Society of Cinematographers Awards. Guy also lensed *Becoming*, with director Ayelen Liberona and Joseph Cami, which premiered at the 2009 World Wide Short Film Festival, winning the Emerging Filmmaker Award. Guy worked with New York based director Douglas Karr to shoot the award winning short film *Ten for Grandpa*, which premiered at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival, before going on to over 40 other film festivals worldwide.

Guy spends roughly half his days in New York, where he soaks up the dense inspiration of Big Apple culture.

BIOGRAPHIES

CAST

Alex Ozerov – Mark

Alex Ozerov was born in Tula, Russia and immigrated to Toronto at the age of 13. After taking drama at school, he took an instant interest in acting. Alex then began studying the craft with filmmaker Walter Alza in 2006 at the Alza Acting Studio.

Ozerov has been consistently working in television since a young age, most recently filming recurring roles on BBC America's ORPHAN BLACK and Syfy's BITTEN. Previously, he has landed guest star appearances on ABC's ROOKIE BLUE, TNT's TRANSPORTER: THE SERIES, Disney Channel's WHAT'S UP WARTHOGS, CBC's CRACKED, and History Television's PERFECT STORM.

Alex made his feature film debut in Jason Buxton's award winning film BLACKBIRD, which premiered at the 2012 Toronto International Film Festival. He has continued working in film, appearing in the independent features MOLLY MAXWELL and THE DARK STRANGER, and the award-winning GUIDANCE, which premiered at the 2014 Toronto International Film Festival. Alex starred in leading roles in the Canadian indies NATASHA and COCONUT HERO, which opened nationwide in Canada this past spring. This fall, he can be seen playing a supporting role in the film adaptation of the New York Times best seller THE HISTORY OF LOVE, opposite Gemma Arterton and Sophie Nélisse.

Alex can currently be seen on Hulu's original series FREAKISH and is also recurring on FX's critically acclaimed series THE AMERICANS.

Sasha K. Gordon – Natasha

Sasha was born and raised in Odessa, Ukraine and moved to the U.S. at the age of 16. She holds a degree in Marketing and Finance from Fordham University and is a proud member of Wednesday Repertory Company in New York. She garnered a Canadian Screen Awards nomination for Best Actress for her title role in Natasha. The film also got a nomination for Best Adapted Screenplay. Sasha made her directorial debut in a short film titled Unique New York, which she also wrote and starred in.

Deanna Dez mari – Bella

Deanna Dez mari is a Russian born actress who has been steadily working in film and TV for eighteen years. While in Canada she has starred in feature films *UKM: The Ultimate Killing Machine* with Michael Madsen, *Bag the Wolf* and *Away From Her*, directed by Sarah Polley. TV credits include recurring roles on *Regenesis*, *MVP*, *11 Cameras* and *METROPIA*. She currently lives and continues to work in St Petersburg, Russia, with her director husband Pavel Malkov and their daughter. Deanna is also an accomplished painter of religious icons, portraits and murals.

Genadijs Dolganovs – Roman

Genadijs is originally from Latvija and has been living and working in Canada since 1999. He has appeared in over 20 film and television productions. He earned a Gemini Award nomination for his work in the CTV series *The Bridge*. Other film and television credits include: *Max Payne*, *Devil*, *Crash & Burn*, *ZOS* and *Living In Your Car*. Genadijs has a Masters Degree in Acting and Directing and also works on the stage and as a children's circus entertainer.

Igor Ovadis – Fima

Igor Ovadis studied acting at the Leningrad Institute of Theatre, Music, and Cinematography under the supervision of Zinovy Korogodski. After his graduation, he became a permanent member of the St. Petersburg Theatre Company where he had the chance to play many lead roles for 17 years. At the age of 23, he started teaching at his alma mater, gaining experience both as a teacher and a director. For the past 25 years, however, he has made Montreal his home and has been teaching at Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Montréal since 1992. He's appeared often in film and television, most notably as the lead in *Cosmos*, as well as in *Starbuck* and *Friends from France*, and played principal parts in television series *10-07*, *Affaire Kafka*, *Jack Carter* and *Minuit, le soir*. He has played in and directed numerous stage productions, including Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Wajdi Mouawad's *Six personnages en quête d'auteurs* and Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*.

Aidan Shipley – Rufus

Aidan Shipley graduated in 2014 from the Ryerson film program in which he pursued his passions in both directing and acting. His acting work has allowed him to work with some of Canada's best filmmakers, including Atom Egoyan with his role alongside Ryan Reynolds among others in *The Captive*, which made its première at the Cannes Film Festival. During his time at Ryerson he became the recipient of the Harvey Hart Award for directing, as well as the Norman Jewison Filmmaker Award for his third and fourth year films. His third year film *Bridges* and his fourth year film *Dorsal* have played at major festivals across Canada and internationally. He also co-produced the short film, *Running Season*, which premiered at TIFF, won the award for Best Canadian Short at the Whistler Film Festival and was screened at the 2015 Slamdance Film Festival. Most recently, he is the co-director/writer of Bravofact short *Boxing*.

Aya-Tatyana Stolnits – Zina

Aya is an actress, director, producer, international life coach, painter, poet, motivational speaker and art healer, based in Israel and Canada. She graduated from the Beit Zvi School for the Performing Arts in Israel and has performed in over 80 plays and shows, as well as 5 feature films. She has been nominated for the "Israel Prize for Theatre" and is three times winner of the title Best Actress of the Year (1997-1999). She's also the Founder and Creative Director of Theatre Studio "Bravo", Toronto; the Founder of "The Power of Art" community (Canada, Israel), an educational programme for creative thinking and imagination and the Founder of the "School of the Ancient Beauty" (Canada, Israel), working with women to awaken their inner feminine power and self-awareness.

NATASHA

Mongrel Media Presents in Association with **TAJJ Media** a **Vortex Words + Pictures** Production
"NATASHA"

Alex Ozerov • Deanna Dez mari • Genadijs Dolganovs • Igor Ovadis
Aidan Shipley • Aya-Tatyana Stolnits • Pavel Tsitrinel • and Introducing Sasha K. Gordon
Production Designer **Peter Cosco** • Costume Designer **Ginger Martini** • Casting by **Marsha Chesley, C.D.C.**
Editor **Michelle Szemberg** • Cinematographer **Guy Godfree**
Executive Producers **Daniel Ostroff Aeschylus Poulos Hussain Amarshi Jeff Sackman**
Co-Producer **Julia Rosenberg** • Produced by **Bill Marks Deborah Marks**
Written and Directed by **David Bezmozgis**

Produced in
Association with



January films



Canada



Mark Alex Ozerov
Natasha Sasha K. Gordon
Bella Deanna Dez mari
Roman Genadijs Dolganovs
Fima Igor Ovadis
Rufus Aidan Shipley
Zina Aya-Tatyana Stolnits
Meyer Pavel Tsitrinel
Dora Mila Kanev
Zhana Lola Tash
Faina Alla Kadysh
Gena Sergiy Kotelenets
Daniel John Mavro
Older Pool Guy Jonathan Purdon
Kid #1 Joshua Teixeira
Vadim Grisha Pasternak
Judge David Boyce

Written and Directed by David Bezmozgis
Based on the Story "Natasha" by David Bezmozgis

Produced by Bill Marks
Deborah Marks
Co-Producer Julia Rosenberg
Executive Producers Daniel Ostroff
Aeschylus Poulos
Hussain Amarshi
Jeff Sackman

Production Designer Peter Cosco
Costume Designer Ginger Martini
Casting by Marsha Chesley, C.D.C.
Editor Michelle Szemberg
Cinematographer Guy Godfree

Production Manager Deborah Marks
1st Assistant Director David Sparkes
2nd Assistant Director Kira McCord
Production Supervisor Geoff Ewart

Stunt Coordinator Steve Lucescu
Script Supervisor Jennifer Capraru
A-Camera 1st Assistant Demetri Portelli
A-Camera 2nd Assistant Brian Cassar
B-Camera 2nd Assistant Tisa Dixit

Sound Mixer	David Ottier
Boom Operator	Dennis Nicholson
Key Grip	Todd Thompson
Best Boy	Daniel M. Veldman
Grip	Devin Myler
Gaffer	Ryan Hernandez
Best Boy Electric	Sam Lebel-Wong
Property Master	Joseph Kabbach
Assistant Property Master	Maggie Shain
Set Decorator	David Gruer
Set Dresser	Daniel Cipilinsky
Set Decoration Buyer	Laura Keightley
Special Effects Coordinator	Warren Appleby
Assistant Costume Designer	Chelsea Oliver
Key Hair & Make-Up	Kelly Kavanagh
Hair/Make-Up Assistants	Olga Kirnos
	Elyse Marion
Assistant Production Coordinator	Paula Hamilton
3rd Assistant Director	Fatima Palhetas
Production Assistant	Naomi Andrews
Business Affairs Executive	Judith Cogan-Andrews
Executive Assistant to Mr. Marks	Trina Hickey
Delivery Supervisor	Oliver Groom
Production Assistant	Vivienne Leith
Production Accountant	Stacey McKay
Post-Production Accountant	Amanda MacDonald
Location Managers	Kyle O'Connor
	Stanley Lidon
Assistant Location Manager	Ron McKenzie
Security/Locations PA	Branden Scherenzel
Background Casting	Rita Bertucci
Unit Publicity	Cinécoup Media, Vancouver
	Amy Lennon
Stills Photographers	Christos Kalohoridis
	Elly Dassas
Transportation Coordinator	Adam Crawford
Drivers	Larry Greer
	Steve May
Catering	Blazing Kitchens, Toronto
	Donnie Blais
Craft Service	Patrick Moore
Assistant Editor	Orlee Buim
Sound Editing & Mixing Services	Tattersall Sound & Picture, Toronto
Dialogue Editor	Krystin Hunter
Sound Effects Editors	Claire Dobson
	Steve Medeiros

Re-Recording Mixers Matthew Chan
Graham Rogers
Assistant Re-Recording Mixers James Bastable
Alex Aslund

Post-Production Services Provided by The Rolling Picture Company, Toronto
Post Production Coordinator Brandon Tobia
Digital Colourist Drake Conrad
Online Editor David Hermiston
Dailies Technician Scott Hannigan
Post Production Technician Kevin Mitchner
Foley Artists Tim O'Connell
Marilee Yorston
Foley Recordist Dave Mercel

With Special Thanks to David McCallum
Kathy Choi
Brent Pickett
Anna Szakaly
Jesse Wyatt

Visual Effects Gary Couto
Motion Graphics Andrew Chiu

Music Supervision by Silent Joe, Toronto
Marco Di Felice
Jane Heath
Jody Colero
Natasha Duprey
Music Consultant Talia Newman

"Dance With Me"
Composed by Adam Green
Published by BMG Chrysalis
Performed by Adam Green
Courtesy of Adam Green

"Foolish Hearts" (Tribe of Zebras remix)
Composed by Tristan Orchard, Andrew Janczewski,
Daniel Ruiz, Robert Cameron
Published by BESTiE, Tribe of Zebras
Performed by BESTiE
Courtesy of Bleed101 Music

"Fell In Love With A Stripper"
Composed by Tristan Orchard, Andrew Janczewski,
Daniel Ruiz, Robert Cameron
Published by BESTiE
Performed by BESTiE
Courtesy of Bleed101 Music

"The Bells"
Composed by Elizabeth Boland, Justin Broad, Paul Herman
Published by Voxwatch, BMG Chrysalis, Peer Music
Performed by Lowell
Courtesy of Arts & Crafts Productions Inc.

"Fineshrine"

Composed by Corin Roddick, Megan James

Published by We Are Free

Performed by Purity Ring

Courtesy of 4AD Ltd by Arrangement with
Beggars Group Media Limited and of Last Gang Records

"Weird Life"

Composed by Ryan Hemsworth

Published by People's Champ Management

Performed by Ryan Hemsworth

Courtesy of Last Gang Records

"Chubchik"

A traditional Russian folk song

Performed and Arranged by Pyotr Leshchenko

Courtesy of Melodiya Records

"Symphony No. 2" (2nd Movement)

Composed by Gustav Mahler

Performed by Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra

Courtesy of Naxos of America, Inc.

"The Marilyn Denis Show" Footage Provided by CTV © 2014 Bell Media Inc.

Clip from the "Toptuni" TV Show Courtesy of HTB Canada Inc.

Painting "We Were Rich" by Margaux Williamson

Courtesy of Margaux Williamson

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Account Manager	Catherine Kunz
Legal Services for the National Bank of Canada	Miller Thompson LLP Jonathan Dyck
Production Legal	Dentons Canada LLP David Steinberg Jayme Alter
Camera Equipment Supplied by	SIM Digital Melanie Watier Craig Milne John DeBoer
Lighting and Grip Equipment Supplied by	PS Production Services Steve Hancock

Produced with the Participation of



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