



EASTWEST FILMDISTRIBUTION PRESENTS

Urvurga



A MYTHOLOGICAL THRILLER IN THE WILD



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LOGLINE

An uptight rafting instructor loses his clients to the dank waters and dark forests of a river valley pregnant with the paranormal. Bound by the roots of their pagan past and submerged in unconscious passions: do they want to be saved?

FILM TRAILER [click]

FILM STILLs [click]

SYNOPSIS

Andrejs is an adventure guide who is afraid of real adventures. But that's what he gets when his sister, an influencer, goes missing in the valley of a wild river, together with a vegan-sausage advertising crew. Facing ancient forces of nature, Andrejs' deepest anxieties awaken as he engages in a futile search that pushes his body and mind to the extreme. During his journey, the young man will meet locals such as a silent cabbage fermenter and a weird brotherhood of hunters who speak a language totally of their own. They are the protectors of a wondrous natural phenomena, haunting and beautiful at the same time. Andrejs doesn't know that every path in this strange forest leads exactly to the thing you are looking for - but to find it, you must first get lost.





UGIS OLTE [writer & director]

"I grew up in the Latvian countryside, a fact that comes with serious side effects. I was once desperately lost in a forest that I knew by heart and had to beg a gang of wild boars to leave me alone after I had accidentally stepped into their lair. Another time, I almost drowned twice on the same day in a creek that is only a foot deep. Now, I have translated my personal sense of Latvian forests, rivers, and small villages into the mythological thriller "Upurga", which tells the story of a young man's initiation in facing the ancient forces of Nature. It's a story dealing with elements I know by heart. The viewer is seated on the shoulder of our main protagonist, Andrejs, and follows his wandering viewpoint as he delves deeper and deeper into a mystery that is much bigger than himself. The film's tone attempts to forge opposing elements as it meanders from menacing dread to quirky humour, and from believable realism to mythological dreamscapes."





BOJANA BABIC [co-writer]

“When I read the first draft of *Upurga*, my immediate thought was that it was like no other screenplay I’d ever read before. The tone, the characters, and the atmosphere of the story drew me into the peculiar universe of the film, compelling me to keep exploring it. I was very excited to work on the script as a co-writer mainly because I saw potential in the mystery of the story; in the main character’s relationships with those that he encounters on his journey; with the forces of nature that keep challenging him; and with his own desires and demons.

As I got to know Uģis Olte’s previous work, especially his documentary films *Liberation Day* and *Double Aliens*, I was further convinced by his clear director’s vision and his peculiar poetic approach to storytelling. But what I found most interesting is the genre of the film – for me, the best way to describe *UPURGA* is to call it a deconstructed Baltic fairytale. I feel that in the current state of so-called European film, where there is a constant influx of simplistic social commentary, this is boldly refreshing.”

LUCAS ABRAHÃO [co-writer]

“When Uģis introduced me to the idea of *Upurga*, I couldn’t at first make sense of it. I just knew that it was a strange, strange fairytale -- equally dark, comic, and dream-like -- that somehow resonated with me. It felt creative, uncompromising, and free. It was a weird project, for sure, and it was funny, for sure, and it was brutal and nightmarish, for sure. But what was really captivating was its rawness and honesty. All the outlandish imagery was coming from a place of truth. It was this point, coupled with a gut feeling telling me that this would be a great process, that urged me to join the team.

Upurga is deeply rooted in Latvian mythology, so it took a lot of learning for a Brazilian like me to be able to feel confident about the material. Throughout the process, though, I started to realize the universal nature behind all the specific details. Myths and dreamlike narratives make for universal, relatable experiences. Themes such as coming-of-age and the discovery of the savage world of our desires as well. As we were writing, it became clear to me that this experience was one that could be enjoyed by filmgoers way beyond borders, and I believe that we managed to create a powerful, oneiric film, local in frame and universal in scope.

I am very proud and glad to be part of this collaboration, and I sincerely believe that *Upurga* has potential to create a lasting impact on audiences.”



VALDIS CELMINS [director of photography]

"I was intrigued by the eerily mythical visions from the unconscious, which little by little unmask the background of the protagonist's past. And above all, there is invincible nature with her age-old order of things."

THESSA MOOIJ [publicist]

"Even though the film has a very strong mystical side, rather than straight-up horror - it still racks up tension in ways that I didn't expect. After I saw the film, I had a pretty intense nightmare that was triggered by a seemingly small detail - the older woman and her bloody mouth lying underneath a moss-covered tree trunk - so it must have certainly crept into my mind overnight."

ULDIS CEKULIS [producer]

"The question of finding oneself, and in doing so not disappearing in the denseness of our reality, is and will be a pressing challenge in our modern times. And this is certainly not a fairytale; rather an adventure that, with a light dose of humour, intertwines the modern world with mythological components rooted in the Latvian soil."





ANDREJS

A 28-year old adventure and team-building guide, who carries out his work like a well-raised boy - pedantically, without risk, and controlling every detail. As a result, he himself has yet to experience any real adventure.

IGORS SELEGOVSKIS [actor]

"I experienced big changes in my life after I turned 28. These changes I experienced as a metamorphosis: from a boy to a man. A new start, a new me. It turned out that my death and my rebirth took place in the woods of Ergli village and in a river - in the flesh and blood of the true mother. I say 'it turned out', but it wasn't really a chance happening since as far as I know, I am not the only one to have died and been born there."





MATIASS

A musician, actor, and influencer who lives life to the full, savouring his vitality and craving for adventure, being unafraid to be provocative in his relationships with those around him. In the shadow of his cocky demeanour, however, lies a warm-hearted and empathetic guy who likes to catalyze situations, rather than passively making do with those offered up by life.

RIHARDS Sniegs [actor]

“On the surface, Matiass is, to most people, just a goofball, but if you dig deeper, you get to know this kind-hearted guy who puts on a show just to make life a little easier to live.”





EVA

The project manager of an advertising agency, whose aggressive and overbearing front hides a woman who though in her full bloom, is confused - instinctively feeling that in her everyday life she serves the interests of those with values different to her.

INGA TROPA [actress]

“When creating this work, I experienced a peculiar and unforgettable initiation ritual, both individual and collective. When my sickly ego gained, unnoticed, the upper hand, I found it healthy to get lost on the rapids of the river, the rutted muddy pathways, the overgrown gullies, and the thickets of the forest in order to allow the repressed emotions to break out in a free, primal scream. So as to wake up my inner animal and in so doing lay myself bare and merge with the womb of Mother Nature to die losing my pride and ideas of omnipotence.”





MARA

Andrejs's sister, whose youth and qualities have led her on to the career path of an influencer. Courted, caressed, and annoyingly guarded on all sides, she is subconsciously ripe for an explosive blooming.

ELVITA RAGOVSKA [actress]

"Heaven and hell are within us."





OSKARS

The ideal advertising agency videographer - a friendly, handsome, and self-confident master of all trades. He can film, edit, operate drones and write music. Moreover, in his film sequences, he doesn't search for deep layers of meaning. Rather he creates, with a light touch, dynamic, social-media friendly content.

REINIS BOTERS [actor]

"To my mind, Oskars shows that it is not always necessary to dig deep. You don't always need sadness, melancholy, and tears in the mist. Now and again you also need something exciting, quickly assembled, and topped off with something extreme. But if you love, you have to do so completely and animalistically."





INSPECTOR SALINS

Upurga valley's only policeman, head of a hunting brotherhood, park ranger, and the passionate guardian of the local secrets. So many tasks can only be undertaken by the kind of person who is yet to find his true place.

MORTEN TRAAVIK [actor]

"Inspector Salins is a kind of "last of the Mohicans", a keeper of the flame, or rather, the dying embers of Livonian culture in the area. Denied the powers of a shaman, he chooses the mantle of the guardian and shepherd instead."





THE OLD WOMAN IN THE WOOD

No one can be completely sure whether she really is a lost berry-picker or rather a human form adopted by a spirit of nature, who one could meet in the forest twilight not just today, but always.

MARA KIMELE [actress]

"I feel a strong relationship to this old forest woman. Since I was a child I have had an urge to go into - inside - a tree. And I still believe that it can be done - you just have to want it even more powerfully. Humans are nature."





THE CABBAGE-MAN

An ex-forest worker who 26 years previously had experienced an unusual initiation in the lap of Mother Nature. Since that day he hasn't uttered a word. He did, however, begin fermenting the world's best sauerkraut.

UGIS PRAULINS [actor]

"There is a lot of the cabbage-man in me, though the peace one can find fermenting cabbage is something I have yet to look forward to. A non-speaking character is everyone's ideal. To see the world in its harmony and balance (with all its evil-doers, do-gooders, hormonal storms, and academics) and to not spend time and energy on non-essential things - chatting 'about life', eloquent judgments on 'how things ought to be' and so on."



UPURGA

85 min, 2021, Latvia

Genre: **mythological thriller, drama, adventure**

Specs: **DCP 4K, sound 5.1, color**

World premiere: **Tallin Black Nights festival, 2021**

Writer & director: **Ugis Olte**

Co-writers: **Bojana Babic & Lucas Abrahão**

Cinematographer: **Valdis Celmins**

Production designers: **Janis Kalnins, Lasma Olte**

Sound designer & mixer: **Artis Dukalskis**

Composer: **Reinis Sejans**

Editor: **Gatis Belogrudovs**

Costume designer: **Jurate Silakaktina**

Makeup artist: **Maija Gundare**

Visual effects: **Nauris Asenkampfs, Aigars Gercans, Ugis Olte**

Main cast: **Igors Selegovskis, Inga Tropa, Rihards Sniegs,**

Elvita Ragovska, Reinis Boters, Morten Traavik

Producers: **Uldis Cekulis, Raitis Abele**

Production company: **VFS Films**

Cinema distributor for Latvia: **Sergejs Timonins (SPEKTRS)**

Supporter: **State Culture Capital Foundation of Latvia**





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