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Present

BRIGHTON 4TH

A film by Levan Koguashvili

Georgia, Russia, Bulgaria, Monaco, USA | 95 min. | 2021

OFFICIAL SELECTION
TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL 2021

INTERNATIONAL SALES

Loco Films

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LOGLINE

Brighton 4th tells the story of Kakhi, a Georgian ex-wrestler who travels from Tbilisi to Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, to help his son Soso find a way out of a gambling debt.

SYNOPSIS

Former wrestling champion Kakhi (Levan Tediashvili, himself a former Olympic wrestling champion) always has his family on his conscience, and in *Brighton 4th*, this leads him on a journey from his home in the Republic of Georgia to visit his son Soso (Giorgi Tabidze) in the Russian-speaking neighborhood of Brighton Beach, Brooklyn. There he finds Soso living in a shabby boarding house populated by a colorful group of fellow Georgian immigrants. And Soso is not studying medicine, as Kakhi believed, but is working for a moving company and has accrued a \$14,000 gambling debt to a local mob boss. Kakhi sets his mind to helping his hapless son out of his debt, leading to situations as often comic as they are dire.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Kakhi, a former wrestling champion from Georgia, travels to New York to visit his son Soso, who lives in the immigrant neighbourhood of Brighton Beach, Brooklyn. Soso left for New York a few years earlier in order to pass medical exams and become an American doctor.

In Brooklyn, Kakhi finds out that Soso works at a moving company, lives in a boarding house and, instead of studying for exams, spends his time gambling. By the time Kakhi arrives, Soso has accumulated a \$14,000 gambling debt, which he owes to Amir, an ex-wrestler and local mafia guy. Soso has a few days left to pay off this debt. In addition, Soso needs money to arrange a fake marriage with a social worker, Lena, to obtain a US green card.

Kakhi gives Soso \$2,000 he brought with him from home. Father and son go to see Amir at a local restaurant to offer this money to as partial payment. There is a card game in progress. Amir won't accept partial payment, only the whole amount. One of the players has to leave and gives his place at the table to Soso. Soso starts playing and loses Kakhi's money. He starts arguing at the table and is dragged outside and beaten by Amir's thugs. He is told that he must pay the debt, and that they know where he lives.

Soso hides from the thugs in Lena's apartment. Kakhi talks to his wife Maka on Skype and tells her that things are OK with their son. Kakhi is asked by a housemate from the boarding house to help him get money from a Kazakh man who extorts money from Georgian women

who clean motels in New Jersey. Kakhi takes part in the kidnapping of the Kazakh guy, but after learning that he needs money for his sick father in Alma-Ata, he lets him go.

Kakhi's last option to help his son is to talk one on one with Amir. Kakhi offers him a wrestling challenge — if Kakhi wins, Soso's debt will be forgiven. Amir agrees. They go to the beach. Kakhi wins the wrestling match, but his heart fails. He is brought to the hostel, where he dies. Fellow Georgian men come to the house to sing a farewell song to Kakhi — the champion.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT, Levan Koguashvili

Brighton Beach is a neighbourhood in Brooklyn mainly inhabited by immigrants from the former USSR.

It's a place where one can easily survive without speaking English as postings around the area are mainly in Russian and in the streets Russian, Georgian or Armenian is more commonly spoken than English.

Brighton Beach is often the first stop in America for people who have just arrived from the post Soviet world. It's a place where they get used to being immigrants, where they make their first steps into the "real America" of New York.

For many, America — the land of opportunity — begins in Brighton Beach and ends in Brighton Beach, because they can't leave this place.

They are unable to adjust to "real America" to learn English and so they stay forever in the familiar Russian world of the neighbourhood. It is a social and often mental state when one is in the US and the non-existent Soviet Union at the same time. One wants to start a new life, but can't get rid of the past.

Brighton Beach is very cinematic place where our story — a universal and eternal story of the relationship between father and son — takes place. This is the combination that I believe makes our film interesting — the unique character and texture of Brighton Beach on one hand and a human story on the other. *Brighton 4th* is a Georgian film that takes place in outer Brooklyn. The film is about Georgians whose behavior, mentality, songs, and tragicomedy are also highly cinematic to me. The film is the mixture of these two cinematic phenomena: Georgia and New York.

Adding to the film's dual sense of place is the fact that, in addition to the professional actors at the film's center, the cast is largely made up of Russian-speaking non-professionals who live and work in Brighton Beach and it is shot in real locations in the area.

FILM TEAM BIOS

Levan Koguashvili, Director, Writer and Producer

Born in Tbilisi in 1973, Levan Koguashvili studied Film Production at the Georgian State University of Theatre and Cinema in Tbilisi, but a year after he began his studies a war broke out in Georgia and he started to work as a journalist for the first independent Georgian television station. Between 1995 and 1999, Levan studied Film Directing at the Russian State Institute of Film (VGIK) in Moscow. In 2007, he graduated from Tisch School of the Art's Graduate Film Program at New York University.

Levan's short film, *The Debt* (2005), won a number of awards at international film festivals and was in the official selection of the 2006 Sundance Film Festival. His documentaries, *Father and Son* (2003) and *The Women from Georgia* (2008), have also taken part in many film festivals and been awarded prizes.

His first feature film, *Street Days*, was an international success. The film premiered in the Tiger Award Competition of the Rotterdam Film Festival in 2010 and was regarded by many critics as the beginning of a new wave of the modern Georgian cinema.

According to Jay Weissberg of *Variety*, "Georgian cinema has a new star in director Levan Koguashvili, whose superb neorealist drama, 'Street Days,' is just the calling card the beleaguered country needs. Lensed with impressive assurance and boasting powerful perfs from a combo of established pros and non-pros, 'Street Days' looks poised to lead a Georgian renaissance spearheaded by fests and advancing into the arthouse circuit."

In 2013, Levan made his second narrative feature, *Blind Dates*, which world-premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival and received multiple festival awards.

In 2016, he directed the documentary *Gogita's New Life*. The film received an IDFA nomination for the best feature-length documentary and screened at festivals around the world.

Irakli Rodonaya, Producer

Irakli Rodonaya's career in film started in 2013. Since then he has produced three feature films and several successful Russian TV shows. After leaving Nebo Films in 2015, along with a few of his close friends, he started Moskvich Films company, concentrating on films with potential social impact. Their first project was Levan Koguashvili's documentary *Gogita's New Life*, which received an IDFA nomination for the best feature-length documentary in 2016.

Producer Rodonaya and director Koguashvili first talked about *Brighton 4th* in 2015. Levan pitched two ideas: one Georgian film and one New York Brighton Beach story. Brighton Beach got the green light. Later, after the Georgian National Film Centre and Bulgarian National Film Centre supported the project, co-producer Stefan Kitanov came on board, followed by Koguashvili's longtime producer Olena Yershova. Yershova pitched the project to French producer Michele Merkt who joined the project along with his wife Kateryna Merkt.

Olena Yershova, Producer

Olena Yershova graduated as a film director at the Kyiv State Theater and Film Institute. Her graduation short film *Demoniada* premiered in the short film competition in the Locarno Film Festival.

Yershova worked for many years as executive director of the Molodist Kyiv IFF (Ukraine) and for two years as the development manager of the Eurasia Film Market (Antalya, Turkey). She executive produced *My Joy* by Sergei Loznitsa (Germany/Ukraine/The Netherlands), which premiered in competition at Cannes in 2010 and received numerous awards worldwide. In 2011 she created the company TatoFilm, which operates in Ukraine and in Turkey. She produced nine feature films and three feature documentaries, which received more than 140 awards at international film festivals. They include: *Everything Will Not Be Fine* by Adrian Pirvu (2020); *Volcano* by Roman Bondarchuk (2018); *Frost* by Sarunas Bartas (2017); *Falling* by Maryna Stepanska (2017); *Gogita's New Life* by Levan Koguashvili (2016); *Motherland* by Senem Tuzen (2015); and *Blind Dates* by Levan Koguashvili (2013). Her latest film, *Anatolian Leopard* by Emre Kayis Lab, is in post-production.

Olena Yershova is a head of Antalya Film Forum in frame of Antalya IFF (2019 - 2020) and has served as a member of the jury of Karlovy Vary IFF, Warsaw IFF, European Film Festival in Lecce, Odessa IFF, Ankara IFF, Haifa IFF, and Minsk IFF Listapad. She is a member of the the Asian Pacific Screen Academy, the European Film Academy, the Ukrainian Film Academy, and the European Producers Club.

Michel Merkt, Producer

Michel Merkt is a producer known for *Elle* (2016), *Toni Erdmann* (2016) and *Capharnaüm* (2018).

Boris Frumin, Writer

Boris Frumin, born in 1947, is a Latvian film director and script writer. Frumin's film *Errors of Youth* was screened in the Un Certain Regard section at the 1989 Cannes Film Festival. His other films as a writer-director, *Black and White* (1992) and *Viva Castro!* (1994), premiered at the Sundance and Locarno festivals respectively. His project *Siberian Triangle* was presented at the 32nd Moscow International Film Festival. *Brighton 4th* marks his third collaboration as a screenwriter with Levan Koguashvili, having written the scripts for *Street Days* and *Blind Dates*.

Frumin is an associate professor at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, where he shares his passion for neorealism and Eastern European film.

Phedon Papamichael, Cinematographer

Phedon Papamichael is an acclaimed Greek-born cinematographer who has twice been nominated for the Academy Award for Best Cinematography (Aaron Sorkin's *The Trial of the Chicago 7* and Alexander Payne's *Nebraska*) and twice also for the BAFTA Award for Best Cinematography (*Nebraska* and James Mangold's *Ford v Ferrari*).

Papamichael now counts over forty-five features to his credit as a DOP, including the early blockbusters *While You Were Sleeping* and *Cool Runnings*, as well as *Phenomenon*, all directed by Jon Turteltaub. Other early credits include *The Million Dollar Hotel*, directed by Wim Wenders, which was chosen as the Opening Film the Berlinale in 2000 and won the Grand Jury Prize, the Silver Bear and the Golden Camera.

He has worked regularly with directors James Mangold, Alexander Payne, Wim Wenders, Oliver Stone, George Clooney, and many others, and has also directed films, such as *Sketch Artist*, *Dark Side of Genius*, and *From Within*, *Arcadia Lost*. Other DOP credits include *America's Sweethearts*, *Sideways*, *Walk the Line*, *The Weather Man*, *W*, *The Monuments Men*, *The Descendants*, *Downsizing*, and *3:10 to Yuma*. He is soon set to shoot James Mangold's untitled fifth Indiana Jones film.

CAST

Kakhi - Levan Tediashvili (b. 1948) is a non-professional actor and a former Soviet (Georgian) wrestler and Olympic champion in Freestyle wrestling in 1972 and 1976. A five-time world champion, he remained undefeated between 1971 and 1976. Besides freestyle wrestling, he was also a Soviet and world champion in sambo.

Sergo - Kakhi Kavsadze, who died in April of 2021 at the age of 85, was a legend of Soviet and Georgian cinema. His role of Abdullah in *White Sun of the Desert* made him one of the most beloved actors in the ex USSR. If one was to compare Kavsadze to anyone from the Hollywood in terms of his popularity and recognition it would probably be Sean Connery. The role of Sergo was his second appearance in a film by Levan Koguashvili.

Lena - Nadezhda Mikhalkova is the youngest daughter of Russian actor and film director Nikita Mikhalkov. At age 6, Nadezhda starred as Nadia Kotova in the film *Burnt by the Sun* directed by her father, who also played Nadia's father in the film. The film received the Grand Prize at Cannes and the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, among many other honors.

Soso - Giorgi Tabidze is a rising Georgian star who is best known internationally for his part in the film *Hostages*, which premiered in Berlin and later screened at the Telluride Film Festival.

CREDITS

Directed by Levan Koguashvili

Producers Irakli Rodonaya
Olena Yershova
Michel Merkt
Kateryna Merkt

Executive producers Armen Zuloian
Tinatin Berdzenishvili
Rusudan Manjgaladze

Written by Boris Frumin

Cinematographer Phedon Papamichael

Edited by Sasha Frumin
Davit Kiknadze
Elene Asatiani

Co-Producers Boris Frumin
Stefan Kitanov
Mira Staleva
Abylay Zhakashov