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Film Reviews

Posted: Mon., Jan. 28, 2013, 4:23pm PT

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Sundance

Circles

(Serbia-Germany-France-Croatia-Slovenia)

By JOHN ANDERSON

A Film House Bas Celik presentation in association with Neue Mediopolis, La Cinefature, Proleper Film and VertigoEmotion. Produced by Jelena Mitrovic, Alexande Ris, Emilie Georges, Boris T. Matic, Danijel Hocevar. Directed by Srdan Golubovic. Screenplay, Srdan Koljevic, Melina Pota Koljevic.

With: Aleksandar Bercek, Leon Lucev, Nebojsa Glogovac, Hristina Popovic, Nikola Rakocevic, Vuk Kostic. (Serbo-Croatian dialogue)

The past comes back to haunt everyone in Srdan Golubovic's "Circles," an unorthodox morality tale about Serb-on-Serb crime in which concentric narratives make for considerable resonance. The ghosts of the Bosnian War have stalked Balkan film for nearly 20 years, and Golubovic's take will leave specialty auds rattled -- and perhaps hopeful, as the screenplay by Srdan Koljevic and Melina Pota Koljevic strains to end on an upbeat. Commercial prospects are limited, but viewers will be rewarded.

Blessed by the outstanding lensing of Aleksandar Ilic, "Circles" begins in flashback: In 1993, three Serb soldiers are interrupted beating a Muslim vendor named Haris (Leon Lucev) by a fellow Serb, whom they then murder. Twelve years later, the dead man's fiancee (Hristina Popovic) asks Haris for help against her abusive ex-husband; the son of one of the killers asks the dead man's father for a job; and the chief Serb bully, hospitalized after an accident, finds his surgeon is one of the dead man's friends. There's certainly coincidence to overlook, but Golubovic keeps the viewer so off-balance and hungry for story that the upshot is exhilaration.

Camera (color), Aleksandar Ilic; editor, Marko Glusac; music, Mario Schneider, production designer, Goran Joksimovic; costume designer, Ljiljana Petrovic; sound designer, Julij Zornik. Reviewed at Sundance Film Festival (World Cinema -- competing), Jan. 23, 2013. Running time: 112 MIN.

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