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# Russian Films Win Top Prizes in German Festival

By The Moscow Times

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A film about a hapless drunk who becomes a teacher took top prize.

Two Russian films took the prizes for Best Picture and Best Director at Film Festival Cottbus at the awards ceremony last weekend.

"The Geographer Drank His Globe Away," a picture directed by Alexander Veledinsky and based on the novel of the same name by Alexei Ivanov, was award the Lubina statuette, the festival's main prize. The film stars Konstantin Khabensky as a troubled alcoholic with family issues whose life changes when he takes a job as a school teacher in a provincial city.

Audiences "love honest heroes, because each person considers themselves to be honest, good, and orderly. When such a hero appears onscreen, willingly or unwillingly the viewers identify with him, and this is good," Veledinsky said in an interview with RIA Novosti.

The jury lauded this story of a modern everyman, particularly complimenting Veledinsky

on his careful work adapting the novel to the screen. Veledinsky's film has done well on the festival circuit, also taking the grand prix at the Kinotavr film festival in Sochi in June and the top prize at the Fourth Odessa Film Festival in Ukraine.

The prize for best director was awarded to Yury Bykov for his work on the film "The Major," a story of the consequences and moral struggle faced by a police officer who accidentally kills a child in a car accident. The festival jury particularly praised the director's multifaceted work, noting that he had played one of the main roles in the film as well as composing the soundtrack.

Despite the awards, neither of these films will be in the contention for the Best Foreign Language Oscar: The Russian nomination for this award wen to Fyodor Bondarchuk's "Stalingrad."

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