

My Lost Russian Mother



a film by Sam Jones
86 min English / Russian 2023

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Trailer: <https://youtu.be/vLtaL4IKDZM>
Viewing link of My Lost Russian Mother: f.io/lyjGqhWI
Photos: <https://mab.to/t/90QFzT9m2VI/euI>



Synopsis

An intimate tale of secrets and lies, family and ethnicity and one young man's odyssey from America to Russia, searching for his birth mother.

Irish filmmaker Sam Jones, in his first feature documentary follows US citizen Gabe, trying to trace the mother he and his sister were taken from in childhood when they were adopted into America.

Gabe arrives in Russia high on expectation. He wants to know who he is and the truth about his childhood.

What he finds is not the loving parent he hoped for, but an alcoholic, a woman steeped in lies, darkness and death.

Sam is with Gabe, step by step, recording his first exchanges with his mother, nourishing him with love and hope as Gabe begins to coaxing her on the path to sobriety.

But as the relationship slowly unravels before the camera, Sam sees Gabe uncover a darker side of domestic life in rural Russia.

Gabe begins to see his mother through the harsh spotlight of her addiction, learning the truth of the brutal murder of his half-sister's father and how his mother, then in the early days of her heavy drinking, was to blame.

Sam returns to Ireland and for a time loses contact with Gabe.

Then, he hears that in a tragic twist of fate, Gabe is dead. Having returned to finish college in America, Gabe began taking drugs and overdosed on heroin adulterated with Fentanyl.

Sam is devastated. All his friend wanted was to establish a relationship with his mother before she died. Now, he's the one who has gone.

In an attempt to understand all that he has learned, Sam makes one last journey back to America to meet Gabe's grieving sister and adoptive mother.

It's the final act of a deeply personal journey. An attempt to make sense of the circle of loss, addiction and tragedy.



Director Statement

I never for a moment thought my first feature documentary would take a decade to complete, nor turn out to be so personal, so complex, dark and tragic.

My wife's career had brought us to Russia. I was making my very first steps as a filmmaker when I met Gabe. Not just met. We became close friends.

He was a complex character, fiery and erratic, warm and funny. It took me a while to learn that he'd been diagnosed with ADHD. Nor did he tell me at the outset that his mother was an alcoholic, who turned out to be implicated in her husband's murder.

As the story progressed, although Gabe was my friend, I could see a darker side to his character. I desperately wanted to understand him and portray him fairly. But at the same time, I had to be fair to his mother.

It was a complex line to tread and one which caused me a great deal of anguish. I can only hope I've been able to give the audience some understanding of that. I'm still coming to terms with everything this film taught me. Not just as a filmmaker. But life lessons about the bonds of family, and ethnicity.

And I'm still missing Gabe.





Director Biography

Sam Jones started out as a sculptor, drifting into documentary when he built a boat out of old furniture and travelled the Sheffield canal with a camera.

The discovery that a camera could get him behind closed doors had him hooked.

Now as a self-shooter PD, filmmaker and video journalist, he's worked all over the world. Produced and directed television documentaries, series and news stories, from the freezing plains of Russia to the first unrest in Ukraine and the turbulence of the refugee crisis in Greece.

2023 Director/Camera (in-production) RTÉ One, 8-part series, MY UNI LIFE.

2022 Shooter/Director BBC 3, 6-part series, FAST & FARMERISH Series 2.

2022 Shooter/Director GCN, HERO TO ZERO, 60min documentary.

2022 Journalist/Camera, Sky News, Transnistria The Frozen Conflict, 30min current affairs.

2021 Producer/Director/Camera, BBC One NI - True North, Tanorama, 30min documentary.

2021 Director/Camera, RTÉ One, 6-part series, Change Makers.

2021 Shooter/Director, RTÉ One, series two 6-part Cat Hospital.

2020 DOP, Al-Jazeera, Trade of the Dead, 50mins documentary.

2020 Shooter/Director, CNN, Living Golf, 30min programmes.

2019 Shooter/Director RTÉ One, series one 6-part Cat Hospital.

2018 Producer/Director/Camera BBC One NI - True North, The Bat Catchers, 30min doc.

2017 Producer/Director/Camera BBC NI, The Crossing, 30min documentary.

2016 Producer/c Arts Promotion Centre Finland, Drifting South, documentary short.

2015 Producer/Director/Camera IV EenVandaag, Faces of Russian Patriotism documentary short.

2011 Co- Director/Camera BBC NI 2-part documentary series, Wannabes.