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## `Aga' - an ode to a disappearing world

By Sophie Braccini



Photo provided

immense sky.

This month's presentation by the International Film Showcase brings to Orinda a gem from the North, "Aga," - the Bulgarian selection for this year's Oscar that is an ode to a vanishing world, the world of the lakoutes whose country, the coldest inhabited region of the world, lies in the North-East of Siberia.

Nanouk and Sedna live a simple and tough traditional life, by themselves, in the middle of an endless desert of snow and ice. Their every day life is spent finding food, fishing or hunting, taking care of their yurt, making nets, traps, clothing, and everything they need to survive with their dog. They are not young anymore, maybe in their 50s, and every day they notice the changes that are affecting their environment: there is less fishing, animals die for no apparent reason, spring comes sooner, planes and even helicopters appear in their

But on Sedna's side there is a secret wound that is deeply hurting her. What is it? Is she feeling in the flesh the hurt her mother's heart endures? Change and "progress" have disintegrated the lakoute family and the film bears emotional witness to their demise. Bulgarian director Milko Lazarov has created a movie about a lost people, but it also speaks of universal themes of love and loss

The measured film may surprise the American moviegoer; not much is said and action is sparse. It is a slow painting of a magnificent country, almost a documentary of what was and will no longer be. The light, the colors, and the music create a poetic and almost hypnotic spectacle: strange, different and totally worth a movie ticket.

Movie buffs will of course think of the 1922 docudrama by Robert Flaherty "Nanook of the North" that depicted the life of an Inuit family in the Canadian Arctic. No doubt that Lazarov gave that same name to the main character in homage to the early 20th century silent film.

The presentation at the Orinda Theatre will be a U.S. premiere of "Aga." Winner of 24 international awards from Bulgaria, France and Germany, the movie will open on Oct. 4 and play for at least one week. For information, visit www.orindamovies.com.

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