

STEPHEN REA AND DONALD SUTHERLAND TRACK THE MOST SAVAGE SERIAL KILLER OF  
MODERN TIMES WHEN THE HBO PICTURES PRESENTATION **CITIZEN X** DEBUTS FEB. 25

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Jeffrey DeMunn, Joss Ackland, John Wood And Max Von Sydow Also Star  
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The search took eight long years. From 1982 to 1990, Russian detective Viktor Burakov pursued the most savage and most elusive serial killer in modern times. Day after day, he fought his own police and his own government. He was a man working against the system -- against time -- to find a killer no one had seen and no one would even acknowledge.

Stephen Rea and Donald Sutherland star in the HBO Pictures presentation *CITIZEN X*, which follows Burakov's remarkable real-life struggle to capture serial killer Andrei Chikatilo, who was eventually convicted of murdering 52 people. Set against the backdrop of a changing Soviet Union, the film chronicles the tragic irony of living in a police state where the police are at their worst and shows how Perestroika surprisingly and profoundly helped Burakov crack the case. *CITIZEN X* makes its world premiere SATURDAY, FEB. 25 at 8:00 p.m. (ET), exclusively on HBO.

(Other playdates include: Feb. 28 and dates in March.)

HBO Pictures presents an Asylum Films and Citadel Entertainment production, *CITIZEN X*, starring Stephen Rea ("Ready to Wear"), Donald Sutherland ("Disclosure"), Jeffrey DeMunn ("Barbarians at the Gate"), Joss Ackland ("The Hunt for Red October"), John Wood ("WarGames") and Max von Sydow ("Pelle the Conqueror"). Director Chris Gerolmo based his script upon the book "The Killer Department," by Robert Cullen, a former *Newsweek* bureau chief who lived in the Soviet Union for more than 10 years.

Executive producers are Matthew Chapman, Laura Bickford and David R. Ginsburg. Producer is Timothy Marx ("Passed Away"). Director of photography, Robert Fraisse ("The Lover"); production designer, J—zesf Romv†ri; art director, Lor†nd J†vor; costume designer, Maria Hruby.

#### SYNOPSIS

In 1982, 500 miles south of Moscow in Rostov-on-Don, a body is found, unearthed after heavy rains hit the countryside. Its discovery sparks a search through the woods, where seven more bodies are found in various stages of decomposition. All of them are brought to the morgue for examination by forensics expert Viktor Burakov (Stephen Rea). Among the dead are several children and young women, their bodies horribly mutilated and disfigured.

Autopsy reports in hand, Burakov meets Colonel Fetisov (Donald Sutherland) and members of the supervising investigatory committee. Burakov reads a report of his findings and concludes that a serial killer is responsible for these crimes. The stunned committee members immediately offer different theories,

with the head of the committee, Bondarchuk (Joss Ackland), concluding that serial killers do not exist in the Soviet Union. They are, he insists, "a decadent Western phenomenon."

Fetisov, however, realizes Burakov is right. He also knows Burakov will take the methodical, detailed approach necessary to find the killer. Fetisov promotes him from a forensics man to detective in charge of the newly formed "Killer Department."

As Burakov questions relatives of the murder victims, a pattern slowly emerges -- they all rode the Òelektrichka, Ó the trains that criss-cross rural Russia. He determines that the killer's method of operation is picking up prostitutes or children in rural train stations, and urges police surveillance of the elektrichka.

As bodies continue to be found in the woods near Rostov, widespread rumors and panic sweep through the city. A state-controlled press never reports the disappearances and murders. There is no publicity to warn young people about the killer or solicit information from possible witnesses. It's all speculation and whispers as the gruesome discoveries accumulate over the years.

After the 16th body is found, Burakov updates the committee on his investigation, telling them he needs several things to capture the killer. He requires a computer -- otherwise, all the information on the case must be kept on thousands of index cards. Burakov also asks for publicity, and seeks permission to speak with the FBI's Serial Murder Task Force. Finally, he asks for a special detail of soldiers to widen the search for bodies.

All of Burakov's requests are denied.

Although Fetisov does nothing in the committee meeting to support Burakov, he writes down a complete list of the demands.

Later, Fetisov visits Burakov in the forensics lab. The savvy career colonel is surprised by Burakov's naivete in dealing with the Soviet bureaucracy. Fetisov explains that to ask for more men or computers is to admit to superiors in Moscow that they're overwhelmed -- which the committee will never do. To ask the FBI for help is to admit to the West that the Soviets are behind in forensics techniques and managing information -- which they'll never do. And to publicize the case is to admit that such crimes exist in the Soviet Union -- which, of course, they'll never do.

Fetisov tells Burakov it will be up to the two of them to catch the killer -- Fetisov bribing, wheedling and trading favors to get what they need, Burakov directing the investigation.

When another year passes, the committee re-convenes and Bondarchuk demotes Burakov. Although Burakov will still run the day-to-day operations, the committee appoints Comrade Gorbunov (John Wood) from Moscow to head the investigation. Gorbunov announces that he will drop the surveillance of train stations and focus on the persecution of homosexuals, since young boys are among the murdered. During this time, bizarre theories and false leads take the detectives in far-flung directions, including the surveillance of doctors, surgeons and the mentally ill.

In 1984, Andrei Chikatilo (Jeffrey DeMunn) is arrested, carrying a leather bag containing a rope and knife. A background check reveals that he is a party member in good standing. The simple laboratory tests don't support the arrest -- the suspect's blood type is AB, whereas Chikatilo tested A -- so Bondarchuk orders his release.

He remains free for another six years, killing at least 35 more women and children. As a Communist Party member, a family man and former schoolteacher, he is an invisible man in a society that discourages individuality. He is a factory worker, a quiet, ordinary-looking man whose dark secret is well-hidden behind a facade of rigid conformity.

After four difficult years on the case, Burakov suffers a breakdown. He is sent to a psychiatric institution for a rest. When he returns, Fetisov has saved his job for him. But Burakov's experience in the sanitarium affects him and he comes up with an idea.

By Spring 1987, desperate to stop the savage killings, Burakov makes an unprecedented move -- one not sanctioned by the state. He turns to an expert in abnormal psychiatry to create a psychological portrait of the killer.

Dr. Aleksandr Bukhanovsky (Max von Sydow) at the Rostov Institute of Medicine studies Burakov's evidence and prepares a detailed profile. He describes the killer as an average, undistinguished man in his forties who finds it difficult or impossible to have sexual intercourse under normal circumstances. Bukhanovsky even suggests in his paper that the man may work with children or be a teacher. This valuable, highly instinctive theory proves eerily accurate when Chikatilo is finally captured.

The investigation continues until June 1990, when perestroika and the fall of Communism effect changes that prove crucial to cracking the case. The ban on publicity is lifted. Fetisov is promoted to general and Burakov to colonel. The two are finally given true control and get what they've always needed: computers, train surveillance, communication with the FBI, and more sophisticated blood sampling.

By summer, the two organize a highly visible police presence in the train stations, except for a couple of small rural stations, where undercover officers are posted. This forces Chikatilo to ride the trains looking for a station without soldiers and police. After a body is discovered in the woods near one of the undercover posts, all the interrogation slips for the station are reviewed. Spotted walking out of the woods, Chikatilo's name is among them. He is arrested -- again.

This time, with more sophisticated blood-testing abilities, Chikatilo's blood shows up AB -- a match. Burakov is sure they have the killer. In many ways, he fits the psychiatric profile perfectly. After several days of stalled interrogations, Burakov brings in Bukhanovsky, who reads Chikatilo the paper he wrote about him, entitled "Citizen X." Chikatilo breaks down and confesses to the psychiatrist, the first person, he believes, ever to "understand him."

The Chikatilo case created headlines throughout the world when he was arrested and tried in

Rostov for murdering 52 people -- a record for modern times. From 1978 until his arrest, Chikatilo's victims included 35 boys and girls and 17 women -- often homeless or mentally impaired. He lured them into the woods near train stations where they were tortured and killed.

Chikatilo was executed in March 1994.

## NOTES

Burakov's dogged pursuit of the world's most prolific serial killer is remarkable because it was done largely without computers or other technology readily available to American police and the FBI. Burakov's painstaking, methodical detective work was a solitary obsession without respite. It is interesting to note that most American police agencies rotate detectives off serial murder cases every few months to prevent psychological problems. Burakov was on the Chikatilo case for more than eight years and reportedly suffered a breakdown.

"I was immediately drawn to this character," said Stephen Rea, whose current films include "Interview with the Vampire" and "Ready to Wear." "I love the idea of a cop nobody believes in, who knows he's on to it, who knows what he's looking for. But he's up against the system -- it's a classic American movie genre."

The genre may be American, but the setting is distinctly Russian -- more specifically, southern Russia, a place not often seen in films. Far from the pageantry of Red Square and the Kremlin, CITIZEN X explores life among the impoverished rural peasantry of Rostov-on-Don. In exploring the dark side of the Soviet Union, it reveals a place where runaways, thieves and prostitutes find shelter in the countryside train stations that provided Chikatilo with his victims.

"This was Burakov's first case, and it took him eight years to solve it," said director-writer Chris Gerolmo. "After solving just one case, Viktor Burakov has this unbelievable reputation in southern Russia. He's like Popeye Doyle over there. Everyone knows who he is and what he did."

The decision to tell Burakov's -- not Chikatilo's -- story was the key to interesting Gerolmo. After a research trip to Rostov in which he met both Burakov and Chikatilo, Gerolmo came up with his approach.

"I started thinking of the story in other terms, less about the killer and more about the pursuit," Gerolmo said. "I saw it as this very dogged man and his boss pursuing an unknown killer for years, in spite of an extremely difficult system where they were always struggling for the simplest things."

The result is a story about the relationship between Burakov and Fetisov -- two very different men -- as they work to capture a killer during the twilight days of Communism.

"My job as a producer was made infinitely easier by the incredible script, because it became a magnet," said producer Tim Marx. "Stephen Rea, Donald Sutherland, Max von Sydow, Jeffrey DeMunn -- it's an incredible cast. And they were all drawn to the film by the quality of the script."

Rea, Oscar<sup>®</sup>-nominated in the Best Actor category for his role in 1992's "The Crying Game," said he focuses on story and characters when reading a script. "Very seldom do you get a script that feels perfect, that has been fully realized like this one," Rea said. "I've been brought up in the theatre where text is more sacred. You don't change it. I like the feeling that the text is a backbone, a spine to the thing that sustains you."

Max von Sydow, whose credits include "Hannah and Her Sisters" and "The Exorcist," says Gerolmo's approach hooked him, too. "It's very intelligently written with very, very good dialogue," he said. "And Bukhanvosky was an unusual character -- a psychiatrist specializing in abnormal psychiatry in the Soviet Union. Not a very popular figure in that country, particularly before the fall of Communism."

Bukhanovsky's paper on Chikatilo, "Citizen X," opened up the killer's long-held secrets. Years prior to meeting Chikatilo, Bukhanovsky captured Chikatilo's thoughts and behavior in startling detail. For Chikatilo, this was the first time anyone had understood him, and he confessed his crimes to the psychiatrist in vivid detail, down to victims' names and murder sites.

To portray Chikatilo, Jeffrey DeMunn prepared by watching videotapes of the killer and his trial. "You have to get past the barrier of 'Oh, what a horrible person,' " said DeMunn. "You have to get inside them. Once you do that, they are just human beings. Chikatilo was incredibly sick and distorted, but it's not about good and bad. It's about the human condition, dark as it may be. You have to get past the point of editorializing in your heart, or you'll never get to him."

Executive producer Laura Bickford recalls meeting the real Chikatilo during a research trip to Rostov. She tells of traveling deep down into the basement of the police militia building to death row, where Chikatilo was imprisoned. Both she and Gerolmo, who was also on the trip, spent an hour with Chikatilo in his cell. They are the only two Westerners to meet him.

"He kept saying the stress of worldwide Communism made him commit his crimes and now that Communism had fallen, he should be released," said Bickford. "He was a very self-pitying man who wanted to get out of prison. He never seemed to show any remorse for what he'd done."

Gerolmo said his visit with Chikatilo convinced him to keep the focus on Burakov and Fetisov. "I was deeply angry at Chikatilo," Gerolmo said. "I almost reconsidered my decision to write the film after spending time with him. He was the most horrible kind of maniac who learned just enough psychological lingo to try to pass off responsibility for his crimes. I despised him. Jeffrey (DeMunn) is teaching me to understand him."

In CITIZEN X, Gerolmo wanted to keep violence to a minimum but still communicate Chikatilo's brutal crimes. Balancing those aspects of the story dictated that screen violence be more suggested than seen. Often, the filmmakers chose hand-held or fast camera moves to heighten the frenzied mood. With only two killings on screen, it has far less violence than an average TV police movie.

"The audience knows what's going on," said Marx. "Whenever they see Chikatilo at a train station or they see a child, they viscerally understand what's about to happen. We don't have to show it."

Director of photography Robert Fraise, Oscar<sup>®</sup>-nominated for 1992's "The Lover," said he and Gerolmo rejected traditional lighting styles for their film. Most of the colors in CITIZEN X are desaturated, pastel tones, slightly overexposed and underdeveloped. Fraise and Gerolmo sought to counter the genre's more typical harsh shadows and dark, dramatic colors.

Filmmakers scouted Rostov and southern Russia for shooting, but decided instead to film CITIZEN X in Budapest, Hungary. They shot for six weeks in the eastern European country, on the outskirts of Budapest and in the city itself. Hungary's long tradition of filmmaking offered experienced crews, equipment, transportation and accommodations -- and a look that matched Rostov.

"CITIZEN X is the latest example of HBO's relationship with Hungarian filmmaking," said executive producer David Ginsburg, noting that five films have been made by HBO Pictures in Budapest over the last five years. "With this project, we're working with experienced crew members that we've worked with over and over again."

CITIZEN X shot at six different train stations in and around Budapest. Many of the interiors were city apartments or converted rooms at ELTE University. A considerable portion of the film takes place in the committee room, with sets built at ELTE. The committee, which represented the meddlesome bureaucracy from Moscow, ultimately was defeated by its refusal to deal with the crimes. The scenes in the committee room, with its heated dialogue and emotions, offered filmmakers a big challenge.

"It was a tough set because it was essentially six people sitting in a room, talking," said Fraise. "The claustrophobic feeling of the room itself only underscored the repression and tension in the very emotional scenes we did in there."

Gerolmo created the committee as a composite character representing the obstacles Burakov faced in the Soviet bureaucracy. He also saw it as a symbol of societal restrictions and governing attitudes that affect almost everyone, regardless of national politics. "My goal with this film was to make a sort of elegant, beautifully acted and photographed movie that scares the shit out of you," said Gerolmo, "and then breaks your heart."

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