

# IVAN & IVANA

PRODUCED & DIRECTED BY JEFF SILVA

80 MINUTES / 2011



After the Kosovo war devastates a couple's dreams for a normal life in the Balkan's, a turbulent new journey in America begins in the midst of the global financial crisis.



Director, Cinematographer and Editor: Jeff Daniel Silva  
Associate Producer: Shannon Carroll



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## THE FILM

After the Kosovo war devastates a young couple's homeland and their dreams for a normal life, they set out unexpectedly from the Balkans, along a wild journey to rebuild their lives anew in America. Arriving in California amidst the peak of a housing boom that would soon burst, the film reveals their trials and tribulations over five years of turbulent economic, political and personal tides to reveal an unorthodox depiction of the American immigrant experience.

## FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT

I first met Ivan and Ivana while I was in Kosovo in 1999 filming a documentary about post-war Yugoslavia entitled "Balkan Rhapsodies". At that time he and his wife were working for the United Nations (Ivan as driver and Ivana as a translator) and dreaming of an escape from the violence and ethnic backlash going on throughout Kosovo by the Albanian led KLA. After a violent forced expulsion from their home in Pristina they fled to a Serbian enclave and suffered a further year of constant threats and provocations. Ivan and Ivana knew they had to find a way out of Kosovo to some "normal country" as they would so often say.

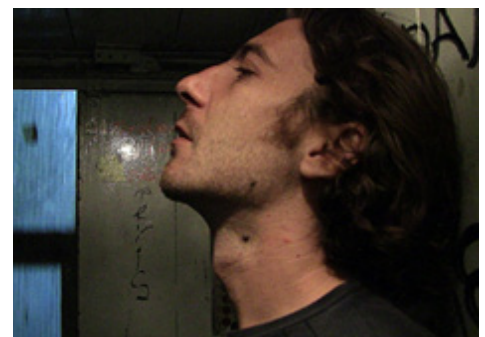
When I left Kosovo in the winter of 2000 I was troubled by what I witnessed and distraught that my new friends might never get out of Kosovo alive. A year later however, I received a surprise phone call from Ivan in broken English telling me that he and his wife had found a way out of Kosovo and that they were now in the USA ready to start over.

The film, Ivan & Ivana, picks up with my friends about 6 years after that phone call and their arrival in the US and focuses instead on their incredible newfound prosperity, their emotional ambivalence of their relationship to the US, and the lingering traumatic memories that continue to inform their identity.

In contrast to most documentaries, Ivan & Ivana tends to eschew drama in favor of quotidian moments and the spaces before and after climatic moments. Focusing on these non-events and giving the viewer only the barest of narrative exposition, the film lingers on gazes and body movement to express story-telling through tension, emotion, and the senses. Oscillating back and forth between a confounding layering of uncontrolled moments, provoked performativity and inquisitive dialogues, the film unveils important social and political issues, while at the same time it complicates the ethical challenges of documentary filmmaking.

## FILMMAKER

Jeff Daniel Silva is a filmmaker and artist based in Somerville, Massachusetts. His films and installations have been exhibited at festivals, galleries and in museums in the United States, South America, Canada, Europe and Australia; including the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA – NY), the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (Boston, MA), The Betty Rymer Gallery (Chicago, IL), The Valdivia International Film Festival (Chile), the DokumentArt Film Festival (Germany), and DocHouse Brussels (Belgium). Jeff was an instructor at Harvard University from 2006-2009, where he taught and helped develop the curriculum, along with Lucien Taylor, for The Sensory Ethnography Lab, a practice-based program of visual anthropology exploring the interstices of art, anthropology and documentary film. Currently, Jeff is a professor of film at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts (SMFA). He was also the co-founder The Balagan Experimental Film Series, programming an eclectic mix of documentary and experimental film to the New England community since 2000.



Sensory  
Ethnography  
Lab

