

a nomination for Best Supporting Actor (Tom Hardy); still in theaters and worth seeing on the big screen if you are prepared for violence.]

6. **"Tangerine"** deserved the critical attention it got; though the Academy didn't notice it, this underground project filmed on iPhones depicts rarely-noticed and even less understood aspects of Hollywood life with its focus on a day in the life of two transgender sex workers. The director and his co-writer did so many things right in crafting this story, including building on a foundation of genuine interest in the lives of the two actresses who carry the film and giving them significant say in how this story is told. The result zings with energy and humor to equip you for the ache of watching lives of unending struggle to survive and to express something true about oneself. [Not rated but definitely racy; on at least 137 other critics'



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Kitana Kiki Rodriguez (right) in 'Tangerine.'

top ten lists; in the language of the street; should have received Academy Awards nominations for Best Director and Best Original Screenplay; available on DVD and streaming.]

7. Though it doesn't appear to have found much of an American audience (it played only briefly in Portland last March), **"Leviathan"** is worth finding on DVD if you are interested in a brilliantly perceptive story of institutionalized brutality. I can't think of when I have seen corruption so insightfully portrayed, and though this is absorbing enough as a distinct Russian story, it is even more riveting metaphorically and as example, communicating much about dynamics evident throughout Russian history and, beyond that, in human history. The immediate story involves Kolya, a hard-drinking, small-town man who has resided in the same well-located house his entire life, but is engaged in a pitched battle with a corrupt local politician who wants the land for development. Everything deteriorates from there, and as the story plays out, we see how the law and the church prop up this system against which Kolya has no chance of prevailing. A conversation with the local priest late in the film is worth the price of admission--devastating. Kolya is no hero, and most people would more readily identify him as a flawed person than the people around him, making him an even easier victim; this film pans out to the broader perspective. [Not rated;

on at least 20 other critics' top ten lists for 2014, though not released in Portland until mid-2015; in Russian; nominated for an Academy Award in 2015 for Best Foreign Language Film; available on DVD and streaming.]

8. **"45 Years"** feels like an ironic addition to my top ten list, given that immediately after I saw it, I joked that I would not put it on my list. That is because it is a bit of a downer. But as I have reflected on it, this film has really stayed with me as an unparalleled and richly observed depiction of the thin line that separates many seemingly happy and connected relationships from total disintegration. The undeniably brilliant premise involves a long-married couple preparing to celebrate 45 years together -- disrupted by news that the body of his former lover has been recovered, preserved in the ice where she fell to her death 50 years before. That

answered her heart's call to teach a blind and deaf girl to communicate with the world around her, and it is because of Marguerite's faith and love and determination that Marie's story ever existed as a story. Watching this film is the best find of spiritual work. [Not rated; not found on any other critics' top ten lists; in French and sign language; available on DVD and streaming.]

10. **"Peace Officer"** is a well-constructed look at a topic that has begun to surface in the news: the rise in incidents of violence in citizen encounters with American police, and increased militarization of police forces. The filmmakers started with a compelling character -- Dub Lawrence, a white former sheriff from Utah whose own son-in-law was killed in an encounter with police -- and followed where their subject took them, into a very incisive critique of a slow evolution of police thinking toward viewing citizens as the enemy. It's not something most police forces want to acknowledge, but Lawrence is a good entry point, and using his personal story as well as cases to which he now applies his relentless skills as an investigator provides terrific windows into a charged subject. It both helps and hurts the film a bit that all its examples deal with white citizens, but the topic of race does come up naturally in the very good interviews that inform the film. Kudos to first-time co-directors Brad Barber and Scott Christopherson for assembling such a clear and cogent look at this subject, including interviews with many police officers. [Not rated; not found on any other critics'

top ten lists; deserved an Academy Award nomination for best documentary; available on DVD and streaming.]

Darleen Ortega is a judge on the Oregon Court of Appeals and

the first woman of color to serve in that capacity. Her movie review column *Opinionated Judge* appears regularly in *The Portland Observer*. Find her movie blog at opinionatedjudge.blogspot.com.



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