

VOLCANO

a film by Roman Bondarchuk

Ukraine / Germany / Monaco, 2018, 103 min, color, Ukrainian / English language with English subtitles

Produced by: Olena Yershova (Tato Film)

Co-produced by: Tanja Georgieva (elemag pictures), Michel Merkt (KNM), Dar'ya Averchenko (South)

With financial support from: Ukrainian State Film Agency and MDM Fund (Germany)



Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival
East of the West – Competition

Credits: Vadym Ilkov

WORLD PREMIERE

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2018 (East of the West Competition)

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Credits: Vadym Ilkov



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LOGLINE

Lukas, an interpreter for a military mission, gets lost near a remote Ukrainian village and stumbles from simple misadventure into the weirdest road trip of his life.

SYNOPSIS

A series of odd coincidences has left Lukas, an interpreter for a military checkpoint inspection tour, stranded near a remote town in the south Ukrainian steppe. With nowhere to turn, this city boy finds shelter at the home of a colorful local named Vova. With Vova as his guide, Lukas is confronted by an anarchist universe beyond his imagination, a world in which life seems utterly detached from any identifiable structure. Fascinated by his host and his host's daughter Marushka, Lukas's contempt for provincial life slowly melts away and sets him on a quest for a happiness he never knew could exist.

Volcano is the feature debut of acclaimed director Roman Bondarchuk, known for his documentaries *Euromaidan. Rough Cut* (2014), *Ukrainian Sheriffs* (2015) and *Dixie Land* (2016).

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

ROMAN BONDARCHUK

Roman Bondarchuk is a graduate of the Karpenko-Kary Theater, Film and Television University (Yuriy Illienko's workshop). His graduation film *Taxi Driver* won the White Elephant prize from the Russian Film Critic Guild and the Russian Producers' Grand Prix at the Kinoshok Open film festival, as well as the prize for 'Boldness and Poetics' at the 4th KINOTEATR.DOC festival. Bondarchuk is the art director of Docudays UA – International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival in Kyiv.

Bondarchuk co-directed *Euromaidan. Rough Cut*, a film about the events on Maidan Square, which screened at IDFA, amongst others. He has made a number of shorts, documentaries and music videos that have received awards at Ukrainian and international festivals. *Ukrainian Sheriffs* (2015) was his first feature-length documentary which won a Special Jury Award at IDFA 2015 and was selected as the Ukrainian entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 89th Academy Awards.



Credits: Yuliya Malinovska

Selected Filmography

Volcano (Feature, 2018)

Karlovy Vary IFF 2018, East of the West Competition

Dixie Land (Documentary, 2016)

Winner Best Film in the National Competition, Odessa International Film Festival 2017

Other festivals included: Full Frame (USA - world premiere), Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival (USA), Vilnius Documentary film festival (Lithuania), Noida IFF (India), Makedox (Macedonia), BIAFF (Batumi, Georgia)

Ukrainian Sheriffs (Documentary, 2015)

Official Ukrainian entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 89th Academy Awards
Awards: IDFA (Winner Special Jury Award), Docs Against Gravity (Winner Grand Prix)
Other festivals included: Sofia IFF, Thessaloniki IFF, Hot Docs, Odessa IFF, Riga IFF

Euromaidan. Rough Cut (Documentary, 2014)

Commemoration Day (Short, 2007)

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I discovered the unique universe of the south Ukrainian steppe through my wife's uncle, Vova, who lived there and who was constantly coming up with crazy business ideas. Once, he suggested to dig up the bones from German soldiers from the Second World War in his garden and sell them to the relatives in Germany. This seemed so absurd to me that I decided to follow him with a camera to get a better understanding of his life and the area where he lived.

In this deserted land, during a very dramatic moment of history in my country, I found a wild and forgotten place of anarchy; a new provincial order, where people live their own lives, some of them even without any documents or connection to the state. Living in the city, it is hard to imagine a magical place like this, where people still see mirages, with local feudals, private security groups on watermelon fields and checkpoints in the middle of nowhere exists.

I wanted to find out why people stay there, what keeps them from leaving? And is it possible to find yourself or at least survive there?



Credits: Vadym Ilkov

CAST



Credits: Vadym Ilkov

SERHIY STEPANSKY (LUKAS)

Born in 1983. Serhiy was thinking to become an actor but he entered the Kyiv State Institute of Karpenko Karyi where he graduated as a sound designer. As such he is, amongst others, a member of the European Film Academy.

Filmography as a sound designer

- *OE 20. Live in Kyiv* and *OE. Backstage* (2015), directed by Serhiy Bukovsky
- *Man's Work* (2015), short, directed by Maryna Stepanska, winner Best Film at National competition at Odessa IFF
- *Nyukhach*, series, season 1 (2013) & 2 (2015), directed by Artyom Litvinenko
- *The Tribe* (2014), directed by Myroslav Slaboshpytskyi, winner Grand Prize, France 4 Visionary Award and Gan Foundation Support for Distribution at the Cannes Critic's Week
- *Green Jacket* (2013), directed by Volodymyr Tykhyy, San Sebastian IFF – New Horizons competition 2013
- *Girl with the Fish Tale* (2013), animated short, directed by Serhiy Melnichenko
- *The Road* (2013), short, directed by Mykola Ksyondza
- *Millionaire* (2013), TV movie, director Serhiy Chekalov
- *Nuclear Waste* (2013), short, directed by Myroslav Slaboshpytskyi, winner Silver Leopard at Locarno IFF

Volcano is his first experience as an actor.



Credits: Vadym Ilkov

VICTOR ZHDANOV (VOVA)

Born in 1965 in Kyselivka, a village in the Kherson region, where *Volcano* is set. In 1982 he entered the Kherson Culture and Education College to become a theatre director. From 1986 he started working in different theatres as an actor, including the Kherson Regional Puppet Theater, Kherson Regional Music and Drama Theater, Donetsk Regional Music and Drama Theater and Kiev Academic Theatre of Drama and Comedy. In 2010 he became an Honored Artist of Ukraine.

Filmography as an actor

Volcano (2018) by Roman Bondarchuk

Cyborgs: Heroes Never Die (2017) by Akhtem Seitablaev

Red (2017) by Zaza Buadze



Credits: Vadym Ilkov

KHRYSTYNA DEILYK (MARUSHKA)

Born in 1993 in Poltava, Ukraine, Khrystyna graduated from the National University of Theater, Cinema and Television in 2015 and now works at the Kyiv Academic Theater on Lypky.

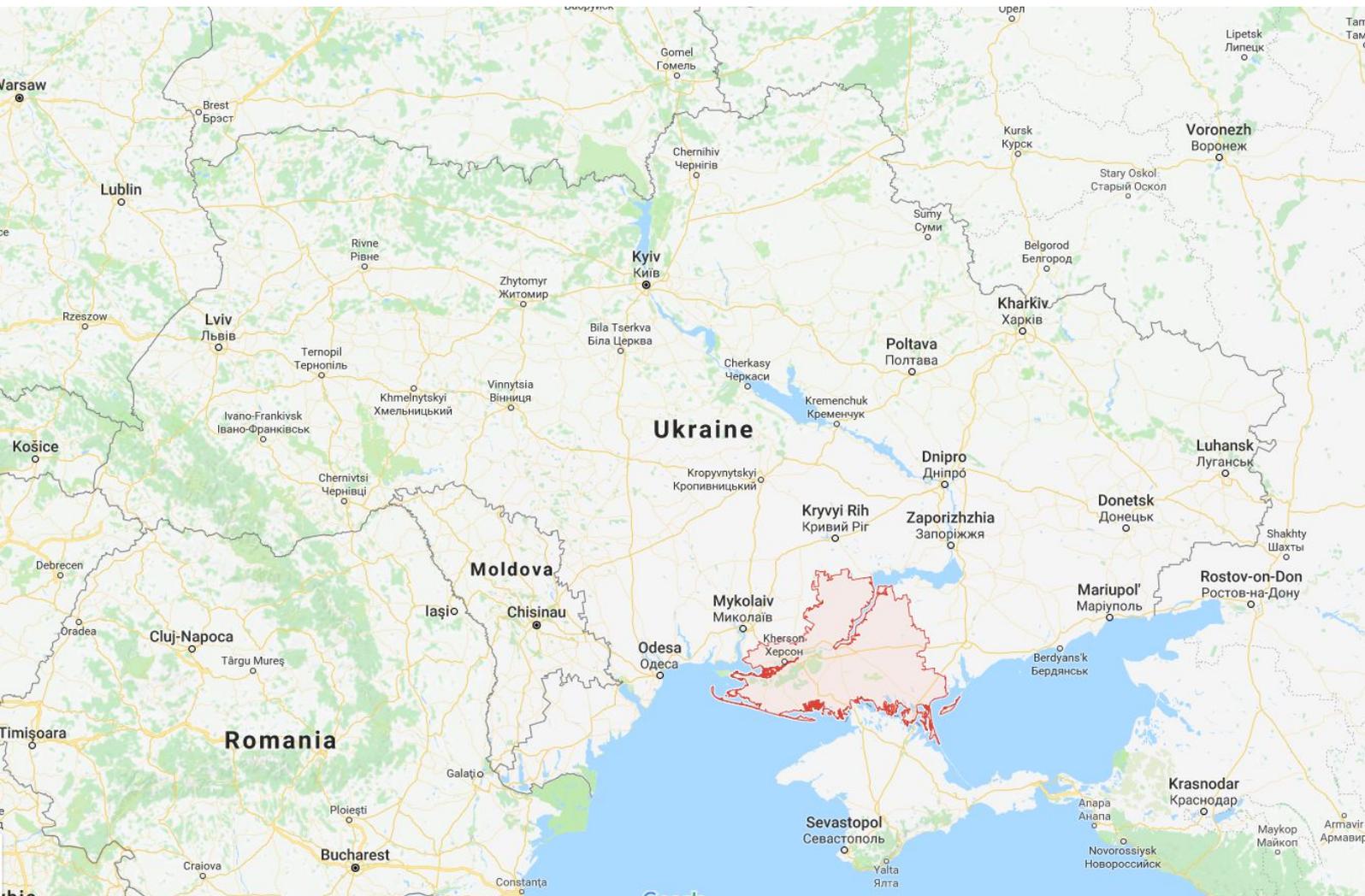
Volcano is her film acting debut.

ABOUT THE REGION

Volcano is set in the town of Beryslav in the province (oblast) **Kherson** (Ukrainian: Херсонська область) in southern Ukraine, just north of Crimea. The oblast is known for its agricultural production, including huge watermelon plantations. The area is part of the Pontic–Caspian steppe, or Ukrainian steppe, which stretches all the way from the northern shores of the Black Sea to western Kazakhstan.

From the northeast the river Dnieper enters the Kherson Oblast, crossing the province and creating a delta of islands before ending in the Black Sea. In the river Dnieper an artificial reservoir was created, the Kakhovka Reservoir, by flooding over 90 villages. The reservoir covered the vast territories of fertile lands, destroying meadows, lakes and forests and killings many fish and animal species upon its creation.

The Kakhovka Reservoir is mainly used to supply hydroelectric stations, industrial plants, freshwater fish farms and the North Crimean Canal.



Kherson Oblast on Google Maps

INTERVIEW

BY VICTORIA KHOMENKO WITH DIRECTOR ROMAN BONDARCHUK
& WRITER AND CO-PRODUCER DAR'YA AVERCHENKO

*We take the juice from the watermelons and cook it down
until there's nothing left but sugar, and then we work it
into the shape of this thing that we have: our lives.*

Richard Brautigan

In films, we often talk about ourselves, in one way or another. Roman, Dar'ya, whom among the *Volcano* protagonists do you identify with most?

Roman Bondarchuk (RB): There are some similarities between myself and the protagonist Lukas. In 2008, on our way to the seaside, we drove to Beryslav to visit Dar'ya's uncle Vova. The day before, he had seen a story on TV about a man who dug out bones of a German soldier and sold them for a large sum of money. He also knew we worked together with some German film producers for another project and said that the only thing he needed was a metal detector and connections in Germany. He desperately tried to find himself something to do, otherwise he would go mad. Thanks to uncle Vova and his fantastic projects I started to understand the surrealism of that land. Although I originally come from the Kherson region, I am still, like Lukas, an observer with whom the locals share their philosophy and their truth.

Dar'ya Averchenko (DA): My mother's family lived in Beryslav. We often visited my grandmother and uncle Vova. So for me, the script was like a documentary: the core characters are based on my grandmother and uncle. In the process of writing the script, it was as if I merged with each of my family members, I started to understand them better. Three people worked on the script: I, Roman and writer Alla Tyutyunnyk — her grandmother was from Mylove, which was drowned in the Water Reservoir, and her parents are from the village of Sablukivka, which now stands right on the shore of the artificial lake.

People here still remember the Great Grassland, the floodplains, and how vegetables grew in the flooded lands. And then, for three years, right in front of people's eyes, the water rose slowly, engulfing the floodplains and the houses — more than 90 villages. For several years, when spring came, migratory birds flew in circles above the water, looking for their family nesting places; they could not find them and just died. And that was it, only dead treetops stuck out of the giant water surface, and coffins from the flooded old cemeteries floated between them... This experience is disconcerting even as a story. It gives us an understanding of the place.



Production still by Dar'ya Averchenko

You have been working on this film since 2008. Many things have happened since. Did the script change over time?

RB: Yes, back then, there was no occupation of Crimea, or war in the East, or OSCE visits. But life in the country was changing, we were changing, and the script was changing, too. For me, there is nothing false or untrue in the film. Still, there is an author's "angle" in it. But what remains constant throughout the film and throughout the Beryslav reality is the sense of humor with which these people take some essentially disastrous things.

DA: Actually, this is the only thing that saves them amid the disasters: their irony and self-irony.

How clear was the film's idea to your producers outside of Ukraine? Was it difficult to pitch a film on the life of Ukrainians outside of the capital, not set on Maidan, not in the ATO, but in the wild steppe?

DA: For European funds it was important to justify the realities of our country. It was very hard to explain that our reality contains not only disasters, but also something that allows us not to lose optimism, even in the extreme circumstances that we live in. Especially given that the European world has developed a myth about hopeless and bleak post-Soviet countries. But actually, not everything is hopeless here.

In the film you also show a rather dangerous reality. In the first scene, we see a beautiful and fateful entry into another world: a barge slowly sailing into a gate that leads — where?

RB: This world is not what it looks like at first. You need to monitor everything you say here. It's all turned upside-down.

DA: Even the villages in this area are not called by the names that are written on maps, but by the names of the kolkhozes (collective farms in the Soviet Union). These kolkhozes are in ruins, but, for example, everyone still calls the village of Maksym Gorki by the name "Cosmos."

It is difficult for me to explain, but the air there is "thick," as if the place has accumulated the energies of all the historic events that happened on those hills. In the 15th century, there was a Lithuanian Customs building where now Beryslav is; then the fortress was occupied by Crimean Tatars, and later by Ottomans, who built several other fortresses here, one of which was the legendary Kyzy-Kerman. They defended against Zaporizhia Cossacks who, in the end, defeated the Ottomans under the leadership of Mazepa. I am certain that in Beryslav, you can physically feel all these different periods.



Production still by Dar'ya Averchenko

Is that why you decided to work mostly with locals? To convey the area through the actual people that live there, through a documentary space? For example, the gas station worker, he's almost like Steve Buscemi. What did this on-the-ground search for your characters look like?

RB: In general, we wanted the locals to play local characters. They talk differently, move differently. By the way, the actor Viktor Zhdanov, who plays Uncle Vova, was also born around here. Tetiana Symon worked with the actors for us. She is very perceptive with people. The casting took place three months before the shooting. We walked around factories, clubs, fields and watermelon plantations. Some people were afraid that their daughters were not actually cast for a movie, but for trafficking to Turkey. And this one time we had to film a shepherd for a scene. There was this wonderful man with a cane and a grey beard. But his wife chased Tetiana away every time, because she was afraid that she was attracted to her husband. And the gas station man actually looked even better at the casting. When he came to the set, he looked as if he shaved for the first time in ten years and washed all the oil off his dark body.

Feature and documentary films are two different ways of interacting with reality. When does this trick with “type casting” work, and when doesn't it?

RB: Working with “types” is harder than hiring an actor. But you see fantastic faces and their unique experiences, which you can observe in their movements and in the positions of their hands, legs, their body.

The protagonist, Lukas, is not played by a type character or a professional actor, but by one of the best Ukrainian sound directors, Serhiy Stepansky. Why him?

RB: We were looking for the protagonist among professional actors and had dozens of casting sessions. But then Serhiy came and did all the dialogues as if they were his own, as if he really experienced them. Then there was no point in looking for an actor to play Lucas anymore.

DA: We were also very lucky with the improvisation by the host of the charity event. She was played by Alla Tverdokhlib, who had hosted hundreds of such events at the local club and always dreamt of acting in a movie. She came in a smart costume, she had her hair done. We only needed to turn on the camera.

RB: The documentary luck also played out in the scene with the “molecular glue.” Two of our main actors rehearsed the sale of the glue in the middle of the market. And actual customers started coming up to them and asking about the price. We made a scene in which random passers-by bought out nearly all props. When we wanted to do another take and asked the customers to give the “glue” back, people just ran off, because they didn't believe it was a film shooting. One man shouted, “I've been looking for this glue since 1995, and I'm not giving anything to anyone!” After that, the whole town reeked of plastic which was melted on gas stoves, according to the instructions on the package, but it turned out that our prop makers didn't find the actual glue and used fake plastic.

Essentially it was this documentary environment that created the combination of mystery, western, comedy, mockumentary, kitsch — all the shapes and rhythms that the film contains. How did you prioritize, both in terms of the genre and in terms of the visual aspect of the story?

RB: From the very beginning, we decided that the means must be very simple. We only filmed with the tripod or carried the camera in our hands. We followed the environment and looked what it had to offer and what it had to say. We spent most of the time looking for locations. Vova's house was one of the last places we found, it's in the Novovorontsovka district, and there's practically no road that leads there. We wanted to have the range and the width of Vova's soul: unfulfilled plans to become wealthy and have a big family. There are many houses like this one over there, but in the one we filmed, you can feel a potential future. Then we had rehearsals at the locations, and watched in awe how a baroque amalgam of genres and meanings was being born.

There was a specific moment in which our work changed its tone: it was when we were preparing the honorary board for one of the scenes. The idea was to make it in a contemporary style, with eye-popping colors, plastic flowers, with the portraits of the nurse, the businessman, the council member. The idea was to show the respected people of our reality, where everyone pretends to be someone they are not. But we accidentally found parts of an actual board, with faded faces, with eyes you can no longer meet nowadays. We only added to it a picture of the older Lucas with a beard. The interesting thing is that a similar board could have stood here in the past 70 years, unchanged. And that is the element that asks one of the central questions of the film, that provokes doubt in the audience: are all these people on the board even real and alive?



Production still by Dar'ya Averchenko

ABOUT THE PRODUCERS

OLENA YERSHOVA - TATO FILM (UKRAINE)

Delegate Producer

In 2011, Olena founded Tato Film, which operates in Ukraine and in Turkey. She has produced a total of 10 feature films that gathered more than 100 awards worldwide. She was a participant at EAVE in 2010 and is a member of the Asian Pacific Screen Academy, the European Film Academy and the European Producers Club.

Her filmography includes *My Joy* (main competition at Cannes 2010), *Frost* (Directors' Fortnight - Cannes 2017), *Falling* (Prix Du Public Jeanne Moreau at Premiers Plans, France, 2018), *Gogita's New Life* (main competition at IDFA 2016), *Motherland* (Venice Critics' Week 2015, Best Script and Unesco Award nomination at the Asian Pacific Screen Awards 2015) and *Blind Dates* (Toronto IFF, Tokyo IFF, Palm Springs IFF, Berlinale - Forum, 2014).



TANJA GEORGIEVA-WALDHAUER - ELEMAG PICTURES GMBH (GERMANY)

Co-producer

Tanja holds a Masters Degree in Journalism from the University of Leipzig, Germany and has produced a dozen multi-awarded films over the last years. In 2013 Tanja was awarded with the European Media Prize for *The Graveyard Of The Illegals* as Best European feature-length documentary. *Istanbul United* was nominated for the German Human Rights Film Award 2014 and invited to more than 40 International Film Festivals. Tanja also co-produced Roman Bondarchuk's *Ukrainian Sheriffs*.



Since January 2015, Tanja is Leading Producer and CEO of elemag pictures, a Leipzig/ Germany based film production company focussing on developing, coproducing & producing high-quality international films with a strong appeal to large audiences worldwide.

In 2016 Tanja attended the EAVE Producers Workshop. In 2018 she was selected by Screen International to represent Germany at their Future Leader Producers edition of up-and-coming producers during the Cannes film festival.

MICHEL MERKT - KNM (MONACO)

Co-producer

Monaco-based Swiss producer Michel Merkt has become a heavyweight in the indie film world. Just this year he had seven movies playing in at the Cannes film festival, including *Carharnaum* by Nadin Labaki and *Ayka* by Sergei Dvortsevoi. In 2017, Michel won the Locarno Best Independent Producer Award.

Michel's filmography includes the animated *My Life as a Zucchini*, which opened Directors' Fortnight in 2016 and repped Switzerland in the Oscar foreign-language race, as well as a Paul Verhoeven's *Elle*, Maren Ade's *Toni Erdmann*, Xavier Dolan's *It's Only the End of the World* (the French and German foreign-language Oscar candidates, respectively), and Kleber Mendonça Filho's *Aquarius*, which competed in the official selection in Cannes.



DAR'YA AVERCHENKO - SOUTH (UKRAINE)

Co-producer

Darya's passion is documentary films. She is an award-winning film writer and producer best known for her work on *Radunytsya*, *Euromaidan: Rough Cut*, *Ukrainian Sheriffs* and *Dixie Land*. Since 2009 she has been working as a PR director and member of the Selection Board of the International Documentary Human Rights Film Festival "Docudays UA".

As a correspondent she has worked at Mirror Weekly, the Ukrainian independent newspaper, the K1 TV channel and TV Phoenix (Berlin). She also works as professional photographer and is a member of the Ukrainian National Union of Journalists.

With *Ukrainian Sheriffs* Dar'ya has been nominated for an Oscar Academy Awards in the Best Foreign Language Film category.



SPECS & CREDITS

VOLCANO

a film by Roman Bondarchuk

Original title:	Вулкан
Genre:	Comedy, drama
Country of production:	Ukraine, Germany
Year of production:	2018
Length:	106 min
Shooting format:	Digital
Screening format:	DCP (1:2,39, Sound 5.1, un-encrypted)
Language(s):	Ukrainian, English
Subtitles:	English
Color or b/w:	color
Production Company:	Tato Film (Ukraine)
Delegate Producer:	Olena Yershova
Co-Production Companies:	elemag pictures GmbH (Germany), KNM (Monaco), South (Ukraine)
Co-Producers:	Tanja Georgieva-Waldhauer, Michel Merkt, Dar'ya Averchenko
Directed by:	Roman Bondarchuk
Written by:	Alla Tyutyunnyk, Roman Bondarchuk, Dar'ya Averchenko
Director of Photography:	Vadym Ilkov
Edited by:	Mykola Bazarkin, Heike Parplies
Production designer:	Kirill Shuvalov
Compositor:	Anton Baibakov
Sound designer:	Borys Peter
Re-recording Mixer:	Maria Nesterenko
Financial Support from:	Ukrainian State Film Agency and MDM Fund (Germany)
Technical Details:	25 fps Sound 5.1 Aspect ratio: 1:2,39



Credits: Vadym Ilkov