

ELDA PRODUCTIONS  
MINIMAL MOVIE  
PRESENT

A FILM BY  
ROMAN BLAZHAN



# THE BASEMENT

PRODUCED BY CHRISTILLA HUILLARD-KANN & ROMAN BLAZHAN MAGE MYKHAILO VOLKOV, ANDRIY NOHA  
SOUND VICTOR KONKEVYCH EDITING MATTHIEU AUGUSTIN ORIGINAL MUSIC JÉRÔME REBOTIER & GEOFFROY BERLIOZ  
SOUND EDITING MANU VIDAL MIXING XAVIER THIBAUT COLOR GRADING THIBAUT PETILLON PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT CORINNE DELPECH  
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR CLARISSE BELONDRADE INTERNATIONAL SALES ANDANA FILMS

arte

CNC Centre national  
du cinéma et de  
l'animation

ELDA  
PRODUCTIONS

MINIMAL MOVIE

GENERATION  
UKRAINE

andanafilms

GOETHE  
INSTITUT

PROCIREP ANCOA

# TECHNICAL SHEET

02

**78 minutes**

**Color**

**16/9**

**5.1**

**Language**

Ukrainian

**Countries**

France

Ukraine

**Coproductions**

ELDA PRODUCTIONS (*France*) - Christilla Huillard-Kann

MINIMAL MOVIE (*Ukraine*) - Roman Blazhan

**World Sales**

Andana Films



# LOGLINE

03

What happens to us when we want to forget but the only way to move on is to remember?

# SYNOPSIS

369 people, 160 square meters, 27 days. A Ukrainian village is locked in a school basement, the livestock killed, the farms devastated. One year later everything appears peaceful. The dogs are running around and the gardens are green but the wounds have barely healed. The children play war; the adults fluctuate between getting on with things and remembering. "Enjoy. Don't drown." A testimony to strength and solidarity.



On the 3rd of March, 2022 Russian troops entered the tiny village of Yahidne in Northern Ukraine. On the next day, armed with rifles, they forcibly extracted local residents from their dwellings and convoyed them to the school. Russians stuffed all 341 residents of Yahidne, including 77 children, into the school basement, roughly 190 m<sup>2</sup>, where the people spent the next 27 days. The conditions were inhumane: no ventilation, no oxygen, no water, no space to stretch your legs, pitch darkness. They used a bucket as a toilet in the same basement, and received some food once a day. Sometimes, when the Russians were in a good mood, they let the people outside to breathe for 1.5 hours. In the span of the 26 days of captivity, 10 people died in the basement. Olha, one of the villagers, kept a diary during her captivity, in case no one will survive.

Now, a year has passed after those events. From the first sight, the village is coming back to life. But it is no longer normal any more. While some residents are trying to forget the traumatic experience, there are people in the village who again and again come back to the memories trying to work out what happened. Their lives are intertwined with the experience of close co-existence. All of them have different motivations and personal stakes. But the openness gives them a voice to represent the community and to build a new identity of Yahidne.



Roman Blazhan is documentary filmmaker hailing from Donetsk, Eastern Ukraine. Initially embarking on a career in energy trading and finance, Roman's trajectory took a dramatic turn following the onset of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2014. Displaced from his home and disenchanted with his previous profession, he embarked on a profound journey of reinvention, discovering his true calling in the world of film.

In 2015, Roman co-founded the documentary film production company Minimal Movie alongside Mykhailo Volkov. As a visionary creative duo, Roman takes the helm as director and producer, while Mykhailo lends his expertise as the director of photography and co-director. Together, they craft stories that resonate and challenge, delving into complex themes and human experiences. Currently based in Germany since 2022, Roman continues to explore and document the human condition through his cinematic works. His notable filmography includes:



## FILMOGRAPHY

2024 | **The Basement** 78 minutes

2023 | **Generation Ukraine** 52 minutes  
*A vivid portrayal of a nation's youth amidst turmoil.*

2021 | **Deported** 40 minutes  
*An intimate look into the lives of the descents of Germans displaced by Soviet state in 1941.*

2020 | **Orthodox Chic** 4 minutes  
*A snapshot of contemporary sacred architecture.*

2020 | **Landscape Architecture: Rethinking The Future out of a Totalitarian Past** 4 minutes  
*A critical view on urban space and memory.*

2019 | **Enter Through the Balcony** 26 minutes  
*An exploration of the time and space through the makeshift architectural phenomenon.*

2018 | **Soviet Modernism. Brutalism. Post-Modernism** 4 minutes  
*A study of architectural legacies through the intergenerational dialogue*

I was born in 1978 in Donetsk, Eastern Ukraine. When the Soviet Union fell in August 1991, I was 13 years old. Which generation do I belong to? To Ukrainians who had to find a new identity after the Soviet Union fall and were young enough to make it? To those eastern Ukrainians who have clashes between generations in their families divided because of the Maidan Revolution? To those generations of Russian speakers who shifted to Ukrainian Language in their families to raise up the next generation having Ukrainian as their mother tongue? To the generation of Ukrainians who fled the country with their small children and are starting their life from scratch?

As a person who already lost his home twice, I thought I had lost the sensitivity to horrors of the war. It's just the mechanism which helps you to keep sane while the nightmare you live has no end. But that was not the case when I heard the story of Yahidne. All the monstrosity of the war crystallized into that single story. All the sides of the shattered world of human existence could be explored through just one photo of the basement door. Nevertheless, the existence of the diary gives this story volume. While human memory can be fluid and transformative, the diary gives a precise framework. This is the right time to catch these immediate memories until they become a part of collective identity. This is the chance for me to give a voice to ordinary people so their personal stories will not disappear in a collective story.

I've always been focusing on memory in my films - on the intergenerational, on the national level, on the gender based, on the fluidity and metamorphosis of the memory during our life. It has always been a key question for me - deconstruction of the memory as a key for the deconstruction of the post-soviet identity. In Yahidne, we see the transformation of the local community - from attempts to avoid the memories of events to the understanding that this experience of close co-existence made them stronger and supportive. This is how post-soviet identity transformed to the new Ukrainian identity on the local community level.

Stories of our past tell us who we are and they announce to others who we are. That is one of the definitions of identity. There were a lot of discussions in Ukrainian society about Ukrainian identity before the war. But there was never a consensus about this. This war became a nail into the coffin of the post-soviet identities for most of Ukrainians. This is my step forward from deconstructing of post-soviet identity to the constructing of the new Ukrainian identity.



# CREDITS

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## **Author and director**

Roman Blazhan

## **Director of Photography**

Mikhail Volkov

## **Sound**

Victor Konkevych

## **Editing**

Matthieu Augustin

## **Sound Editing**

Manu Vidal

## **Mixing**

Xavier Thibaut

## **Color Grading**

Thibaut Petillon

## **Music**

Jérôme Rebotier

Geoffroy Berlioz

## **Producer**

Christilla Huillard-Kann

## **Executive producer**

Roman Blazhan

## **TV Participation**

ARTE France

A film as part of GENERATION UKRAINE

## **Support**

CNC

Procirep-Angoa

Goethe Institute

Ex-Oriente FILM

Ji.hlava New Visions Forum

East Doc Platform

## **World Sales**

Andana Films



# CONTACT

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