

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



ELDA

MINIMAL MOVIE

GENERATION  
UKRAINE



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

**arte** GENERATION UKRAINE

**Generation Ukraine** is an initiative led by the ARTE Group aimed at supporting the Ukrainian filmmaking industry by co-producing 12 documentaries that explore Ukrainian reality in the throes of the ongoing war.



For 27 days confined in a school basement during an invasion, the villagers of Yahidne share a profound lesson with the world: how to preserve humanity when it seems all but lost, offering a blueprint for resilience and compassion amid chaos.

## SYNOPSIS

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2022, nearly 400 people of the Ukrainian village Yahidne are locked by Russian troops in a 160 square meters school basement for 27 days. The livestock is 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. 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 nearly 400 residents of Yahidne, including 77 children, into the school basement, roughly 200 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. Among the villagers, Olha documented their ordeal through a diary, preserving their experiences should they not survive. A year later, Yahidne shows signs of life, yet it remains profoundly changed. The village is divided; while some residents struggle to leave the past behind, physically free yet mentally trapped, others find a transformative power in their suffering. These villagers have turned their ordeal into a path for spiritual and emotional growth, emerging with insights into maintaining humanity even as the surrounding world crumbles. They share their stories with a resilience that shines through their enduring smiles, becoming beacons of hope and crafting a new narrative for their community and the broader Ukrainian identity.



Roman Blazhan is a 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 fell and were young enough to make it? To the generation 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?

Stories of our past tell us who we are and announce to others who we are. That is one definition of identity. What kind of stories will we share about this war with our children and grandchildren? Will these stories be marked by tragedy and stigma, or will they inspire and unify?

As a documentary film director, I feel a profound responsibility to forge new myths for a new Ukrainian identity. The core idea was to work with immediate memory, capturing individual stories before they transform into stories about stories.

I consciously chose to avoid the most harrowing tales from *Yahidne*, as it was not my intention to traumatize the audience. Given today's often bleak media landscape, my role as a director is to present the narrative of the war in a manner that engages and compels the world to listen.

*Yahidne* emerged as a beacon of light and hope for me. It showcased the resilience of modern-day saints who endured hell on earth yet did not remain mentally trapped there. They send a message that, despite the horrors of war and the fragility of human nature, our strength lies in our humanity. This film amplifies their message that love and empathy are the answers; cooperation and collaboration are our only way to survival. To remain human, we need little more than compassion, trust, empathy, and hope. These are universal truths, relevant not only in life-and-death situations but as the means for our collective survival as a species.

Despite our many differences that divide us, the few things we share bind us together and give us hope for a better world. This film aims to highlight those shared human elements, fostering a vision of a united and hopeful future.



# 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 Coproduction**

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

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