

A photograph of two men inside a vehicle, likely a bus or truck. The man on the left is wearing a black beret, a grey and black patterned scarf, and a dark jacket. The man on the right is wearing sunglasses, a mustache, and a dark jacket, and is holding the steering wheel. The interior of the vehicle is visible, including the dashboard and windows. The title "UKRAINIAN SHERIFFS" is overlaid in a stylized, bold, yellow font with a black outline. Below the title is a small yellow star flanked by two horizontal lines.

# UKRAINIAN SHERIFFS

SOUTH, VFS FILMS, TASKOVSKI PRODUCTIONS

a film by ROMAN BONDARCHUK

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A tragicomic portrait of a two-man team of sheriffs in a remote Ukrainian village disturbed by everyday incidents and political developments.



Year of production: 2015

Length: Director's cut 85 min / TV version 52 min

Genre: Human Interest / Social Issues / Author's Point of View / Society

Original language: Ukrainian

Screening format: DCP with English subtitles

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## SYNOPSIS

Like a bird, the Ukrainian flag flies along perched on the car of two affable "sheriffs" deputized by the mayor of a village in southern Ukraine. There's a sly bum whose gift is not to work. There's a guy who puts an anaconda in his woman's shed.

The advent of Euromaidan, and draft-dodgers abound. Town folks are dipping in icy water and laughing, but are they divided in their loyalty? These sheriffs are taking you along for the ride..

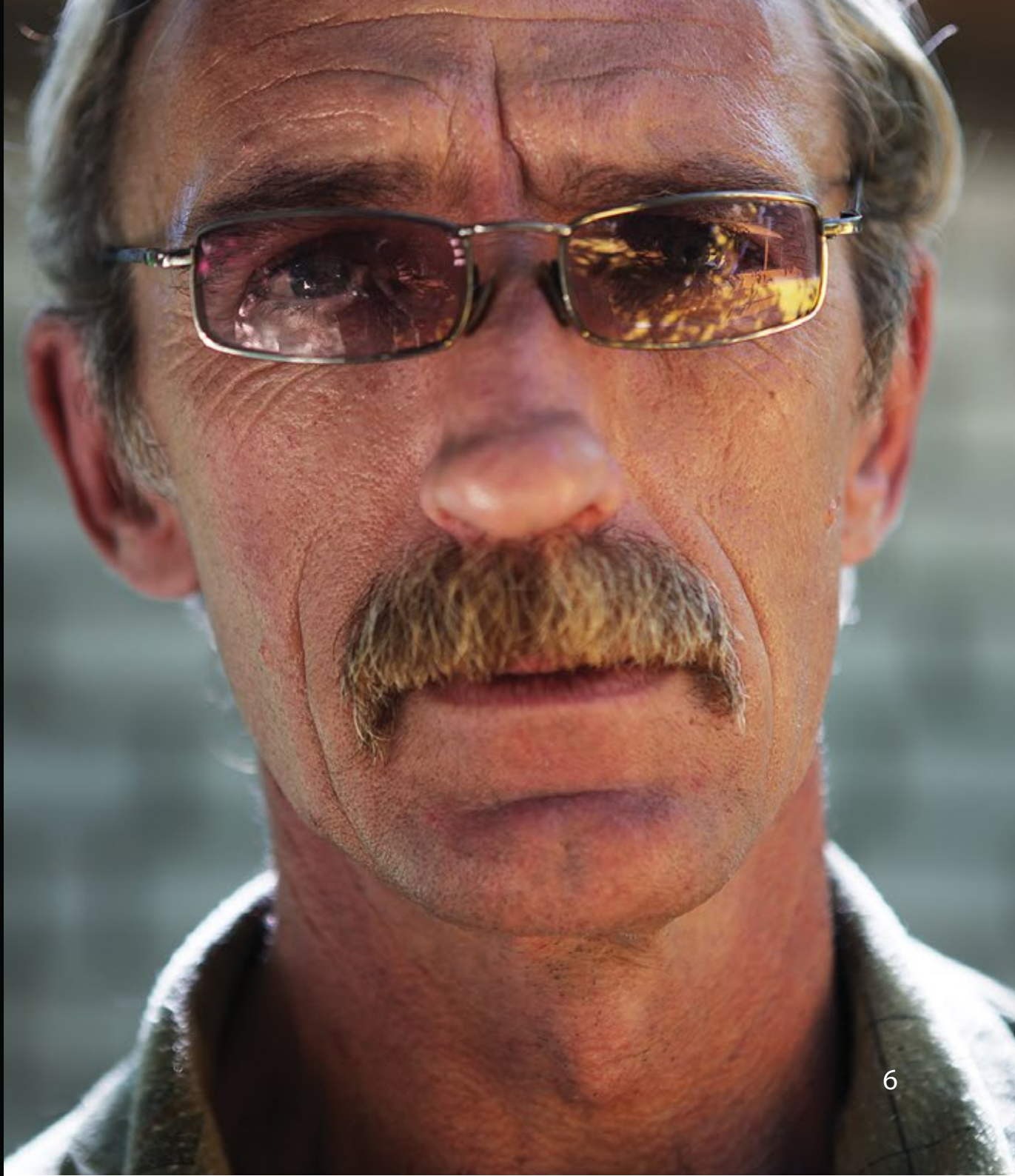






VICTOR GRYGOROVYCH (50)

The "smart guy", is a former policeman. Since his youth he always "wanted to be a man in uniform running over the field with a submachine gun." He first enrolled in a military college but had give up the studies due to health problems. He became a police inspector. He solved on average 13 cases per month (two times more than the fixed norm) and travelled to distant places all over the country, including above the Arctic Circle. After the collapse of the Soviet empire, he returned to Ukraine to work as a police inspector in rural areas. Now retired, he still dreams of great criminal cases and investigations.



VOLODYA (44)

The "strong guy", has recently started keeping pigs and is entirely focused on running his household. Two years ago his wife gave birth to their daughter Sonya, and the strongest man in the village, "the terror of hooligans", turned into a gentle loving father. He used to work as a security man at a bar and a disco club. But a year ago Volodya returned to his sheriff duties which he regards as the highest point in his professional life.





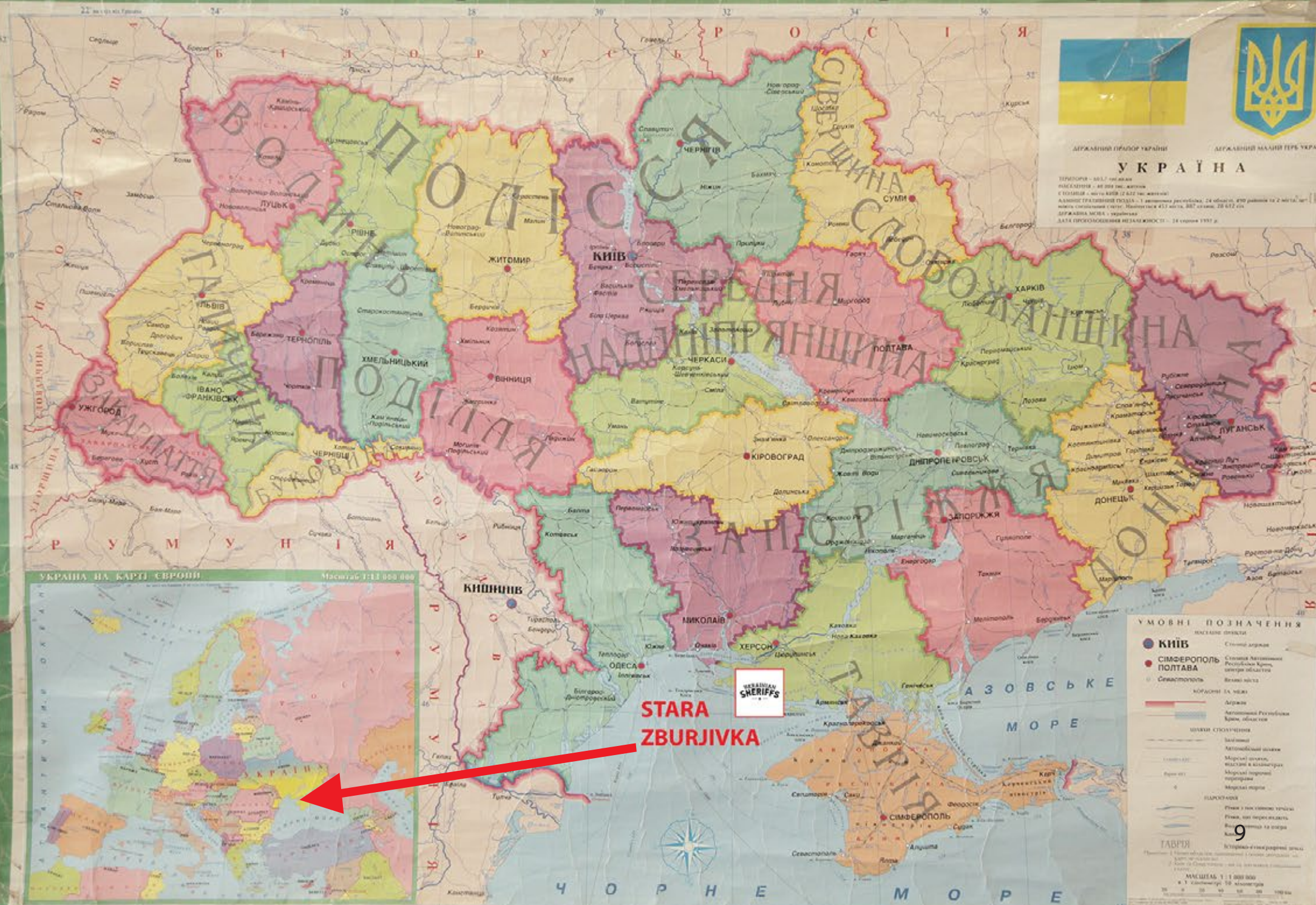
VIKTOR MARUNYAK (56)

The third-term chairman of Stara Zburjivka village council. He is the man who initiated and embodied the idea of village sheriffs. Marunyak is a historian by education, an intellectual and a patriot. During the Orange Revolution, he was a member of the security squad protecting Yulia Tymoshenko, spending the first day of the Revolution to the last on the Independence Square in Kyiv. Today he is determined to put things in order, at least in his own village, irrespective of what happens in the country at large.





У К Р А І Н А. Адміністративний поділ та історико-етнографічні зем





# QUOTES ABOUT THE FILM



## VITALY MANSKY

Film director

(UNDER THE SUN, THE PIPELINE and others)

This film was aiming to tell the story of a few people from the Ukrainian countryside, but instead it portrayed the faith of a nation during the turning period in its history.



## ANDREY ZAGDANSKY

Film director

(VAGRYCH AND THE BLACK SQUARE, MY FATHER EUGENIY and others)

I watched one of the work-in-progress versions of the film.

I'm sure the viewers will pay close attention to the ups and down of Stara Zburjivka small village "sheriffs" in East Ukraine.

Still, the greater discoveries for me were the secondary characters.

A high-rank police official is being disturbed by a phone call from even higher boss, just like me, you won't be able to forget him; a flying separatist demagogue, a prison bird in love who dreams of a new life, and even an inanimate object: a watchtower from which you can clearly see that nothing is happening in the town. To be exact, something is happening, but still nothing's changing in our Ukraine. Good luck to the filmmakers!



## VALDIS ĀBOLS

Editor of Rigas Laiks

Tucked in an old, claustrophobic car, the Ukrainian sheriffs take you on a truly Gogolesque ride through a sleepy backwater of a village. Direct, ruthlessly honest and often irresistibly funny, this film reveals the Ukraine concealed behind the veil of media imagery.



## AUDRIUS STONYS

Film director

(GATES OF THE LAMB, RAMIN and others)

Up on the screen we see the real people, those who are searching, suffering, falling yet arising again, struggling to find their place in this unstable and ever-changing world, tormented between past and present. Here the tragedy walks hand in hand with comedy.

The film elevates us to the heights of a human virtue and throws us into the deepest abyss of suffering and injustice. But even when we see the unspeakable poverty and despair, this film opens up for us the miracle of love as a sign of hope that even in the darkest of darknesses there is an ever-shining light.



## YULIA SERDYUKOVA

Producer

(EUROMAIDAN. ROUGH CUT, ALL THINGS ABLAZE and others)

"Ukrainian Sheriffs" is a precious crystal that reflects all facets of life in our country today, as well as the wide range of characters inhabiting it, and does so in a thoughtful but at the same time tremendously entertaining way. Life here is absurd, but also deeply human. It may vary from digging graves in the morning to reaching (sometimes literally) for the sky in the afternoon, but when a small village is your backdrop, all dramas feel as if they're on the scale of opera.

The protagonists wander through a moral grey zone most of the time, making it hard to tell who's good or bad... and you might find a hero lurking where you don't expect. What unites these people in my mind is their desperate, often painful striving to become decent human beings while the whole country is struggling through a growing-up process.



## OLENA YERSHOVA

Producer

(MOTHERLAND, BLIND DATES and others)

When you cut your finger you feel pain, it means you are alive...Do these people still feel pain?...Very touching documentary from the South of Ukraine...





## MARINA STEPANSKA

Film director

(HOLIDAYS, MAN'S WORK and others)

It seems like you're in to see a funny story, something like, "Once upon a time, in a crossroad between civilizations... there were the people..." with some classic characters like in the Hollywood westerns: the sheriffs (good guys) are restoring justice in the kingdom of bad guys (the rest of the townspeople).

Yet, suddenly it turns out that the conflict of the film is not between the good sheriffs and the bad villagers, but between your perception of a human nature and the real manifestations of this very nature: the sheriffs are regular people, there are no particular, "moral" principles, moreover, "the good" is as transparently comes through filth and clean windows, as "the bad" does happen to those who have chosen to lead a "righteous path." It is that kind of territory. I'm familiar with the territory of a small town, I spent the first 5 years of my life in such a place, the small towns are often being idealized (a cozy cherry garden, a fog over the river) by those who come to feast their eyes on the fogs, and by those who think of it as a living hell and horror show with real savages.

In reality these things are combined. Such are metaphysics of the territory. At one moment a farmer may admire the rays of sun coming through the crown of a hundred-year-old oak, and at the other he will cut it to firewood without a shadow of a doubt, just because "it's cheaper than to order a truck." So, in my opinion, the greatest success of the film is its ability to project such metaphysics of existence. There is a very precise image: a horizontal life with its vanities, fuss, and never ending, unsolvable conflicts and a vertical life up at the watchtower, even time passes differently up there. And these two lives, two relations, two times do co-exist in a single space.

The time is of a great importance here. When it slows down, especially up at the watchtower, I'm not getting the impression that the action of the film suspends, because when it stops, the time passes even more intensively than it does in the beginning, when the sheriffs are rushing through the town, solving problems. The first half with its quick editing paradoxically looks like a pointless fuss, in other words, this territory has its own time and it needs to be heard.

All in all, you got lucky, since you've got a really universal story of a human nature, but not a local report on a social experiment in some small town.



## SERHIY LYSENKO

Film director

(AMOSOV: THE CENTURY, ENCYCLOPEDY OF EUROMAIDAN and others)

### 1. The film is everywhere.

Our film industry is a dead plant. It shut out of communications, deprived of orders and markets. It attracts either thieves who come in just to steal something, or mad enthusiasts who are trying to create something against all odds. This is why I consider every Ukrainian film either as a vile stealing fest of corruption and thieves, or as an act of personal bravery.

Roman's film belongs to a second category. The crew that has been working on the film had a long path before achieving a result, they were filming in spite of circumstances, they were spending their personal savings and were looking for the clean funding sources. As a result we've got a rare occurrence when a Ukrainian film becomes a part of the European film industry, without help of Ministry of Culture, without Russian and Ukrainian TV-channels. This is the way we all need to be headed. That's why Tarkovsky's thought on film being an action is completely suitable to Roman and his crew.

### 2. The film.

It is the true film. The subject, the conflict, the characters, the message to viewers, everything's here. The link between the events, time, and eternity is in place and it works. So according to my personal check-list for analysis of a film, everything's fine. I've got concerns about rhythm and construction, but these disadvantages are much easy to mistake for a unique creator's style. I never learned to separate one from the other.

As a viewer I liked the film. I think it's about a "mysterious Ukrainian soul" during a complicated time for the country. It is unclear whether the soul disintegrates, awakens, or is deeply sleeping. Probably it's everything at the same time. I think, Dostoyevsky and Gogol are its potential target audience.

### 3. Aftertaste.

The story with Roman's film is a direct illustration of the reality which says, if you want to make a film in Ukraine you have to become its producer. This is another confirmation of thesis that our Ukrainian 'Cinema House' (generally speaking) has decayed to such a degree, that it's easier to start building a new one. And I'm really glad there are the ones who are building.





## AUTHOR'S NOTE

I have known the people from the small village of Stara Zburyivka since my early childhood. By the end of the 80s, my parents began to build a summer house there. I loved the town for its river and pine woods, but I hated the summer house because I had to work in the garden during my vacations. Many years after this, in the summer of 2011, we were shooting a project called THE NEW HEROES, a series of short documentaries about people who struggled and succeeded under the corrupt Yanukovich regime.

One of our heroes was Viktor Vasylyovych Maruniak, the head of the Stara Zburyivka village council. He was protecting the land of the town from oligarchs who were buying up the property in the South, and that's why he was jailed. He was freed after two weeks because all of the villagers gathered before the Kherson prosecutor's office. We were astonished by this story, and wanted to find out more about this person who was so highly respected.

This is how we found out that in addition to the kindergarten, a well-paved road, and a public beach, there were also sheriffs in the village. During those times, it was nearly impossible to call the police to the village. They wouldn't come due to the gas shortages, so public order was kept by two locals - Viktor Kryvoborodko and Volodymyr Rudkovsky. With time, we became more and more engaged, and later we moved to my parent's summerhouse and started to shoot. And, we started to mix with the locals.

At first, we thought of making a humorous film about the experience of keeping public order, since there were so many curious cases. For instance, the neighbors were quarreling about the borders of their property, and one of the neighbors pissed over the fence. But after the war in the east started, the mood of the film has changed. The originally planned comedy has turned into a drama and acquired more significance and implications.

With this film, it was important for me to break through the torrent of news which depicts Ukraine much too superficially, basing the stories on the political figures, the Crimea annexation, and the war on the eastern border. I wanted very much to tell about our people, to show their lives, the depth of their feelings, and the love that shines through with hope even in the darkest of hours.

Dar'ya Averchenko



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT


When I first met the mayor of this village and the sheriffs, I was totally fascinated: in a country where everything was corrupt, authorities not working properly, and the police never around, the people were not complaining, but found an alternative way to arrange their life. I immediately started following them with my camera and discovered another universe with its own morality, beliefs and fears, sometimes absurd but very human.

Then I realized that life in the village is full of paradoxes but it reflects all the events in my country, on a smaller scale. There is a pro-Russian separatist living in the village, all the time competing with the mayor for power. Villagers are afraid of war, but draft the locals to fight in the war. And they band together to collect food and goods for the Ukrainian army. They are trying to deal with the new reality on their own, like all Ukrainians do now.

Following recent political events in Ukraine and personal stories of the sheriffs, I made a very honest film. I would love to call it a tragic documentary comedy.

Roman Bondarchuk



A black and white photograph of two people, a man and a woman, standing outdoors at night. The man, on the left, is looking off to the side with a slight smile. The woman, on the right, is leaning her chin on her hand and looking towards the camera. They are both wearing dark clothing. The background is dark with several out-of-focus light sources, likely streetlights or building lights, creating a bokeh effect. The overall mood is intimate and candid.

ROMAN BONDARCHUK and DAR'YA AVERCHENKO  
talk about the film with TUE STEEN MÜLLER  
Leipzig, October 2015

#### WHY AND HOW AND WHEN

TSM: So, in journalism you have the W: who, where, when, where, why. With which W do you want to start?

RB: I'm absolutely unprepared, so I can improvise. It's my first time to think about answers to questions. I'm glad, that it is you.

TSM: All right, then the classic one, a bit boring: When did you start the film?

RB: I can tell you. And if it's boring you can stop me. I have a story behind it all. I can tell you, how we met this mayor Viktor Vasylyovych Marunyak.

TSM: Ok, he is my favourite in the film!

RB: It was during one of our dates – Dasha and me - that we met each other. I took a car, we went for some driving around Kherson. There was a huge sign on the road like "Georgievsk church, 19-th century, fortress, Cossacks graves" and we were interested to find them. They were touristic signs.

TSM: How many years ago?

DA: It was late 90'es.

RB: No! (Roma says) Really?

TSM: And you were not a couple at that time?

RB: No, it was just one of our first dates... and we turned to the road to nowhere, looking for all these attractions. We couldn't find anything, so we stopped on the road to ask the way. That's how we met a local man, a teacher of history. He confirmed: Here was a fortress in the 18th century, but villagers deconstructed it and built their sheds out of fortress's bricks. He said, that this is a village of free people. It's a Cossacks' village. In the 19th century the villagers were wealthy enough to have their own bank. There was a shipyard over there – many people were sailors or owned ships and were travelling and trading all around the world. In Soviet times they never had kolkhoz, no Lenin monuments, because they lived quite remote from any central city and also because there is very little land around the village. Most of the villagers are not farmers, but fishermen. Even in the 1930'es (during the Stalinist repressions) they always had fish to eat, what made them feel like free people.

RB: Of course road signs were only installed on the big road for report: In reality it was not an attraction at all. But this teacher could tell stories. Later I got to know, that he took part in Orange revolution, left the teaching and was elected as a mayor.

DA: For me it was absolutely a discovery, that in this village you could meet an intelligent person, educated, with good brain and historical

knowledge, a great speaker, philosopher and storyteller. We were two teenagers from the city and had the prejudice that mostly wild people live in villages!

#### DATING FOR A FILM

TSM: Roman, why were you dating there?

RB: I just grabbed my brother's car, wanted to surprise Dasha, discover some new places.

TSM: So, you don't have any connections to these places?

RB: At that moment Dasha's parents had a summerhouse in Stara Zbur-jivka.

TSM: A Dachas?

RB: Yes, but she hated that summer house, because you had to work in your garden or vegetable garden during all holidays. We all hated dachas.

#### THE MAYOR

TSM: So the teacher/mayor was the one who got you into the film?

RB: From that point on I was very interested. Imagine: In the middle of nowhere, with such stories from the past, but with nothing in the presence. Faked road sign. Some mystery was behind.

RB: The second time we met, was when we had been shooting "New Heroes" – short documentaries about ordinary people, who succeeded in a corrupted country and defend themselves from the attacks of state. Viktor Vasylyovych was already a mayor of this village and wanted to protect their land from stealing. It was a land-boom, when people from the capital started to buy the best land on the seashore, near the rivers. Of course, it was illegal, but with the support of officials from the regional center. When Marunyak stood up against officials, they first offered him money – something like 1,000,000 dollars just for silence. He refused and was immediately `caught` with bribe and put into prison. But local people conducted a real campaign to release the mayor: petitions, demonstrations in front of the prison, it was done with passion and finally he was released! We made a short documentary about this story, it became very popular in social media and on youtube. I think this short documentary also helped the mayor to overcome this crisis after jail and go back to his work. Anyway, after we made it, we became like relatives for those villagers, as we went together with them through bad times.

TSM: So he was the man, who inspired and motivated you with his charisma.



RB: Yes, his charisma and the stories he told. He built a kindergarden, which is unusual for a village of this size. He built a good road. And in between of this and that he said: It's really hard to call police here, they never come. So, I found two guys, gave them a car, managed how to pay them from really useless points in the village budget and called them sheriffs. Now they are here instead of police.

TONY SOPRANO AND CHUCK NORRIS

RB: I asked him again – What do you call them? – Sheriffs, he said! – Can I meet them? – I asked.

RB: At first time I met them I thought I would never find a better casting for a fiction movie. One – the big guy – looks like Tony Soprano, the other – thin and with moustache, like Chuck Norris. I was immediately attracted and fascinated. They told me, let's go and fix some problems and it was like that. And that day we shot two episodes, which are in the film now.

TSM: Which scenes?

RB: The broken door (Let's drink!) and Kolka scene, their conversation about wife Tanya, why he had beaten her.

TSM: And you found another character Kolya...

RB: Yes, we met Kolya in first day of research. But he was like one in the row. I thought – the last thing I want is to make one more film about the bum. But at the end this bum was the one, who uncover all my main characters. Our Latvian producer Uldis Cekulis calls Kolya is "their own Jesus".

And then we made a pause for almost a year, finishing another film. But after a year we understood that we were still attracted and still thought about them and decided to spend the whole summer shooting. It's funny – Viktor, the guy with moustache, suddenly told me something, that I couldn't forget. They have a coffin, a special village coffin, they store it in the firewood shed for poor people, who can not afford a personal coffin. The ceremony looks like this: They bring the body in the coffin to a cemetery and then just overturn it into the grave. Then the coffin waits for the next poor one. While showing me this coffin, Grygorovych said dramatically: recently I counted how many people I buried – it's about 80!

TSM: In that way?

RB: Yes, and it was said very poetically. You can't stay calm.

TSM: Which year was this?

RB: Summer 2013.

TSM: That's way how you got closer to them...

RB: Yes! The problem was also that at the first shooting day they were so open, they wanted to do their best for us, to please us, to open for us their achievements, but when they realized that we are there for longer time, we become annoying people who follow them with this boom microphone and a camera. So they started to avoid us. That was the moment where we decided to stay with them as long as we could in order to dive into their life. If we had stopped then, we would never be close to them, we would be aliens for them forever. So we moved into the village – me, Dasha and our friend and sound man Borys Peter, and started to hunt them.

THE METHOD

RB: First I thought that they could call me if something happens, but they never called me back. The working day in the village council starts at 8 a.m. And we decided to come there at 7:45, just sit and wait. Sound man Boris was strong enough to put radio microphones on them straight at morning and he was sitting and listening, what they were talking about in his headphones. And when he heard some interesting conversation, he always pressed «rec» button and I knew, that it was time to go inside and film. Even with their «cases» and scenes in the car: When I asked them, where are you going? – Oh, it's nothing serious, nothing interesting. We'll be back in 15 minutes. Then when they are back: «Oh! It was so amazing! It's a pity you were not there. One huge man has beaten his woman...» – It was like that. After a few «what a pity» we decided to jump into their car without permission, each time they went. Soon they got used to us.

TSM: I suppose they didn't have any idea, what is a documentary. They thought you'll take an interview and that's it.

RB: Of course they thought of TV. For the mayor it was easier to show his life, to open up. It's funny, but for these strong guys the most scary thing is the public opinion, what others say.

TSM: Did they ask to see, what are you filming?

THE PERFECT GIFT

RB: No. It's interesting, but no. I made some DVD's for them out of my footage for home use: Birth of the daughter of the younger sheriff, village ceremonies, celebrations. They were quite happy, they understood that we can be useful! But funny thing about their reputation. It was Christmas. Viktor, the sheriff with mustache said: Oh, Christmas is coming, but I have



absolutely no money for the gifts. I would love to buy ice-skaters for my son. I answered: OK, went to Dasha's father, took his old ice-skaters and told Grygorovych: Here is the present! He was so glad, told me, this is a perfect gift. I told him that I would like to film him skating with his son. He said: Well, OK, maybe tomorrow, and then tomorrow was tomorrow again. Ice started to melt ... I couldn't understand, why he was avoiding that. But suddenly I understood that he was afraid of falling. If I skate with my son and fall, what would others say? Not because we are filming them, but because others could see him falling.

TSM: Is that also why he didn't jump into the water in the wonderful scene in your film on Vodohresha celebration.

RB: Maybe, yes.

TSM: He doesn't want to undress himself like the big guy Volodya.

RB: Probably it's also because he is secret service man.

TSM: So after the summer...

RB: ... it became easier. They were happy, that we came in wintertime, to share with us their news and fears. And when the Kolya case happened, we were in Kyiv, and sheriff called me for the first time and started to confess by phone.

TSM: Moustache sheriff?

RB: Yes, moustache sheriff Viktor Grygorovych told me: «What else should I do, he stole a bike, I had something to do as a sheriff and now all the village hates me. Even my colleague in the village council said to me: and now you have to put Tanya into jail to get rid of her, because now she is a problem for the village. I know it's stupid and there is absolutely no reason to put him to jail, but it was how the things worked out.»

RB: It was an amazing monologue I couldn't record, but I realized his thinking, he is part of the system, he couldn't understand the meaning of his work and what followed.

TSM: Is it a full-time job for him?

RB: Yes, it is.

TSM: But the big guy is also a pig farmer, so he has two jobs.

RB: For the pig farmer it's not a full time job. Officially Volodya is like a driver for the village council, from 8 am in the morning till 3 pm. But this guy Grygorovych made his confession, trying to limit his responsibility: I'm the sheriff, I do my job, I don't care what is happening with people afterwards. At that moment something clicked in my head. I connected this drawing of Jesus. He took real peace of art, this gravure from the wall and destroyed it with the cells and started to copy it from cell to cell,

without understanding the whole picture. Just drawing this line from cell to cell. I understood: this is a metaphor for what he does and how he thinks. I called my soundman and said, let's go tomorrow morning, we have to be there to catch Grygorovych in such mood and such conditions. And it was the day when he feels some regret. Maybe you remember the scene, when he is sitting on the table and says: everybody is master of their own destiny. It's the only moment, when he opens up as a person, suffering on what he did. All other episodes he is only sheriff.

TSM: Because also big guy – he told maybe my colleague did a mistake.

RB: Yes!

TSM: Even two mistakes: because you can't take this litography with Jesus. Can I do that? So, your ambition from the start was to go deeper and deeper with these two characters. Would you say that?

RB: Yes! We hoped we could find a case which starts at the beginning and leads us through the whole movie.

#### POLITICS CREEP IN

TSM: But now you have it with Kolya. And the other things around: Ukraine today – the small village, history, the 9'th of May, celebration Day – all these kind of things. When and how did you find out, which elements to bring to the audience to understand the social-cultural frame of these two characters.

RB: In 2013 it was absolutely unimportant, all the political issues. All was clear – we had a dictator and a country stucked in the middle of nowhere, with a village completely separated from police. We didn't care about the context at all. We just knew this is Ukraine and this is the village, which is in Ukraine geographically, but in a completely different universe with police service and other rules, but then when Maidan came in November 2013...

RB: Of course we were in Kyiv filming Maidan and when we came back that winter after Maidan, they all started to talk about politics and Putin, fear of war, how to react to Russians – it was all about that. Our film changed really, it was really like two different films from summer and from winter. But we had the wonderful guy on the top of the tower. He is a complete freak and doesn't care about anything, so we put some radio over his «hard-working» job.

TSM: So, he was there before and during Maidan and afterwards. What is his job?

RB: In reality his job is to observe, if fire happens. Stara Zburijvka is



surrounded by forest.

TSM: He was hired to climb there every bloody day to sit and observe?

RB: He is fire watcher. As he said his job is to sit and watch. And finally it's big luck to have him speak about war and army. He has been drafted. He refused, because he is in the tower- not so easy to draft him, he survived and is still sitting there. He is like a view from the top, who knows all the events and processes, which we can see downstairs?

TSM: Is he like a documentarian? Your alter-ego?

RB: We have a story with him. Once we discovered him with a lady in this small space on watching tower. I asked him, what is this lady here for? And he answers: Oh, it's my assistant, I'm teaching her to observe fire!

#### NO INTERFERENCE – ALMOST

TSM: How much did you interfere? I mean how many times did you ask sheriffs or mayor to do something? Would you call it an observational documentary or it is also staged?

RB: There are some artificial moments, but they are not staged. Once in winter Volodya told us, that his car is from Donetsk region and every policeman stops him for inspection. He told, I wish I have this Ukrainian flag on my car just to show them, that I am Ukrainian and not from Donetsk. We bought and gave him a flag for the car and then we had this scene, when he loses his flag on the road. So, you can't really interfere with their reality – it's so surprising, because as a stranger there, all our interferences will be visible. We decided to collect episodes and play with them in the editing, not while filming.

TSM: Now we have these three characters, plus the one in the tower. I know it's an absolutely stupid question, but, would you say they are representatives of the ordinary Ukrainians living in the countryside, not in Donetsk region, maybe not in Kyiv, which is much more open. Are they prototypes of people who live in the countryside, who are of course politically engaged, but not that much. They are listening to what happens, but they have enough in simply settling day-to-day things. Would you say that? Let me tell you, why I say that. Because for me it could be Danish village. Of course our social cultural context is different, but still they are people living their little problems, which should be solved. And here you have sheriffs, who are solving problems. And a mayor who is also philosopher. Would you say they are prototypes or what?

RB: special village, with a very special mayor and to have sheriffs is also

not so common. Historically it's a border village, that was founded by Zaporyzki kosaks, who defended Ukraine from Turks. And you know, locals still have this kosak blood. So, I would say, this village is special, but their understanding of life, understanding of politics, their beliefs and fears – they are common for every villager. What I realized by being there: I was surprised of their cultural background, because it's connected with national identity and it's connected with national security at the end, because when you ask them who they are and what is Ukraine is... with mayor it's clear, he is absolutely patriotic guy and he is absolutely for Ukraine, no question, but with sheriffs it's not that clear. Of course they are for Ukraine and they are ready to fight for their families and their houses, but they listen to Russian music, Russian chansons, it's thief-music, popular among prisoners. It's quite an important thing, what are you listening to and what kind of stories you know. The context. They still remember all these soviet movies. From their favourite soviet movies, they moved to Russian criminal series, so their cultural background is not Ukrainian at all. No characters, no heroes, nothing to fight for in cultural sense. So, I realized that I live in completely different cultural context. The thing is how to replace this former, ugly, terrible, thief-culture to something, which could lead them to a new stage, some new identity. That was my biggest discovery there. Even the best of them, the active fighters, they are all in the wrong context culturally.

#### NEW IDENTITY

TSM: So, they are in the process of finding new identity.

RB: I think they will never find the new identity by themselves. It must be helped through state informational politics. At least the government should block this terrible Russian radio stations and TV-stations.

TSM: Did they ever vote for Yanukovich?

RB: I'm not sure. The mayor Viktor Vasylovych never voted. The sheriffs also didn't. But the tower guy did. On the day of elections I was filming him and asked him did you vote? He answered: Of course, for Poroshenko. I asked, why for him, there are so many beautiful new people, who have appeared after revolution. He said: Come on, everybody votes for him and I vote for him too. I said: Ok, who was your candidate on previous elections? He answered: Yanukovich, everybody voted for him, me too. So, it's like a tribe.

TSM: Is it a political film?

RB: I think it's stupid at this time to film non-political film. I have to share



country to others.

TSM: Would you say there is some message in the film? Now we are talking and you can tell me, what do you want us to understand, what we didn't understand before. When people say Ukraine, what kind of images do you have in our head? Maidan, Donetsk and the conflicts, which are difficult for us to understand. You then bring life in a village to us, is here anything here you want us to understand better or what?

TSM: The images we have when people say Ukraine: Maidan, conflict in the Eastern part, conflict with Russians, Putin, Poroshenko is going around. And what are you bringing is different or what?

#### THE PARADOX

RB: I want to create empathy towards these people and to transfer this feeling of new times, when people try to adjust to reality by themselves. They are afraid of war, but they draft people to this war, they deliver goods and food to their soldiers, when they are drafted. I want to create live characters to connect Ukraine with them, not on an abstract but on a deeper level. For me it's about former and new thinking. When Grygorovich draws Jesus following the cells, he is just repeating lines, not creating, for me it's an image of former thinking. And the celebration the 9'th of May, Victory of Soviet Union over German fascists. When they paint the monument to Alyosha in gold while they have new war in the country. They celebrate former victory. It's absurd!

TSM: Right. This is paradox.

RB: The ritual they still follow – absurdic paradox. And my message is that we have to see that from a new perspective, come on, we have to win now! And it's all about rituals and possibility to see reality. I want them to see reality not to paint Soviet soldier monument. Come on, it's not our hero.

TSM: Well, it's part of your history, isn't it?

RB: It is. But it's also the part of our enslaving. Before Maidan we were a colony of Russia and we still are like an informational colony, still have their TV, films – it's what imprisoned us. We can't go fight with them, because we know them since our childhood as our friends and brothers. And this golden guy is also image of russian brotherhood and they are painting him in gold.

TSM: Are you optimistic about this? Don't you think their life will be the same, as it was while Yanukovich was there? Does it matter for them, if

Yanukovich rules the country or another one? Life in such a small village like this one, will it be influenced? Of course there is war and other things. But will it change anything?

DA: I think it matters what the regime stands for. Because during Yanukovich time our mayor Marunyak was kept as briber and sent into prison, a completely innocent person. It was possible at that time and a lot of such situations happened, not only to our mayor, but to many others, who defended their land and didn't want to sell it to oligarchs. And now I think there are a lot of good changes, but unfortunately the reformation of the country couldn't be so quick, because of the war.

RB: You need to believe in something. I believe they are poor, because of wrong thinking. If we repair thinking, everything will get better. There were elections in Ukraine some days ago and Marunyak won again, in fight with the pro-Russian fisher-businessman. That makes me optimistic.



# CAST & CREW

Directed by  
ROMAN BONDARCHUK

Idea by  
DAR'YA AVERCHENKO  
ROMAN BONDARCHUK

Cinematography  
ROMAN BONDARCHUK

Produced by  
DAR'YA AVERCHENKO  
ULDIS CEKULIS

Co-producers  
TANJA GEORGIEVA  
IRENA TASKOVSKI

Edited by  
KATERYNA GORNOSTAI  
ROMAN BONDARCHUK  
BORYS PETER

Editing Consultant  
PER K. KIRKEGAARD

Sound Director & Recording & Design  
BORYS PETER

Sound Engineer  
ANDRII ROGACHOV

Original Music  
ANTON BAIBAKOV

Sound Editor  
EUGENE KOUTS

Foley Artist  
VICTOR SHCHEGLOV

Foley Recordist  
EDUARD ZEMLIANOI

Re-Recording Mixer  
MAX PONOMARCHUK

Colorist & On-line Editor  
KRISS ROZINS

Photography  
YULIA SERDYUKOVA  
ROMAN BONDARCHUK

Designer  
VARVARA PEREKREST

Web-Site supervisor  
YULIA SERDYUKOVA

Translators  
VIKTOR HLON  
NADIYA CHUSHAK  
VALDIS ABOLS

KERRY SHAVN KEYS  
Management SOUTH (Ukraine)  
DENYS KOSTYUNIN  
SVITLANA SMAL

Management VFS FILMS (Latvia)  
JOLANTA LIEPIŅA  
ELINA KARULE

Management TASKOVSKI PRODUCTIONS (Germany)  
ALEKSANDRA DEREWIENKO  
INKA ACHTE

Our Thanks to  
VIKTOR MARUNYAK (Mayor)  
VIKTOR KRYVOBORODKO (Sheriff)  
VOLODYMYR RUDKOVSKYY (Sheriff)  
MYKOLA YANOVSKYY (Kolka)  
TETYANA TEMOFEEVA (Tanja)  
IRYNA RUDKOVSKA  
and all the residents of Stara Zburyivka village

# BIOGRAPHIES



## ROMAN BONDARCHUK (director)

Graduated from the Kyiv State University of Theatre, Cinema and TV. His teacher was Yuriy Illenko – one of the founders of the Ukrainian Poetic Cinema school.

Roman Bondarchuk has created a number of short films, documentaries, and music videos. He wrote several books of fiction, and has participated in photography and contemporary art exhibitions. Also, an award-winner of national and international film festivals. Roman works as art-director for, and is a member of, the Selection Committee of the International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival, Doucdays UA. As a documentary director, he collaborated with MDR, ZDF, Arte and other TV channels. Among his well-known films: THE TAXI-DRIVER, RADUNYTSIA, CAFE "VOYAGE", EUROMAIDAN. ROUGH CUT. In 2015, he finished his first feature-length documentary, UKRAINIAN SHERIFFS.



## DAR'YA AVERCHENKO (author, producer)

Studied at the Faculty of Journalism at Kyiv International University. She received her postgraduate education at the Free University of Berlin. She worked as a journalist for the publication, "Weekly Mirror"; and has worked for TV Channel K1, and TV Phoenix (Berlin). She led the Ukrainian version of the German TV Channel, Da Vinci Learning. She is a member of the Union of Journalists. She's PR-director and a member of the Selection Committee of the International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival, Docudays UA. Since 2007, Averchenko has been a script writer for feature films and documentaries. Dar'ya is a producer, based in Kyiv (Ukraine). In 2014, her film EUROMAIDAN. ROUGH CUT was in the Best of Fests program at IDFA. UKRAINIAN SHERIFFS is her first feature-length documentary.





#### ULDIS CEKULIS (producer)

Created the independent production company VFS FILMS in Latvia almost 18 years ago and later won the International Trailblazer prize at MIPDOC in Cannes, which recognises the best documentary makers. He has worked on almost fifty creative documentaries and author-driven prime time TV projects both as a producer and sometimes as a cameraman.

As producer, most of his films such as ROOF ON THE MOONWAY, THEODORE, THE DECONSTRUCTION OF AN ARTIST, DOUBLE ALIENS and others have travelled and received awards around the world, including nomination for the European Film Academy Documentary Award 2005 for DREAMLAND by Laila Pakalnina; and the Lithuanian official Academy Award entry RAMIN by Audrius Stonys in 2012 for Best Foreign Language Film.

He has co-produced documentaries with Ukrainian, Estonian, Lithuanian, Russian, German, Italian, French, Greek, Icelandic, Finnish, and Georgian production companies. Currently he is working on five documentary co-productions. For more information, please visit VFS FILMS site [www.vfs.lv](http://www.vfs.lv)



#### TANJA GEORGIEVA (co-producer)

Holds a Masters Degree in Journalism from the University of Leipzig, Germany, and has produced numerous multi-awarded films. In 2013 Tanja received the European Mediaprize for THE GRAVEYARD OF THE ILLEGALS (wdr the story) as Best European feature length documentary.

One of her latest works, ISTANBUL UNITED, was nominated for the German Human Rights Film Award 2014 and invited to more than 40 International Film Festivals. With ONCE UPON A DREAM - A JOURNEY TO THE

LAST SPAGHETTI WESTERN by Tonislav Hristov Tanja was invited in 2015 for the second year in a row to the Documentary Films Competition at Karlovy Vary International Film Festival. Since January 2015, Tanja leads as Producer and CEO the new Leipzig based international film production company ELEMAG PICTURES.



#### IRENA TASKOVSKI (co-producer)

Founder of Taskovski Films Ltd. London & Berlin leading world sales and production company of creative documentary films. Since 2013 working as external consultant / expert on marketing, sales and festivals for many film institutions eg. HBO Europe, Asian Cinema Fund, Taiwan Film Institut, Dokulncubator, etc. Taskovski producers / coproducers titles: A multiple award winners VILLAGE B, dir. Filip Remunda (Best Doc at Karlovy Vary in 2002) and CZECH DREAM by Vit Klusak and Filip Remunda ( Best Doc San Francisco Film Fest 2005 USA), CZECH PEACE by Vit Klusak and Filip Remunda, ALL GOOD FOR THE WORLD and NOSOVIC by Vit Klusak, WHO WILL BE GURKHA (2013) by Kesang Tseten, Surire (2015) by Bettina Perrut and Ivan Osnovikoff, UKRAINIAN SHERIFFS (2015) by Roman Bodnarchuk, etc.

Taskovski films SALES - full portfolio on [www.taskovskifilms.com](http://www.taskovskifilms.com) some titles: OLMO AND THE SEAGULL by Petra Costa and Lea Glob, BLOOD SISTERS by Malin Andersson, WORK HARD PLAY HARD by Carmen Losmann, PEOPLE I COULD HAVE BEEN AND MAYBE I AM by Boris Gerrets, European Academy Awarded directors Audrius Stonys, with his RAMIN and Helena Trestikova RENE, winner of the European Academy Award – Prix Arte 2008.

# IDFA SCREENINGS

Munt 11 – Fri 20-11, 20:00

Munt 13 – Sat 21-11, 10:00 (industry screening)

Brakke Grond Expozaal – Sat 21-11, 10:30

De Kleine Komedie – Sat 21-11, 21:30

Brakke Grond Expozaal – Tue 24-11, 20:45

Tuschinski 1 – Thu 26-11, 12:15

Tuschinski 2 – Fri 27-11, 18:45

Munt 10 – Sat 28-11, 14:00







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