

ACTIVIST38 & ICI ET LÀ
PRESENT



OFFICIAL SELECTION
UN CERTAIN REGARD
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

WOMEN DO CRY

A FILM BY MINA MILEVA & VESELA KAZAKOVA

2021 – BULGARIA, FRANCE – DRAMA – 2K – 5.1
BULGARIAN – 106'

SYNOPSIS

A mother stork is shot down from a chimney. A woman suffering from postnatal depression nearly jumps off a balcony. A girl has to deal with the stigma of HIV. A mother looks for magic in the lunar calendar. Fragility and absurdity in this contemporary Bulgarian family are set against the backdrop of violent anti gender-equality protests. Based on a true story.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I, Vesela, grew up in a family of women. A family of three sisters, two of whom now have daughters themselves – just like the film's heroines. I've chosen not to have children and, as one might imagine, I witnessed my sisters' invisible battles as women. I supported them, from their post-partum depressions to every time their kids would get sick. Women and the world they inhabit have always inspired me. Even as a child, I knew I was attracted to women. And I was fascinated by my mother, a victim of my father's aggressive behavior.

In addition to (rather commonplace) domestic violence in Bulgaria, homophobic violence – which was not very frequent, even during the Communist era – is now becoming increasingly common. All of this goes hand in hand with a new "patriotism" and a rejection of European values. A Bulgarian court recently rejected the Istanbul Convention – which is aimed at combating domestic and gender-based violence – simply because of a sloppy translation of the term "gender". The Bulgarian constitution defines a "woman" as a person who gives birth to a child... We then saw nationalist uprisings motivated by the fear that Europe would try to impose "gay" values on the population. There have also been demonstrations to protect traditional family structures and childhood. Public debate has been fraught, and the Orthodox Church has taken a moralistic stance on how the nuclear family should be defined.

A few years ago, when my older sister's daughter was 19, she announced she was HIV positive. We were in shock. When AIDS entered our family, it unearthed all the issues we had previously swept under the rug. I'm now ready to share all of that.

The film's central character, played by Maria Bakalova, is the link between every character in this ensemble film.

As co-directors, our work on set would flow smoothly, where we'd focus our attention primarily on the actors. When we chose Maria out of 100 young actresses in Sofia, we didn't know she would soon have the lead role in a big Hollywood production (*BORAT 2*) which would later win her a Golden Globe and an Oscar nomination.

Our respective professional profiles (acting for Vesela, graphic design and animation for Mina) were very complementary during production. And the fact that we filmed most scenes handheld allowed us to stay close to the characters.

WOMEN DO CRY dives into the female psyche, into the heart of a country that does not officially recognize the word "gender". A country in Europe, torn by cyber-bullying, poverty and isolation.

Mina Mileva and Vesela Kazakova

ABOUT MINA MILEVA AND VESELA KAZAKOVA

After two decades in the British animation industry Mina Mileva created Activist38 with Vesela Kazakova, also an actress. Vesela's leading roles have won her several Best Actress awards like Silver George at the 2005 Moscow International Film Festival and Berlinale Shooting Stars in 2006.

Mina and Vesela have directed and produced subversive documentaries, which, according to Variety act as “rare gadflies whose sting is causing a massive allergic reaction on the thin skin of Bulgaria’s filmmaking elite”. Despite their international recognition, the films haven’t been aired on Bulgarian television for years. Vesela and Mina received institutional harassment and had to undergo numerous interrogations. A PR of a major political party and member of Bulgarian Parliament even nicknamed them the “Demonic duo”!

Their first fiction film CAT IN THE WALL premiered in Competition at the Locarno Film Festival 2019 and SXSW for North America. It received the FIPRESCI Award at the Warsaw Film Festival 2019 and was part of the EFA Feature Film Selection 2020. The film ranked number 1 in Screen’s summer festivals selection of 2019.

Their second feature drama, WOMEN DO CRY, was selected in Un Certain Regard at the Cannes Film Festival 2021.

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

2021	WOMEN DO CRY Drama, 106’
2019	CAT IN THE WALL Drama, 92’
2016	THE BEAST IS STILL ALIVE Documentary, 91’
2014	UNCLE TONY, THREE FOOLS AND THE SECRET SERVICE Documentary, 87’

CAST

Sonja	Maria BAKALOVA
Lora	Ralitsa STOYANOVA
Ana	Katia KAZAKOVA
Veronica	Bilyana KAZAKOVA
Yoana	Vesela KAZAKOVA
The Father	Iossif SURCHADZHIEV
Maria	Rositza GEVRENOVA
Katerina	Siana GEORGIEVA
Drago	Gragomir KOSTADONOV
Tina	Dobriela POPOVA

CREW

Directed by	Mina MILEVA and Vesela KAZAKOVA
Written by	Mina MILEVA, Vesela KAZAKOVA, Bilyana KAZAKOVA
Music	Andy COWTON
Director of Photography	Dimitar KOSTOV
Color Correction	Lionel KOPP
Casting	Vania BAJDAROVA
Production Design	Yuliya KUNOVA
Editing	Donka IVANOVA and Yann DEDET
Sound Editing	Jean-Pierre HALBWACHS
Sound Effect	Gadou NAUDIN
Mixing	Stéphane DE ROCQUIGNY
Postproduction	UNITED POST PRODUCTION
Postproduction (Sound)	M STUDIOS
A French-Bulgarian coproduction between	ACTIVIST38 and ICI ET LA PRODUCTIONS
In Coproduction with	ARTE FRANCE CINEMA
Produced by	Mina MILEVA and Vesela KAZAKOVA Christophe BRUNCHER
With the support of	BULGARIAN NATIONAL FILM CENTER EURIMAGES ARTE FRANCE LA RÉGION ILE-DE-FRANCE
French Distribution	EUROZOOM
Austrian Distribution	FILMLADEN
International Sales	mk2 films

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