



THESSALONIKI
INTERNATIONAL
DOCUMENTARY FESTIVAL

NEWCOMERS
COMPETITION 2025

TiDF27



a documentary film by Olga Gibelinda

Queens of Joy

WORLD PREMIERE

Thessaloniki International Documentary Film Festival 2025

Newcomers Competition

Original title: Korolevy radosti
International title: Queens of Joy
Running time: 90 & 60 min
Year of completion: 2025
Language: Ukrainian & Russian (with English subtitles)
DCP 5.1 Color
Countries: Ukraine, France, Czech Republic

Director: Olga Gibelinda
Screenplay: Olga Gibelinda, Ivanna Khitsinska
Script and Editing
Consultant: Martin Horyna
Cinematography: Kyrylo Nikrashevych, Olga Gibelinda
Editing: Zuzana Walter
Music: Artem Baburin
Sound: 4ears Sound (Ukraine)
With: Monroe, Artur Ozerov aka Aura,
Oleksandr Danilin aka Marlen Scandal

Producer: Ivanna Khitsinska (for Malanka Studios),
Louis Beaudemont (for Les Steppes Productions),
Hana Blaha Šilarová (for Films & Chips)

Co-producers: Claudia Bucher (ARTE G.E.I.E.),
Barbora Bouillo (ARTE G.E.I.E.),
Beatrice Meier (ARTE G.E.I.E.),
Caroline Kelsch (ARTE G.E.I.E.),
Sergiy Nedzelsky (Suspilne Ukraine),
Natalie Movshovych (Suspilne Ukraine),
Alona Holiakova (Suspilne Ukraine).

In collaboration with: ARTE and Suspilne Ukraine.

This film is part of the GENERATION UKRAINE collection, developed and supported by ARTE, Doc Society European Documentary Journalism Fund, CNC, Czech Audiovisual Fund and with financial support of European Union, Next Generation EU, Ministry of Culture Czech Republic, Ukrainian Cultural Foundation.

Logline
Ukrainian Drag Queens Documentary

Diva Monroe, along with drag queens Marlene and Aura, are on a journey to discover their identities while embracing freedom and hedonism. In the face of the horrors of the war in Ukraine, they come together to organize a charity drag show to support their homeland.



Synopsis

"Queens of Joy" is a debut film about self-discovery, personal freedom and the power of community. It tells the story of three Ukrainian queer people: Monroe - a trans woman and icon of the Ukrainian queer scene, Artur Ozerov aka Aura - a drag artist and military man and Oleksandr Danilin aka Marlen Scandal - a legendary figure of Ukrainian drag culture. In times of full-scale war, they unite to organize a charity drag show in support of Ukraine and its defenders, proving that art and culture can be a powerful weapon of resistance and solidarity.



Director's Biography

Olga Gibelinda is a Ukrainian director and producer. She works in the documentary genre, creating films that highlight important societal issues. «Queens of Joy» is her debut in a full-length documentary. In the film, Olga combines artistic sensitivity with documentary precision. She strives to bring the stories of her characters to a wide audience, encouraging dialogue about identity, self-expression, and the right to be oneself.



Director's note

"Queens of Joy" is a statement about the courage to be yourself, about the search for hope, and about how true beauty is born in freedom. This film is for everyone, as each of us fights our own battle—for identity, for love, for the right to have a voice in this world. In the darkest times, what unites us is not just shared pain, but also unwavering dignity, the ability to rejoice, create, and love. It is a story about those who, despite the war, choose life in all its colors.» – director Olga Gibelinda

Producer's note

«'Queens of Joy' is more than just a story about the Ukrainian drag scene. It is a film about dignity, struggle, and the right to be oneself, regardless of the challenges faced. The film demonstrates that the Ukrainian LGBTQ+ community is an integral part of society and actively supports the country in its most difficult times. In times of war, the only thing that matters is which side you fight on, not how you dress or whom you love. "Queens of Joy" aims to expand the dialogue about human rights, freedom of expression and tolerance. This project is a message to the world that Ukrainians are fighting not only for their independence, but also for the right to freedom in all its manifestations.» – producer

Ivanna Khitsinska

«Queens of Joy goes against all our preconceived notions. It shows that the war in Ukraine does not bring more paternalism, more hatred, more racism, or more homophobia. On the contrary, the development of Ukrainian identity, freed from the chains of the Russian Empire and in the terrible conditions of the most violent conflict Europe has experienced since the Second World War, embraces an idea that lies at the very foundation of Europe: united in diversity.» - French

producer Louis Beaudemont

When I first saw the director Olga and the producer Ivanna pitching the project, I knew it would be a very unique story. "Queens of Joy" represents to me will to live on one's own terms despite the circumstances. The film shows that resistance and bravery can have many forms and our three queens can lead by example - you can try finding happiness and joy in every situation and it is more important during war times. - Czech

producer Hana Blaha Šilarová

Co-producer's note

arte

GENERATION
UKRAINE

«Queens of Joy» is one of twelve film projects by Ukrainian filmmakers, supported by Arte since the start of the war in Ukraine.

At ARTE GEIE in Strasbourg, we were immediately excited about this upbeat and relevant project.

The Queens combat war and murder with joy - and resist by continuing daily life with dance, love and colourful power. Therefore, they have decided to stay put in their country and continue to fight for LGBTQ+ visibility and rights in wartime.

LGBTQ+ is a crucial social and political marker in transition countries. The growing community illustrates the growing presence of Western culture in this post-soviet society.

We really appreciate this double dimension of the project and are thrilled to see «our Queens» shine on stage and on screen. - **Beatrice Meier, Barbara Bouillon, Claudia Bucher**

SUSPILNE
UKRAINE

In the darkest and hardest times people are able not only to show resilience and bravery, but are also prone to manifest courage and willingness to go beyond the fixed conservative attitudes. "Queens of Joy" is an example of the journey into oneself's inner world in search of self-determination and freedom.

The film declares very important, in times of war, messages of equality of rights, compassion, acceptance and respect to each other.

"Queens of Joy" also is evidence that Ukraine is a free and tolerant country. I can't imagine seeing such a film in the totalitarian states. - **Sergiy Nedzelskyy, Head of Co-Production & Outsource Commissioning at Suspilne Ukraine**

About producers and Co-producers



Malanka Studios is Kyiv based production company founded by Olga Gibelinda. It creates TV series, feature films, documentaries. The company works with original scripts and projects, develops, produces, distributes and delivers audiovisual content and provides a full range of services.



Les Steppes Productions - is Paris based an audiovisual production company founded in 2018 by Nicolaï Iarochenko and Louis Beaudemont. Les Steppes produces or co-produces fiction and documentary films from France and abroad, with the sole aim of ensuring that the authors' point of view is rich and fresh.



Founded in 2021, **Films & Chips** is a testament to the enduring creative collaboration and friendship of three filmmakers—Marek Čermák, Karolína Dvorská Fránková, and Hana Blaha Šilarová. Based in Prague, Czech Republic, the company is dedicated to producing a diverse range of high-quality, innovative audiovisual projects for a global audience. Its portfolio includes short fiction films and international documentary projects, while also actively developing feature-length films, animated works, series, and pioneering multi-genre projects from emerging filmmakers.

Protagonists

Monroe - a trans woman and icon of the Ukrainian queer scene. Monroe fought for acceptance and self-identification throughout her life. As a renowned TV host, actress, blogger, and influencer, she introduces the term 'transvestite diva' in Ukraine and openly identifies as transgender. The war triggers Monroe's journey towards accepting her femininity and gender identity. She seeks help from a psychologist and gradually reveals her true self, breaking free from her public image.

Ukrainian Queer Icon and celebrity, activist, fighter and a trans woman. Demanding acceptance and rights for self-identification, she became the role model for many Ukrainian queers.



Protagonists

Oleksandr Danilin aka **Marlen Scandal** - a legendary figure of Ukrainian drag culture. Oleksandr leads a dual life. In one persona, he is a kind, compassionate, and humble person named Oleksandr. In the other, he transforms into the confident and popular drag queen, Marlen Scandal. Despite the war, Oleksandr continues to give drag shows and visit the club. Oleksandr organize a special event, a big charity show, to unite different and iconic people from the LGBTQ+ community, including Monroe and Aura and support army.



Protagonists

Artur Ozerov aka **Aura** - a drag artist and military man. Aura, a young soldier, has been serving in the environmental protection department of the Ukrainian army for 8 years. Before the war started, Arthur gave his first drag show as AURA - the inner woman, the queen and the part of his personality that Arthur was afraid to show. The boy grew up in a typical post-Soviet family that experienced a specific national identification: his mother's brother went to Russia and is now an FSB officer. The rest of the family, his mother and Arthur, switched to Ukrainian and chose the values of freedom.



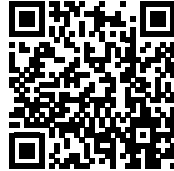


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