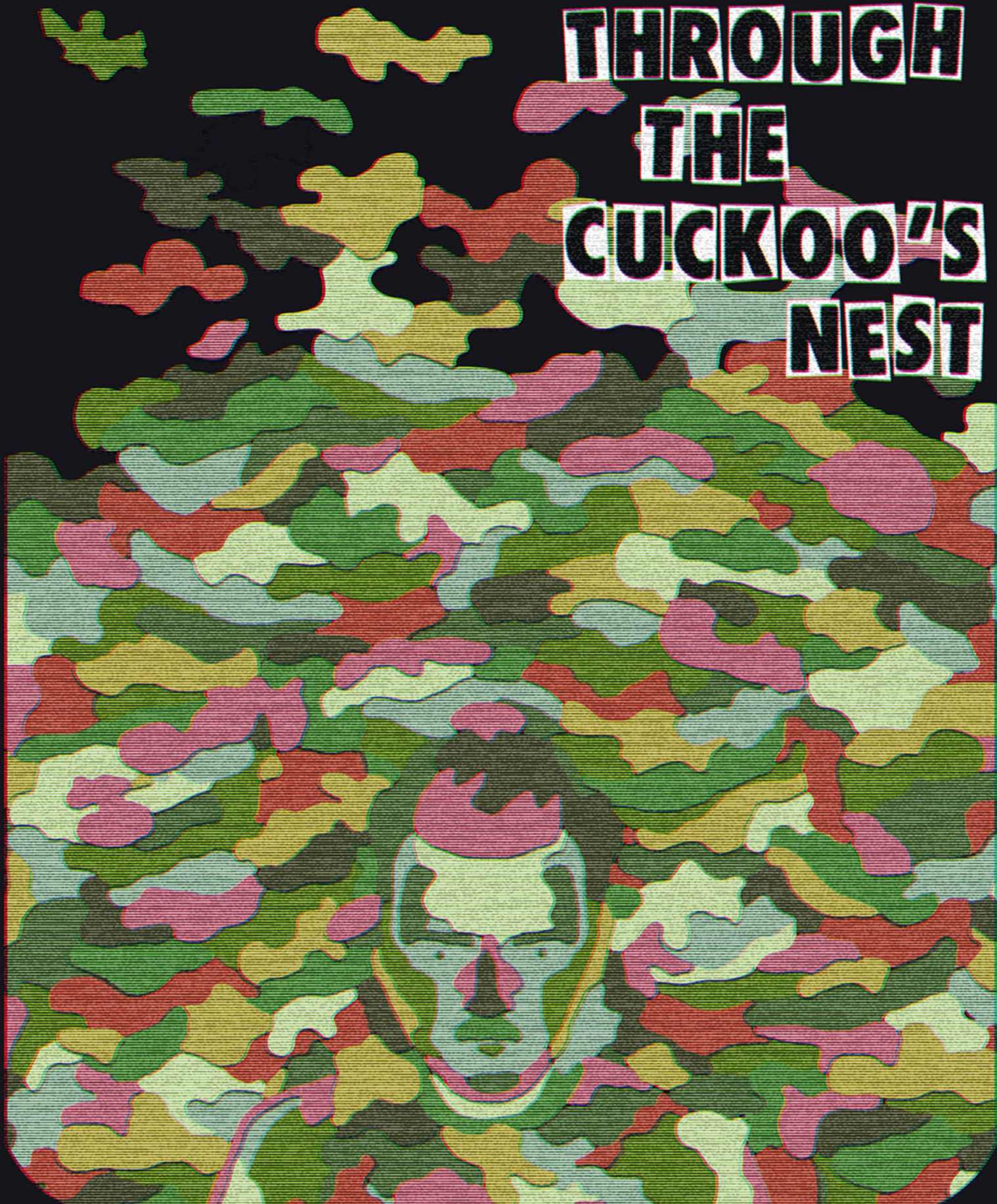


EXIT THROUGH THE CUCKOO'S NEST

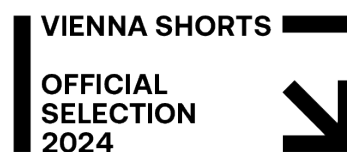
A Film by Nikola Ilić



Director: Nikola Ilić | Editor: Corina Schwingruber Ilić | Producer: Laurin Merz | Production Manager: Barbara Praschnig | Cinematography, Location Sound Mixer: Nikola Ilić, Corina Schwingruber Ilić | Sound Design: Jan Godde | Graphic Design: Sabina Oehninger | Colour-correction: Unsere Farben GmbH | © 2024 HOOK Film

LOGLINE

The essayistic personal short documentary
tells the story of a soldier who -never
wanted to be one.
Choosing never to pull the trigger, his
defiance leads to military prison.
Faking mental illness he detours away from
the front line, through a lunatic asylum
back home to Belgrade on the day that NATO
begins bombing the entire country.



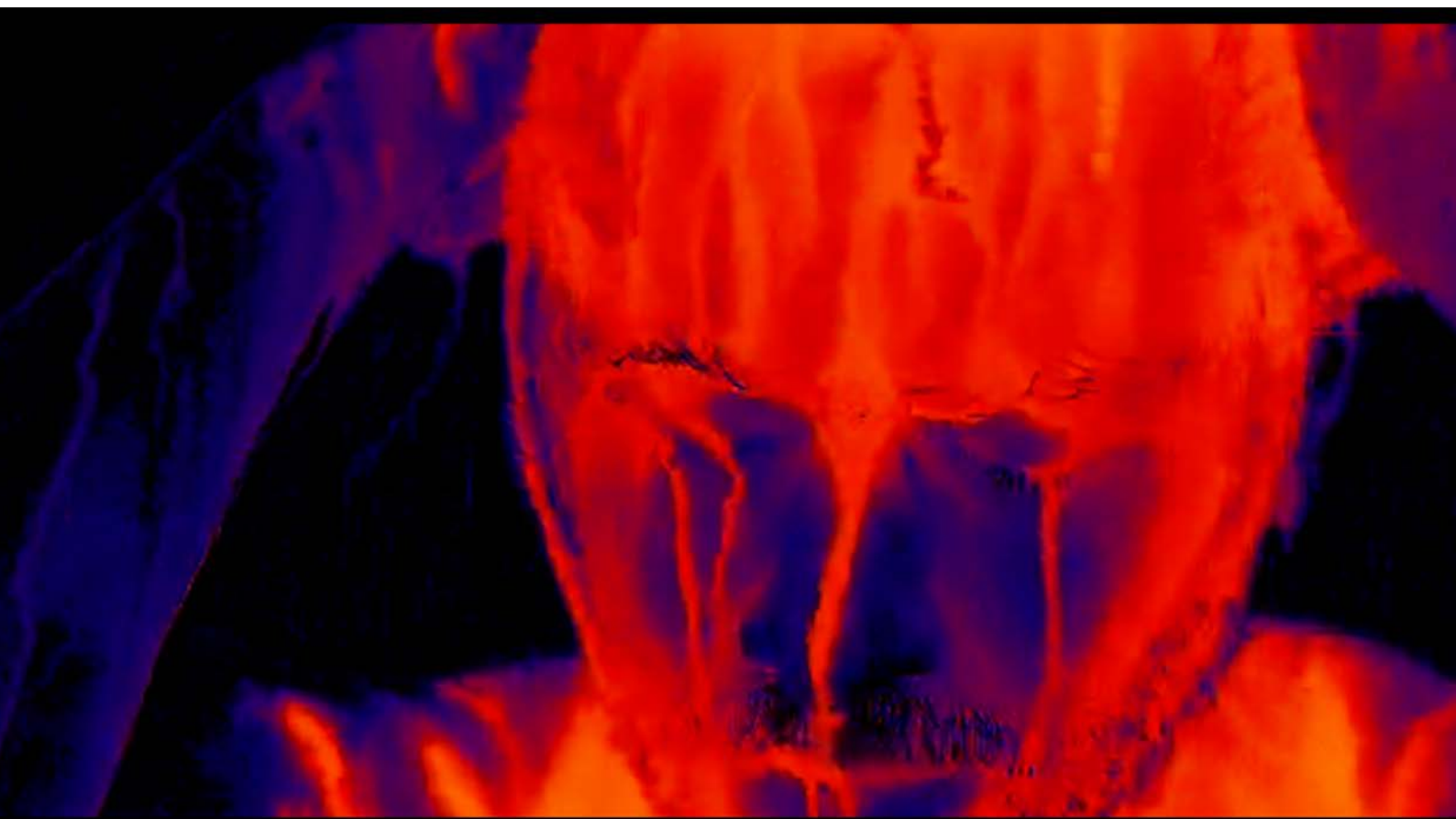
SYNOPSIS

«As a teenager in 1990s Belgrade, life felt as if in some limbo in a country ruled by incompetent fools and crippled by sanctions and wars. When the blue envelope arrived, ordering me to war in Kosovo, the only thing I knew was that I would never ever shoot. However, I had to get on the train to become a soldier I never wanted to be.

In the platoon around me were young people like me in their early twenties: provincials, mechanics, young fathers, failed students, unemployed hairdressers, and others with unfulfilled lives.

'Here's the rifle. Now go and kill!' they were told.

Many of my comrades died, some of them taking their own lives afterwards. I was lucky to have always refused to shoot, but I ended up in military prison. After becoming a translator, I had a breakdown and purposely acted mentally ill to be sent to a psychiatric hospital. After months of pretending, I was finally released and able to return home on the exact day when NATO began bombing my entire country.»



ABOUT NIKOLA ILIĆ

BIOGRAPHY

Originally from Belgrade (Serbia), Nikola Ilić is an independent filmmaker and cinematographer interested in creative and observational documentary film-making. Since 2007, Nikola Ilić resides between Switzerland and Serbia, completing his studies at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts while working professionally since more than a decade. His short films have been awarded and shown at many Festivals around the globe. His first feature Doc (Co-Directed with Corina Schwingruber Ilić) won a DOK Leipzig Golden Dove among other awards. He's the DOP of the well received shorts ALL INCLUSIVE (2018) and BEEN THERE (2023) both directed by Corina Schwingruber Ilić. Tree times nominated for the Swiss Film Award. Two times winner of Zürich Film Award and Film Award of Central Switzerland. Co-founder of Pro Short Association. Member of the Swiss and European Film Academy.



FILMOGRAPHY

«DIDA» I Feature documentary I 2021 I 78 min. I Co-Directed by Corina Schwingruber Ilić

«RAKIJADA – Distilled Village Tales» I Short documentary I 2016 I 19 min.

«JUST ANOTHER DAY IN EGYPT» I Short documentary I 2015 I 11 min. I Co-DOP & Co-Directed by Corina Schwingruber Ilić

«KOD ČOŠKa (Down on the Corner)» I Short documentary I 2013 I 15 min.

«KANTON JUGOSLAWIEN» I Short documentary I 2013 I 16 min. I Co-Directed by Corina Schwingruber Ilić

Director Statement

War is a complex and difficult subject to address. It took me awhile to dive into my own turbulent past, that I was just ignoring for the past 25 years. Sharing my personal war experience, in a country that was perceived as a villain by the western world, only adds to the challenges. Despite being raised in an alternative subculture, driving a skateboard and playing guitar in a hc-punk band, it goes without saying that 'My culture' was opposed the war and the political regime of my country.

As a young soldier in the midst of Kosovo war, I was struck by a universal truth - more than 95% of my comrades didn't want to be there. I believe it was a state of mind shared by young (still not) men around the globe, who were ripped from their normal lives and thrust into military boots, sent to the front lines with no say in the matter. The weight of this realization hit me hard - the fear, the anger, the frustration, the hopelessness.

Many of my fellow 'soldiers' were killed, some committed suicide afterwards - they alone decided when they were their turn to end. While most of us ended up with some type of disorder.

The other day as I watched my children play in the parks of Belgrade during our yearly visits in the spring and autumn, I had the chance to meet a group of young Ukrainian and Russian families who had fled from the atrocities of war and were now living in Serbia as «deserters». The conversation hit me like a hammer, triggering intense flashbacks of my own experiences. Their stories resonated with me on a deeply emotional level.

For me it was a journey of self-discovery and introspection that forced me to question my own feelings and shed light on the human cost of conflict, the story of a young soldier who never wanted to be a soldier.

SPECIFICATIONS

Project Type:
Documentary, Short

Genres:
Biopic, Anti-war, Politics, Music, Human Rights

Runtime:
19 minutes

Completion Date:
February 31, 2024

Country of Origin:
Switzerland

Country of Filming:
Serbia, Switzerland

Language:
Serbian

Subtitles:
English, French, German

Shooting Format:
Digital

Aspect Ratio:
16:9

Film Color:
Color

Visual approach

This art style combines different media. My pre-war life (skateboarding, parties, concerts thought VHS-C footage). Then 'modern' 4K, surveillance cameras and experimental elements expressed through a thermal/infrared monocular. It features patterns, pulsing lines, and waves and has a personal, introspective focus. The use of an infrared monocular adds mystery and the emphasis on visual elements creates a dynamic viewing experience. This style is effective at conveying raw emotions in powerful and engaging ways.

CREDITS

DIRECTOR & WRITER

Nikola Ilić

CINEMATOGRAPHY AND SOUND ENGINEER

Nikola Ilić
Corina Schwingruber Ilić

MONTAGE

Corina Schwingruber Ilić

PRODUCER

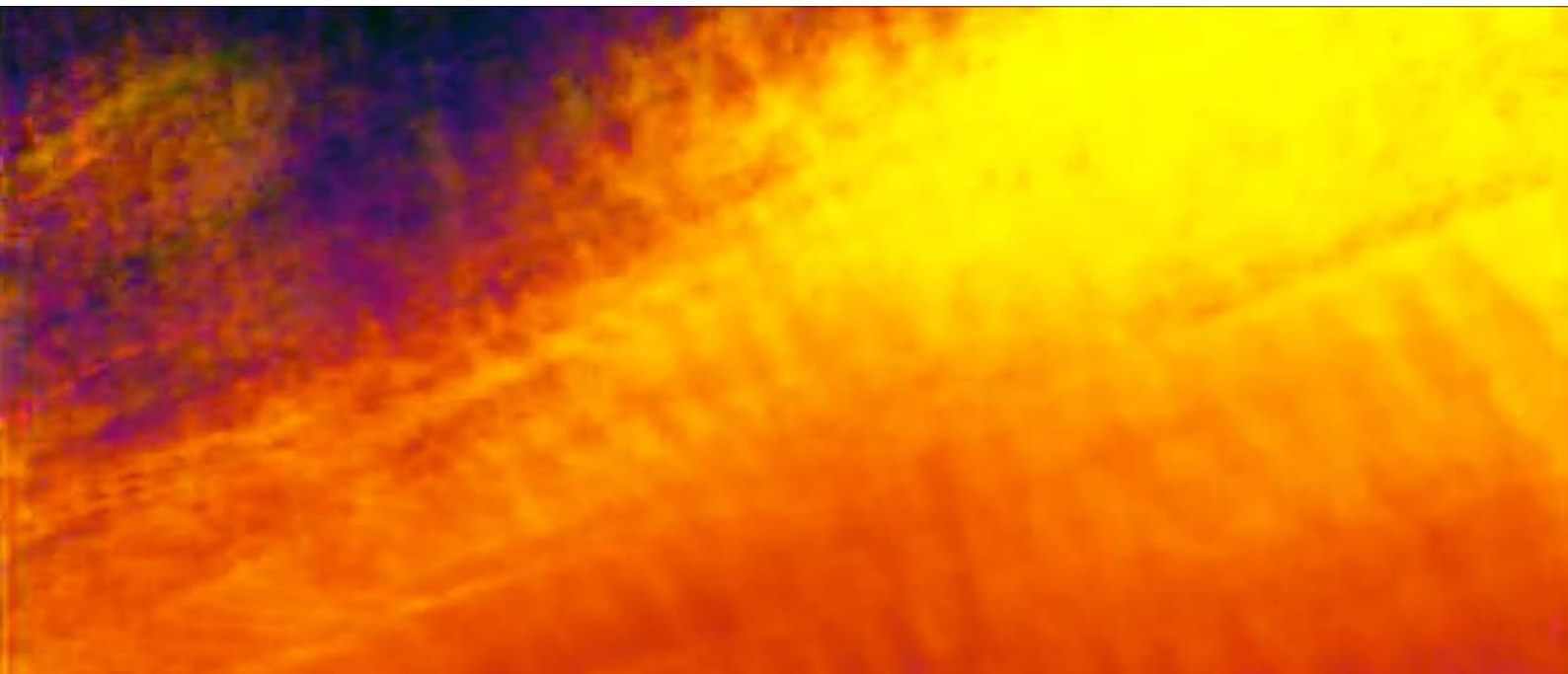
Laurin Merz
HOOK Film & Kulturproduktion GmbH
Schweiz

PRODUCTIONS MANAGER

Barbara Praschnig
HOOK Film & Kulturproduktion GmbH
Schweiz

SOUND DESIGN

Jan Godde
&
Aleksandar Saša Rančić



CONTACT



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<https://hook-film.com/en/work/>