

AND THEY WILL TALK ABOUT US

SERGII SEVIDOV, ANNA SERHEIVA

IN A FILM BY SIEVA DIAMANTAKOS

WRITTEN BY SIEVA DIAMANTAKOS, NATALIA FENTISOVA

DIRECTED BY SIEVA DIAMANTAKOS

CINEMATOGRAPHY BY SIEVA DIAMANTAKOS

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SOUND DESING BY MYKHAILO RUSAKOV, NATHANIEL ERAS

LINE PRODUCER DMYTRO KOZHEMA,

PRODUCED BY IGOR SAVYCHENKO, NATALIA FENTISOVA, SIEVA DIAMANTAKOS,
PETRO TSYMBAL, VOLODYMYR YATSENKO



LOGLINE

“And They Will Talk About Us” is a documentary about two people, a military tourism entrepreneur and an artist and humanitarian volunteer, struggling to succeed and survive in post-Maidan Ukraine.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

“And They Will Talk About Us” is a documentary that interweaves the lives of two main characters: Sergey and Anna.

Sergey is an entrepreneur who offers military tours for foreigners. His story is about the rise of his small empire, from a small company founded with the help of friends to a huge money-making machine that became the most successful extreme tourism company in Ukraine.

Anna is a volunteer who had to flee Donetsk (her hometown) at the beginning of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

She now teaches children art and games and often travels to the Donbas to provide the people with clothes and toys. This life gives her purpose and fulfillment, but after meeting Alex on an overnight train, she falls in love with him and abandons her ideals.

Unfortunately, Alex leaves her when she becomes pregnant with his baby. She finds herself alone in Kyiv, with no money and no place to live, facing an uncertain fate.



Will the paths of Sergey and Anna cross? What do their stories tell us about modern Ukraine?

LONG SYNOPSIS

The introduction summarizes the events of two characters, Sergey and Anna, that took place between 2014 and 2015. I told their stories in my first film “Postcards From Ukraine”, among others. At that time, the Maidan revolution had just taken place, and many people feared that conflict might break out in the east of the country. The situation was very unstable, and the grivna, the Ukrainian currency, lost two-thirds of its value.

Anna, an artist and pro-Ukrainian activist currently living in Kyiv, returned to her hometown of Donetsk to vote in the presidential elections. The pro-Russian separatists armed with Kalashnikovs broke into her apartment at night. They abducted and tortured her for seven days. She was released, mainly because she was neither rich nor particularly important as an activist. As a result, she had to leave her hometown, which had already become a pro-Russian separatist stronghold in the east.

At the same time, Sergey, an entrepreneur from Kharkiv, moved to Kyiv to open a club on Trukhaniv Island in an old Soviet building in the center of the Ukrainian capital. The sponsors did not provide him with the money they had initially promised. His dream of becoming part of the entertainment business in the capital collapsed, and he had to find a new path.



Two years have passed, it is 2017, and Anna now lives in Kharkiv and works as a volunteer in a center that supports displaced children and their parents. She can live on very little money and devotes herself to what she loves doing best: painting and writing poetry. She often travels with Illya to the so-called gray zone, a very dangerous region still plagued by war. Her job is to bring clothes and toys from the social center in Kharkiv to the people in these regions.

Sergey has founded a new company in Kyiv called “Adventure Tours in Ukraine”, which offers military tours for tourists. He teaches wealthy foreigners how to shoot various weapons, lets them drive old Soviet tanks in the region around Kyiv and arranges guided tours of Chernobyl. The business is growing, people come from all over the world because they love the adrenaline that the tours offer.

Anna's ambitions go in a different direction. She wants to organize an art festival for children in Toschkiwka, a small village just two kilometers from the front line of the Donetsk People's Republic and the first separatist block post. A place where the school has been bombed and where you can hear the sound of shelling. At first she tries to raise the money with the help of a lawyer friend, but her lack of organization causes her to fail. On a train back to Kharkiv, she meets Liosha and falls in love with him. They move to the Ukrainian capital, without money and with the dream of building a new life and a family there. Anna leaves her crystalline dream of founding a festival behind in the gray zone while she struggles to find an apartment and a job.



As “Adventure Tours in Ukraine” expands, more extreme tours are developed. Sergey hires new employees, including Alex, a guy who perfectly complements his bossy personality; he is more affable, speaks fluent English and is very well-mannered. In the meantime, Sergey becomes CEO of E-Chat, a kind of messaging application based on cryptocurrencies.

In November 2017, the value of Bitcoin skyrockets and he is invited to very exclusive and expensive conferences around the world (including Davos, Berlin, London, Singapore) to present his start-up. Unfortunately for him, foreign entrepreneurs find both the project and his manners questionable, and the e-chat adventure ends as abruptly as it began.

In the meantime, Anna and Liosha, like many other migrants from the East, have to cope with the hard life in Kyiv. She takes part in the memorial day in honor of those killed in the fight against the Yanukovych regime, which turns into a demonstration against corruption. Anna observes the events from the sidelines, not without skepticism. The exciting times of the so-called “Revolution of Dignity” on the Maidan are long gone and the country is not recovering but is stuck in a frozen conflict. One day, at home with her friends, she reflects on the whole situation and the decisions she has made in her life. The following summer she becomes pregnant, while her boyfriend is unable to support her financially.

Sergey is back in Kyiv, defeated in his crypto adventure, but refocused on his business in Ukraine and ready to do whatever it takes to make the venture a success.



Will they manage to find their place in this world? Will their paths cross? What do their stories tell us about Ukraine after the Maidan revolution in 2014?

TOPIC SUMMARY

In 2013, during the revolution on the Maidan, I began documenting the events by following the lives of five Ukrainians. Inspired by them, I undertook a journey to learn more about the cultural and political situation. In 2017, I decided to return and stay with those who made the biggest impression on me during those wild times: Sergey and Anna.

The new generation of entrepreneurs and the volunteer movement are two interesting aspects of today's reality. Sergey (the entrepreneur) and Anna (the artist and pro-Ukrainian activist) are not idealized heroes; they have weaknesses, but they dare to live a risky life and embrace their destiny. They are courageous and sometimes even reckless.



They both come from the two largest cities in eastern Ukraine: Donetsk and Kharkiv; the centers of the toughest and in some ways most conservative parts of the country.

They are in their 30s; neither too young to have forgotten the old Soviet culture, nor too old not to have embraced the new lifestyle. What's more, when the millennials in Ukraine were teenagers in the late 1990s, the country (like Russia) was essentially ruled by the mafia. It was an extremely dangerous time, characterized by poverty, insecurity and intolerance. Then there was a first attempt to get rid of the oligarchs during the "Orange Revolution" in 2004, but it did not bring the changes that people had hoped for. In 2014, Sergey and Anna were still young when they joined the second revolution that took place on the Maidan Nezalezhnosti. This so-called "Revolution of Dignity" symbolized a profound and radical change for the country. Most young people really felt that they had the power to change their destiny.



Compared to my generation in Europe, where most of us grew up overprotected in a bubble of prosperity, the differences are huge. That's why I felt the need to tell these stories, to capture the uniqueness of this moment, and why I chose these two characters. Through their different social status and their relationships to today's historical context, they give a deeper insight into the situation. My aim is to give the audience an immersive experience where they will be in constant contact with two different lifestyles, expectations, atmospheres and psychologies. This is because I have always found the opportunity to spend time with people with such different value systems and social backgrounds very rewarding. Commercial entertainment versus art, rich versus poor, and action versus reflection are just some of the dichotomies that the protagonists illustrate. The synthesis of this dialectical process offers a deeper insight into Ukrainian society. Nationalism, militarism and liberalism permeate the stories, while the shadows of the communist past lurk in the background.



The two protagonists try to deal with their country's current situation in different ways. Sergey is determined to become rich and lead the life of a successful businessman. To achieve this, he does not question his business or his dominant personality.

Anna fully embraces the bohemian life of a poète maudit and lives out her ideals. She finds inspiration for her art in alcohol, on her travels to dangerous regions and from people whose fates are marked by war. In order to live this way, she avoids thinking about her responsibilities or her future.

Spending more than five years with Sergey and Anna was like a rollercoaster ride through the unknown. Their stories reflect the history of their country, especially that of Kyiv, which has always been a border town fought over by different empires. They challenged my beliefs and values and gave me a deeper view of human nature. Through them, I learned about the Ukrainian struggle in search of an identity.

ARTISTIC APPROACH (AS DOP)

I, the director and cameraman, am completely absent from the film. The few interviews were shot spontaneously. The people speak directly into the camera and break through the fourth wall as if they were talking to the viewer. I chose this style to convey a feeling of total immersion in Ukrainian reality.

I focus more on the emotions than on what the characters express with words. Since I don't speak Russian or Ukrainian, I can only roughly understand what is happening while filming. So the decision about what to include in the film is largely made in the editing phase. This decision is limiting in some ways, but it allows me to be more open with the characters and events. In other words, my willingness to manipulate at the shooting stage leaves room for immersion in the ethos of a culture other than my own. Also, I don't stage anything and provide a safe space for the characters to express themselves. Both Anna and Sergei seemed to sense this. They sensed that I respected them and tried to learn from them instead of judging. As a result, they felt freer.

The two stories are told in parallel, so they are in constant dialogue throughout the film. As the protagonists are very different, I adapted my film style to their personalities. The camera follows Sergey and gives the impression of being part of the scene; the viewer is immersed in the action.

The pace is fast, as the protagonist makes sure that something is constantly happening. Sergey is filmed in a dominant position with long shots, often with a rig, which helps me to introduce more dynamic movements into the story.



Anna is filmed in a more abstract, dreamy and sensual way; the viewer should feel more like a distant observer. The rhythm should be slower to match her introspective personality, which is often prone to negative emotions. The background around them is blurred to give the impression of a place where chaos and beauty coexist. From the insecure life in Donbas to the bohemian cafés in Kyiv, from the rides on the night trains to the demonstrations on the Maidan, the camera always follows Anna into her world, where a kind of fairy-tale atmosphere and social realism mix.

As a cameraman, I try to maintain a strict aesthetic throughout the film. I use stabilized lenses to avoid blurred images, but I work with a handheld camera to maintain empathy within the scene. I try to make the audience feel like they are in the movie with the characters, and with this goal in mind, I rarely use unnatural angles. Anna is mainly filmed with old, vintage lenses, while Sergey is filmed with new, sharp lenses.

TRAILER

AND THEY WILL TALK ABOUT US

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYxrffJex28&t=9s>

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Co-writer, producer:

Natalia Fentisova

Producer: Ihor Savychenko, Petro Tsymbal,
Volodymyr Yatsenko

Editors: Volodymyr Demchenko, Petro Tsymbal

Sound designers: Mykhailo Rusakov,
Nathaniel Eras

Colorists: Viktor Tiryuto, Cornelius Glaser

Main protagonists:

Sergey Sevidov, Anna Serheiva

Both characters are also present in the film:
"Postcards From Ukraine":

<https://vimeo.com/792021014?share=copy>

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