



# — TO THE VICTORY!

OFFICIAL SELECTION

tiff50

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL 2025

A Film by Valentyn Vasyanovych

PRESSKIT



# — TO THE VICTORY!

105 MIN

UKRAINE, LITHUANIA

2025

2.39 SCOPE

DOLBY 5.1

UKRAINIAN

## SCREENINGS IN TORONTO

SAT. SEP 6th, 3:30 PM @ SCOTIABANK 11 (P&I)

SUN. SEP 7th, 8:45 PM @ TIFF LIGHTBOX 3  
(World Premiere)

MON. SEP 8th, 6:30 PM @ SCOTIABANK 9

THU. SEP 11th, 8:55 AM @ SCOTIABANK 8

FRI. SEP 12th, 12:45 PM @ SCOTIABANK 10

## INTERNATIONAL SALES

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# SYNOPSIS

Ukraine, in the near future. The war has ended. A film director is out of work, out of luck, and out of touch with his family abroad. While his wife and daughter built a new life in Vienna, he stays behind—confused, restless, and convinced that things will get better. Eventually. Probably. Maybe.





# A CONVERSATION WITH VALENTYN VASYANOVYCH

**How did the work on the film begin? And why did you decide to set this story in the future?**

The impetus for starting work on the film was the departure of my wife and daughter abroad because of the war. The families of my friends were also separated and, unfortunately, began to break apart. These dramatic stories were happening before my eyes. I was thinking about my own family, which seemed not to be directly threatened, but time and distance could take their toll. How long the war might last, nobody knows. Whether another populist might come to power after the war—no one knows. Whether Ukraine would revive after the war or become a gray buffer zone—also no one knows. Whether my wife would return at that time—I did not know either. That is why I decided to focus on the future and imagine myself in a country that had withstood a great war, but in which survival is far from simple.

The issue of the country's depopulation is already dramatically urgent today, and this trend will only deepen after the war ends.

**What prompted you to play the leading role, and how did this experience differ from directing other actors?**

We started the project with a professional actor in the leading role, but by the time of filming his schedule had become unpredictable because of his service in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The filming process slowed down considerably and became uncontrollable. Over time, I decided to take on the role myself—it was a forced step to simplify planning.

As for directing, this decision made the task both simpler and more complicated. On one hand, I just needed to exist naturally in front of the camera, and that turned out not to be too difficult. On the other hand, it became much

harder to evaluate the results. When you're in the frame yourself, you are in an altered, emotionally unstable state that prevents you from assessing the take rationally. It's very difficult to live through a scene on camera and then, a minute later, coldly and rationally evaluate the material.

**How does the story of the protagonist reflect you as a director?**

This story is not entirely autobiographical. Of course, it is composed of my own experiences, but also of my friends' stories. It's more of a collective biography of my circle of life. As for reflecting me as a director, it's quite truthful. I usually try to create films based either on lived experience or deep research into a topic. All my previous films we initially "shot" with a small group, on a cheap camera, searching for the most expressive mise-en-scènes and solutions, and only afterward came with a full crew, professional equipment, and filmed the scene

properly. In this production I limited myself to only the first stage. Our entire crew consisted of six or seven people, who both appeared in the frame as actors and took turns handling the necessary work behind the camera. This method may not be very comfortable, but it allows you to shoot on a limited budget.

**Isolation, both physical and emotional, plays an important role in the film. How did you work with the visual language to convey this?**

It's not exactly isolation. Rather, it is life with certain limitations, which you try to compensate for with activity in other parts of your life. It's difficult for me to single out and formulate specific theses about visual language. I followed the material; the material arose from life circumstances; the visual side was limited by the budget, which influenced the ability to shoot in certain locations and with certain technical solutions. In other words, the visual component was shaped by the possibilities and





by the logic of the scene, which usually emerged simultaneously from the idea of the scene and the available location.

The only thing that existed on the level of concept from the beginning was the attempt to erase the line between reality and cinematic fiction, and also the desire to tell the story as ironically as possible, primarily about myself. In real life, that is more or less how things happen.

**What did you discover about yourself while filming *To the Victory*?**

The biggest challenges for me in this film were the need to tell an utterly truthful story without a single drop of pathos or embellishment, and my participation as an actor.

With acting, I quickly realized that I had to get rid of my fear of the camera. That turned out to be quite easy, because I was surrounded exclusively by friends with whom I had been making films for the last 20 years. For most of them, this was also their first attempt at acting. In fact, none of us really acted—we simply existed in our usual way in circumstances we ourselves created. As for telling a truthful story, I think I succeeded there as well. I don't know how viewers will perceive this story, but when I watch it, I feel as if I am walking naked down the central street of the city.

**What difficulties did you face while shooting this film in a country at war?**

Even before the full-scale war began, I lost the opportunity to work in my profession due to incompetent management of the film industry in Ukraine.

I dreamed that in a few years elections would be held and professional, responsible people would come to lead the country. It was just a matter of waiting a little. But then the war started.

The greatest problem for the industry during the war is the war itself. Many people are serving in combat. Many have already died. There is a curfew. Limited mobility. A lack of national support for cinema, which makes it impossible to assemble a full-fledged co-production budget. And I'm not even mentioning the psychological state of people who, for the fourth year, live under mortal danger and are not sure if they will wake up tomorrow.

**Do you consider *To the Victory* a continuation of your previous films *Atlantis* and *Reflection*?**

Obviously, yes. All three films were inspired by the war. Whether my focus on this theme will end here, I don't know. It seems to me that war will be the main theme of Ukrainian culture for many years after it ends.

**How did your collaboration with your usual team—cinematographer, editor, sound designer—affect the film?**

I have been shooting my entire life with the same team. These people are my best friends. I can't imagine how filming could happen with anyone else. So I believe we achieved the best possible result under the specific circumstances. They are full-fledged co-authors of this story.

**The film has a very ironic view of itself, reminiscent of Jafar Panahi's cinema. What inspired you?**

I agree that the ironic tone may indeed remind one of the films of this great Iranian director. That flatters me. But the word *inspired* carries a positive connotation, which may not be entirely appropriate in this case. The impetus was the disaster happening to and around people in Ukraine, and what drives me is the desire to survive in this situation not only physically, but also mentally. Focusing on this story gave me a great deal of strength.

**What does the title of the film *TO THE VICTORY!* mean?**

“To the Victory!” is a toast I heard many times from my grandfather during commemorations of anniversaries of victory in World War II. So I think when this war ends, this toast will also be relevant.

**What do you hope audiences will take away from this film?**

I eagerly await the viewers' feedback. I'm even a little anxious, because this is an extremely intimate story.







# — BIOGRAPHY VALENTYN VASYANOVYCH



Valentyn Vasyanovych was born in Zhytomyr, Ukraine, and studied at the Kyiv National University of Theatre, Cinema and Television and Andrzej Wajda Master School of Film Directing in Warsaw. He worked as a producer and DOP on Myroslav Slaboshpytskiy's *The Tribe*, which was one of the biggest international success of Ukrainian film. *To The Victory!* rounds out his dystopian trilogy of which *Atlantis* won Best Film at Venice Orrizonti in 2019 and *Reflection* played in Venice Competition in 2022.



# FILMOGRAPHY

## VALENTYN VASYANOVYCH

2022	<i>Reflection</i> — Venice Competition
2019	<i>Atlantis</i> — Best Film in Venice Orrizonti
2017	<i>Black Level</i> — Winner of Grand Prix of Fribourg International Film Festival
2014	<i>Crepuscule</i> — Winner Golden Duke at Odesa International Film Festival



# CAST

Valyk	Valentyn Vasyanovych
Vlad	Vladlen Odudenko
Sofia	Marianna Novikova
Yaroslav	Hryhoriy Naumov
Tato	Volodymyr Kuznetsov



# CREW

Director	Valentyn Vasyanovych
Screenplay	Valentyn Vasyanovych
Director of Photography	Mykhailo Lubarsky, Valentyn Vasyanovych
Production Design	Vlad Odudenko
Casting	Tetiana Symon
Costume Design	Hanna Chabaniuk
Editing	Valentyn Vasyanovych
VFX	Yan Vasyanovych
Sound Design	Serhiy Stepansky
Make-Up	Maria Pylunska, Bozhenok Tetiana
Composer	Dominykas Digimas
Production	ForeFilms, Arsenal Films, M-Films.
Producers	Volodymyr Yatsenko, Iya Myslytska, Valentyn Vasyanovych, Anna Yatsenko, Marija Razgutė
Countries	Ukraine, Lithuania
International Sales	Best Friend Forever



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