



Blood

A film by Alina Rudnitskaya
An Icarus Films Release

"A precise, concise torrent of images
from one of Russia's best young documentary-makers."

—The Hollywood Reporter

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SYNOPSIS

A mobile blood donation center drives around to small Russian towns like a traveling circus, collecting donations from remote towns.

There is no shortage of donors: the old, the young, the retired and the unemployed all line up to have their blood taken by the visiting nurses.

Unlike most Western countries where the process does not involve monetary compensation, the Russian state pays 850 rubles (about \$25) for a half liter of blood. For many, the money is their only income.

Surgeons use the blood collected to save lives while the poor people's blood flows out of them, creating a powerful metaphor of Russian society.

Alina Ruditskaya, whose acclaimed previous film *I Will Forget This Day* documented a Russian abortion clinic, has created an aching, melancholic new film coursing with life.

SELECTED FILM FESTIVALS

Official Selection, IDFA Amsterdam 2013, Netherlands

Grand Prix, ArtDocFest Moscow 2013, Russia

Official Selection, Visionsdu Reel 2014, Switzerland

Official Selection, Docpoint Helsinki 2014, Finland

Official Selection, Tempo IDF Stockholm 2014, Sweden

Official Selection, EDOC IDF Quito 2014, Ecuador

Official Selection, Krakow IFF 2014, Poland

Official Selection, London Film Festival 2014, UK

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR



Alina Rudnitskaya was born 1976 in Zaozernyj (Murmansk), Russia. She attended the Academy of Aerospace Engineering, St. Petersburg before enrolling in the University of Culture and Arts where she graduated with a degree in filmmaking.

Rudnitskaya has received more than 30 international awards for her short films, many of which were produced for the renowned St. Petersburg Documentary Film Studio. She explores

contemporary Russian life, studying her characters' daily lives as well as their internal worlds. Alina Rudnitskaya lives and works in St. Petersburg.

Filmography

- 2013 *Blood*, documentary, 59 minutes, HD, b/w
- 2011 *I Will Forget This Day*, documentary, 25 minutes, 35mm, b/w
- 2008 *Bitch Academy*, documentary, 30 minutes, 35mm
- 2006 *Bésame Mucho*, documentary, 28 minutes, 35mm
- 2006 *The Sound of Malines*, documentary, 30 minutes
- 2005 *Civil Status*, documentary, 29 minutes, 35mm, b/w
- 2004 *Rural Lessons*, documentary, 26 minutes, 35mm
- 2004 *Tatu*, 16-part documentary series, 44 minutes
- 2003 *Amazons*, documentary, 20 minutes, 35mm
- 2002 *Driving Mad*, documentary, 13 minutes
- 2002 *Communal Residence*, documentary, 13 minutes
- 2001 *Letter*, documentary, 15 minutes

IN THE PRESS

THE *Hollywood* **REPORTER**

Review by Clarence Tsui 9/22/2014

The Bottom Line: A precise, concise torrent of images from one of Russia's best young documentary-makers

Chaos quietly reigns as Alina Rudnitskaya follows a team of blood-donation nurses across small-town Russia

Clocking in at just under an hour, it's short; teeming with scenes featuring fumbling and inappropriately feisty medical workers, it's sharp; with many a scene of blood pumping in and out of bodies—both intact or cut open—it's certainly a shock. But Russian filmmaker Alina Rudnitskaya's latest documentary goes well beyond merely just the raw and the visceral: *Blood* is also a cerebral, multi-layered piece about the organization of women workers in a social system slowly cast asunder in economic quicksand.

Having traveled the documentary-festival circuit for nearly a year now after its world premiere at last year's IDFA, *Blood*'s bow last week at Vladivostok—where it won a special jury prize—heralded its presence at bigger, mainstream events, including screenings at the London Film Festival next month. While its length might hinder circulation for proper theater releases (its 59-minute run would fit perfectly for a television berth), *Blood*'s black-and-white cinematography is definitely at its most powerful when seen on a big screen.

Central to Rudnitskaya's documentary is a team of female nurses who travel around broke, post-industrial Russian towns collecting blood from what seem to

be eager hordes of donors—their enthusiasm driven less by simple civic-mindedness than the 850-rouble (US\$22) reward which could help with their lives in places where unemployment is more the norm than the exception.

Veering away from the easy option of conjuring sympathy with images of the desperate urban poor, Rudnitskaya instead opts for humorous *verité*. Amid the sea of bored faces, there's a lot of fainting, freaking out and fumbling with stretched-out arms and dated *modus operandi*: the team leader frowns as she explains how she is to account for the amount of collected blood in terms of buckets rather than more modern, metric measurements.

With inventive visual flourish, Rudnitskaya connects the corporeal with the corporate, the surgical with the social; *Blood* is about showing the machinations of a post-communist Russian society still floundering at the precipice of its rapid lurch toward capitalism. In this case, the representations of the nurses' everyday existence—at work and at play—make perfect sense, as their lives, which could easily be seen as vampire-like given their line of work, is as much a testament to this society as those who are selling blood to survive. And some do lead existences which are hardly a pretty sight, especially Olga, whose unruliness at the donation booths during the day is matched by her love of booze and boy toys during the evening.

But *Blood* is anything but misogynist: Olga's behavior might be unsavory at times, and comical always, but to allow a glimpse into such a way of countering workplace pressure is in itself emancipation for Rudnitskaya's able, generous and no-nonsense working-class heroines. If the blood here is deployed to represent the flow of capital, *Blood* as a film is about human labor, its discontents and how people react to them—and, more specifically, how women are to confront these challenges, a theme in many of Rudnitskaya's previous efforts (a female

provincial choir in *Kiss Me Harder*; a school teaching young women to manipulate men in *Bitch Academy*).

And as macho men struggle to remain conscious while giving blood, or row about the pittance they are paid for it, the women—the donors, the nurses, the hospital staff—press on. At the end of the film, a celebratory dinner ends with a health official (the only man in the room) describing the nurses as being well-organized to the point of nearly being invisible.

The film's fluctuating sentiments and circumstances are thoroughly well-captured by Rudnitskaya's quartet of cameramen, and spliced together with energy and beauty by the director and screenwriter/co-editor Sergey Vinokurov. There will be blood, and brooding moments which reveal a lot about Russians fighting for their well-being away from the bling-fueled cityscapes.



FILM CREDITS

Film Title: *Blood*
Original Language Title: *Krov*
Country of Production: Russia
Year of Production: 2013
Year of Release: 2014
Feature version running time: 59 minutes
Image: HD, Black and White, 25 fps
Aspect ratio: 16:9
Exhibition formats: DCP and Blu-ray
Language: Russian with English subtitles

Director: Alina Rudnitskaya
Production company: 317film
Writer: Sergei Vinokurov
Sound: Alexey Antonov
Music: Olafur Arnalds
Editors: Alina Rudnitskaya and Sergei Vinokurov
Camera: Alexander Filippov, Sergei Maksimov,
Alexander Demanenko, Yura Gautsel
Producer: Alina Rudnitskaya

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A film by Alina Rudnitskaya / 2013 / NR / 59 minutes
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