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A FILM BY **MACIEK HAMELA**

# IN THE REARVIEW

"A ROAD MOVIE THAT IS SIMPLE IN CONCEPT AND DEVASTATING IN EXECUTION."  
 —THE WRAP

IN THE REARVIEW A FILM BY MACIEK HAMELA. SCREENPLAY AND DIRECTING MACIEK HAMELA. MUSIC YURA DUNAY. MAWRZYNYEC SKOCZYŁAS. MARCH SIERAKOWSKI. PIOTR GRAWENDER. EDITING PIOTR OGIOŃSKI. PRODUCTION DESIGNER ANTONI KOMASA-LAZARKEWICZ. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MARCH LENARCZYK. CINEGRAPHER ALEKSANDRA KRAJUS PSC. PRODUCERS PIOTR GRAWENDER. MACIEK HAMELA. CO-PRODUCERS JEAN-MARIE GIGON. ANNA PALENCZYK. PRODUCTION AFFINITY CINE PENPLUM. CO-PRODUCTION SANDSI PRODUCTIONS. 435 FILMS. CO-PRODUCER POLISH FILM INSTITUTE.

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## SYNOPSIS

***In the Rearview*** is an authentic, intimate observation of war as it unfolds, following multiple generations of Ukrainian civilians as they abruptly abandon their homes and rely on the help of director Maciek Hamela's volunteer aid van to escape the life-threatening conflict. As he steers through minefields to leave Ukraine and tries to get through numerous military checkpoints, Hamela offers us a seat in his car, guiding the documentary from behind the wheel and behind the camera, crisscrossing the roads of Ukraine to transport uprooted refugees safely to Poland. The van traverses tens of thousands of kilometers and serves as a waiting room, hospital, shelter, and zone for confidences and confessions among compatriots thrown together by chance.

***In the Rearview*** is a collective portrait composed of an array of experiences of Ukrainians who share a single goal: finding a safe haven in the throes of conflict. With temporary asylum granted to all passengers, their differences in gender, age, skin tone, physical condition, origin, identity, worldviews and faith become irrelevant. While the war itself remains in the backdrop, its reflection and impact are evident and raw.



Original title: **Skąd dokąd**

Director: **Maciek Hamela**

Image: **Yura Dunay, Wawrzyniec Skoczylas, Marcin Sierakowski, Piotr Grawender**

Editing: **Piotr Ogiński**

Music: **Antoni Komasa-Łazarkiewicz**

Sound Design: **Marcin Lenarczyk**

Color Grading: **Aleksandra Kraus PSFC**

Producers: **Piotr Grawender (Affinity Cine), Maciek Hamela (Pemplum)**

Co-producers: **Jean-Marie Gigon (SaNoSi Productions), Anna Palenchuk (435 FILMS)**

Co-financing: **Polish Film Institute (PISF)**

Genre: **Documentary**

Running Time: **84 minutes**

Language: **Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, French, English**

Countries of Production: **Poland, France, Ukraine**

Year of Production: **2023**

## SELECTED FESTIVALS AND ACCOLADES

**96th ACADEMY AWARDS® SHORTLIST - BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE FILM**  
**PARE LORENTZ AWARD - International Documentary Association 2023**  
**DOCUMENTARY SELECTION OF THE EUROPEAN FILM ACADEMY 2023**

**Bastau International Film Festival** (Kazakhstan), Bastau Docs

▲ Main Prize named after Oran Abishev

**Porto/Post/Doc** (Portugal), International Competition

**RIDM Montreal Documentary Festival** (Canada), Panorama - The State of the World

**ZINEBI – IF of Documentary and Short Film of Bilbao** (Spain), First Film Int Competition

▲ ZIFF Grand Award

**DOC NYC - America's Largest Documentary Festival** (US), Winner's Circle

**Denver Film Festival** (US), Maysles Brothers Award for Best Documentary selection

**IDFA - The International Documentary Film Festival** (Teh Netherlands), Best of Fests

**Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival** (Czech Republic), Constellations

**Ukraina! Film Festival** (Poland), Documentary Competition

▲ Audience Award ▲ Best Documentary Competition Award

**Man in Danger Media Festival** (Poland), Documentary Competition

▲ Audience Award ▲ A Kazimierz Karabasz „Patient Eye” Award

**Chicago International Film Festival** (US), Documentary Film Competition

▲ The Silver Hugo Award

**Corsica.doc International Documentary Festival** (France), Nouveaux Talents Competition

▲ Main Award Corsica.doc/Via Stella for the Best Feature Film

▲ Youth Jury Award for the Best Feature Film

**Opolskie Lamy Film Festival** (Poland), Feature Film Competition: Documentary

▲ Grand Prix for the Best Documentary

**Festival International de cinéma War on Screen** (France), Feature Film Competition

▲ International Jury Grand Prize

**Zurich Film Festival** (Switzerland), Documentary Competition

▲ The Best Documentary

**Filmfest Hamburg** (Germany), VETO! Competition

▲ Political Film Award for the best directorial work

**Festival 2 Cinéma de Valenciennes** (France), Documentary Competition

▲ Grand Prix ▲ Critics' Award ▲ Students' Award

**DMZ Docs** (KOR), Unable to Settle or Leave section

**TIFF - Toronto International Film Festival** (Canada), TIFF Docs

**Odesa International Film Festival** (Ukraine), National Competition

▲ The Best Ukrainian Documentary Feature Film Award

**DokuFest** (Kosovo), International Feature Dox Competition

**Two Riversides Film and Art Festival** (Poland), World Under Canvas

**Iceland Documentary Film Festival – IceDocs** (Iceland), Main Competition

▲ Special Mention

**International Film Festival Fema La Rochelle** (France), l'Année du Documentaire

**Sheffield DocFest** (UK), International Competition

▲ Grand Jury Prize

**Cannes Film Festival** (France), ACID section

**Millennium Docs Against Gravity** (Poland), Polish Competition

▲ The Best Polish Film Award ▲ The Arthouse Cinema Association Award



## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT FROM MACIEK HAMELA**

I was born in Warsaw in the early 80's and was the first generation of Poles that were not forced to learn Russian in school. This is perhaps why, after turning 18, I made the decision to study Russian language in St. Petersburg. I wanted to read Nabokov and Dostoyevsky in their original language. I soon found out how distant my "literary" perception of Russia was from the reality I got acquainted with.

In 2013, the Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, pressured by Russia, refused to sign an Association Agreement with the EU, and hundreds of students came out on Maidan to protest. I had a feeling that this conflict would be not only massively important for Ukraine itself, but also for the entire region, including Poland, which was about to celebrate ten years of membership in the EU. It was almost my 31st birthday, and while I would typically throw a huge party at my Warsaw apartment, instead I realized that the only adequate way to celebrate would be to take a train to Kiev and show solidarity with the protesters. I traveled to Ukraine, intending only to stay for three days but ended up staying for three months and filming a documentary about the participants of the Maidan revolution.

The main protagonist of my film joined the Azov battalion to defend Mariupol and was taken prisoner by the Russian army in 2014. I spent a few years trying to find him, but never succeeded. In the process, I forged my special attachment to Ukraine and its people as my life became entangled with its political history. This is why, when Russia launched its full scale invasion on Ukraine in 2022, I felt I could not stay uninvolved. I bought a van on the third day of the war and started transporting refugees from the Polish border. Within a week, I bought another two vans and organized other buses to transport people arriving at the border crossings with Poland. It was not long before I was already driving in Ukraine bringing families of friends from Lviv, Kyiv, Cherkasy and other Ukrainian cities to the Polish border where they would be picked up by other drivers. Soon, I was getting calls every day from people asking me to transport their family members. I also started working with international aid organizations helping with evacuating underprivileged people: foreigners, pregnant surrogate mothers and people with disabilities. My knowledge of Ukrainian and Russian languages enabled me to reach remote locations in the country, and to efficiently organize accommodation and onward travels for all my passengers. During the first wave of refugees, I almost did not sleep. The constant influx of people and phone calls gave me the impression that every hour counted.

That's when I realized I should be driving with a second driver, and that's how the idea of *In the Rearview* was born. A documentary that would be subordinate to the evacuations, where the filming would be performed inside a car by a cameraman who would film during the day, and replace me as a driver during the night. I realized it would allow aid activities to be carried out the same way as before, and at the same time it would be possible to document the deteriorating situation of the civilian population of Ukraine subjected to terror. *In the Rearview* approaches the story without any post-factum commentary or layer of analysis, with its protagonists being people who have decided to flee at the very moment. The intimate space of the van establishes room for frank conversations between driver and passengers about life, dreams, anxieties, plans and expectations. The car interior becomes a confessional for deeply emotional stories of war experience, told often for the very first time.

The documentary's intention, along with presenting personal stories and experiences, is to show the landscape of the war taking place before our very eyes. Its course has exceeded

the worst projections and the material, psychological, social and civilizational impact will extend for decades. The film is also a testimony to the enormous aid mobilization among Poles nationwide and our two countries' historical rapprochement with a difficult mutual past.

### **FILM'S TITLE IN ORIGINAL LANGUAGE; CONTEXT**

*Skąd dokąd* and *Zvidky kudy* are the Polish and Ukrainian versions of the film's title, respectively. These phrases can be translated to mean "where from" (*skąd / звідки / zvidky*) and "where to" (*dokąd / куди / kudy*). They are routine questions asked when trying to pass through the numerous checkpoints located throughout the country that Maciek Hamela passed during his trips to and from Ukraine.

### **FILM'S ORIGINAL SCORE**

The film's score was composed by Antoni Komasa-Łazarkiewicz, a Berlin-based Polish composer who writes music for film, theater, and television. He is one of the best-known composers of his generation in his region and is particularly known for his multiple collaborations with director Agnieszka Holland. They have worked together on films such as the Oscar-nominated "In Darkness," the Berlinale Silver Bear Winner "Spoor," and the Berlinale Competition entry "Mr. Jones," among many others. Komasa-Łazarkiewicz's other notable projects include the feature film "Quo Vadis, Aida," which was Oscar-nominated and directed by Jasmila Žbanić, the 2014 Lions Gate production of "Rosemary's Baby" for NBC, as well as the first Polish-language original Netflix production, "1983."

In addition to the original score, Antoni Komasa-Łazarkiewicz composed the film's theme, a classical piece called "The Wings" performed by the Ukrainian Choir. The theme is based on a poem of the same title by Lina Kostenko, one of Ukraine's most prominent contemporary poets.



## MACIEK HAMELA BIO



photo by Fiilp Wolski

Film and radio producer, director, scriptwriter. Born in Warsaw, Poland, he received a master's degree from Sorbonne University (Paris IV) in French literature. Worked in renovations and as a tour guide, while studying film directing at École Internationale de Création Audiovisuelle et de Réalisation (EICAR). He is a longtime BBC Channel collaborator. A co-creator and a producer of a documentary short film *Bless You*, for which he received a Doc Alliance Award within the Cannes Docs program (Cannes FF 2021), the short was also presented at Millennium Docs Against Gravity FF. He produced films such as *Convictions* (MDR Film Prize for an outstanding Eastern European documentary film at Dok Leipzig IFF 2016), *Gatherers of Sea Grass*, *Polonaise* or *Parquet*. Being a director and a producer of various radio works he has received the Silver Melchior Radio Award for the Premiere of the Year 2018 in the Polish Radio Reporters National Competition. He produced and co-directed *Plan B*, a documentary podcast series for Audioteka.

### Selected filmography

2023 *In the Rearview*

2021 *Bless You* (short)

## **CINEMATOGRAPHER'S STATEMENT**

*In the Rearview* is an authentic, intimate observation of war as it unfolds, following multiple generations of Ukrainian civilians as they abruptly abandon their homes and rely on the help of director Maciek Hamela's volunteer aid van to escape the life-threatening conflict.

When we were preparing for the shooting, our main goal was not to intervene in the evacuation process. Most of the movie takes place in the car. We were filming the passengers being evacuated from the war zone, following the Russian invasion. People caught by time and in space, facing an uncertain here and now, choose to abandon what they hold most precious as they climb straight into the dusty van with foreign plates. To create an environment where the director could establish an intimate relation with the war refugees, the camera needed to be as small as possible, not huge, and overwhelming. It had to be unobtrusive. Furthermore, most of the funding went to evacuation efforts, to save people's lives, so we had to find reasonable solutions to justify money spent on the camera equipment. Arri was not an option. For that reason, we looked into zCam f6, a full frame camera with excellent dynamic range and color science. The zCam f6, which was used as a crash cam on Mission Impossible 7, turned out to be the best option to achieve all of our goals.

The main idea was to hold a camera in one position in the car, filming long takes without the frame adjustment to record these intimate stories. Fixed frame helped to achieve maximum documentary feel, which carries through honesty and truth to the war victims' testimony. The camera was set on a monopod which helped with stabilization. This also allowed us to place it in the same position and at the same height every time we got back to the car. Working in a country at war, filming is a challenge, the camera might be mistakenly taken as a weapon, or a spy tool for the enemy. For that reason, the size of the camera benefited greatly. We could hide it quickly while driving through numerous military checkpoints and prevent dangerous situations. In the evacuation process time was of the essence, we had to avoid being arrested or held for questioning.

Being in the car required a wide lens angle, ideally with stabilization, to reduce the constant shakes from a moving car driving on destroyed Ukrainian roads and very often off road. There are not too many options there. To capture travelers' reflections, intermingle with Ukraine's harsh, shelling-scarred landscapes out the windows of their transitory home, a confessional on wheels, we decided to go with Canon L line lenses.

This zCam has good dynamic range to work in completely unpredictable conditions. Very often we had no chance to adjust the color balance and its amazing color science was a real lifesaver in the post-production. We shot it in 6k and 4K, depending on the stage of the production which gave us the possibility to adjust the framing in the post-production.