



Entertainment • Corporate Communications  
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# QUEENDOM

AN AGNIIA GALDANOVA FILM

Produced by Igor Myakotin and Agniia Galdanova

Starring Gena Marvin

Executive Produced by David France

WORLD PREMIERE - 2023 SXSW Film Festival

Documentary Feature Competition



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**Mins** 98 | **Language** Russian with English Subtitles | **Year** 2023 |

**Country** France, United States

<https://www.QUEENDOMdoc.com/>

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**2023 SXSW Film Festival Schedule**

**World Premiere** - Saturday, March 11, 2023 at 6:30 PM at Alamo Drafthouse (Lamar E)  
Sunday, March 12, 2023 at 2:00 PM at Alamo Drafthouse (Lamar A)  
Friday, March 17, 2023 at 3:00 PM at Alamo Drafthouse (Lamar B)

**LOGLINE**

Gena, a queer artist from a small town in Russia, stages radical performances in public that become a new form of art and activism - and put her life in danger.

**SYNOPSIS**

Gena, a queer artist from a small town in Russia, dresses in otherworldly costumes made from junk and tape, and protests the government on the streets of Moscow. Born and raised on the harsh streets of Magadan, a frigid outpost of the Soviet gulag, Gena is only 21. She stages radical performances in public that become a new form of art and activism. By doing that, she wants to change people's perception of beauty and queerness and bring attention to the harassment of the LGBTQ+ community. The performances - often dark, strange, evocative, and queer at their core - are a manifestation of Gena's subconscious. But they come at a price.

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**DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT - Agniia Galdanova**

As a teenager, I had a hard time accepting myself and constantly endured humiliation and beatings because of my “unfeminine” look. From an early age, I often pretended to be a boy, and wore shapeless clothes and heavy shoes. This was my refuge from the stereotype that a girl should be feminine. Years later, I was beaten up by two men in the very center of Moscow just because they had mistaken me for a guy in a skirt. I decided to explore the themes of sexuality and gender identity further in my work. My initial idea was to follow several drag queens across Russia. One of the first potential characters I met was Gena. After spending time together, I was mesmerized by Gena’s artistry and courage. To me, she wasn’t one of many drag queens. She was an artist embarking on a journey of self-discovery.

I hope that when someone from Russia or any other country where being queer is illegal watches QUEENDOM, the film and Gena will give them the confidence to accept themselves and share their truth with the world, however dangerous it could be.

**DIRECTOR'S Q&A - Agniia Galdanova**

**How did this film come about? How did the idea originate? What inspired you?**

Drag culture and the LGBTQ+ community in Russia is important to me and is driven by my experiences growing up. I was bullied because of my looks when I was growing up. And as the Russian government was getting more hostile toward the LGBTQ+ community, I was fascinated by the resilience and beauty of the drag queen community, which was going deeper underground because of numerous threats. Many of the queens were my close friends.

My original idea was to create a documentary series following several drag queens across Russia. One of the potential protagonists was Gena. The series evolved into a feature documentary focusing solely on her life and art. It was a revelation to see Gena grow as a person and as an artist as we were filming with her. She was pushing the artistic boundaries and delivering a clear message - love yourself. We instantly connected and started collaborating. It’s an everlasting bond that will continue after the film is finished.

**How long did it take to make the film? From concept to finish.**

We started working on the film in 2019 and finished it in February 2023.

**Why did you make this film?**

I wish I could have seen someone like Gena when I was growing up in Russia. I made the film because I was mesmerized by Gena’s artistry and inspired by her courage to be her true self in such an oppressive environment as Russia. I could feel her fear, but I never saw her waver from her intention. There’s no one else like Gena. When I saw Gena struggling to fit in a small town built on top of the biggest gulag camp, I wondered how she could be two very

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different people. But then I saw how she blossomed and transformed while experimenting with makeup and making spectacular and otherworldly costumes from junk and tape - I knew I had to make a film just about her.

Gena was born and raised on the harsh streets of Magadan, a frigid outpost of the biggest gulag camp in the Russian Far East. Her parents passed away when she was a child. Brought up by her grandparents, she had the courage to come out to them early on. It was unbearably difficult. Gena says that when her grandfather realized their “grandson” was “not like everyone else,” he took her to the guardianship authorities and wanted to give her up, yelling: “We adopted a normal one! And we don't need THIS anymore!” But despite fear and misunderstanding, they still love her.

After witnessing Gena’s relationship with her grandparents who raised her, I kept thinking about how important unconditional love is. I was raised without a dad, and my mom was busy providing for the family. That’s why I connected so profoundly with Gena, who was also brought up without much-needed family support and care. In the LGBTQ+ community, people who are usually abandoned by their relatives find new families among queer peers. Gena is not an exception. But she never gave up on her grandparents. At the end of the day, they do love and care for her. Gena’s forced maturity and her lust for life motivated me to make this film.

I hope that if someone from Russia, or any other country where being queer is illegal, watches QUEENDOM, it will give them the confidence to accept themselves and share their truth with the world, however dangerous it could be.

**Did the film change from your original idea for the film as you were filming or in post?**

Gena was 20 years old when we started our collaboration, and over several years, she flourished into the incredible artist she is today. Starting with art performances in public, Gena gradually realized that she has the platform on social media to create positive change in society through her art. The catalyst for Gena’s political stance was the moment when she participated in the protest demanding the freedom of the opposition leader Alexei Navalny. It was an important moment for Gena’s evolution as an activist.

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched an aggressive full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Gena couldn’t stay silent, and she knew she had to oppose it through an art performance in public to draw attention to the horrific war that the Russian government had started. Gena wrapped her naked body with barbed wire and marched the streets of Moscow in the freezing cold. The protest-performance resulted in Gena’s arrest. From that point on, it was a whirlwind of events - from Gena’s release from detention to her daring escape from Russia. No one, even Gena herself, could have anticipated such an unexpected turn of events. She had to make choices about leaving the only home she has ever known, losing friends that love her, accepting that she might never see her grandparents again, and not knowing if she made the right decisions in an extremely short period.

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In the end, Gena's life became the story that represented so much about before and after, old and new, love and loss.

**What were the challenges in making this film?**

One of the challenges was keeping the crew and protagonists safe. Filming in Russia, especially with someone like Gena, who uses her art to protest in public, posed a considerable risk, and we had to evaluate each shoot and be careful everywhere we filmed. There were many close calls, and it was often a dangerous task. Still, we wanted to reveal the real story of what was happening inside contemporary Russia, especially around the often invisible LGBTQ+ community.

**What were the successes that you had in making this film?**

I developed a deep bond and a meaningful connection with Gena that I hope is felt while watching the film. The trust we felt for each other created a true collaboration that allowed the film crew - which was very small at all times to preserve the intimacy and for safety reasons - to capture candid moments between Gena and her grandparents as well as during moments of intense feelings and concern for her future. We created a safe space where Gena's truth is revealed through observational cinema.

We are proud of the film's visual language, including several performances featuring Gena that give a glimpse into her inner world and emotional state. The performances - often dark, strange, evocative and queer at their core - are a manifestation of Gena's subconscious.

**What do you want audiences to take away from this film?**

At the core of the film is Gena's relationship with her grandparents, who love her even though they disapprove of how she expresses herself or even who she loves. It is a clash of generations that many can relate to and understand. But it's also a film about the danger of being queer in Russia today. Gena has to make some painful decisions that make us all wonder - could we do that? Are we brave enough to stand up to the government? Could we leave friends, home, and family behind for something we believe in? Would we do what Gena did?

We hope audiences feel empowered and confident to live their most authentic selves despite the abusive environments they might live in, even if they must flee their home to live freely. We believe the film - and Gena herself - serves as a reminder that the most powerful way to fight prejudice against the queer community is by being true to yourself and not being afraid to show who you are - whether in public or a family setting. That is only the way to change people's minds. Gena did it. Could you?

**Where do you find inspiration or who/what has influenced you as a filmmaker?**

My inspiration for the kind of documentary films I make comes from reality itself. Marina Razbezhkina, my film mentor and teacher, influenced how I approach documentary films. Her method requires the student to be a one-person filmmaker. I had to direct, produce, film, and edit my films. This experience was invaluable and shaped my understanding of how to make a film on a deeper level because you deal with reality on your own. This type of approach

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requires your total dedication; you have to immerse yourself in the world of your protagonist and be ready to leave your comfort zone. It's not a job. It's a lifestyle. What's good about being inspired by reality is that you never know where it can come from. You have to be open to the world of possibilities and serendipity. While making QUEENDOM, I stayed true to the observational approach, but I also knew that I wanted to develop a new visual language that reflects my vision of Gena's world.

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**DIRECTOR/PRODUCER**

**Agniia Galdanova**

Agniia Galdanova is a Sundance and IDFA-supported documentary film director. Her previous film, "One Step Forward, One Step Back," about a family's dream to live far from civilization in the Altai Mountains, premiered at the Message to Man International Film Festival. Her work focuses on complex human relationships told through immersive observational language. Her new film QUEENDOM about a young queer artist Gena Marvin is set to premiere at SXSW 2023 in Documentary Competition.

**PRODUCER**

**Igor Myakotin**

Igor Myakotin is an Emmy-nominated BAFTA-winning filmmaker who co-produced the feature-length documentary WELCOME TO CHECHNYA (Sundance '20, Berlinale '20). He is a 2022 Sundance Producing Fellow and was named by DOC NYC as one of the "40 Under 40" working in documentary film. Igor believes that cinema is not a way to escape reality but to embrace it with all its peculiarities and darkness. Currently, Igor is producing QUEENDOM (2022 Sundance Producers Lab and Summit, Gotham Market Week, CPH:FORUM, Big Sky Pitch), directed by Agniia Galdanova.

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**FULL CREDIT LIST**

**Director**

Agniiia Galdanova

**Producer**

Igor Myakotin  
Agniiia Galdanova

**Executive Producers**

David France  
Jess Search  
Arnaud Borges

**Co-Executive Producer**

James Costa

**Cinematographer**

Ruslan Fedotov

**Editor**

Vlad Fishez

**Principal Cast**

Gena Marvin

**Cinematography by**

Ruslan Fedotov

**Additional Cinematography by**

Aliaksandr Tsymbaliuk  
Nikolai Zheludovich  
Aleksander Elkan

**Edited by**

Vlad Fishez

**Music by**

Damien Vandesande  
Toke Bronson Odin

**Sound design & Re-recording Mixer**

Andrey Dergachev

**Color by**

Ruslan Fedotov

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**Filmmakers would like to thank**

Gena's grandparents

Ismail Luceat-Anima

Lex Blank

Oleg Makhnorylov

Deoxys Io

Pavel Kolomeytsev

Daria Savonina

Andrey Skatkov

Roman Valynkin

Quamaz

Anastasiya

Yulia

Flavia

Artists in Exile

Judith Depaule

Adèle Costa

Tatiana Efrussi

**Editorial Consultants**

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Ricardo Acosta

Charlotte Munch Bengtsen

Alex O'Flinn

Peter Kerekes

**Consulting Producers**

Alice Henty

Melody Gilbert

**Associate Producers**

Arjun and Elena Joshi

Nikolai Kovtunenکو

**Additional Cinematography**

Askold Kurov

Maxim Tomash

Sergei Borsuk

Sergey Stasroستين

Nikita Lychev

Voleemor

Yulia Morozova

Vera Vishnevaya

Shamil Hasanzanov

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**Location Sound Mixers**

Agniia Galdanova  
Agatha Carioca Vandesande  
Ilya Rodionov

**Production Assistants**

Yulia Smyshlyaeva  
Tatiana Ochinskaya  
development producers  
Marfouga  
Anna Gudkova  
Liza Vorobyova

**Development Cinematographers**

Artem Emelianov  
Anna Zalevskaya  
Vitaly Shkotov  
Masha Terentieva  
Pete Minakov

**Development Editors**

Anna Zalevskaya  
Pavel Volchek  
Yuri Pivovarov

**Development Translators**

Ivan Nechepurenko  
Loretta May

**Development Copywriter**

Valeria Tsyganova

**Music Clearance**

Dawn Sutter Madell

**Additional Translators**

Tomas Naglis  
Jesse Mars

**Titles and Credits Design**

République Studio

**Poster Photographer**

Boris Camaca

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**Poster Design**  
République Studio

**Post-production Services**  
DumDum Films

**Digital Intermediate Colorist**  
Ruslan Fedotov

**Digital Intermediate Online Editor**  
Vlad Fishez

**Digital Intermediate Conform Artist**  
Vlad Fishez

**Visual Effects Artists**  
Vasiliy Raevskiy  
Mic Sachkov

**Post-production Sound Services by**  
Doli Media Studio  
Sofia, Bulgaria

**Supervising Sound Editor**  
Andrey Dergachev

**Doli Media Studio Manager**  
Lyubomir Chochov

**Doli Media Studio Assistant**  
Iliyan Apostolov

**Dialogue Editor**  
Ruslan Khusein

**Foley Studio**  
Kyrgyzfilm  
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

**Foley Artist**  
Ivan Savelev

**Foley Recordist**  
Sergei Radzievskiy

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**Foley Editor**  
Anna Zobova

**Audio Sync Engineer**  
Konstantin Danilin

**Transcription**  
Natalia Slavina

**Closed Captions Services**  
Mistral Artist  
Jerry Rudes

**Bookkeeper**  
DAVID HARRISON

**Production Accountants**  
LUTZ & CARR  
PATRICK SMITH

**Production Counsel**  
Gray Schwartz LLP  
David F. Schwartz, Esq.  
&

**Kondas Law**  
Patrick Kondas, Esq.

**Fiscal Sponsor**  
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**United Talent Agency**

Mikey Schwartz-Wright

Billy Offer

Grace Royer

**PUBLICITY**

**David Magdael & Associates**

David Magdael

Vince Johnson

Tommy Tang

Will Zang

Jennifer Hast

**Festival Distribution by**

The Film Collaborative

**Song Credits**

“Siboney”

Written by: Ernesto Lecuona

Performed by Connie Francis

Published by: EMI Feist Catalog Inc.

Courtesy of Polydor Records under license from Universal Music Enterprises

‘De La Cabeza’

performed by DJs Pareira

written by Mariano Caloso and Diego Irasusta

published by Música Cómeme

administered by Freibank Music Publishing

courtesy of Música Cómeme

“Human”

by Sevdaliza

Written By Sevdaliza

Composition: Sevdaliza, Mucky

Production: Mucky, Sevdaliza

Drum Programming: Mucky

Arrangement: Mucky, Sevdaliza

Recorded, Mixed and Mastered by Mucky and Sevdaliza at Soundkings  
Reynard Bargmann / Rabies Publishing/Maktub Music Publishing administered by Cloud 9  
Music B.V..

" Strichka "

written by Jonathan Illel / Alina Pash / Fabien Leseure /Damien Vandesande

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Performed by dOP & Alina Pash  
Published by Circus Company / Because Editions  
Courtesy of dOP Only

" Your Fellin' "

Written by Sammy Doylestien & Ryan Williams & Clement Alchelbaum  
Performed by dOP & Pillow Talk  
Published by Circus Company  
Courtesy of dOP Only

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IDA ENTERPRISE DOCUMENTARY FUND  
InMaat Foundation  
IDFA BERTHA CLASSIC FUND  
THE JONATHAN LOGAN FAMILY FOUNDATION - EMPOWERING WORLD-CHANGING  
WORK  
Fritt Ord Foundation  
DOC SOCIETY  
Current Time TV Award to the Best Pitch at Artdocpitch

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Damien Vandesande  
Benjamin Daussy  
Coralie Manant  
Arnaud Borges  
Jess Search  
Florent Vassault  
Mike Lerner  
Marina Razbezhkina  
Alain Nagler  
Alana Waksman  
Alessandro Ubaldi  
Alex Tomi  
Alexey Platonov  
Alyona Bocharova  
Amanda Hillsberg Arya  
Amanda Lebow  
Andrea Alarcon  
Andronik Khachiyani  
Ania Trzebiatowska

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Anna Makh  
Anna Mongayt  
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Athanasios Karanikolas  
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Beadie Finzi  
Bente Roalsvig  
Boris Matveev  
Boris Stefanov  
Carrie Lozano  
Chandra Jessee  
Claudette Godfrey  
Coralie Manant  
Daniil Antonov  
Dasha Slyusarenko  
Denis Smagin  
Director Nichego  
Dmitriy Fesenko  
Dominic Davis  
Dumitrita Pacicovschi  
Elhum Shakerifar  
Emma Mørup  
Evan Neff  
Fanny Dugas  
Fenton Bailey  
Freddy Neumann  
Fredrik Nedelmann  
Heather Haynes  
Heidi Pullyard  
Henner Winckler  
Holly Stanton  
Igor Kompaniets  
Isabel Arrate Fernandez  
Iva Dimitrova  
Jesper Jack  
Jess Kohl  
Jesse Mars  
John Burgan  
Jonathan Bertin  
Jonathan Illel  
Jose Rodriguez  
Karina Zrajevskaya  
Kat Schulze  
Katherine Hurley

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**PRESS NOTES**

Katya Sedlyarova  
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Kirill Sorokin  
Kristal Sotomayor  
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Ksenia Gapchenko  
Ksenia Gapchenko  
Langdon Page  
Laura Tatham  
Laurent Danielou  
Lex Cocker  
Mansky Vitaly  
Maria Clement  
Maria Eismont  
Maria Santos  
Marie-Genevieve Vandesande  
Marina Naumova  
Mark Wollemann  
Marusya Syroechkovskaya  
Maryana Drogoveyko  
Masha Pavlova  
Matias Aguayo  
Max Tuula  
Max Tuula  
Maxim Gorbunov  
Maxwell Anderson  
Maya Daisy Hawke  
Mika Altskan  
Mike Lerner  
Milton Tabbot  
Monica Baptiste  
Nadya Stepanova  
Nastia Korkia  
Nevo Shinaar  
Nicolas Ouvrard  
Nigel M.V. van Ommeren  
Nikki Heyman  
Niklas Engstrøm  
Nina Guseva  
Nino Maisaia  
Olga Babych  
Olga Privolnova  
Olivier Tournaud

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Sergey Nesterenko  
Shoshi Korman  
Sima Timofeeva  
Soheil Rezayazdi  
Susan Jacobs  
Suzana Peric  
Tanya Varavva  
Teona Tomi  
Tereza Simikova  
Theresa Boylan  
Tomas Naglis  
Torstein Grude  
Tue Steen Müller  
Vasiliy Mirolubov  
Vera Krichevskaya  
Victor Nemeth  
Weinshtein Alexander  
Weinshtein Alexander Junior  
Weinshtein Tatiana  
William Krinsky  
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Yulia Vorobyova  
Zaferhan Yumru  
Zeynep Güzel

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This film was developed with artist support from Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program

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**The Film was Pitched at**

The Artdocfest Pitching/ Current Time TV  
Big Sky Pitch at Big Sky Film Festival  
CPH:FORUM at CPH:DOX  
Gotham Market Week