MK PRODUCTIONS and CG CINEMA

present

FESTIVAL DE CANNES
2026 OFFICIAL SELECTION
COMPETITION

MINOTAUR

A film by

Andrey Zvyagintsev

Based on the film THE UNFAITHFUL WIFE written and directed by Claude Chabrol

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Runtime: 2h21 / 5.1 Dolby / Color / Scope / 2026 / France, Germany, Latvia

SYNOPSIS

Russia, 2022. When Gleb, a successful company director, finds himself under siege from mounting corporate pressures and an increasingly unstable world, the collapse of his carefully ordered life accelerates toward violence.

A CONVERSATION WITH ANDREY ZVYAGINTSEV

We haven't seen a single image of you for nine years and we know that you have been seriously ill. Can you tell us what happened over the course of these nine years?

Let's start with my state of health. In the summer of 2021, swept away by the wave of the pandemic, I found myself in intensive care with 90% lung damage. I was rushed to a clinic in Hannover, Germany, and put into an induced coma. I was released forty days later and remained in rehabilitation in this clinic without being able to move at all for several months, without feeling any of my limbs. It was in this state that I learned of the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. It was a shock; I felt immense pain and deep despair. While I was still in Germany, in a rehabilitation center in Bad Camberg, near Frankfurt, while learning to walk and use my hands again, I made the decision not to return to Russia – because I don't want to be associated with what my country has done.
It took me an entire year, until the fall of 2022, to re-learn how to hold a fork and a spoon. In the spring of 2022, still in a wheelchair, I moved to Paris with my family. I chose France because it's the Mecca of cinema and it's here that the director is the real author of his film. I continued rehabilitation in France. I was able to give up the wheelchair quite quickly and learned to walk on my own again.
In 2021, Nathanaël Karmitz, who had, in the meantime, learned from a French friend that I was interested in *The Unfaithful Woman* and had acquired the rights, asked me if I was still interested in making an adaptation. I said yes and, in the autumn of 2022, we signed a writing contract for the film *Minotaur*. In the end, it took until spring of 2024 before I started preparing *Minotaur*. Then, in the fall of 2025, three years after signing the contract, my team and I began shooting this film.
I think that was quite an achievement, because, given everything that had happened, my life in a new country, the new production conditions and the new relationships with French producers, finding common ground and mutual understanding was far from easy. I did everything I set out to do, and I think my producers, Nathanaël Karmitz and Charles Gillibert, doubted that it would be possible to have the film ready six months after the last day of shooting. But I know this algorithm by heart: if you have the opportunity to have a long and meticulous preparation, once on set, you know how everything is going to go and you won't have any surprises. In addition, the sound engineer works in parallel with the editing: as soon as I know that I will no longer touch the image editing of a scene, it goes to the sound engineer, and this allows us to be faster and more efficient.
Thus, out of these nine years, three and a half were devoted to *Minotaur*. The rest was the pandemic and the vain search for funding for one of my previous projects that I was already working on in 2019 in Russia.

What inspired you in Chabrol's The Unfaithful Wife?

After finishing Loveless in 2017, I started looking for material for my next film, telling myself that I would try my hand at an adaptation. I then watched a large list of important French films from the 1960s and 1970s that my French friend had drawn up for me and I stopped at this film by Chabrol with the intention of adapting it to the Russian context.
The main driving force of Chabrol's film around which the subject unfolds is murder. From the very first scene, we see the main character suspect, with good reason, that his wife is cheating on him. The observation of his behavior and his reactions becomes the object of his thoughts, the main event of which is the climax. It is in this way that, freed from ancillary details, the

criminal history unfolds before our eyes.
My co-screenwriter Simon Lyashenko and I had to invent what kind of company this man ran and what the pitfalls of this company could be. It was real life that gave us the answer. In the autumn of 2022, Russia mobilized. This event fundamentally changed the lives of Russians. The mass exodus of the citizens of that country, especially young men, suddenly provided the harrowing backdrop to the events of that time. In addition, the Russian government took countermeasures to people leaving the country. All this influenced what became the second trigger, shaking the moral choice of our protagonist, Gleb Morozov.

All your films deal with the family and this is usually problematic. Is the family a metaphor for Russian society for you? And the character of the father, whether he is strong or weak, whether he is present or absent, is at the center of all your films. Why?

Family is the closest relationship there is: the father, the mother, the other members of the family, the children... Family is the social sphere in which we are closest to our true self. In society, we can wear masks. In the family, we also take on roles: that of father, wife, mother... Nevertheless, it is within the family itself that we are completely naked. The family is the place where we fight against ourselves and against those around us. It is there that we see clearly what moves us. It is therefore the best field of investigation on which we can pause to dive into an introspection of the relationships between its members. Maybe that's why I'm focusing on these subjects. But it's not a conscious or deliberate choice – I've never said to myself, "I'm going to study the family." Whether it's with my previous co-writer, Oleg Negin, or with my current co-writer, Simon Lyashenko, we never approach the subject or project the action from this angle. Simply, family is the place where human beings choose themselves, it is where they question their behavior – it is this that lays bare their personality, their very essence.
I never decided that the main protagonist should be the father. It's just that this character, in the presence of those to whom he is closest, reveals himself totally. It doesn't matter if it's the father or the mother (as in Elena). To put it another way, whether this father is strong or weak is not a conceptual decision that one makes. It is the situation in which this or that character finds himself that whispers to us that a given act will reveal his weakness or his strength. In this sense, my main hero is the human being.

You sometimes quote Pico della Mirandola who says that humans are neither intrinsically good nor bad, that they are in perpetual evolution and that they have to make choices...

Exactly, because people are not predetermined, fixed creatures. They are constantly looking for their place in the world. With every step taken, every choice made, they discover who they really are. For Pico della Mirandola, the human being is a process and, if we observe the decisions it makes, we not only deduce things about the character who is on the screen, but we also project these deductions onto ourselves.

While your first two films were far from politics, the next four, including Minotaur, deal with the situation in Russia. Even if you no longer live in Russia, you still come back to the analysis of Russian society. What is your view of Russia and the world today?

Since Leviathan, it's true that my films are part of a given political context, because politics has entered our lives and it's impossible to detach ourselves from it. I will tell you a story: "A man and his son are walking down the street. In the distance, a demonstration looms. The man and his son stop to see her pass. Suddenly, the police arrive and take them into a paddy wagon. Once underway, the son asks his father: "Where are they taking us?" And the father replies: "I don't know, I'm not interested in politics." Once politics has entered your life, you can't not think

about it, not ask yourself questions, it's impossible. And, as it is impossible not to see it, politics becomes part of the works you create.
People in Russia today are apathetic, under the yoke of censorship; They are afraid, disoriented, social networks are working less and less well: the fight against progress is in full swing, as is the propaganda machine. Everyone tries to close their eyes, because every day that passes only increases the debt to the truth and looking into her eyes is more and more frightening – Russia now looks like a monster. European civilization rests on three pillars: reason (the logos of the ancient Greeks), justice (Roman law) and Christian charity. When our representations of reason and justice are transformed before our eyes, when new rules are leading us straight to collapse, we must remember charity and love.
We thought we had entered the twenty-first century weighed down by the abominable experience of two world wars. It seemed to us that the catastrophe that had gripped the twentieth century would preserve us forever from new wars and that humanity had drawn humanist conclusions from it forever. But we see that hard-built foundations are being systematically undermined: democracy is in crisis, international organizations are weak, international law is ignored, and the law of the strongest prevails. The world before has collapsed, the rules of the game have completely changed and, obviously, few people can know how to do it now.

Let's get back to the film. You co-wrote four films with Oleg Negin, but you had to change co-writers and worked on this screenplay with Simon Lyashenko, with whom you had never worked before. Was it complicated for you and did you have to change your working method?

I met Simon Lyashenko a long time ago. He had come to a public event I was involved in, gave me a text about my film The Return and asked me to read it. I read it late, I saw that it was extremely well-written, and I understood that this man had a fine understanding of life. That's how we met. When the question of writing Minotaur arose, I already knew that Oleg Negin wouldn't co-write it, because he had told me a long time ago that he wouldn't write an adaptation. In addition, it was already the autumn of 2022, the political situation had changed, and I knew that we would not be able to work together, because he had stayed in Russia. But I understood that I absolutely needed a sparring partner. Simon and I had already written a little book together called Le Chemin d'un film. He had the idea of telling the story of how Mikhail Krichman, my cinematographer, and I had shot a short film in New York. I asked him if he would agree to write a screenplay together. He said yes and we worked as I had worked before with Oleg Negin: we see each other, we exchange ideas, our thoughts, our impressions, then Simon writes the text alone on his computer and sends it to me. I read it, we see each other several times, we correct, etc. Nothing could be more usual. In other words, I am not the one who writes. The dialogues and the description of the scenes are due to him, but we agree beforehand on the plot twists and collateral collisions. I was very lucky to have found such a reliable and talented partner so quickly.

Filming obviously could not take place in Russia. Why did you choose Latvia?

I knew that in Latvia there were remnants of the Russian presence in architecture. The Soviet architecture of Riga's dormitory neighborhoods is exactly the same as that of the suburbs of Russian cities, while Riga's Old Town looks like any other European city – hence the fact that you can't pretend to film Russia there. But, as one of the major sequences of the film takes place in an apartment on the seventh floor of a social housing project where Anton, the photographer, lives, I knew that we would find this place in Riga. We also needed the couple's house, outside the city. I must say, however, that the architecture of the villas around Riga stands out for its

special color. It differs a little from that of the villas around Moscow. But we were lucky: we found not far from Riga a single-story house of European construction like those we could have found in the vicinity of Russian cities. It is implied that the action takes place in a medium-sized Russian provincial city – it has even been invented with a name: Krasnoborsk.
In terms of interiors, it was easy for us to find the spaces we needed in Riga. The same goes for the exteriors of Anton, the photographer's apartment, and his social housing: we found the place quite quickly. So we filmed the exteriors in this dormitory district of Riga, but the apartment itself was built as a studio.

Was your usual film crew able to follow you on this film?

Yes, fortunately. We were able to bring almost everyone together, although we are all scattered all over the world. So, of course: Andrey Dergachev, who has done sound on all my films since The Banishment, lives in Canada; Andrey Ponkratov, who has been my production designer since The Banishment, as well as Masha Slavina, who had already worked on the sets for Loveless, live in the United States; Mikhail Krichman, who is the cinematographer of all my films, is based in London; my co-writer, Simon Lyashenko, no longer lives in Russia either. As for me, I'm in France where my composer, Evgueni Galperine, also lives, with whom I had already worked on Loveless and whose talent amazed me.
For this film, I wanted there to be very little music, for it to be almost absent. There is a scene in the film without dialogue that lasts almost twenty minutes. I could have been tempted by the introduction of music. But I imposed on myself not to give in to this temptation. And I almost succeeded – even if, in the end, it's up to the viewer to decide. Nevertheless, the music on the opening credits and the one that accompanies the last images seemed essential to me.

Can you tell us about the way you did the casting? Did you limit yourself to looking for actors who had left Russia?

Absolutely not. Of course, the main actors who are on screen have almost all come from elsewhere: Dubai, Paris, Berlin, Israel, Vilnius... I had two casting directors in Europe, but not a single one in Russia – although it was in Moscow that I found the lead actor. For the first time, I used screen tests that the actors did themselves in the place where they were: I received them from Argentina, Israel, London, Los Angeles... This allowed me to do a first skimming and to say that I would like to bring this or that one to do some real tests. I didn't want to limit myself to the actors I could have on hand in Riga, even if I found some who are in the film. This is the wrong way to do things. First of all, we must not limit ourselves, do the broadest research and only then see what is possible in terms of logistics to bring them in. All the actors who are on screen are acting for the first time in one of my films – with the exception of Varvara Shmykova who was part of the team of the association that was looking for the little boy in Loveless. I had Anatoliy Weissmann test out when I was casting for The Banishment, twenty years ago, but we hadn't made the film together. I knew he was a great artist, and I saw him last year in the film Two Prosecutors by Sergey Loznitsa, who warmly recommended him to me. I sent Anatoliy the text of a single scene to offer him this small role and, to my great joy, he immediately accepted. I found the lead actress through the test she had done at home and sent me on video. In fact, at one point in the preparation, I spent quite a bit of time in Paris and saw all the possible Russian-speaking actors and actresses living in France – that's how I found Yuriy Zavalnyouk playing the role of the photographer. And one of the actresses I saw told one of her friends, Iris Lebedeva who lives in Dubai, that this role was for her and that she had to make herself known to me. It was after seeing his video that I brought him in for real tests. You have to be particularly generous to offer another actress, even if she is a friend, the role for which you yourself have

come to try out!
For the main male role, I did the same. I received videos from actors living in Russia but given the script I submitted to those who had previously sent me their videos and whom I had selected for real tests, I ended up with relatively few candidates. Many have told me that acting in this film would be too risky for their careers.

How did you work with these actors that you didn't know?

I brought several actors and actresses to Riga that I had selected to do definitive tests, in particular by associating actors and actresses to form a couple. Then I made my final decisions, notably on Iris Lebedeva and Dmitriy Mazurov, while resolving multiple visa problems in the process... Obviously, it wasn't me who settled them, but the production company Forma Pro Films.

There is, I think, a scene whose filming was nothing like any scene in your previous films: the one in the restaurant.

Indeed. I particularly wanted this scene to be as lively as possible, and I wanted the conversations of the six characters to never be interrupted. Of course, I could have shot it in a sequence shot, but the five or six minutes of the scene would have plunged the viewer into boredom. I could also have edited it, but that meant that I had to interrupt the game to change the angle of the shot. So we decided to shoot the scene with two cameras so that each of them had three protagonists in their shot. I don't remember how many shots we did with two cameras – 8, 12 or 14 – so that everyone knows exactly when to speak, after whom, in what order, and so that we keep the naturalness, the liveliness and the lightness. In the end, the images you see on the screen are all from the same take and the jokes told by the blonde, played by Stacy Tolstoy, were only told in this take. Jokes were invented for each take so that the laughter was as spontaneous as possible.
For the rest of the shoot, I proceeded as usual: precise choice of locations, storyboard, sequence shots, rehearsals, and a sometimes gigantic number of takes because, as long as I'm not sure I have what I want in the box, I start the take again.

What role do photographs play in your films? In Minotaur, the character of the lover is, moreover, a photographer. Why this need to show photos in your films?

In this film, it is first of all a tribute to Chabrol's The Unfaithful Wife. His film begins with the scene where the hero's mother and daughter-in-law are sitting in a garden and looking at photos while commenting on them. It's also a tribute that I pay to myself, because I have a similar scene in The Banishment, at the end of the film. But I think it's important to add photos to show the audience that it's not just the action that's happening before their eyes, but that this action has a background, a past. There is also a kind of iconostasis in the couple's living room with photos of the young husband and wife (these are real photos of Dmitriy Mazurov and Iris Lebedeva). We don't dwell on these photos, we don't see the details, but we can clearly spot them in the frame. They bring credibility to what happens on screen.

By way of conclusion, can you comment on the title of your film?

I don't see the point of it. One day, a Russian producer living in the United States read this script – I had sent it to him in the hope that he would finance this film in part. We spoke on Zoom and he told me the following: *"Andrey, it doesn't matter which character you associate with Theseus or even if he is present in the script. It doesn't matter, either, where Ariadne's thread is or which*

of the heroes is the Minotaur – all this is of no importance, because the main point in this film is its truth, its fullness and the courage of looking at the myth. Hence my answer to your question: viewers must see the film and not read what the newspapers say about it.

Interview by Joël Chapron, Paris, April 17, 2026.

Andrey Zvyagintsev

Director, screenwriter

FILMOGRAPHY

2026 – Minotaur

Festival de Cannes – Official Selection - Competition

2017 – Loveless

Festival de Cannes – Official Selection – Jury Prize

BFI London Film Festival 2017 – Best Film

César 2018 – Best Foreign Film

Munich Film Festival 2017 – Best Foreign Film

Prize of the French Critics Union – Best Foreign Film

Los Angeles Film Critics Association Awards – Best Foreign Film

2022 – Leviathan

Festival de Cannes – Official Selection – Best Screenplay

BFI London Film Festival 2014 – Best Film

Munich Film Festival 2014 – Best Foreign Film

2011 – Elena

Festival de Cannes – Un Certain Regard – Special Jury Award

2007 – The Banishment

Festival de Cannes – Official Selection - Best Actor

2003 – The Return

International Film Festival Venice – Competition – Golden Lion

International Film Festival Venice – Competition – Luigi De Laurentiis Award

European Film Awards – Discovery Award

— SCREENPLAY —

SIMON LYASHENKO and ANDREY ZVYAGINTSEV

Screenwriter of a short film, Simon Lyashenko co-wrote his first feature film, Minotaur, with Andrey Zvyagintsev.

— DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY —

MIKHAIL KRICHMAN

Cinematographer of all of Andrey Zvyagintsev's films (The Return, The Banishment, Elena, Leviathan, Loveless [European Film Award for Best Cinematography, 2017]), but also, in particular, The Last Tanya's Journey by Alexei Fedortchenko (Golden Osella for Best Cinematography, Venice Film Festival, 2010), Mademoiselle Julie by Liv Ullmann (2014), The Hidden Testament by Jim Sheridan (2016) and Vermiglio by Maura Delpero (David di Donatello for Best Cinematography, 2025).

— SET DESIGN —

MASCHA SLAVINA and ANDREY PONKRATOV

Andrey Ponkratov has made the sets for all of Andrey Zvyagintsev's films since The Banishment, but also, in particular, for Tanya's Last Journey by Alexei Fedorchenko (2010) and Hot Milk by Rebecca Lenkiewicz (2025). Together with Masha Slavina, they did the sets for Loveless by Andrey Zvyagintsev (2017) and Leto by Kirill Serebrennikov (European Film Award for Best Production Design, 2018).

— ORIGINAL MUSIC —

EVGUENI and SACHA GALPERINE

Already composers of the music for Loveless (European Film Award for Best Score 2017), Evgueni and Sacha Galpérine have also collaborated with Eric Lartigau (La Famille Bélier, 2014), Asghar Farhadi (The Past, 2013), François Ozon (By the Grace of God, 2018; When autumn comes, 2024), Kantemir Balagov (Une grande fille, 2019 ; Butterfly Jam, 2026), Hagai Levi (serie tele Scenes From A Marriage, 2021), Jan Komasa (La Communion, 2019) ; Audrey Diwan (L'Evenement, 2021 ; Emmanuelle, 2024), Richard Gadd (TV series My Little Reindeer, 2024), Laszlo Nemes (Orphan, 2025).

CAST

Gleb ..... Dmitriy Mazurov
Galina ..... Iris Lebedeva
Seriosha ..... Boris Kudrin
Anton ..... Yuriy Zavalnyouk
Natasha ..... Varvara Zmykova
The Mayor ..... Vladimir Friedman
Tatjana ..... Elena Bogdanovich-Golubeva
Nikolai ..... Mikhail Samodakhov
Kostia ..... Anatoliy Weissmann
Denis ..... Artur Smolyaninov
Inna ..... Kristina Zakharova
Yulia ..... Stacy Tolstoy
Dasha ..... Anastasia Mishenko
Kirill ..... ArtIgoris Abramavičius
Pavel ..... Artjoms Garejevs
Liosha ..... Mikhail Safronov
Igor Karmanov ..... Dmitrijs Punte
Police Inspector Semenov ..... Volodymyr Gorislavets
Police Inspector Medvedev ..... Stanislav Kolodub
Draft Officer ..... Sergey Golomazov

CREW

Screenplay ..... Simon Lyashenko and Andrey Zvyagintsev, based on the film THE UNFAITHFUL WIFE written and directed by Claude Chabrol

Director of Photography ..... Mikhail Krichman
Editor ..... Andrey Zvyagintsev
Sound ..... Andrey Dergachev
Set Design ..... Masha Slavina, Andrey Ponkratov
Costumes ..... Uliana Polianskaia
Original Music ..... Evgueni and Sasha Galperine
Mixing Engineer ..... Andrey Dergachev

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