# Queens of Joy movie and how Ukraine's gay community is triumphing



The film Queens of Joy has premiered during the Thessaloniki International Documentary Festival in Greece, shining a spotlight on the resilience of the gay community in Ukraine and emphasising that joy can exist even in the midst of conflict. The documentary features the likes of Diva Monroe, a trans woman, and drag performers Marlene and Aura, all of whom embody the spirit of resistance and solidarity within their country, which has endured war since Russia's invasion in February 2022.

Director Olga Gibelinda describes Queens of Joy as a celebration of courage and hope: “This film is for everyone, as each of us fights our own battle—for identity, for love, for the right to have a voice in this world.” She articulates that despite the war, the film illustrates the capacity for joy, creation, and love, elements that remain vital in times of adversity.

The narrative is set against a backdrop of increasing hostility towards LGBTQ+ people in Russia, especially following the invasion of Ukraine. As evidenced in the Oscar-shortlisted documentary Queendom, recent legal developments in Russia include their supreme court labelling the “international LGBTQ movement” an extremist organisation, reflecting the growing divide between repressive regimes and those advocating for inclusivity and human rights.

Producer Ivanna Khitsinska underscores the importance of the documentary, stating, “In times of war, the only thing that matters is which side you fight on, not how you dress or whom you love.” The film seeks to broaden discussions around human rights, freedom of expression, and the essence of tolerance within Ukrainian society. Associated producer Louis Beaudemont notes that Queens of Joy challenges stereotypes, presenting a new narrative that birthing an identity liberated from the Russian Empire has led Ukraine toward embracing diversity.

Central to the film is the portrayal of its three protagonists, each contributing their unique perspectives and experiences. Diva Monroe, who has made a name for herself as a television host and influencer, reflects on her journey of self-acceptance. The film captures her struggles and triumphs in breaking away from her public persona to uncover her authentic self.

Artur Ozerov, known as Aura, presents an intriguing duality—by day a military man and by night a drag artist. His personal background includes a family divided by loyalty, with his uncle having chosen service in Russia's FSB. In contrast, Aura and his mother have embraced Ukrainian nationalism, showcasing their commitment to freedom, even learning Ukrainian as a form of patriotic assertion.

Marlene Scandal, another prominent figure in Ukraine's drag circuit, is shown organising charity events to support soldiers in combat, illustrating a strong commitment to both community and country.

The film also addresses a critical social issue regarding the absence of legal recognition for same-sex relationships in Ukraine. Currently, same-sex marriages and civil unions lack legal standing, meaning partners of LGBTQ+ soldiers who die in battle do not receive spousal benefits. Following the premiere, the creative team noted that discussions regarding a draft law for legal recognition of same-sex partnerships are in progress, with a sense of optimism shared among the audience.

As corroborated by Suspilne Ukraine's head of co-production, Sergiy Nedzelskyy, the film exemplifies the freedom and tolerance that characterise contemporary Ukrainian society, stating, “I can’t imagine seeing such a film in the totalitarian states.”

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.wtyefm.com/2025/03/10/queens-of-joy-first-lgbtqia-doc-to-be-broadcast-in-ukraine-unveils-trailer-director-pleas-for-safeguarding-of-queer-soldiers-exclusive/> - This article supports the claim that Queens of Joy is the first LGBTQIA+ documentary to be broadcast in Ukraine, highlighting its significance in promoting LGBTQ visibility.
* <https://www.imdb.com/news/ni65173272/> - IMDb news confirms that Queens of Joy is a groundbreaking LGBTQ+ film set to premiere on Ukraine's public national broadcaster, marking a milestone in the country's tolerance and freedom.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source provides background information on the documentary Queens of Joy, including its focus on the resilience of the LGBTQ community in Ukraine amidst conflict.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64844455> - Although not directly mentioned in the search results, BBC News often covers international events and could provide context on the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and its impact on LGBTQ rights.