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Frontlight
2026

the big boom!

A FILM BY
gabriel tejedor



WITH PAVLINA, PETAR, VICTOR, SOFIA, SADUKA, PAVAL, TOMA, NIKI, STEFAN DIRECTOR, AUTOR, SOUND GABRIEL TEJEDOR PRODUCER SUSANNA CUGGENBERGER ASSOCIATE PRODUCER VADIM JENDREYKO CINEMATOGRAPHY THOMAS SZCZEPANSKI EDITING CHRISTINE HOFFET COMPOSER PETAR DUNDAKOV RESEARCHER, PRODUCTION MANAGER LORA FILEVA SOUND DESIGN, PRE-MIX, ADDITIONAL MUSIC DANIEL ALMADA RE-RECORDING MIX DOMINIK AVENVEDDE COLOR GRADING FRANCK RAVEL IMAGE POST-PRODUCTION HANNES RÜTTIMANN COMMISSIONING EDITOR RTS STEVEN ARTELS NATIONAL COORDINATION SRG SSR SVEN WÄLTI FINANCIALLY SUPPORTED BY SWISSLOS-FONDS BASEL STADT UND BASEL LANDSCHAFT, FACHAUSSCHUSS FILM UND MEDIENKUNST REGION BASEL, FEDERAL OFFICE OF CULTURE (FOC), CINÉFORUM, LOTERIE ROMANDE, ZÜRCHER FILMSTIFTUNG, KULTURFONDS SUISSIMAGE, SUCCÈS PASSAGE ANTENNE, JOURNAFONDS, VILLE DE GENÈVE PRODUCED BY MIRA FILM IN COPRODUCTION WITH RTS RADIO TÉLÉVISION SUISSE, SRG SSR © 2026 MIRA FILM , WWW.LEGRANDBOUM.CH

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The Big Boom!

A FILM BY GABRIEL TEJEDOR

Switzerland / 79 min / 2026

In Kazanlak, Bulgaria's "Valley of Roses," a town not far from Ukraine is home to a weapons factory supplying the frontlines, where residents, torn between economic survival and personal loyalties, live with the uneasy contradiction of a war that challenges their beliefs, while still longing for peace.





Synopsis

In Bulgaria's "Valley of Roses," the town of Kazanlak blooms in the shadow of a weapons factory supplying seemingly distant wars. 10 500 people produce ammunition for Ukraine's front lines, even as many still feel bound to Russia. Rifles are assembled while children learn to handle guns at local folklore fairs. In this landscape of quiet absurdity, where war underwrites everyday life, residents navigate a fragile balance between survival, belief, and identity. With irony and intimacy, the film reveals lives shaped by contradiction, where pacifist ideals collide with the need to make a living from war.

Director's Statement

Gabriel Tejedor

I have never been interested in war or weapons. I grew up in Switzerland, where war, the army and weapons felt like abstract notions. I never did military service and considered myself a pacifist, without really questioning what that meant. Russia's war in Ukraine changed that. Europe entered a new era of rearmament, and one question began to haunt me: what does it mean to be a pacifist today?

THE BIG BOOM! began several years earlier, when I first came to Kazanlak during a family holiday. Walking through the forest, I discovered a huge industrial complex hidden behind walls, barbed wire and watchtowers. The only clue was the name Arsenal. The next day, at the local market, I saw the same logo on a weapons illustration. I was struck by the contrast: a beautiful, peaceful town full of parks, families and cafés, living alongside a major weapons factory.

Later on, I returned with Bulgarian journalist Lora Fileva, who grew up in Kazanlak. We spent considerable time simply getting to know the city and its inhabitants. Slowly, I understood how deeply Arsenal is woven into the life of the city. It employs thousands of people, but its presence goes much further — into the shooting club, cultural life, sport and everyday routines.



What emerged was a profound unease around the production of weapons. The four protagonists each live this contradiction differently. Pavlina works there while struggling with the lethal purpose of what she helps produce. Petar left Arsenal because he was a pacifist, but the war in Ukraine has changed his position. Saduka carries the memory and human cost of the factory's past. Viktor, a Ukrainian refugee, is grateful to Kazanlak and Arsenal, yet hesitates to work there because he fears having blood on his hands.

Following them also forced me to confront my own contradictions. By consuming or having consumed Russian oil and wheat, I had supported that country. At the same time, by wishing for Ukraine to resist the Russian advance, I also wanted the war not to move west, towards my home. And many of the most effective weapons on the battlefield are American or European. Whether I want it or not, I am part of this conflict, just like the workers at Arsenal. I therefore do not judge them.

I did not want to approach the subject through political decision-makers or military experts. I wanted to stay close to ordinary life. We do not film inside the factory or on the battlefield. Instead, the war enters through work, family, religion, friendships and personal choices. Explosions and the pounding of the factory remain present through sound, while the wider geopolitical reality emerges through the lives of the protagonists.

Kazanlak makes these contradictions almost impossible to miss: roses and weapons, celebration and violence, peace and preparation for war. A cemetery faces the entrance to Arsenal. Children perform at festivals while military exercises take place nearby. The city celebrates its famous Rose Festival while, just a short distance away, the international Hemus arms fair brings together weapons manufacturers and military officials from around the world.



Ultimately, THE BIG BOOM! is not about providing a simple answer to the question of weapons. It is about the gap between what we believe and how we live. A contradiction that extends far beyond Kazanlak. Who can claim to act in complete coherence with their convictions? And what happens when our values collide with survival, history and everyday life?

Long Synopsis

Kazanlak, in Bulgaria's "Valley of Roses," is known for beauty, tradition, and quiet provincial life. But hidden in the surrounding forest, the Arsenal factory employs 10 500 people producing weapons and ammunition – much of it destined for Ukraine's frontlines, just hours away.

Since the outbreak of war, production has surged, placing this small EU town at the center of a global conflict. Yet Kazanlak is also a place of deep historical ties to Russia, where many residents feel cultural and emotional closeness to the very country their labour now opposes. This contradiction runs through everyday life: rifles are assembled behind trees and hills, children are taught how to handle guns, and folklore festivals unfold under the shadow of a weapons brand that shapes the town's identity.

THE BIG BOOM! follows four inhabitants whose lives intersect with this reality in different ways. A factory worker who takes pride in her craft and finds empowerment in shooting. A former Arsenal employee turned pacifist journalist who left the factory decades ago and now challenges the narratives surrounding the war. A Ukrainian refugee rebuilding his life in Kazanlak while carrying the trauma of loss. And a Roma grandmother whose family history bears the physical cost of the factory's past.

Through their stories, the film reveals how war seeps into places far from the battlefield into routines, beliefs, and personal choices. Each of them navigates a fragile balance between economic necessity, political identity, and moral doubt. Some embrace the system, others resist it, and some remain suspended in between.

With a tone that blends observation, irony, and quiet tension, the film captures the unsettling coexistence of opposites: roses and weapons, celebration and fear, distance and proximity to war. What emerges is a portrait of a community shaped by forces beyond its control, where living with contradiction becomes a way of life.



Director's Biography

Gabriel Tejedor



Gabriel holds a Master's degree in Sociology from the University of Geneva, Switzerland (2004), followed by a diploma in Image from the École supérieure de journalisme in Lille, France (2009). In 2018, he attended the screenwriting workshop at Ateliers Varan in Paris. Alongside his work as a journalist for Swiss television, Gabriel pursues an independent filmmaking practice. His previous feature films include *Kombinat*, released in French cinemas in 2021 to critical acclaim, and *Svetlana: My Father Is J. Stalin*, released in Swiss cinemas in autumn 2024. *The Big Boom*! is his fifth feature-length film.

Filmography

2026 *The Big Boom!*
2023 *Svetlana: My Father is J. Stalin*
2020 *Kombinat*
2017 *Mayskaya Street*
2014 *The trail*

Producer's Biography

Susanna Guggenberger

Susanna Guggenberger has been producing documentaries for Mira Film (Zürich/Basel) since 2012. Since October 2021 she is the artistic director of Bildrausch Film Festival Basel which presents an exquisite selection of outstanding films. She is a Member of Motion Picture and Science (AMPAS), European Women's Audiovisual Network (EWA), Documentary Association Europe (DAE).

Born in the Austrian Alps, Susanne studied communication science and history at the University of Salzburg. Since 1998 Susanne worked with a focus on documentary film with various production companies in Vienna. She gained experience in distribution at Autlook Filmsales as well as through her roles at DOK Leipzig and Visions du Réel.

Mira Film produces committed films that are sophisticated in both content and style, addressing social, political and cultural issues with a strong personal touch. In co-production with Argentina, Belgium, Chile, China, Germany, France, Georgia, Canada, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal and the USA, the company has produced outstanding documentary films that reach audiences worldwide in cinemas, on television, at festivals and via streaming services.

Many of the films have won national and international awards and are still in circulation even after many years. Mira Film was founded in 2002.

More information: mirafilm.ch

Credits

Direction, script, sound
Gabriel Tejedor
Produced by
Susanna Guggenberger
Cinematography
Thomas Szczepanski
Editing
Christine Hoffet
Composer
Petar Dundakov
Sound design
Daniel Almada
Research & production management
Lora Fileva
Associate Producer
Vadim Jendreyko

Mira Film in coproduction with
RTS Radio Télévision Suisse, SRG SSR

Commissioning editor RTS
Steven Artels
National coordination SRG SSR
Sven Wälti

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Federal Office of Culture (FOC)
Cinéforom
Loterie Romande
Zürcher Filmstiftung
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