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Locarno Festival
Official selection

WALKING ON WATER

a documentary film by Andrey M Paounov



WALKING ON WATER

Directed by Andrey M Paounov

2018 / 100 min / Documentary

USA, ITALY / Color / English

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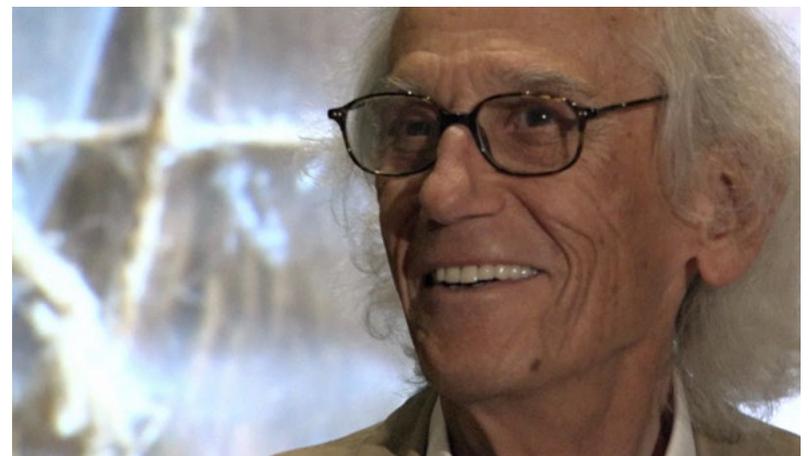
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LOGLINE

TEN YEARS AFTER the passing of his wife and partner, Jeanne-Claude, Christo sets out to realize, *The Floating Piers*, a project they conceived together many years before. Documented with uncensored access to Christo and his team, *Walking on Water* is a cinema verite look into the process and personal relationships of the world's biggest installation artist



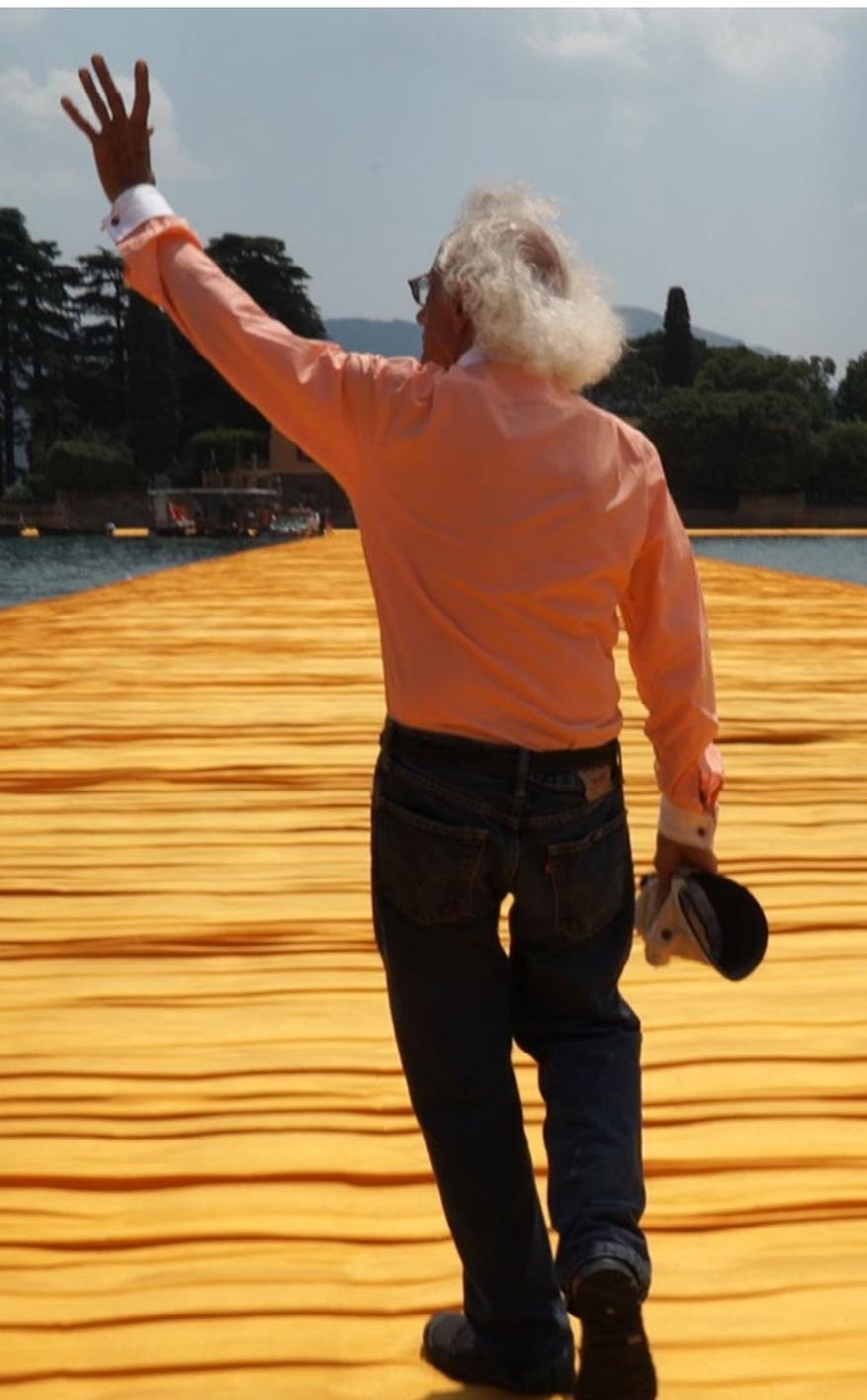
SYNOPSIS

TEN YEARS AFTER the passing of his wife and partner, Jeanne-Claude, Christo sets out to realize, *The Floating Piers*, a project they conceived together many years before. Documented with uncensored access to Christo and his team, *Walking on Water* is a cinema verite look into Christo's process, from inception to completion of his latest large-scale art installation. The film takes the viewer on an intimate journey into Christo's world, unmediated by interviews, voice overs or reenactments drawing the portrait of a

man who deliberately places visceral experience over demagogy.

And yet, this intimate portrait of a man chasing a dream happens on the backdrop of the epic madness of it all — the complex dealings that merge between art and state politics, engineering challenges and logistical nightmares, and the sheer force of nature, captured through breathtaking aerial views and fly on the wall cameras. So, as we watch the dream unfold, we get to know the man chasing it — Christo.





DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FASCINATED by Christo and Jeanne-Claude's uncompromising vision of how art should be conceived, financed and produced — in total independence and with the sole agenda of the pursuit of joy and beauty. Regardless of how the audience experienced or explained the inflation of thousands of colorful balloons, the installation of countless umbrellas simultaneously in Japan and California or the wrapping of The Reichstag, at their core, these were the works of artists in pursuit of their dream visions with unprecedented dedication and unique sense of aesthetics.

At the same time, the freestyle honesty of cinema verite of the 60's, such as the works of Albert and David Maysels, D.A. Pennebaker and Richard Leacock, have been formative of

my vision of the possibilities of documentary cinema. These were films that were stripped from the banal preconceptions of plot and narrative, proposing a novel way to approach storytelling. They offered stories that stemmed organically from the characters and capitalized on the uncontrollable chain of events, creating a sense of drowning in reality.

Every once in a while, a documentary filmmaker gets very lucky. For me that moment came when the opportunity to combine these two worlds presented itself. In 2016, I was approached with the proposition to make a film about Christo and his artistic process, starting out with 700 hours of footage, shot by ten different crews, on a variety of media, over the course of one year, during the preparation and production of Christo's latest



signature work, *The Floating Piers*. It sounds like an enormous amount of raw material, but it is business-as-usual in Christo world, for he has a long-standing fascination with documenting his process.

I worked on *Walking on Water* for 18 months, while staying in daily, often casual, contact with the protagonist, who worked (in this case meaning lived) several stories above the editing suite. So the raw footage I had at my disposal, though shot in the past, became the material from which I chiseled a portrait of Christo and his process as I began to understand him in my daily observations and interactions. In the process, I continued to explore existing media, including youtube videos and i-phone footage posted by tourists and random stand-bys, as well as to shoot additional material, and all of those, too, found their place in the final product.

Christo is among the most covered personas of our times, so the skill required was not so

much to capture, but to sculpt. This was quite a departure — and liberation — from the process in my previous films, where I was in full control from concept through shooting to the final product. But it also reflects something essential about the times we live in, where information in its raw form abounds, and the challenge becomes to shape it into something that is authentic.

My personal takeaway from this experience is that for Christo, art is a process, not an end result. *The Floating Piers* is the cherry of the cake, but the true excitement comes from imagining the possibilities, overcoming bureaucracy, taming the forces of nature. The film's title, *Walking on Water* is a double entendre — on the surface it is a reference to the experience offered by *The Floating Piers*, but in essence it stands for my goal — to make a film that offers every viewer the opportunity to walk in Christo's footsteps on the holy grail of creation.

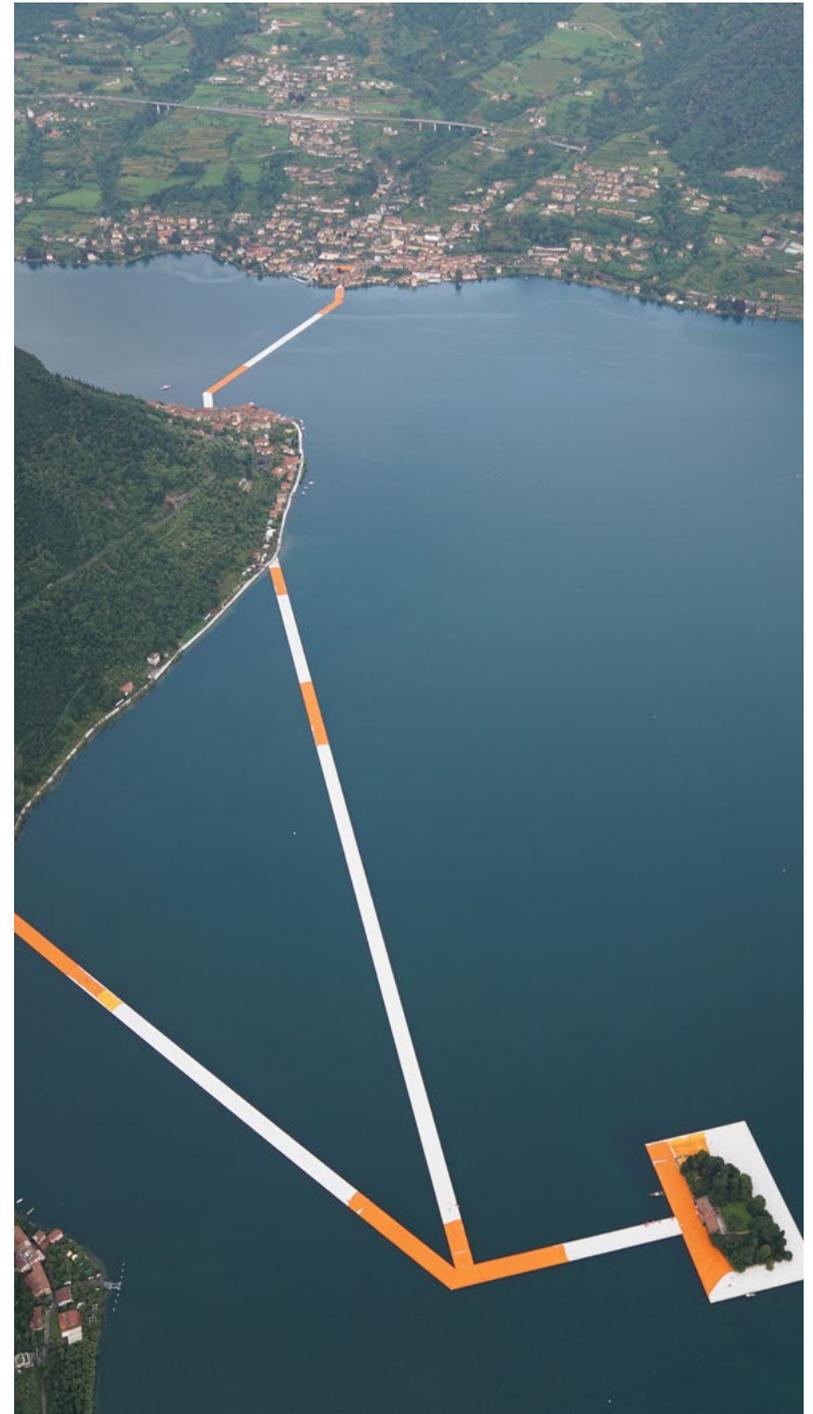
BACKGROUND

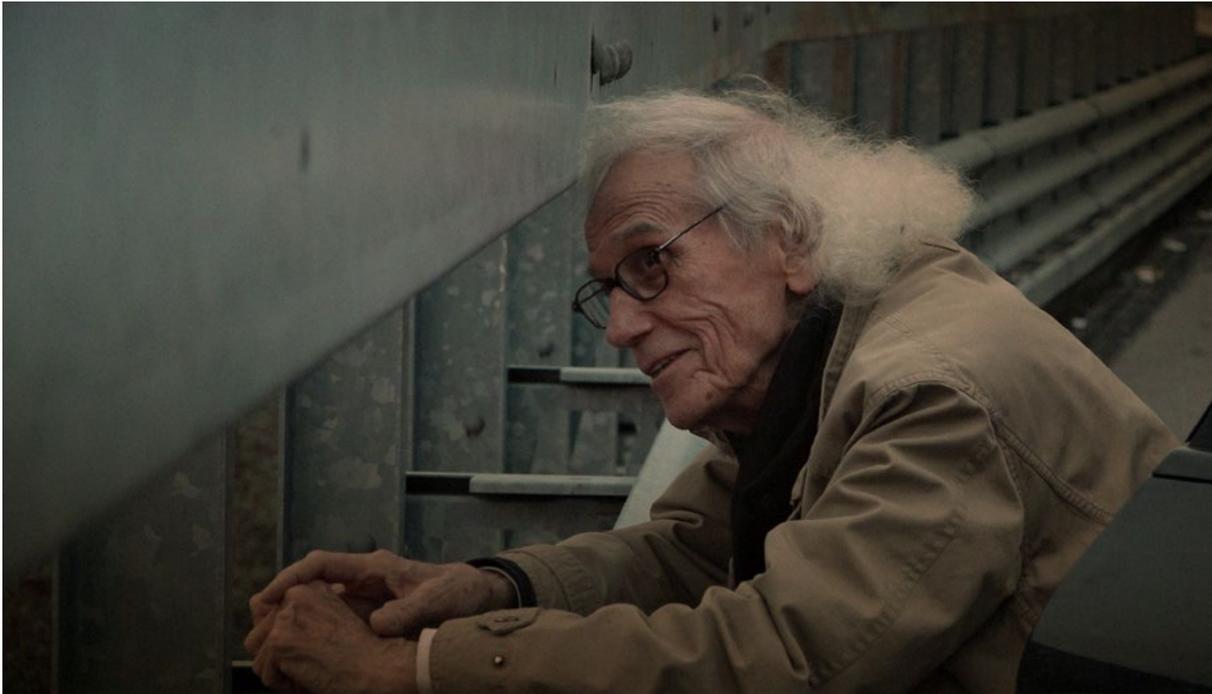
IN THE SPRING OF 2014, world renowned artist, Christo, and his team set out to find a location for his next large public art installation; The Floating Piers. They settled on a small and quiet lake between Lake Cuomo and Lake Garda in Northern Italy, called Lake Iseo. Christo and his wife Jeanne-Claude first conceived the idea for the project in 1970, consequently making attempts to realize it in Argentina and in Japan. This would be his first large-scale installation since The Gates in Central Park in 2005 and since his wife passed-away.

The excitement of the local Italian authorities quickly spread and Christo and his team set out to construct his most ambitious project to date; a 3-kilometer-long walkway

which allowed people to safely walk on water for a period of 16 days.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude have been realizing large-scale art installations since the 1960's; The Wrapped Reichstag Building in Berlin, The Umbrellas in California and Japan, The Running Fence in California, The Wrapped Coast in Australia, The Pont Neuf in Paris and The Surrounded Islands in Miami. These installations take decades to complete and in the process of bringing them to life, the artists are often confronted with world leaders, art innovators and hordes of fascinating characters from each region. The works transformative power extends to the people who live through them.





THE FLOATING PIERS: A TIMELINE



1969: Christo and Jeanne-Claude propose Project for Rio de la Plata (2000 Metres Wrapped, Inflated Pier) in Argentina, the artists' first project that includes floating piers. While the proposal never goes forward, the artists' wish to realize a project with a floating walkway would resurface in the following decades.

1996: In Tokyo, Japan, the artists' propose The Daiba Project, a temporary work of art that would use two floating promenades to connect two islands in Tokyo Bay to Odaiba park. Following a disagreement with the managers of the site, the artists' cancel the project.

April 2014: Christo and his team scout the northern Italian lakes; Maggiore, Como and Iseo before deciding on Lake Iseo. Christo reenvisioned the 45-year-old floating piers project for Lake Iseo in Northern Italy. The Floating Piers will include 3 kilometers (1.9 miles) of floating walkways as well as 2.5 kilometers (1.6 miles) of fabric-covered pedestrian streets.



August 2014: Christo and his team have the first of many meetings with the Italian authorities in an effort to obtain the necessary permits for the realization of The Floating Piers.

August - September 2014: The crew carries out a secret life-size test of The Floating Piers in Schleswig-Holstein in Northern Germany to evaluate the project's structural requirements.

February 2015: Operations Director Vladimir Yavachev carries out an additional life-size test on the Black Sea near Sozopol, Bulgaria.

April 9, 2015: The local authorities approve the project and give Christo permission to build The Floating Piers.

Spring 2015: Fabrication of the project's components begins.

Winter 2015: Assembly of the pier sectionals begins.

January 2016: Director of Construction Rosen Jeliazkov and his team of divers begin to install 240 anchors and 50 counterweights that will stabilize The Floating Piers in Lake Iseo.

April 2016: The first pier sectionals are pulled to their final locations on Lake Iseo.

June 15, 2016: After assembling the pier sectionals that create the floating walkways, the Dahlia yellow fabric is delivered by helicopter and installed by The Floating Piers workforce.

June 18, 2018: Opening day of The Floating Piers.

July 3, 2018: Closing day of The Floating Piers. The temporary work of art attracts over 1.2 million visitors.

SUBJECTS



CHRISTO (born 1935 in Gabrovo, Bulgaria) and his late wife Jeanne-Claude (born 1935 in Casablanca, Morocco, died 2009, New York City, USA) have created some of the most visually breathtaking works of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The artists began their collaboration in 1961. Their large-scale projects include *Wrapped Coast, Little Bay, Australia, 1968–69*; *Valley Curtain, Rifle, Colorado, 1970–72*; *Running Fence, Sonoma and Marin Counties, California, 1972–76*; *Surrounded Islands, Biscayne Bay, Florida, 1980–83*; *The Pont Neuf Wrapped, Paris, 1975–85*; *The Umbrellas, Japan–USA, 1984–91*; *Wrapped Reichstag, Berlin, 1971–95*; *Wrapped Trees, Riehen, Switzerland, 1997–98*; *The Gates, Central Park, New York City, 1979–2005*; and *The Floating Piers, Lake Iseo, Italy, 2014–16*. Their work is represented in museums and galleries throughout the globe including the Guggenheim and Metropolitan museums in New York, Tate in London and the Centre Pompidou in Paris.



Christo's nephew, **VLADIMIR YAVACHEV**, has worked with Christo and Jeanne-Claude since 1991, helping coordinate and build *Wrapped Reichstag, Berlin, 1971–95*, *Wrapped Trees, Riehen, Switzerland, 1997–98*, and *The Gates, Central Park, New York City, 1979–2005*. Since the passing of Jeanne-Claude he has stepped into the role of operations director for the artists' latest projects, *The Floating Piers, Lake Iseo, Italy, 2014–16* and *The London Mastaba, Serpentine Lake, Hyde Park, 2016–18*. He is also the project manager and operations director for Christo and Jeanne-Claude's current work in progress, *The Mastaba of Abu Dhabi (Project for United Arab Emirates)*.



WOLFGANG VOLZ has worked with Christo and Jeanne-Claude as the exclusive photographer of their works since 1971. He was also project director (with Roland Specker) for *Wrapped Reichstag* and (with Josy Kraft) for *Wrapped Trees*, and was in charge of *The Wall – 13,000 Oil Barrels, Gasometer Oberhausen, Germany, 1998–99* and *Big Air Package, Gasometer Oberhausen, Germany, 2010–13*. His close collaboration has resulted in many books and more than 300 exhibitions in museums and galleries around the world.

TEAM



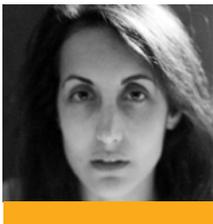
DIRECTOR

ANDREY PAOUNOV is a Bulgarian writer/director best known for his non-fiction films, including *Georgi and the Butterflies* (Silver Wolf winner, IDFA 2004), *The Mosquito Problem and Other Stories* (Cannes Critics' Week 2007) and *The Boy Who Was King* (premiered at Toronto International Film Festival). His films have screened at over 150 international film festivals and received more than 40 awards. He is currently in pre-production on his first narrative feature, *January*.



PRODUCER

Based in New York, IZABELLA TZENKOVA founded Kotva Films in 2015. She produced Crystal Moselle's award-winning documentary, *The Wolfpack* (2015) which took the 2015 Sundance Grand Jury Prize and her first narrative feature *Skate Kitchen* (2018) coming out in theaters worldwide late summer/early fall. Currently she is producing a Vice feature documentary on the artist, Dash Snow directed by Cheryl Dunn (*Everybody's Street*) and in development on *Skate Kitchen* scribe, Aslihan Unaldi's directorial debut feature.



PRODUCER

VALERIA GIAMPIETRO lives and works in Rome. Her work is focused on contemporary art projects, mostly video and documentary film about art. In 2009 she worked as production coordinator/assistant director on the documentary film *The Universe of Keith Haring* directed by Christina Clausen. She also collaborated at the video section of the three Pop Art exhibitions at the Milano Triennale: *The Jean Michel Basquiat Show* (2007), *The Keith Haring Show* (2006) and *The Andy Warhol Show* (2005).



COMPOSERS

DANNY BENSI and SAUNDER JURRIANS are award winning film composers. They have been playing music together for over twenty years. In the last eight years, they have completed well over 100 acclaimed film and TV scores. One of their first films, *Martha Marcy May Marlene* (Dir. Sean Durkin) garnered much attention for its sparse and suspenseful score. Soon after, their sinister score for *Enemy* (Dir. Denis Villeneuve) won Best Musical Score at the Canadian Screen Awards. In 2015 they scored Joel Edgerton's acclaimed suspense thriller *The Gift*. The duo have written remarkable scores for *LA 92* (Nat Geo), *Amanda Knox*, and *The Wolfpack*. They have scored 2 seasons of Jason Bateman's *Ozark* as well as *The OA* and *Chef's Table*. They were also recently sought out to write a fresh new score for season 4 of *Fear The Walking Dead* (AMC) and have also signed on for the second season of *American Gods*.



EDITOR

ANASTAS PETKOV is a documentary photographer and editor. *Walking on Water* is his first feature film, edited alongside the director, Andrey M Paounov.



TRIVIA

1. The film was edited out of 700 hours of footage
2. . The Floating Piers was up for 16 days total between June 18 and July 3, 2016
3. Over 1.2 million people visited the Floating Piers in the 16 days that it was up
4. It was the most visited art event of 2016

END CREDITS

DIRECTED BY	Andrey M Paounov	ASSISTANT EDITORS	Petar Marinov Snejina Latev
PRODUCED BY	Izabella Tzenkova Valeria Giampietro	MUSIC BY	Saunder Juriaans Danny Bensi
PRODUCTION COORDINATORS	Marilena Mondati Maria Teresa Zingarello	Music Mixed by Music Mixed at	Phil McGowan McGowan Soundworks, Ltd
PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS	Marzia De Tavonatti Giuseppe Ribola Davide Antonio Massetti Giampiero Pelli	MUSIC SUPERVISOR	Phil Canning
CAMERA OPERATORS	Martina Cocco Pietro Daviddi Simone D'Arcangelo Antonio Ferrera Snejina Latev Anastas Petkov Franco Piroli Nevena Rashkova Wedigo von Schultendorff Debora Vrizzi	SOUND SERVICES BY	Gigantic Pictures
		SUPERVISING SOUND EDITOR	Tom Paul
		DIALOGUE EDITOR	Nicholas Torres
		SOUND EFFECTS EDITOR	David Forshee
		FOLEY ARTIST	Alex Carpenter
		FOLEY RECORDIST	Nathan Hasz
		Post Sound Producer	Iva Gocheva
		DIGITAL SERVICES BY	Technicolor Postworks NY
		DI COLORIST	Jack Lewars
		DI EDITOR	Sean Perry Allie Ames
		DI PRODUCER	Isabel Cafaro-Anderson
		DI ENGINEERS	Eric Horwitz Randy Main
		VP CREATIVE SERVICES	Benjamin Murray
		CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER	Joe Beirne
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		SALES AGENT	CAA Media Finance
EDITORS	Anastas Petkov Andrey M Paounov		