



collective (colectiv)

Directed By
Alexander Nanau



UK release:

109 minutes | Romania, Luxembourg | 16:9 | 2019

Website:

Press:

Asa Martin

DDA Asa.Martin@ddapr.com

Jessica Askham

DDA Jessica.Askham@ddapr.com

Yung Kha

DOGWOOF

yung@dogwoof.com

FESTIVALS & AWARDS

LOG LINE:

Investigative journalists uncover massive fraud in the Romanian health care system revealing the price of corruption and ultimately, the price of truth.

ONE LINE SYNOPSIS:**SHORT SYNOPSIS:**

In 2015, a fire at Bucharest's Colectiv club leaves 27 dead and 180 injured. Soon, more burn victims begin dying in hospitals from wounds that were not life-threatening. Then a doctor blows the whistle to a team of investigative journalists. One revelation leads to another as the journalists start to uncover vast health care fraud. When a new health minister is appointed, he offers unprecedented access to his efforts to reform the corrupt system but also to the obstacles he faces. Following journalists, whistle-blowers, burn victims, and government officials, Collective is an uncompromising look at the impact of investigative journalism at its best.

LONG SYNOPSIS:

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT, Alexander Nanau

No interviews, no voice over. My process of documentary filmmaking is a purely observational one. It is a process of learning from the life of others, of growing on a personal level by getting as close as possible, up to a point of complete identification, with the chosen protagonists. When I start filming a story, at first I don't want to know too much from – nor about – my characters. I actually never know for sure if from the moment I step into their lives anything noteworthy of a cinematic story will develop further. But what I experience in the process, I am trying to frame in a way that will make the viewers feel as if they were living in close proximity to and discovering the characters. The viewer should feel as if witnessing his or her own process of personal growth through the life of others. That I think is what cinema should do.

I was born in Romania. I have lived most of my life in Germany, but at the end of 2015, when Romanian society was devastated by the Colectiv club fire, I was back living in Bucharest. By being right there at that time,

I experienced the full extent of the blow suffered by a democratic European society which could never have imagined that dozens of people could die when going out to a club. The fire at Colectiv was a national trauma.

It felt like everybody in the country was part of it.

Like any single traumatized human, a traumatized society becomes easy to manipulate and to lie to. I have witnessed during the days after the fire an institutional lie about how the authorities were perfectly managing the tragedy, that was constantly repeated to a grieving population, through all media. I have seen manipulation silencing people and stopping them from asking questions for a time. While young people injured in the fire kept dying in hospitals.

My very first attempt was to understand the direct impact of the tragedy on the private lives of the survivors and of the families who had lost their children in hospitals, after the fire. Mihai Grecea, a filmmaker himself, is one Colectiv survivor who joined my team right after he woke up from a coma. Together with Mihai, I plunged into the big family of the Colectiv victims. I stayed as close to them as I could, through their innermost grief and their struggle to understand why they had to lose their loved ones, weeks after the fire, if the medical treatment that they received was as good as the authorities claimed. The hardest challenge for me, as a father, was to witness the pain that parents went through after losing a child. The pain of not having been able to save the life of one's own child, while it would still have been possible, because of the power and the lies of state authorities.

As I was aware that one day the same situation could hit my own life, I needed to understand more, to delve deeper, to reach and to try to film the well-hidden. It was an organic decision to follow the very few that also doubted the official version of the events. The ones that were asking the unexpected, yet simple questions. So the office of the investigative team of journalists at the Sports Gazette, that started to investigate the role of authorities in the tragedy right after the fire, was the best place to start filming the part of the story I wanted to understand.

Though they had started out by looking for simple answers, the journalists plunged deeper and deeper into an entire network of lies and corruption within the healthcare system. Even when doubted by everybody, they didn't abandon their quest. Encouraged by the stubbornness of the journalists, a doctor walked into their newsroom and blew the whistle about the real state of Romanian hospitals and their inability to treat even one burn patient. More whistleblowers followed.

The investigations started to uncover a series of overwhelming facts about corruption in the healthcare system, which had endangered patients' lives for years. By then, I was already following the journalists' work with my camera, as they got caught up in a vortex of disclosures, reaching the highest levels of government. I followed every step and shared every risk the investigative team took.

As a silent witness, equipped with my camera, I could experience and frame the genuine, intimate life of journalists, and understand the process of how news is being born. From the first simple question the journalist is asking himself, to researching, reporting, gathering evidence, fact checking, approaching sources, up to deciding on page layouts, printing and publishing.

With the change of the Minister of Health, I took the chance to get my lens on the inner workings of the state government too. I was lucky to be trusted by an open-minded new Minister who gave me unprecedented access to the system from within. I brought my camera into advisors' meetings, during brainstorming sessions, and coaching meetings before going out to the press. I could witness crisis management decisions and personal breakdowns.

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The biggest challenge we faced during the editing phase of the film was to balance the real-life events, seen from different perspectives, and offer a better understanding of the powers that shape our private lives in a society.

When I started working on this film in early 2016, I never imagined that the year would be a major turning point for democracy all around the world. I never suspected that, by the end of the production, most of what could be said about Romanian society would be equally relevant for older, more established democracies, be it the UK, the US, Italy, Brazil, Hungary, Poland, Turkey, etc. There was a pattern of populists taking over, lying and attacking the free press, misusing state institutions in their own interest and perverting the very meaning of liberal values and social structures. 2016 tested democracies worldwide, but it also tested each and every one of us.

PRODUCERS NOTES, Hanka Kastelicova, Bianca Oana, Bernard Michaux

In November 2015, Alexander Nanau and Hanka Kastelicova, Executive Producer of Documentaries at HBO Europe, having co-produced with Alexander his previous film *Toto and His Sisters*, started discussing the idea of capturing in a documentary the collective phenomenon that was taking place in Romania. The social unrest and the total rupture between the Romanian society and those that were governing it, that took place after the deadly fire at the Colectiv club seemed to reflect a development that could already be felt in many countries in Europe and beyond.

The shooting of the film took place over a period of 14 months, followed by another 18 months of editing. The whole co-production of the film involved a team of 60 people from several European countries.

Collective started out of a personal curiosity about the inner workings of the governing forces that are influencing our lives, regardless of the country we live in. Starting from the tragic incident that led to a government fall in 2015, we take a look at the year that followed and the way authorities, journalists, and regular citizens dealt with it.

We became aware that this was not only an important event that needed to be brought to light, but that it also had a deeper meaning, that of dealing with the relation between citizens vs. state. This multi-layered story felt to be evocative of many countries' political situations nowadays. We live in a Europe where societies have constantly grown to be disappointed and unhappy with their governments, a situation that raised a question in many people's minds: are politicians still working in the best interest of the citizens? At that specific moment in time, *Colectiv* and everything that followed became emblematic for this social awakening.

Although the events portrayed in the film have been broadly publicized in national and international media, we understood the need to tell this Romanian story in a cinematic way for an international audience, as we feel its potential lays in the universal values that are the bases of our societies: freedom of speech, right to health, seeking the truth, and defending democracy. We trusted that Alexander with his unique style of observational filmmaking, which he proved he was able to handle so well already in his last film, could again make a story accessible to a wide international audience.

In a way, this has been a journey of awareness and responsabilization for all of us involved in making the film. And we hope that the audience will experience the same enlightenment after watching the film, that would allow them to become aware of abuse of power by those who govern, and to value the importance of a free press working in the service of society.

ABOUT THE PROTAGONISTS

CĂTĂLIN TOLONTAN (47) –
investigative and sports journalist

Tolontan is a sports journalist and editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper Gazeta Sporturilor. Over the last years, he gained great notoriety by leading a series of investigations on corruption in Romanian sports and politics which brought several resignations of ministers and a series of court cases that ended with the imprisonment of several politicians.



After the Colectiv club fire, he and his team of editors, MIRELA NEAG (47) and RĂZVAN LUTAC (21) started to investigate the role of the state institutions involved in the Colectiv tragedy. Their investigation into the medical treatment in Bucharest hospitals that affected the Colectiv burn patients is one of the greatest journalistic investigations in Romanian history. Their thorough enquiry on the company HEXI PHARMA shattered the entire health system.





CAMELIA ROIU (47) – anesthetist, the Bucharest Burn Hospital

Roiu became the first Romanian whistleblower after the Colectiv club fire. She decided to disclose to Cătălin Tolontan and his investigative team at the Sports Gazette a secret well-kept by Romanian authorities about the cause of deaths of burn patients. Her courage inspired doctors and other people to come forward about the frauds in the Romanian Health System.

TEDY URSULEANU (29) – architect

Tedy is a survivor of the fire. Her looks changed dramatically, as she suffered severe burns on her head and body, and her fingers were amputated. Nevertheless, she is positive and happy to be alive. She embraces her new self and wants to become an example for others by using art to heal her trauma.



**VLAD VOICULESCU (33) –
finance specialist, philanthropist, Minister of Health (may - december 2016)**



Voiculescu worked in Vienna as vice-president of an investment department in Erste Bank for many years. By the age of 27, he had founded the “cytostatic network”, a group of dozens of people smuggling cancer medicine from Austria, Germany and Hungary into Romania for diagnosed patients who had no access to medication.

As a former activist for patients’ rights, he became the new Minister of Health once his predecessor was forced to resign. He

opened the door of his ministerial office to Alexander Nanau, giving him unprecedented and constant access into the Ministry of Health.

**NARCIS HOGEA (49) – engineer
Hogea is the father of ALEX HOGEA (19).**

His son suffered severe burns in the fire in Colectiv and was taken to the Bucharest University Hospital. When Narcis wanted to transfer his son to the General Hospital in Vienna (AKH), the management of the University Hospital in Bucharest refused to approve the transfer. Alex was finally transferred one week after the fire to Vienna where he died on November 22nd from infections with multi-resistant bacteria.



QUOTES ABOUT THE FILM

"Collectiv is fascinating... It is very well-made, masterfully edited, and confirms Alexander's patience, amazing faith, drive and persistence. Something in this story is universal, no matter how Romanian it is. The trust that the filmmaker earns from his characters extends beyond a filmmaker's job, it gives one a sense of community, a sense of complicity, a film, and a filmmaker, who are an organic part of

a subversive movement, not observers of it.” **ORWA NYRABIA - artistic director of IDFA (International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam)**

“I am sometimes asked “Can films change the world?”. Probably not, but some have a greater capacity than others to make you think twice, or think deeper.

We seem to live in a polarised society where everyone is determined to die for their opinion.

I think "collective" has the ability to make you feel less confident that there is only one truth that you already know.” **CRISTIAN MUNGIU - filmmaker**

“It’s almost like watching Woodward and Bernstein at work in Watergate because the scandal that they start revealing piece by piece goes up to the highest levels of government and corporate corruption.

(Realscreen)” **THOM POWERS – documentary programmer TIFF (Toronto International Film Festival)**

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY:

ALEXANDER NANAU

Alexander is a German-Romanian filmmaker born in Romania who studied directing at The Film and Television Academy Berlin (DFFB).

His documentary film, THE WORLD ACCORDING TO ION B was awarded an International Emmy Award in 2010.

His feature documentary film TOTO AND HIS SISTERS was a European Academy Award nominee 2015. The film had a wide international distribution and played successfully in festivals worldwide.

Alexander served as Director of Photography for the French/German documentary NOTHINGWOOD (Sonia Kronlund) that was shot in Afghanistan and premiered in Cannes as part of La Quinzaine des Réalisateurs in 2017.

His latest feature length documentary COLLECTIVE will premiere at the Venice IFF 2019- as part of the Official Selection - Out of Competition and is a co-production with Samsa Film (Luxembourg) and HBO Europe.

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY:

PETER ZADEK INSZENIERT PEER GYNT (2006) – director, DOP, producer, editor (premiere: Munich IFF 2006)

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO ION B. (2010) – director, DOP, producer (premiere: Visions du Reel IFF 2010)

TOTO AND HIS SISTERS (2014) – director, DOP, producer, editor (premiere: San Sebastian IFF 2014)

NOTHINGWOOD by Sonia Kronlund (2017) – DOP (premiere: Cannes IFF Quinzane des Realisateurs 2017)

COLLECTIVE (2019) - director, DOP, producer, editor (premiere: Venice IFF - official selection)

produced by
ALEXANDER NANAU PRODUCTION

in co-production with
SAMSA FILM and HBO EUROPE

with the support of
ROMANIAN FILM CENTRE, LUXEMBOURG FILM FUND, and SUNDANCE DOCUMENTARY FUND

with the participation of
MITTELDEUTSCHER RUNDFUNK (MDR), RADIO TELEVISION SUISSE (RTS), RSI RADIOTÉLÉVISIONE SVIZZERA, YES DOCU

collective

A film by Alexander Nanau

CĂTĂLIN TOLONAN CAMELIA ROIU TEDY URSULEANU
MIRELA NEAG VLAD VOICULESCU
RĂZVAN LUTAC NARCIS HOGEA NICOLETA CIOBANU

director and cinematographer **ALEXANDER NANAU**

dramaturgy **ANTOANETA OPRİȘ**

producers **ALEXANDER NANAU BIANCA OANA**

co-producers **BERNARD MICHAUX HANKA KASTELICOVÁ**

with the support of

ROMANIAN FILM CENTRE FILM FUND LUXEMBOURG SUNDANCE DOCUMENTARY FUND

with the participation of **MITTELDEUTSCHER RUNDFUNK (MDR)**

in association with **RTS RSI YES DOCU**

a film made in collaboration with **MIHAI GRECEA**

film score **KYAN BAYANI**

editing **ALEXANDER NANAU GEORGE CRAGG DANA BUNESCU**

sound designer **ANGELO DOS SANTOS**

sound mix **MICHEL SCHILLINGS**

sound mix consultant **FLORIN TĂBĂCARU**

sound recording **MIHAI GRECEA**

executive producer **HBO Europe ANTONY ROOT**

HBO Romania producer **ALINA DAVID**

executive producer Cinephil **PHILIPPA KOWARSKY**

line producer **BIANCA OANA**

associate producers **JANI THILTGES CLAUDE WARINGO** international sales **CINEPHIL**

international press **CLAUDIA TOMASSINI ADAM J. SEGAL RYAN WERNER**

Key parties' logos:



LICENCED MUSIC

"Gravediggers"

Written and Performed by Blue Daisy (K Darko)
Published By Just Isn't Music
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"Who Do You Think You Are?" titles music
Written by Ash Gibson Grieg
Dublin Bay' Theme Music by Mark Sayer-Wade

"The Truth"
Original Music Fernando Velazquez
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