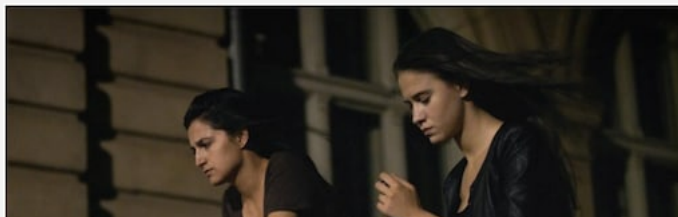


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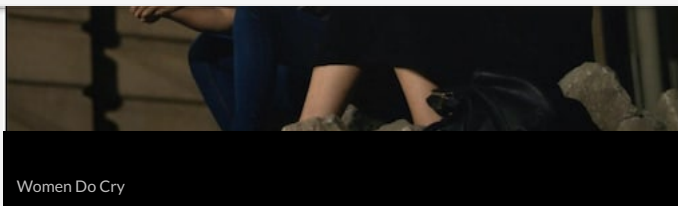
# Cannes Film Festival 2021: Women Do Cry is a Damning Look at Patriarchy in Bulgaria



Women Do Cry, set in Bulgaria, is hauntingly powerful, peeling the layers of a terribly hypocritical society.

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Women Do Cry

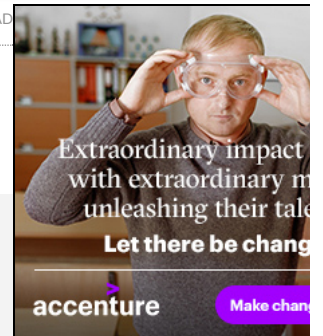
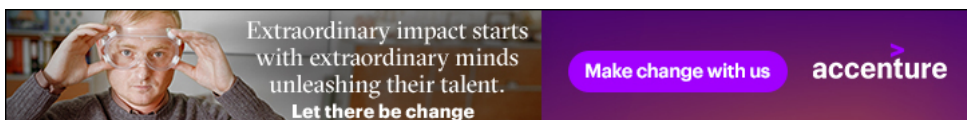
## Women Do Cry

**Directors: Mina Mileva and Vesela Kazakova**

**Cast: Maria Bakalova, Raltisa Stoyanova**

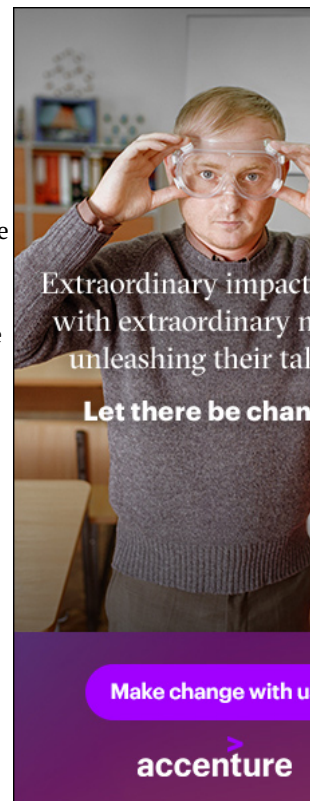
There is a common perception that women are treated as inferior to men in only some parts of the world. Countries like India, for instance. But the truth may well be that they face similar situations in most parts of the world. And one of the entries at the just-concluded Cannes Film Festival, Women Do Cry, is an example of this, and this is a story set in one of the most advanced nations, Bulgaria. The movie is a no-holds-barred attack on the country's attitude towards women, a place where the community shackles women. Patriarchy and prejudice combined with irrational beliefs push women to sometimes miserable existences.

Women Do Cry aptly describes how, through an interestingly structured narrative. Mina Mileva and Vesela Kazakova's first film since the 2019 Cat In The Wall is based on true events, and is deeply rooted in familial traditions. Sonja (the impressive Borat 2 breakout star, Maria Bakalova) and her hotheaded sister, Lora (Raltisa Stoyanova), are classic cases of sibling rivalry which is also tempered with a sense of devotion to each other. They may argue and quarrel and even pull each other's hair, but at the end of the day, they realise that they are sisters, and the bond of blood runs strong in them.



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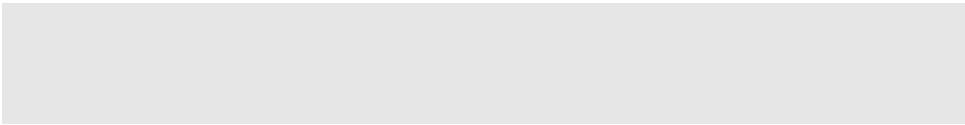
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The movie gradually shifts its focus to the other members of the sisters' family, including their mother Ana (Katia Kazakova), lesbian aunt Yoana (co-director/writer Kazakova) and their grandfather (Iossif Surchadzhiev).

The bomb falls when Sonja finds out that her married lover with a wife and child is HIV positive. When she tests and finds that she too has been infected, the world around her crumbles, losing its sheen. Her carefree days are over, she is just 19. "I can never have a boyfriend. I can never have sex. I can never get married and have babies," Sonja is desperate and depressed, and her mother's and sister's efforts to lift her spirits fail. Even the doctor's, who reassures her that HIV positive is "not a death sentence".

Much like the Romanian landmark work, 4 months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days, Women Do Cry is a compelling canvas that paints and blends the personal with the political. We see through the eyes of the sisters how the political class is ruining the country, how men are haughty, ill-tempered, unreasonable and illogical. Sonja's own grandfather gets raving mad when he is told about her tragic predicament. A male gynaecologist refuses to treat Sonja when she tells him, as she must rightly, that she is HIV positive. This is one of the most shocking scenes in the movie.



Women Do Cry is hauntingly powerful, peeling the layers of a terribly hypocritical society that is infused with a breath of fresh air by some wonderful performances by the lead actresses. They are solid and even stylish, and the fate of an injured stork that they come across conveys in no uncertain terms Sonja's turmoil.

*(Author and movie critic Gautaman Bhaskaran has covered the Cannes Film Festival for 29 years)*

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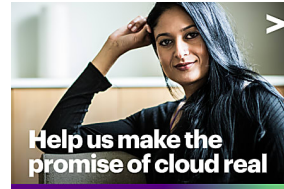
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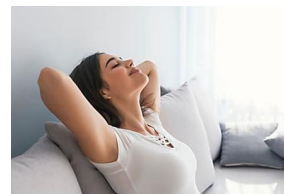
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