

# Wednesday 12 | Viewing guide

## Critic's choice Stacey Dooley: Ready for War?

BBC3, 9pm

As part of the UK's effort to help Ukraine in the wake of the Russian invasion, the British Army is training Ukrainian civilians to fight. "Whilst we're not fighting alongside you on the battlefield, what I can offer you is some of the best training in the world," a commander says. Stacey Dooley, *right*, presents this documentary, with exclusive access to the intense five-week programme that aims to teach the recruits how to kill and how to survive. Dooley is not a war reporter but she is naturally empathetic and this is as much a film about the people and the lives they have left behind as it is about the regime. "These aren't soldiers," Dooley says. "They're florists, teachers, welders... people with no experience at all in battle." Initially Dooley concentrates on communicating the

bewilderment of what it must feel like to suddenly be thrust into the position of learning how to defend your country from invading forces. Artem has left behind his partner, a young son and a career as a jeweller to fight the Russians. "I didn't have a choice," he explains. "I am ready to give my life in order for my child to live in a free country." This selflessness is a recurring theme of the film. "Better I die than die some children," says masseur Yaroslav. The training is physically and mentally gruelling,

necessarily so. The fact that this is happening at all is hard to comprehend. "There are moments where you forget what's at stake," Dooley muses. The scenes of the recruits waving to their trainers as the coach leaves for the front line are unbearably poignant.

Joe Clay

