

a film by  
D M Y T R O S U K H O L Y T K Y Y - S O B C H U K

# P A M F I R

QUIJOTE  
DIRECTOR'S CUT  
CANNES 2022



BOSONFILM presents in co-production with LES FILMS D'ICI, MADANTS, QUIJOTE FILMS in association with MAINSTREAM PICTURES, WADY FILMS, SOILFILMS, MODERATOR INWESTYCJE, STUDIO ORLANDO starring OLEKSANDR YATSENYUK, STANISLAV POTIAK, SOLOMIYA KYRYLOVA, OLENA KHOKHLATKINA, MYROSLAV MAKOVYCHUK, IVAN SHARAN, OLEKSANDR YAREMA cinematography NIKITA KUZMENKO production design IVAN MYKHAILOV music LAETITIA PANSANEL-GARRIC sound director SERHIY STEPANSKY sound mixer MATTHIEU DENIAU editing NIKODEM CHABIOR visual effects DENIS REVA make-up MARIYA PYLUNSKA costume MARIYA KVITKA casting OLHA LYUBAROVA executive producer KARINA KOSTYNA co-produced by ARTEM KOLIUBAIEV, ALYONA TYMOSHENKO, SILVANA SANTAMARIA, ADOLF EL ASSAL, ADAM GUDSELL produced by ALEKSANDRA KOSTINA, JANE YATSUTA, LAURA BRIAND, BOGNA SZEWCZYK, KLAUDIA ŚMIEJA - ROSTWOROWSKA, GIANCARLO NASI written and directed by DMYTRO SUKHOLYTKYY-SOBCHUK  
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MADANTS

QUIJOTE



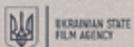
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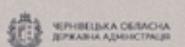
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Film Fund 2022

UKRAINIAN  
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# ΠΑΜΦΙΡ

( ΠΑΜΦΙΡ )

a film by

ΔΗΜΗΤΡΟΣ ΣΥΚΗΟΛΥΤΚΥΥ-ΣΟΒΧΟΥΚ

QUINZAINÉ  
DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT  
CANNES 2022

## Synopsis

Western Ukraine, on the eve of a traditional carnival. Pamfir returns to his family after months of absence. Their love is so unconditional that when his only child starts a fire in the prayer house, Pamfir has no other choice but to reconnect with his troubled past to repair his son's fault. He will be taken on a risky path with irreversible consequences.

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# Cannes Film Festival - Directors' Fortnight

## Public & press screenings

<b>21.05.22</b>	11:45 a.m.		Théâtre Croisette
<b>21.05.22</b>	6:00 p.m.		Théâtre Croisette
<b>22.05.22</b>	10:00 a.m.		Cinéma Le Raimu
<b>22.05.22</b>	2:00 p.m.		Cinéma La Licorne
<b>23.05.22</b>	10:45 p.m.		Cinéma Les Arcades / S1

# PAMFIR

Countries		Ukraine, France, Poland, Chile
Duration		106'
Language		Ukrainian
Screen		2:35
Sound		5.1
Premiere		Cannes 2022 - Directors' Fortnight



# Information

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## Director, Screenwriter

Dmytro Sukholytkyy-Sobchuk

## Producers

Aleksandra Kostina at Bosonfilm and Jane Yatsuta (Ukraine) in co-production with Laura Briand at Les Films d'Ici (France), Bogna Szewczyk and Klaudia Smieja-Rostworowska at Madants (Poland), Giancarlo Nasi at Quijote Films (Chile)

## Co-Producers

Artem Koliubaiev at Mainstream Pictures and Alyona Tymoshenko (Ukraine), Adolf El Assal at Wady Films (Luxembourg), Silvana Santamaria at Soilfilms (Germany), Adam Gudell at Moderator Inwestycje (Poland), Studio Orlando (France)

## With the support of

Ukrainian State Film Agency, Aide Aux Cinémas Du Monde, Polish Film Institute, Visions Sud Est, Hubert Bals Fund+Europe, Göteborg Film Fund, Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, Chernivtsi Regional State Administration

## Cast

Oleksandr Yatsentyuk (Pamfir), Stanislav Potyak (Nazar), Solomiya Kyrylova (Olena), Olena Khokhlatkina (Mother), Myroslav Makoviychuk (Father), Ivan Sharan (Brother)

## Cinematography

Nikita Kuzmenko

## Sound

Serhiy Stepansky

## Sound mix

Matthieu Deniau

## Production Design

Ivan Mykhailov

## Editing

Nikodem Chabior

## Music

«Laetitia Pansanel-Garric»



## Biography & filmography

# Dmytro Sukholytkyy-Sobchuk

**Director and screenwriter**

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Dmytro Sukholytkyy-Sobchuk is a Ukrainian author and filmmaker, graduated from the Kyiv National I.K. Karpenko-Kary Theatre, Cinema and Television University. Participant of the Berlinale Talents, Locarno Film Academy, he is the founder of the script platform Terrarium. He was first noticed with his short film *Weightlifter*, a EFA contender, winner of the Best Short Film Award in Angers. His first feature, *Pamfir*, was supported by TorinoFilmLab, MIDPOINT and Cannes' Cinéfondation.



### **Pamfir, 2022**

Feature - Cannes, Directors' Fortnight

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### **Weightlifter, 2018**

Short

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### **Intersection, 2015**

Short

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### **Krasna Malanka, 2013**

TV Documentary

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### **The Beard, 2012**

Short

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### **Adolescence, 2008**

Short

# Interview with Dmytro Sukholytkyy-Sobchuk

## What's the origin of *Pamfir*?

The script of *Pamfir* is the result of a professional evolution. My graduation film, *Krasna Malanka*, followed those who were preparing the *Malanka* carnival. Later, I made a short documentary film, *Intersection*, in co-production with Romania. These two films were shot in a border area between Ukraine and Romania. Many things continue to be «abnormal» there. In particular, the practice of smuggling, about which I collected many testimonies off-camera, during conversations with the young and not so young men who are involved into smuggling.

Through *Pamfir's* story, I wanted to raise the issue of Ukrainian emigration and the chasm that separates Ukraine with the European

Union. However, at the same time, I wanted to tell the story of an ordinary man reduced to despair. A man who, in trying to preserve his ideal world, transgresses a whole series of ethical norms and human laws to offer a better future to his son – at all costs. It is a story of an honest man who becomes a beast. But it is also a story about love that can be gentle and cruel at the same time.

## Would you compare your film to a Greek tragedy against the backdrop of Ukrainian back country?

*Pamfir* is a drama that replays the biblical myth of Abraham according to the canons of Greek tragedy against the background of the famous Ukrainian carnival of *Malanka*. It is driven by six main characters.

*Pamfir* is the central figure. He is the one who starts the chain of events. Moreover, the story focuses primarily on *Pamfir's* relationship to his wife Olena and his son Nazar as well as his relationship to his mother and his brother Viktor. And, above all, his conflict with his father. Like in a detective story, each scene reveals reasons for this conflict and unravels the intertwined family relationships. The smuggling business is the backdrop of the events framed by village life and the *Malanka* carnival.

For me, reproducing a singular reality on screen is of utmost importance. My task as a director is to make a film built on actions, with a minimum of dialogue, based on a universal story, understandable and moving for the spectator of any country. It is about embodying the psychology of complex and multiple characters, with paradoxical acts and situations.

## Can you tell us more about *Malanka* and why you chose to include it in the film?

*Malanka* is a traditional Ukrainian holiday. They also call it carnival or bacchanalia. It's an ancient holiday that goes deep into the carnival culture described by Rabelais. Each participant tries on a special mask, a different social role. In Western Ukraine, we celebrate *Malanka* throughout the night of January 13th. In some villages *Malanka* is either one of the carnival characters, or the carnival itself. It enters every house in a village. People perform a scene or sing carols. They drink, they wander, they dance. It culminates in a huge party: either celebration or stage combat. In many villages they measure a year between the *Malanka* holiday, not even New Year or Christmas. Preparation takes a lot of time. Everyone picks a costume according to his or her projection. This is where the whole thing becomes interesting for me, because everyone picks a costume which reflects their vision of themselves, and this choice is deliberate. *Malanka* is traditionally associated with death, but after death comes resurrection. The cult itself is based not only on pagan but also on Christian patterns. But what interests me the most is this release of energy, both collective and individual. I had traveled for several years and met a lot of people while shooting my documentary *Krasna Malanka*. I wanted to reflect on that experience in a fiction film. This is why *Malanka* has become a key factor, a starting point in the hierarchy of border villages' communities which follow this tradition. While we observe Victor or Nazar choosing their roles, we understand that something is happening. My goal is to lead the audience as a silent observer.





**The film takes place in the multiethnic region of Chernivtsi where you come from. Can you explain the specificity of this area?**

Chernivtsi region is an intersection of all cultures that one can only find in a border area. Romanians, Jews, Moldovans, Armenians and many other nationalities live there. It is a kind of melting pot. It is typical of border areas: mixing of cultures, intersection of nationalities, religious dualism. It is common for mountain regions: people believe in God and in the Trinitarian church, and on the other hand, they follow pagan rites and visit fortune tellers. This dualism was embedded in my routine when I was a kid: when I was sick, they took me not only to a doctor, but also to a fortune teller. It

had a huge impact on my personality, as well as on the choice of my film's subject and setting and main character's origin.

**The film itself is also intersecting different genres. There are some elements from western and film noir. What were your references?**

With the DOP, we didn't have one single reference. I just asked him to look at Caravaggio's paintings and keep them in mind. I also told him to be bold with colors. We had our own color concept. *Pamfir* is a family story: it is multi-colored, extremely warm and rich. While writing the script, I incorporated certain genre elements. For example, the character's comeback to a place he hasn't seen for a long time

and where he doesn't belong anymore is a classic element of western. I saw the genres mixing up, but since I wasn't afraid to experiment with them, I had no limits. I used this labyrinth of genres both in the script and on the screen to focus on meaning rather than on form. While working on the visual part, I realized that I needed to create a mythology, and it can be created with the help of genres. Mixing genres was an interesting search, and I didn't want to stick to any references. Nevertheless, I can mention some analogies. *Malanka* is an analogy of Bruegel's Landscape with the Fall of Icarus, which is actually an illustration of the proverb 'No plough stops for the dying man'. In the foreground, we can see the continuity of life, while in the background we observe a tragedy, but it becomes secondary in this cycle.

**How did you work with your DOP Nikita Kuzmenko?**

I had already known Nikita for a while. We had made a student film together. He loves the Carpathians, too, and he has already worked there. We launched the work after a long development period. The main task was to follow a character, like in a tunnel or a labyrinth, to make all the way through with him, without any stop. The camera's movement had to reflect a character's life rhythm. We rehearsed in the Carpathians for 8 weeks. While choosing locations, we were looking for as many angles, turns, corners and doors as possible.

Nikita is a virtuoso. He pursued and led his work to perfection as a Japanese calligrapher.

We were seeking for absolute interconnection. Once we achieved that, it was possible to refine the material and search for intonations.

### **How did you cast the actors and how did you work with them on the set ?**

We looked for *Pamfir* for two years. I met Oleksandr Yatsentyuk, and he turned out to be very thoughtful and rigorous. I am glad that he agreed to participate in such a long marathon. When I asked him to gain weight, he had only 2 questions: how much weight and how much time. Most of the actors are from Western Ukraine. It was easier for them to speak the dialect. Nevertheless, Olena Khokhlatkina (*Pamfir's Mother*) is from Eastern Ukraine. I asked her to learn the dialect. Even though she doesn't speak much in the film, she had been preparing much more than other cast.

While looking for Nazar (*Pamfir's son*), we held a casting session at an improvised camp: boys played together, gave nicknames to

each other and improvised different situations. For Oleksandr Yatsentyuk (*Pamfir*), as well as for Solomiya Kyrylova (Olena), *Pamfir* is a full-length debut. The same goes for Stanislav Potiak (Nazar), but he is a non-professional actor.

I established my own method of working with actors. In my short film, *Weightlifter*, I did rehearsals for more than four months with weightlifters and their partners. None of them were actors. The whole film relies on non-professionals. For me, two things are highly important for working with actors: improvisation and provocation. These are the two key stages that the performers of a film go through.

### **Editing is also an important part of your process.**

My idea was that the editor would just read the script and then get the material after shooting. We actually were editing 2 films at

the same time, each of us had his own version. I set a task not to delete a single frame. We were editing during the Covid pandemic, and each of us has built his own story. We met after the lockdown and started working at the third "birth" of the film. The biggest challenge was the way to enter and to exit each scene. The energy we keep from the previous scene is important to start the next one. We did our best to keep the unity of multi-genre tragedy. Nikodem was looking for solutions extremely accurately. I knew the material well, but he knew it by heart. We creatively experimented a lot together.

### **You've been working on *Pamfir* for many years, but how do you feel about releasing your first feature set in a border village, while Ukraine is defending its borders?**

I believe that during the last 30 years of Ukrainian independence, we acquired the aspirations of previous generations: we want

to separate ourselves from imperial Soviet influence. We aspire to join the large democratic community of the EU. Since 2014, this desire to be separated as much as possible from any Russian presence is becoming more and more obvious.

*Pamfir* is a father who wishes the best to his sibling and does everything possible and impossible to achieve that. He actually sacrifices himself and his beliefs to make his son live a better life. The more we reflect on who we are and why we are on this path of war, the more we will realize that the basics of this fight for freedom were laid not over the last 10 or 30 years, but over centuries. It seems to me that *Pamfir* is a typical Ukrainian who fights for his future having had a difficult past. Ukraine is his absolute identification. His appearance is actually a modernized look of a Zaporozhian Cossack.

### **You work in both narrative and documentary. What's next?**

With the war raging in Ukraine, I can only make plans for 3-5 days ahead. Things can change in a second: an explosion might happen just nearby, even in a place that seems secure. I want to be with my country. Since the 24th February, I left Ukraine for a few days only to finish the post-production. It is important for me to be here now. I understand that a film director's work is not as powerful as, for example, the know-how in tactical battle. But still, I think that if all Ukrainian artists killed by the Soviet regime in the 20th century had survived, they would have set a new vector for our identity. This is why I think it is important to document what is happening right now. And I'm doing it. I don't know what will happen next. I have faith in our victory. For my part, I do everything I can to help my country.





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