

Official Selection

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MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE  
D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA  
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2019  
Official Selection

# Atlantis

A FILM BY VALENTYN VASYANOVYCH

# Atlantis

written & directed by Valentyn Vasyanovych

2019 - Ukraine - 108 mn - Color - 1:2.39 - 5.1 - Ukrainian

## SCREENINGS IN VENICE

TUE. 3, 8:00 PM SALA VOLPI (P&I)

TUE. 3, 10:00 PM SALA CASINO (P&I)

WED. 4, 2:00 PM SALA DARSENA (WORLD PREMIERE)

THU. 5, 1:15 PM PALABIENNALE

## SCREENINGS IN TORONTO

FRI. 6, 3:00 PM SCOTIABANK 7 (P&I)

MON. 9, 6:00 PM JACKMAN HALL (PUBLIC)

WED. 11, 5:45 PM SCOTIABANK 7 (P&I)

WED. 11, 6:15 PM TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX 4 (PUBLIC)

FRI. 13, 9:15 PM SCOTIABANK 10 (PUBLIC)

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# Synopsis

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THE NEW FILM BY THE ARTISTIC TEAM BEHIND THE 2014 HIT 'THE TRIBE'

Eastern Ukraine, in the nearest future. A desert unsuitable for human habitation. Sergiy, a former soldier suffering from PTSD, is having trouble adapting to his new reality: a life in pieces, a land in ruins. When the smelter he works at finally shuts down, he finds an unexpected way to cope joining the volunteer Black Tulip mission dedicated to exhuming war corpses. By working alongside Katya, he understands that a better future is possible. Will he learn to live without war and accept himself as he is?



# interview with Valentyn Vasyanovych

## What was the starting point for the film?

By 2017, the conflict with Russia in the Ukrainian territory had lasted for almost three years. My colleagues had shot several feature films about the conflict, mostly genre pieces. I also understood that this war was the most relevant topic and I that I had to film it. When I started writing the script, I realized that I could not distance myself from the traditional dramatic structures. Nor from the set of characters with the protagonist being a friend and the antagonist being the enemy. My film turned out to be a standard military drama, no different to the films that have already been made.

At some point, I came across information about the catastrophic deterioration of the

water quality in the occupied territories; Predictions indicated that this crisis would eventually become an irreversible disaster for the entire eastern region. This problem was mainly due to the large number of waste mines: the water from the shafts was not pumped out properly, thus resulting in increased mineralization of the ground waters. The situation was destined to deteriorate every year, and over time the territory become an uninhabitable desert. Worst of all, this change was irreversible, no way to fix it.

With that in mind, I came up with the idea to shift the story to the near future, to 2025, portraying the results of the war. I wanted to show the end of metallurgical plants,

the minefields, the unemployed people, the environmental catastrophe. Despite this dark context, I also wanted a way out for the protagonist, a person that has lost everything in this war. I wanted to understand what kept him going in this dead territory.

## Your main actor is quite amazing, how did you find him and work with him?

The decision to work with people who had active military experience was evident. I hoped that they would share their unique experiences, which I didn't have, making the film more authentic and understandable. I believe we achieved that!

When I met the lead actor, Andriy Rymaruk, he had returned from the war and worked

at the Come Back Alive Foundation. He often revisited combat zones on foundation missions and sometimes helped my co-producer Vladimir Yatsenko scout locations. I saw his face in photos and invited him to audition. Andriy did a really great job with the part, as well as did Liudmyla Bilek (leading actress) and Vasyl Antoniuk.

## Is the Black Tulip Mission based on true mission?

Yes, there is indeed a humanitarian mission that is committed to detecting and the exhumation of dead soldiers on both sides. We were in close contact with them and they participated in our film. We've discussed all aspects of the film with this mission to insure the film's credibility. I am very grateful



for their help in our production. They were so impressed with the models of soldiers' corpses which our artists produced that we donated the models to them for educational purposes.

We've also cast real forensic experts for the roles of forensic experts in the film.

**The cinematography of your film is very original, why did you choose to work in this way?**

I started to use the technique of long single-frame scenes gradually, while I was working on documentaries. I have always been fascinated by long takes of a heroes' journey and how I can use these shots to tell a complete story in a unique structure. I believe this storytelling is best developed through just one sequence. I especially appreciate this style in documentary filmmaking.

In features, I have more freedom and can simulate reality, as I see it. Restricting the

camera movement and editing, on one hand, sets limitations, but, on the other hand, it almost always offers solutions that yield stronger uncut emotion, hypnotizing the audience with the actions taking place in the frame. The audience becomes an accomplice, completely immersed in the situation with the characters on the screen

**The encounter with Katya is the starting point for better hope, is the film also a love story?**

Yes, it is. Meeting Katya is the only hope for our main character's survival. His only hope for self-acceptance and the catalyst for fighting for his life. Unfortunately, a friend of the main character who committed suicide didn't have such luck.

It is a well-known fact that a high percentage of people with a war-related post-traumatic syndrome end their lives with suicide. Meeting

Katya re-structures the life of our hero filling it with meaning. Their shared commitment to the Black Tulip mission brings them together and leads to love, which is - in this case - the only way out of their situation. It is also a story about the fragile world that is often destroyed by men and then revived by women.

**You were editor, DOP & producer on The Tribe by Myroslav Slaboshpytskiy, did you work with the same artistic crew? How does it feel to pass to different role? Did you edit and shoot the film by yourself as well?**

I have always worked with the same team, Vladlen Odudenko as artistic director and Serhiy Stepansky as a sound director. They are my friends and the best professionals in Ukraine.

Combining the director, DOP, and editor's roles, is seamless for me as they perfectly

coexist within me and complement each other. There's no need to have conversations with people trying to explain things to them that I often don't understand myself. I maintain an inner dialogue and then I take the camera and find the optimal point and solution to the scene. It's so much faster to work this way. And during the editing, I have an opportunity to see my mistakes, analyse them and gain valuable experience that will be useful for me in my next films.





# Bio-filmography Of The Director

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Valentyn Vasyanovych is a Ukrainian director, producer and DOP. He was born in 1971 in Zhytomyr, Ukraine and graduated from The National University of theatre, cinema and television of Karpenko-Kary as cinematographer (1995) and documentary filmmaker (2000), as well as from The Wajda School in Poland (2007).

In 2004, he gained recognition as a documentary filmmaker - his short documentary 'AGAINST THE SUN' received the Jury Prize at Clermont-Ferrand IFF, the Grand Prix at Nancy FF, mention of the jury at the Toronto IFF and several other awards.

His full-length documentary 'PRYSMERK' was awarded Special Mention at Docudays FF in Kiev and received the Golden Duke as the best Ukrainian film at Odesa IFF in 2015.

In 2012, he made his debut feature 'BUSINESS AS USUAL' (Odessa IFF, Special Jury Mention, FICC award). His second feature film KREDENS film received the FIPRESCI prize at Odesa IFF and went on to be long-listed for the Academy Awards 2018.

In 2014, Valentyn Vasyanovych worked as a producer and DOP on Myroslav Slaboshpytskiy's 'THE TRIBE', which became the biggest international success of Ukrainian film, winning the Grand Prize at Cannes' Critics week and more than 40 other prizes around the globe.



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# Cast

Sergiy - Andriy Rymaruk

Kate - Liudmyla Bileka

Ivan - Vasyl Antoniak

# Crew

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Written and directed by Valentyn Vasyanovych

Director of Photography - Valentyn Vasyanovych

Production Design - Vladlen Odudenko

Sound Design - Serhiy Stepansky

Editor - Valentyn Vasyanovych

Producers - Iya Myslytska, Valentyn Vasyanovych, Vladimir Yatsenko

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A man wearing a black beanie and a black jacket stands in the rain next to a white truck. The truck's hood is open, and the man is talking on a mobile phone. The number '200' is printed on the back of the truck's cargo box. The scene is set on a dirt road in a rural, overcast area with some buildings in the background.

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