

# POVODYR (THE GUIDE)

Ukraine, 2014, historical drama, 122 min

## Ukraine's Official Entry for the 87<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards

This autumn the most awaited Ukrainian film has finally hit the screen. From 2004 Oscar contender director Oles Sanin and the best Ukrainian DoP Sergiy Mykhalchuk comes a powerful and beautiful story of human courage in the face of the hardest times of Ukrainian history — bloody Soviet 1930s. Celebrated for its visual and acting excellence at Odessa Film Festival, THE GUIDE is official selection of Palm Springs, Warsaw, Cottbus, India, Kyoto, Bari and other IFFs.

Stars: Jeff Burrell (*Nymphomaniac: Vol. I*, *The Ghost Writer*, *Pandorum*), Stanislav Boklan (*Match*), Oleksandr Kobzar (*The Second Front*), Anton Greene, Iryna Sanina, Jamala (*special debut*)

### CREW

Director: Oles Sanin

Producers: Maxim Asadchiy, Igor Savychenko, Oles Sanin

Screenplay: Oles Sanin, Oleksandr Irvanets, Iren Rozdobudko, Paul Wolansky

Cinematography: Sergiy Mykhalchuk

Music: Alla Zagaykevych

### FESTIVALS

2014 / JUL / UKRAINE / Odessa – **Best Actor, Jury Diploma for Cinematography**

2014 / OCT / POLAND / Warsaw (class A)

2014 / OCT / POLAND / Tofifest

2014 / NOV / INDIA / Goa (class A)

2014 / NOV / GERMANY / Cottbus

2014 / DEC / JAPAN / Kyoto

2015 / JAN / USA / Palm Springs

2015 / MAR / ITALY / Bari

### WEB

Official site: <http://povodyr.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/theguidemovie>

IMDb: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3037582/>

### TECHNICAL FEATURES

Languages: Ukrainian, English, Russian (English subtitles)

Length: 122 min 28 sec

Screening format: DCP, Dolby Digital

Aspect ratio: 2.35:1

## PRODUCTION

Pronto Film / office 1, 10A, Naberezhno-Khreschatitska street / Kyiv, 04070, Ukraine  
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## DISTRIBUTION

Amadeus Entertainment  
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## SYNOPSIS

### *One line:*

This film tells the story of an American boy in Ukraine and a blind Kobzar, whom fate brings together during the early 1930's, a dramatic period of rapid industrialization, genocide and slaughter.

### *Medium:*

Ukraine, 1930s. American engineer Michael Shamrock (Jeff Burrell) arrives in Kharkiv with his ten-year old son, Peter (Anton Greene) to help "build socialism". He falls in love with an actress Olga (Jamala) who has another admirer, Communist Commissar Vladimir. Under tragic circumstances, the American is killed and his son is saved from his pursuers by a blind "Kobzar" (Stanislav Boklan). With no other chance to survive in a foreign land, the boy becomes his guide. Their journey, full of dangerous adventures, unfolds against the background of one of the most dramatic pages of Ukrainian history and human destruction. The film about love, loyalty, betrayal and infamy is based on true events.

## TRIVIA

- Main film character had to be played by Jack Palance, who was of Ukrainian ancestry and could speak Ukrainian. Palance died in 2006, at the stage of film development.
- Many kobzars in film are played by real blind people from all over Ukraine. For example, scene of fighting between blind minstrel and NKVD officers was played by Paralympics judo prize-winner Ihor Zasyadkovych. Specifically for the film, Zasyadkovych together with stunts crew restored the 'crutch' - art of self-defense, that was used by blind minstrels in olden times.
- American boy, who flees from NKVD and becomes the guide of Ivan Kocherga is played by Anton Sviatoslav Green from Ann Arbor, Michigan, whose great-grandfather Mykhailo Soroka was political prisoner of Soviet labor camp. His americanized Ukrainian language was ideal fit for the role of son of American engineer.
- Oles Sanin is a kobzar himself. He got some ideas for this film, while serving as a guide for blind minstrel. At some period of his life he made his living with making musical instruments.

- For the scene of pulling the boy to the running train, special train car was created. System of cables allowed to drag him inside the train without the risk of falling under the wheels.
- Specifically for the film, Jamala learned to sing 1930s jazz. Original historical microphones were used for the shooting.
- To recreate Soviet newsreel dedicated to the production of 1st Soviet tractor, Oles Sanin used original Parvo Debrise camera. Such camera was used by Dziga Vertov for his famous *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929).
- Real first tractor of Kharkiv Tractor Plant, that served as a monument before, was renovated and used for shooting.

## PRESS

**About Oles Sanin's "Mamay" (2003):** this year's Ukrainian submission for Best Foreign Language Oscar, is comparatively quite rich and strange for the category. Still, this ravishing looking debut for shorts-and-docu helmer Oles Sanin, here tipping an ornate headdress to the region's poetic film tradition pioneered by Sergei Parajanov ("*The Color of Pomegranates*"), could be a winner for more adventurous fests and rep houses. ... Sanin's direction is stately and unhurried, and shows no trace of creative influence from his day job making TV docus for foreign broadcast companies. Such work has, however, given him an obvious eye for native culture and skill with the many non-pros who pepper the cast. ... Stunning lensing ... witchy splendor of exotic costumes ... Score by Alla Zagaykevich is hypnotic ... (Leslie Felperin, [Variety](#))

**"The Guide"** tells the story of a blind folk musician and an American boy on the run in 1930s Soviet Union. (Leo Barraclough, [Variety](#))

**About Odessa IFF:** On the home front, the splashiest entry was probably *The Guide*, a big-budget epic set in 1930s Soviet Ukraine, during a time of forced collectivisation, a famine and the mass execution of intellectuals. (Peter Culshaw, [The Guardian](#))

*The Guide* of Oles Sanin is a national epic of the purest water. (Bert Rebhandl, [Der Standard](#))

Ukraine's nomination for best foreign-language Oscar, Oles Sanin's *The Guide*, is an emotionally patriotic film set in the 1930s but reflecting more contemporary concerns. Built around the story of a boy who witnesses the murder of his American engineer father (played by U.S. actor Jeff Burrell) by Stalin's secret police, the film is set against the background of the suppression of rural "kulaks" — wealthy farmers — and the Soviet-engineered famine that left as many as 10 million peasants dead from starvation. (Nick Holdsworth, [Hollywood Reporter](#))

... clearly been tailored with at least one eye on the Academy. ... persuasively incarnated by stage-experienced Boklan, Ivan displays almost supernatural (or even divine) attributes, exuding a rugged, craggy toughness that recalls some of Rutger Hauer's recent roles. ... cinematographer Serhii Mykhalchuk to show off Ukraine's magnificent terrain to considerable effect — in steely, color-leached tones via 2.35:1 widescreen — during a film that strenuously seeks to evoke and celebrate the soul of this long-beleaguered nation. This soul takes human form in the blind kobzars, ragged wanderers half-Jedi and half-Hobbit, whose "religious and

spiritual songs" and bardic-oral traditions are suddenly out of place in a rapidly-industrializing Soviet Union. ... chillingly spectacular conclusion ... undeniable punch ... nakedly emotive song. (Neil Young, [Hollywood Reporter](#))

OLES SANIN  
Director / Screenwriter

Oles Sanin was born on July 30, 1972 in Kamyn-Kashurskiy. He graduated from the Kyiv National Karpenko-Karyi University of Dramatic Art in 1993 as an actor, and again in 1998 with a degree in feature film directing.

Mr. Sanin has worked for INTERNEWS Ukraine, both as a director, and as the head of the department of features and documentaries. He also has been a director at the Dovzhenko National Film Studio and the Ukrknokhronika film studio. He is currently the head of the Young Cinematographers Association, a part of the National Association of Ukrainian Cinematographers. He has produced dozens of documentary films for Internews Network, Canal+, Channel 1+1, NTV, TNT, POLSAT, DALAS studio, IKON, PRO Helvecia and others. He has been the director/producer of several documentary films, and the director of a chain of documentary and live-action short films.

Oles Sanin received the Alexander Dovzhenko State Award of Ukraine for the film "Mamay" (2003), and won the Silver Medal of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts, and the Brothers Lumières' Silver Medal. "Mamay" was Ukraine's official entry for the Academy Awards nomination in the best foreign language film category in 2004.

He plays bandura, turban, and wheel lyre, and he carries on the Volyn region lyrist tradition. He makes musical instruments, having inherited this handicraft from his grandfather. He is a member of the Kyiv Kobzarship under the pseudonym Oles Smyk.

[Cinema Without Borders interview](#)

[Screen Daily interview](#)

## FILMOGRAPHY

### Feature films

2014 – The Guide (director, script author)  
2003 – Mamay (director, script author, actor)  
1995 – Atentat – The Last Murder in Munich (actor)

### Documentary films

2007 – Deserter Biennials (in co-authorship with Mark Harrison)  
2005 – The Seventh Day  
2001 – Aquarelle  
2000 – Christmas, or How the Hutsuls Were Waiting for the End of the World  
1999 – Sin  
1999 – Nation. Jews  
1999 – Nation. Lemky

1998 – Walrus Dance (in co-authorship)

1996 – Desert

1995 – Zymno

1994 – Storm

1994 – Mother Hope