

ANIMALS IN WAR

Original title: Війна Очима Тварин/ Viina Ochyma Tvaryn

Feature Film, Anthology

Ukraine | Drama / Melodrama

2025

LOGLINE

Incredible rescue stories.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Animals in War is a feature film consisting of seven incredible rescue stories united by kindness and hope. The film tells about ordinary Ukrainians who never abandon their own and are always ready to help.

From the touching story of a boy escaping an occupied village together with a cow, to an underwater fairy tale unfolding against a sea destroyed by war, to the journey of a young man from Kyiv and his cat, each story offers a separate human perspective on war, responsibility, and compassion.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Animals in War is a feature anthology film created by Ukrainian filmmakers in response to Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine. The film consists of seven independent novellas. The stories do not intersect narratively, yet they are united by a shared emotional and ethical space.

Each novella focuses on an animal and the people whose lives become connected to it under the pressure of war. War is portrayed not as spectacle, but as a humanitarian and ecological catastrophe that destroys lives, nature, and inner stability. Alongside devastation, the film reveals tenderness, moral choice, and responsibility for those who depend on us.

Children forced to grow up overnight, adults living with loss, people under occupation making impossible decisions all encounter animals that become witnesses, companions, and sometimes the only reason to survive. Blending realism with poetic imagery, and at times approaching allegory and fairy tale, *Animals in War* shows how compassion remains possible even in the darkest circumstances.

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT

Work on *Animals in War* began in early 2022. The first novellas featuring a white rabbit, a wolf, and a cow were filmed by the end of the same year.

In February 2023, on the anniversary of the beginning of the full scale invasion, the first teaser created from three completed stories was presented at the Berlin International Film Festival.

In May 2023, during the 76th Cannes Film Festival, the project unveiled its first official poster and trailer. At that stage, Academy Award winner Sean Penn joined the film, followed later by the internationally renowned band Imagine Dragons, whose hit song became the soundtrack of *Animals in War*.

The segment starring Sean Penn was filmed in autumn 2023 at Evergreen Studios in Los Angeles and was written and directed by Myroslav Slaboshpytskyi.

FESTIVAL HISTORY AND RELEASE

World Premiere: Tribeca Festival, New York, USA

Ukrainian Premiere: Odesa International Film Festival, Closing Film

National theatrical release in Ukraine: November 6

Other Festivals: *El Gouna Film Festival (Egypt)*, *Seoul Animal Film Festival*, *Planet ON (Bogotha)*, *15th Devour! The Food Film Fest (Canada)*, *Hollywood Park Festival*, *Ukraina! Festiwal Filmowy (Warsaw)*.

ANTHOLOGY SEGMENTS

EAGLE

Story:

The recording of rare bird sounds in a national nature reserve, undertaken by a young sound engineer on assignment from a foreign producer, is interrupted by the sudden outbreak of war.

Writer and Director: Myroslav Slaboshpytskyi

Cinematographers: Byron Werner, Serhii Stetsenko

Cast: Sean Penn, Denys Kapustin

Director's quote:

"My participation in this film is a great honor. Working with Sean Penn, an outstanding actor and one of Ukraine's greatest friends, is deeply meaningful. His support is invaluable and cannot be overestimated."

COW IN THE FOG

Story:

Twelve year old Romchyk miraculously escapes an occupied village. Hunger, cold, fear, and despair lie ahead, but the hardest test will be the test of humanity.

Writer and Director: Yuliia Shashkova

Cinematographer: Yurii Hruzynov

Cast: Artem Chernii, cow Milka

Director's quote:

"We are filming a story about love, unity, and humanity that saves lives. The happy ending here is abstract, something everyone hopes for and believes in."

RABBIT: THERE AND BACK AGAIN

Story:

Neither the white fluffy rabbit nor its young owner could have imagined how radically their lives would change the next morning. That morning, the war began.

Writer and Director: Maksym Tuzov

Cinematographer: Lev Kostenko

Cast: Mykhailo Matiukhin, Oleksandr Pecherytsia, Daria Derzhun, rabbits Kanna and Oscar

Director's quote:

"This story is partly autobiographical. Everything at the beginning really happened to me and my rabbit."

SONNY

Story:

When you are left alone with the pain of loss, war no longer seems as frightening. Saving another lonely soul suffering from war becomes a bridge from who you were to who you can still become. But a dog does not always turn out to be a friend.

Writer and Director: Oleksii Mamedov

Cinematographer: Oleksandr Roshchyn

Cast: Maryna Koshkina, Andrii Isaienko, Oleksii Zubkov, dog Kai

Director's quote:

"Our story is about loss and hope. Who truly saves whom, a human or an animal, remains an open question."

Actress Maryna Koshkina:

"Looking at war through the eyes of animals helps us finally understand the value of life, whether human or animal."

UNDERWATER ADVENTURE

Story:

A brave little fish named Apelsynka sets out to rescue her best friend in a vast underwater city destroyed by war.

Writer and Director: Sviatoslav Kostiuk

Cinematographer: Volodymyr Ivanov

Cast: Olha Korotiaieva, Mykhailo Pulianskyi, Polina Haiova

Director's quote:

"Through beauty and imagination, we can create a world that helps children distance themselves from terrifying reality."

TORPEDO

Story:

A picturesque village in northern Ukraine is occupied in the summer of 2022. Each resident must decide how to live next.

Writer and Director: Ivan Sautkin

Cinematographer: Volodymyr Barsuk

Cast: Olha Martynyshyn, Nazar Hladii, goat Yuta

Director's quote:

"Propaganda does not work. Human stories do."

WE ARE ALRIGHT

Story:

One day in the life of a Kyiv resident preparing to leave for safety abroad. The only visible problem is an allergy to a cat. Or is everything really fine?

Writer and Director: Andrii Lidahevskyi

Cinematographer: Oleksandr Roshchyn

Cast: Andrii Lidahevskyi, Daria Marchenko, cat Lilu, cat Rolik

DIRECTORS

Myroslav Slaboshpytskyi

Yuliia Shashkova

Maksym Tuzov

Oleksii Mamedov

Sviatoslav Kostyuk

Ivan Sautkin

Andrii Lidahevskyi

PRODUCERS

Oleh Kokhan

Oleksiy Makukhin

Ihor Dovhal

Svitlana Mashovets

Roman Klimpush

CAST

Sean Penn

Maryna Koshkina

Oleksandr Pecherytsia

Andrii Isaienko

Mykhailo Matiukhin

Daria Marchenko

Olha Korotiaieva

Olha Martynyshyn

Artem Chernii

Polina Haiova

Mykhailo Pulianskyi

Daria Derzhun

Nazar Hladii

and others

PRODUCTION

Production company: Kleos Art

Country: Ukraine, Germany

Language: Ukrainian, English

International title: Animals in War