

World Premiere at Berlinale: Alexander Zolotukhin's feature film, *Brother in Every Inch*



The 72nd Berlin International Film Festival will take place from February 10th until the 16th. The feature film ***BROTHER IN EVERY INCH*** by Russian director **Alexander Zolotukhin** will celebrate its world premiere in the section **Encounters**.

This is the story of the painful separation of twin brothers, whose deep and sincere affection for each other hinders them from attaining their shared dream - becoming air force pilots.

One of the most famous Russian filmmakers, **Alexander Sokurov**, was the creative consultant for this project. He has a fair claim at being Russia's most distinguished living filmmaker. His most significant works include *Russian Ark* (2002), *Father and Son* (2003), and *Faust* (2011), which was honored with the Golden Lion, the highest prize for the best film at the Venice Film Festival.

Alexander Zolotukhin completed Alexander Sokurov's directing course at the University of Kabardino-Balkaria. The international premiere of Alexander Zolotukhin's debut feature film ***A Russian Youth*** took place at the 69th Berlin International Film Festival.

Brother in Every Inch shows how two brothers on the way to their goal – training to be military pilots – have to mature and learn to make decisions on their own.

“People who have dedicated their lives to their calling are brave, intelligent, determined individuals. They sacrifice their peace of mind and prosperity for their dreams. This is a special breed of people, which is most clearly noticeable in the military, in the personalities of those young guys who have chosen a military profession filled with romantic notions. As the son of a military pilot, I know what I am talking about. You don’t become an air cadet by accident. Flying is a cadet’s calling, their childhood dream. Once they have enrolled, these young men enter a period of their lives where they have already taken the first step toward realizing their dream. This is a special kind of brotherly bond that lasts for a lifetime. It’s always interesting to observe fundamentally good people. What are their personalities like? How do they cope with setbacks? What do they talk about? What do they think about? Screenwriters rarely tackle this sort of character because it is hard to find any dramatic conflict in their relationships. But it is often these people who face the most intense internal struggles,

while the contradictions of their natural inclinations are deeply buried. Our aim is to examine how people like this behave in difficult, sometimes life-threatening circumstances. We often see people who are close to each other experience tragedies stemming from hatred, jealousy, and resentment. So how dramatic might the relationship be between two brothers who care deeply for each other and are both training for a dangerous career in the military?” said **Alexander Zolotukhin**.

Twin brothers Andrey and Mitya, the main characters of the film, are cadets at the same military flying school. Despite their contrasting personalities (one of the brothers is strong and stubborn, and the other is calm and level-headed), the brothers have a strong bond.

The brothers are very worried about each other before each flight, and this affects their performance, so Andrey and Mitya are in danger of falling short of their dreams. They understand that they need to try to distance themselves from each other, but it turns out to be incredibly difficult for the twin brothers to do this.

“Before filming, we underwent serious training, including practice flights, stayed at a military base, disassembled and worked out every scene with director Alexander Zolotukhin. He helped and supported us at every stage, and also spoke with Alexander Sokurov, who created the right atmosphere before we went on set. This is our first film, and it will always be the most significant one in our careers,” said actors **Nikolay Zhuravlev and Sergey Zhuravlev**.

Cinematography by **Andrey Naydenov**, who worked on films such as *Dear Comrades!* (directed by Andrei Konchalovsky) and *Euphoria* (directed by Ivan Vyrypaev) and many others.

The film will use Russian and European classical music – gentle and melodic, but also passionate and dynamic – to accentuate the main characters’ relationship and lifestyle.

Encounters appeared at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2020. Encounters is a platform aiming to foster aesthetically and structurally daring works from independent, innovative filmmakers. Its goal is to support new perspectives in cinema and to give more room to diverse narrative and documentary forms in the official selection.

BROTHER IN EVERY INCH (16+)

Year of production: 2022

Genre: Drama

Duration (in minutes): 80.

Production: Proline Film

Country of production: Russia

Produced by Andrey Sigle, Mary Nazari

Directed by Alexander Zolotukhin

Creative consultant: Alexander Sokurov

Screenplay written by Alexander Zolotukhin (in partnership with Mikhail Tyazhev)

Cinematography: Andrey Naydenov

Production design: Elena Zhukova

Edited by Tatyana Kuzmicheva

Main cast: Sergey Zhuravlev, Nikolay Zhuravlev, Mikhail Klabukov, Alexandra Shevyreva, Egor Kutushov.

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SYNOPSIS

Our days. Two brothers training to be military pilots. They have a strong bond and are always together. The two of them have one dream - to conquer the sky. But their close relationship hampers their training, and the brothers begin to make mistakes in the air. They find themselves facing the choice of continuing to live one life for two or letting each other go. The choice is complicated by the fact that the brothers are twins and it is extremely painful to be apart.

Director

Alexander Zolotukhin



Alexander Zolotukhin was born on September 7th, 1988 in the city of Zaporozhye in the Ukrainian SSR.

He is familiar with the air force, as he was born in the family of a military pilot and spent his whole childhood "near the runway."

Alexander completed Alexander Sokurov's directing course at the University of Kabardino-Balkaria. The international premiere of Alexander Zolotukhin's debut feature film *A Russian Youth* took place at the 69th Berlin Film Festival.

The film was first shown to Russian viewers at the 30th Kinotaur, where it was awarded the Diploma of the Guild of Russian Film Experts and Critics. *A Russian Youth* was named Best Film in the Forward Future program at the International Film Festival in Beijing. The film won three foreign film awards at the Fajr Film Festival in Tehran: the Grand Prix for Best Debut, Circle Award 2019 for Best Film, and Film Critics' Award.

Alexander Zolotukhin's Movies

2022 *Brother in Every Inch*

2019 *A Russian Youth*

2017 *My Friend 's Life* (short film)

2015 *Forests of Babylon* (short film)

Director Q+A

Why did you decide to make this film?

I graduated from Alexander Sokurov's filmmaking course. During this course, the Professor would often repeat that one should try to tell a story about relationships between human beings, a theme close to any person any time. You need to try to show the originality of the characters of the people around you. After all, the more people learn about each other through cinema, the better they will understand each other. Our course was located in the Caucasus - in a region about which I knew very little. Through cinema, we talked about the people who live there and about the feelings they experience. But the gaps in understanding people's characters are not limited to geography, there are many closed communities about which little is known. For example, the armed forces. In the film "Brother in Every inch", I wanted to consider how male characters manifest themselves in the extreme circumstances of flight training.

What was your inspiration for writing the script?

My father served as a military pilot and so I spent my childhood on military aviation bases. We lived in Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan - everywhere we lived was in remote military towns closed off to other people. For example, in Kazakhstan, the aviation base was located far away in the steppe, there were only a few houses and an airfield in the vicinity. When other children in other cities were playing on playgrounds, I was climbing on old planes. Mom often pointed to a white dot in the sky and said, "Look, your father is flying." Although now I understand that she, of course, could not know who exactly was on a particular plane. I myself dreamed of becoming a pilot as a child, but it soon became clear that for health reasons I was not fit for aviation. Nevertheless, I still have an interest in this topic.

How did you approach the experience of piloting a fighter jet?

I don't have any experience in piloting. Nevertheless, when preparing for the film, it was important for me to understand the nuances of the pilot's behavior during flight. I studied all kinds of manuals, books and videos on flying. At some point in my research, I came upon a video of the flight, shot on a portable camera on YouTube, nothing but a close-up of the pilot in the cockpit. It looked much more interesting than some action scene from a movie about aviation because the most interesting thing is to watch how a professional, in this case a pilot, does his job. No actor can accurately convey this inner state and nuances of plasticity and behavior. For this reason, a real pilot was chosen to play one of the important roles, a role of an instructor pilot, and all flights were filmed in reality, without the use of CGI. Also, the main characters are brothers, and they have undergone special training with a real instructor pilot.

What are the themes of the film you wish to express?

"Brother in every inch" has three topics of interest to me intertwined in it, interacting and complementing each other. I have already mentioned the first one above - this is the topic of aviation, dreams of flying are a topic born of my childhood impressions. The second theme of the film is the relationship of two close people who, with their sincere love and affection, prevent each other from growing and developing independently. We know many stories when the drama in a relationship is born of hatred, enmity or resentment. But how dramatic can a relationship based on sincere affection and care be? The basis of this theme is the traditions of classical European literature, when the drama of the situation is hidden in the internal, emotional relationships of the characters, and not in their external manifestations. The twins' relationship allows this situation to be shown with crystal transparency, and the extreme situation of flight training, which is fraught with risk, can enhance such a relationship. The third important theme of the film follows from the circumstances of military service - the theme of human responsibility before the destructive power of weapons. An airplane is not only a beautiful machine that gives a sense of flight and freedom, it is a powerful weapon carrying terrible ammunition. And a young man who came to aviation for the dream of the sky, should be ready to press the button. This is the duality of military aviation, a kind of twinness and an illustration of the internal relations of twin brothers, in which there is a desire to gain freedom and the destruction of each other's individualities.

What do you find interesting about people that dedicate themselves to military service?

I cannot say that I am interested in the topic of military service in general. These are rather circumstances in which characters can manifest themselves in a certain way. It is more important for me to talk about strong-willed people, about those who set a goal for themselves and go towards it, even when faced with insurmountable obstacles, with circumstances much stronger than the people are. At the same time - about people who can feel and empathize. Aviation is only one of the areas, and not necessarily of the army-related ones, where such people can be found. Nevertheless, any aviation school is one of the rare places where there are no casual visitors. The guys dream of the sky from a young age, strive to master the profession, persistently prepare for admission. Every person has an informed choice behind them.

What drew you to writing characters that are twins?

It all started with the desire to show the affection of the main characters to each other as clearly as possible. So the idea of twin brothers was born. It became interesting and important for me to show the drama of the relationship between two outwardly similar people who are actually separate individuals. Any mother will distinguish each of her twin children. But it is very difficult for an outsider to do this. One of the important tasks that I set myself while working on the film was to make sure that the viewer, at first naturally confused about who is who but who over the course of the film, discovered the individuality of each of the brothers, the uniqueness of his personality and unlike anyone else. This desire to show that every person is unique is the deep humanistic message of the film.

About casting Sergey and Nikolay.

It was clear that the casting would be long and difficult, because among the limited circle of male twins it was necessary to find performers with natural chemistry, the skill of acting and good physical fitness. At the same time, acting experience was not a prerequisite, but rather the opposite - because it was important for us to show the individuality of the characters, the uniqueness of their speech and

plasticity - those things that are often averaged and smoothed out in acting schools. We announced a large-scale open casting, contacted clubs and communities of twins in different cities, searched on social networks, but until the last moment we could not find the right guys. Out of desperation, not knowing where else to look, I randomly typed on the Internet - "twin brother actors" and I came across a note on the website of a small town in the Ural region. It talked about twin brothers who decided to enter the acting school for puppet theater. One of them got accepted, and the second one didn't. The brother who wasn't accepted decided not to study without his brother, he helped him prepare and the next year the brothers enrolled together. It was Nikolai and Sergey Zhuravlev. This story seemed very emotional to me and characterizes the close relationship of these two guys, their affection for each other. Such an emotional connection was very important for me, because later, communicating with the guys, watching them, I realized a lot about the relationship between the twins. And based on this understanding, on the characters of Nikolai and Sergei, I changed something in the script.

About working with aviation specialists and with cinematographer Andrey Naydenov.

Andrey Naydenov is a gifted cinematographer and a wonderful person. We were very lucky to work with him. The visual part of the film was being formed gradually. We started our work by discussing the paintings of the artist Alexander Deineka, who discovered the element of the sky and aviation for painting. His works are flooded with sunlight, energy and dynamism are felt in them. This was very consistent with my childhood impressions of the sky and airplanes, so it served as a starting point for us. Another factor, and a certain reference that influenced the vision of the film was the fact that during his military service my father had an 8mm non-professional camera. He filmed everything that surrounded us and once developed projected the film onto white sheets he had fixed onto the closet, it was his hobby. Looking back, I understand that the topic of aviation is inextricably linked with the visual nature of a documentary 8mm handheld camera for me. The "Brother in every inch" is a digital film but we tried to convey a certain feeling of a filmstrip through the color and breath of the image. Also an important circumstance that influenced the visual style of the film was the understanding that the shooting would take place at the real airfield, during the flights of real cadets. On the one hand, this imposes restrictions, on the other hand, it opens up wide opportunities for obtaining convincing, documentary material. We decided to shoot some episodes with two cameras on non-discrete optics due to the documentary nature of what is happening. It was important for us not to miss the details of the observed events in which young, dynamic people participate. And it was important to convey this dynamic, untrained camera movement. Filming flights became a separate difficult direction of work. It was important for me that everything in flight happened for real, so we immediately abandoned CGI and began to develop a system for attaching portable cameras. At the same time, it was impossible to violate the aerodynamic properties of the aircraft, thereby affecting flight safety. Therefore, our engineer closely interacted with the military. Several secure attachment points on the fuselage were approved, under which special cases were designed and created, where cameras were later placed. This allowed us to shoot a number of amazing shots.

About working with Alexander Sokurov, in his capacity as creative consultant.

Even though I already graduated from Alexander Sokurov's course several years ago, he remains the person to whom we can turn for advice and listen to an opinion on the issue that concerns you. Alexander Nikolaevich has made several films on military topics, he has extensive experience in this field. We talked a lot with him about how to properly interact with the military men and organize a

film set at a secure facility. In addition, at a certain stage we discussed the script, and later I showed him the editing, sound and color correction. I am very grateful to Alexander Nikolaevich for the help and support he provided during the creation of the film and for the influence he had on my professional life. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Sokurov taught me all the skills of a film director I have.

Poster: https://disk.yandex.ru/i/cWAZK5PnP_qE4w

Photos from the set: <https://disk.yandex.ru/d/3-w2v7OVzUgklQ>

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