

Nordic Council Film Prize – 2023

Purpose

The purpose of the Nordic Council prizes is to raise interest in the Nordic cultural community and in environmental co-operation, as well as to recognise outstanding artistic and environmental initiatives. In addition, the prizes seek to raise the profile of Nordic co-operation and increase its visibility.

The prize-winning film

The winner of the prize will be announced on Tuesday 31 October 2023, during the Session of the Nordic Council in Oslo. The prize is awarded to an artistically significant, Nordic-produced full-length feature film with cinema distribution. The film must have had its cinema premiere between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023. The DKK 300,000 prize will be shared equally among the screenwriter, director, and producer, underscoring how film as an art form is brought about by the close collaboration of these three main contributors.

Criteria for nomination

The nominated films must have deep roots in Nordic culture, be of high artistic quality, distinguish themselves by their artistic originality, and combine and elevate the many elements of film into a compelling and holistic work of art.

National and Nordic juries

Each national jury consists of three members appointed by the Nordic Council of Ministers (Ministers for Culture). The members are selected from prominent figures whose work relates analytically and critically to film. Each national jury has a three-year tenure.

The members of the national juries for 2023 are:

Denmark:

Heidi Hilarius-Kalkau Philipsen, Jacob Ludvigsen, Amalie Næsby Fick

Finland:

Mikaela Westerlund, Kalle Kinnunen, Kaisu Isto

Greenland:

Klaus Georg Hansen, Otto Rosing, Inuk Jørgensen

Iceland:

Jóna Finnsdóttir, Guðrún Helga Jónasdóttir, Björn Þór Vilhjálmsson

Norway:

Inger Merete Hobbelstad, Emilio Sanhueza, Anne Gjelsvik

Sweden:

Emma Gray Munthe, Gunnar Bergdahl, Caroline Cowan

The Nordic jury is made up of the heads of each of the national juries.

Previous winners of the Nordic Council Film Prize

The prize was first awarded in 2002, to the Finnish film *Mies vailla menneisyyttä* (*The Man Without a Past*) by Aki Kaurismäki.

Since the prize was made permanent in 2005, it has been awarded on an annual basis. The winners to date are:

2005: *Drabet* (*Manslaughter*), directed by Per Fly, scripted by Kim Leona, Dorte Høgh, Mogens Rukov and Per Fly, and produced by Ib Tardini for Zentropa, Denmark.

2006: *Zozo*, written and directed by Josef Fares and produced by Anna Anthony for Memphis Film, Sweden.

2007: *Kunsten at græde i kor* (*The Art of Crying*), directed by Peter Schønau Fog, written by Bo Hr. Hansen (based on a novel by Erling Jepsen), and produced by Thomas Stenderup for Final Cut, Denmark.

2008: *Du levande* (*You, the Living*), written and directed by Roy Andersson and produced by Pernilla Sandström for Studio 24, Sweden.

2009: *Antichrist*, written and directed by Lars von Trier and produced by Meta Louise Foldager for Zentropa, Denmark.

2010: *Submarino*, written and directed by Thomas Vinterberg, written by Tobias Lindholm, and produced by Morten Kaufmann for Nimbus Film, Denmark.

2011: *Svinalängorna* (*Beyond*), written and directed by Pernilla August, written by Lolita Ray, and produced by Helena Danielsson and Ralf Karlsson for Hepp Film, Sweden.

2012: *Play*, written and directed by Ruben Östlund and produced by Erik Hemmendorff for Plattform Produktion, Sweden.

2013: *Jagten* (*The Hunt*), written and directed by Thomas Vinterberg, written by Tobias Lindholm, and produced by Sisse Graum Jørgensen and Morten Kaufmann for Zentropa, Denmark.

2014: *Hross í oss* (*Of Horses and Men*), written and directed by Benedikt Erlingsson and produced by Friðrik Þór Friðriksson for Hrossabrestur, Iceland.

2015: *Fúsi* (*Virgin Mountain*), written and directed by Dagur Kári and produced by Baltasar Kormákur and Agnes Johansen for RVK Studios, Iceland.

2016: *Louder Than Bombs*, written and directed by Joachim Trier, written by Eskil Vogt, and produced by Thomas Robsahm for Motlys, Norway.

2017: *Little Wing* (*Tyttö nimeltä Varpu*), written and directed by Selma Vilhunen, and produced by Kai Nordberg and Kaarle Aho for Making Movies, Finland



2018: *Woman at War (Kona fer í stríð)*, directed by Benedikt Erlingsson, written by Ólafur Egill Egilsson and Benedikt Erlingsson and produced by Benedikt Erlingsson for Guldrengurinn, Marianne Slot and Carine Leblanc for Slot Machine, Iceland

2019: *Queen of Hearts (Dronningen)*, directed by May el-Toukhy, written by Maren Louise Käehne and May el-Toukhy and produced by Caroline Blanco and René Ezra for Nordisk Film Production, Denmark

2020: *Beware of Children (Barn)*, written and directed by Dag Johan Haugerud, and produced by Yngve Sæther for Motlys, Norway

2021: *Flee (Flugt)*, directed by Jonas Poher Rasmussen, written by Amin and Jonas Poher Rasmussen and produced by Monica Hellström, Charlotte de la Gournerie and Signe Byrge Sørensen for Final Cut for Real, Denmark

2022: *Lamb (Dýrið)*, directed by Valdimar Jóhannsson, written by Valdimar Jóhannsson and Sjón and produced by Hrönn Kristinsdóttir og Sara Nassim for Sena, Iceland

Viften – Denmark

Preamble

The feature film *Empire (Viften)* is nominated for the 2023 Nordic Council Film Prize.

Summary

St. Croix, the Danish West Indies, 1848. Anna Heegaard and Petrine are close friends. Although both are women of colour, their living conditions are very different – Anna is free and owns the enslaved Petrine. Anna shares her life with Danish Governor General Peter von Scholten at her country house, where she manages the home, her fortune, and her beloved and trusted housekeeper Petrine. Things are seemingly fine until rumours of a rebellion begin to swirl. Which side are Anna and Petrine really on, and is it the same one?

Rationale

It is in itself ambitious to make a film about one of the most shamefully under-examined topics in Danish history, namely the Danish slave trade in the West Indies. But it is seriously brave to do it in a playful way that mixes satire with dramatic seriousness in the depiction of the friendship between two black women of different status at St. Croix, leading up to the slave revolt of 1848.

This is what makes *Empire* so unique in Danish film and in a Nordic context. Conceptualist and screenwriter Anna Neye, in partnership with director Frederikke Aspöck, portrays the racist power structures that permeate Danish colonial rule with a sharp and indignant gaze, all packaged in an original aesthetic, with a sensational soundtrack and impressively executed scenography that emphasise the absurdity of the atrocities.

While the vast majority of historical films play it safe, *Empire* boldly breaks free of the templates, which is why a unanimous Danish jury nominates this film for the 2023 Nordic Council Film Prize.

Screenwriter – Anna Neye

Anna Neye (born 1969) is a writer, director, and actor. She studied at the Arts Educational Schools of London and then at the National Film School of Denmark, where she obtained her degree in screenwriting in 2005. Her credits as a screenwriter include the comedy show *Normalerweize* (2004), the series *Tvillingerne & Julemanden* (2013), and the satirical sketch show about Danish colonial history *Fra kolonimagt til kolonihavemagt* (2015). Neye continued with the same theme in the feature film *Empire*, in which she played the title role. The film had its world premiere as part of the competition at the Göteborg International Film Festival where it ran for Best Nordic Film. For IMDB: [CLICK HERE](#) and [HERE](#).

Director – Frederikke Aspöck

Frederikke Aspöck (born 1974) is a seasoned writer, director, and composer. She holds an MFA in filmmaking from Tisch School of the Arts, NYU, and a BA in set design from Wimbledon School of Art in London. Her graduate short film from the Tisch School *Happy Now* (2004) won the Cannes Cinéfondation First Prize. Her feature debut *Out of Bounds* had its world premiere at Cannes' Un Certain Regard in 2011 and won best film in Marrakesh.

Her second feature film *Rosita* received two nominations at the local Robert awards and won best director in Moscow. Her third feature *Out of Tune* (2019) had its world premiere in Rotterdam and was a box office hit in Denmark. *Empire* had its world premiere at the Göteborg Film Festival in 2023. For IMDB: [CLICK HERE](#).

Producer – Meta Louise Foldager Sørensen

Meta Louise Foldager Sørensen (born 1974) is one of Denmark's most prominent independent producers and is CEO of SAM Productions and its sister company Meta Film. She holds a Master of Arts in Film Studies from the University of Copenhagen. Foldager Sørensen has produced, executive-produced, and co-produced more than 60 shorts, feature-length films, and drama series in the last two decades, working with such esteemed directors as Lars von Trier, Nikolaj Arcel, Pernille Fischer Christensen, Mikkel Munch-Fals, Kasper Barfoed, Per Fly, Ali Abbasi, and Björn Runge. Her numerous award-winning films include the Oscar-nominated *A Royal Affair* and *The Wife*, Cannes award-winning film *Melancholia*, and the hit series *Borgen-Power & Glory*, *The Chestnut Man*, and *The Orchestra*. Most recently she has worked on the Netflix series *The Nurse* and the feature film *Empire*. For IMDB: [CLICK HERE](#).

Producer – Nina Leidersdorff

Nina Leidersdorff is a producer, currently working for Copenhagen-based SAM Productions. She holds an MFA in production from the American Film Institute in Los Angeles, and a BA in Film and Media Studies from Copenhagen University. She joined SAM Productions in 2020 after several years in the US where she worked as Head of Development and Production for Primeridian Entertainment. Her feature film credits include Alonso Mayo's multi-award-winning *The Story of Luke* (2012), Ulrich Thomsen's *In Embryo* (2016), and Fredrikke Aspöck's *Empire*. On the television drama side, she produced the Netflix series *The Nurse* (2023). For IMDB: [CLICK HERE](#).

Producer – Pernille Munk Skydsgaard

Pernille Munk Skydsgaard (born 1971) holds a BA in Economics and a Master of Arts Degree in Film and Media Science from Copenhagen University, and has studied at UCLA in the US. For the last 25 years, she has worked in the Danish audiovisual industry, in both the public and private sector, across production, distribution, financing, and festival strategy. Most recently she has served as producer for the production powerhouses Drive Studios (2021-2022), and for the twin companies Meta Film & SAM Productions (2019-2021). Her production credits include YouSee's series *Sunday*, voted Best TV Satire at the Copenhagen TV Festival 2020, the family film *Captain Bimse* by Kirsten Skytte and Thomas Borch Nielsen, and this year's candidate for Best Nordic Film at the Göteborg Film Festival *Empire*. For IMDB: [CLICK HERE](#).



Production information

Original title: *Viften*

International title: *Empire*

Director: Frederikke Aspöck

Screenwriter: Anna Neye

Producers: Pernille Munk Skydsgaard, Nina Leidersdorff, Meta Louise Foldager Sørensen

Production company: Meta Film

Running time: 114 mins

Danish distribution: SF Studios

International sales: REinvent

Links

<https://metafilm.dk/films/empire/>

SoMe-Tags:

@metafilmdk (IG), Meta Film (FB), @nordiskfilmogtvfond (FB/IG) #nordiskfilmogtvfond (IG)



Kupla – Finland

Preamble

The feature film “*Bubble*” (*Kupla*) is nominated for the 2023 Nordic Council Film Prize.

Summary

Eveliina, 16, is an outgoing teenager, with a close group of friends and loving parents. But her world suddenly collapses when she finds out her mother is having an affair with a woman. She tries to stop it at all costs in an effort to get her parents back together. When she realises that she is the glue that holds them together, she forms a plan that has both dramatic and comedic consequences.

Rationale

Bubble is an exceptionally confident, clever, and humorous film about family secrets and growing up into adulthood. Warmth builds out of winter gloom and children become tutors for their parents. The script, written by Reeta Ruotsalainen and director Aleksi Salmenperä, incorporates two generational perspectives, and the film’s understanding of small-town, everyday life in Finland today is fresh, modern, and sharp.

Screenwriter – Reeta Ruotsalainen

Reeta Ruotsalainen (born 1984) graduated from Helsinki’s Aalto University in 2017. Her graduation film *Now That You’re Mine* was nominated at the Terror in the Bay Film Festival for best original screenplay. She was episodic director of Elisa Viihde’s crime series *Arctic Circle S2*, and co-wrote the Netflix/Yle series *Dance Brothers*. *Bubble* is her feature debut. Ruotsalainen is currently writing a new film called *Defiance*.

Director and screenwriter – Aleksi Salmenperä

Aleks Salmenperä (born 1973) is one of the most acclaimed writers and directors in Finland. Since the late 1990s, he has directed more than 20 shorts, films, and series, many of which have premiered at such top international festivals as San Sebastian (*A Man’s Job*, 2007), the Berlinale (*A Bad Family*, 2009), Hot Docs (*Alcan Highway*, 2013), and Göteborg (*The Mine*, 2016). He has won national Jussi awards for best director with *Distractions* (2015) and *Void* (2018) which was also named best film. *Bubble* was nominated for six Jussi awards in 2023 and won best newcomer (Stella Leppikorpi).

Producer – Minna Haapkylä

Minna Haapkylä (born 1973) is an established theatre, film, and television actress and producer, currently Head of Scripted Content for Rabbit Films. Trained at the Theatre Academy in Finland and the French Conservatoire National Supérieur d’Art Dramatique, she has appeared in more than 60 plays, films, and television series and has picked up several Jussi awards including best actress for Jörn Donner’s *The Interrogation* (2009). As a producer, her credits include: MTV/C More series *Mobile 101*; Elisa Viihde’s *Summer of Sorrow*, which won four national television awards including best series; the film *MC Helper BeKINGS*, audience winner at the Jussi Awards 2023; and *Bubble*, for which Stella Leppikorpi won best newcomer at the Jussi Awards. Her upcoming projects include Tiina Lymi’s series *Queen of Fucking Everything*.



Production information

Original title: *Kupla*

International title: *Bubble*

Swedish title: *Bubblan*

Director: Aleksi Salmenperä

Screenwriters: Reeta Ruotsalainen, Aleksi Salmenperä

Producer: Minna Haapkylä

Production company: Rabbit Films

Running time: 103 mins

Finnish distribution: Aurora Studios

International sales The Yellow Affair

SoMe-Tags:

@elokuviin (IG) @aurorastudiosfinland (FB) @nordiskfilmogtvfond (FB/IG)

#nordiskfilmogtvfond (IG)



Alanngut Killinganni – Greenland

Preamble

The feature film *The Edge of the Shadows (Alanngut Killinganni)* is nominated for the 2023 Nordic Council Film Prize. This is the first time that Greenland has entered this prestigious competition.

Summary

It's eight years since six young people were attacked by the mythical Qivittoq in Qaqqat Alanngui. Tuuma is a tourist guide in Nuuk, Greenland and sails people around for sightseeing. While sailing with some tourists, they ask if they could go to the place where the young people were attacked, against Tuuma's will. When they arrive, Tuuma's fears become warranted as the two tourists disappear. Tuuma quickly sails back to Nuuk to get help from the police. But is it a good idea to go back and look for the tourists when the Qivittoqs are roaming the mountains?

Rationale

With his unique ability to build on Inuit stories and mythology, the director of *The Edge of the Shadows (Alanngut Killinganni)* combines modern storytelling techniques with humour and horror from Greenlandic oral storytelling traditions. One of the film's central elements is therefore its use of Greenlandic tales and mythology, which are woven into the story in a natural and authentic way.

Greenlandic landscapes are also a key component in the film, where breath-taking views of the mountains and the sea form a fantastic backdrop for the action. The beautiful landscapes enhance a sense of dread and unease, while adding an extra dimension to the thrilling action.

The film explores important themes related to grief, community, and tradition. This can be seen in the clash between civilizations, between city and country, and between the natural and the mystical, as well as in the respect for nature and history. There are things out there that we don't know about. The film places itself elegantly in the newer tradition of 'Arctic chills' from the high north.

Screenwriter and director – Malik Kleist

Malik Kleist (born in Greenland in 1977) is an editor, writer, director, and producer. He studied film, television, and media production at Medieskolerne in Viborg (2000 to 2004). He has worked as a television technician since 2001 and went into film in 2009 when he started his company Tunit Production, and later Imalik Film. Kleist made his debut as writer and director with the thriller *Qaqqat Alanngui* in 2011. His second feature *Unnuap Taarnerpaaffiani*, which he wrote, directed, produced, edited, sound-designed, and colour-graded, was made in 2014. His third feature and sequel to his debut, *Alanngut Killinganni*, premiered in Greenland in 2022.



Producer – Nina Paninnguaq Skydsbjerg

Nina Paninnguaq Skydsbjerg (born 1985) is a writer, director, producer, line-producer, and founder of the production company PaniNoir in Nuuk, Greenland. The self-taught professional has worked in the creative industries for 13 years and, since 2016, as a producer mainly of Greenlandic features and documentaries. Her production credits include a television series about filmmaking in Greenland *Assiliiviup tunuani*, the comedy feature *Ukiutoqqami Pilluaritsi* by Otto Rosing (2019), and the chiller *The Edge of the Shadow* by Malik Kleist, sequel to his 2011 break-through film. She is currently working as co-director with Sofie Rørdam on the documentary *Walls*, produced by Anorâk Film.

Production information

Original title: Alanngut Killinganni

International title: The Edge of the Shadows

Director: Malik Kleist

Screenwriter: Malik Kleist

Producer: Nina Paninnguaq Skydsbjerg

Production companies: PaniNoir / Imalik Film

Running time: 112 mins

Greenlandic distribution: QaqqatAlanngui

International sales: N/A

SoMe-Tags: @QaqqatAlanngui (FB)



Á ferð með mömmu – Iceland

Preamble

The feature film *Driving Mum* (Á ferð með mömmu) is nominated for the 2023 Nordic Council Film Prize.

Summary

Jón is in his fifties, single and lives with his mother in an isolated and remote farm in the Westfjords of Iceland. The year is 1980 and they make a living by knitting sweaters which they sell to sustain the household. The atmosphere is dull and the only real life on the farm is the half-breed sheepdog. When the mother passes away, Jón's obligation is to honour her last wish and take her body over to Iceland to the fishing village in the south where she grew up and wants to be buried. He dresses her in her finery and fur coat, paints her lips and eyes, and ties her up in the back of their old Ford Cortina. He then heads off, the dog by his side. The odd trio heads south, threading their way along the intimidating roads of the Westfjords and then through the rocky and barren highlands towards the south coast. They come across various obstacles and challenges along the way. It's understood that Jón holds some grudges against his mother, and as the journey proceeds, the past is reflected on step by step. As they get closer to the final destination, Jón's perspective on his life and existence has reached a new meaning and everything is changed forever.

Rationale

In *Driving Mum*, director Hilmar Oddsson makes efficient use of the traditional road movie structure to describe the inner journey of Jón, the film's main character. On this journey, Jón must confront his extremely prosaic past and the life he never lived.

The film being in black and white serves the material well and mirrors Jón's own bleakness as a person, while creating the mood of a fable rather than a perfectly realistic narrative. This mirroring of the main character's inner life and its evolution is strengthened by the images of the landscape through which he drives. Starting out in narrow fjords with tall, jagged mountains and barely passable dirt roads, it passes through black sands and lava fields with little or no vegetation, before gradually broadening to include large vistas of open space and paved highways. This metaphorical process illustrates the gradual opening up of Jón's mind and his growing realisation of all the things that might have been in his life.

Driving Mum is a dark comedy; surreal at times. Since the basics of the external story are extremely simple and clear, the director is free to be quite playful within that frame without the narrative losing steam and he makes excellent and effortless use of this freedom. The narrative remains light and lively despite the serious theme of a life tragically wasted. The sporadic but carefully placed appearances of the circus troupe represent the joy and happiness which disappeared from Jón's life all those years ago and the music emphatically aids in getting all this across.

A seasoned director, Hilmar Oddsson obviously has excellent knowledge of every aspect of the film narrative and succeeds in telling a story of deep human tragedy with warmth and humour, often without words, making beautiful use of visual storytelling, aided by an especially effective musical score.

Screenwriter and director – Hilmar Oddsson

Hilmar Oddsson (born 1957) is a film director, screenwriter, and musician. He graduated in 1986 with a master's in directing from University of Television and Film Munich. Throughout his carrier, Oddsson has written, directed, and produced numerous fiction and documentary films including *No Trace*, twice nominated at the national Edda awards in 1999, and *Cold Light*, winner of three Edda awards including best film in 2004. His latest feature *Driving Mum* had its world premiere at the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival, where it won best film. Oddsson also served as director of the Icelandic Film School between 2010 and 2017.

Producer – Hlín Jóhannesdóttir

Hlín Jóhannesdóttir (born 1973) is currently a producer at Sagafilm, and co-owner of Reykjavik-based Ursus Parvus. She is an anthropology and media graduate of the University of Iceland and has worked in film production since 2000 as associate producer, producer, co-producer, production manager, and line producer on more than 30 films, many produced by Zik Zak Filmworks. Among others, she has produced Rúnar Rúnarsson's multi-award-winning short film *Two Birds* (2008), Sólveig Anspach's *Back Soon* (2008), and Ása Helga Hjörleifsdóttir's *The Swan* (2017). Oddsson's *Driving Mum* had its world premiere at Tallinn's Black Nights Film Festival in 2022, where it won the Grand Prize for best film. Jóhannesdóttir is also the co-founder of and Head of Production at JONAA.org. In addition, she serves as Head of Production at the Icelandic Film School and has been chair of the Icelandic Film & TV Academy since 2016.

Production information

Original title: *Á ferð með mömmu*
International title: *Driving Mum*
Director: Hilmar Oddsson
Screenwriter: Hilmar Oddsson
Producer: Hlín Jóhannesdóttir
Production company: Ursus Parvus
Running time: 114 mins
Icelandic distribution: Sena
International sales: Alief

SoMe-Tags:

@nordiskfilmogtvfond (FB/IG) #nordiskfilmogtvfond (IG)



War Sailor (Krigsseileren) – Norway

Preamble

The feature film *War Sailor (Krigsseileren)* is nominated for the 2023 Nordic Council Film Prize.

Summary

Alfred Garnes is a working-class sailor, who has recently become the father to a third child. He and his childhood friend Sigbjørn Kvalen (Wally) are working on a merchant ship in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean when World War II breaks out. They are unarmed civilians on the front line of a war they never asked to join. The two men struggle for survival in a spiral of violence and death, where German submarines may attack their valuable vessels at any moment. The war sailors have one goal – to survive and return home. Meanwhile, Alfred's wife Cecilia is struggling through the war alone in Bergen, raising three children on her single-handedly, not knowing whether she'll ever see Alfred again. When British aircraft attempt to bomb the German submarine bunker in Bergen, they hit the primary school at Laksevåg and civilian homes at Nøstet instead, resulting in hundreds of civilian deaths. When the news reaches Alfred and Wally in Canada, they wonder if there's anything left at home for them to return to.

Rationale

With *War Sailor*, director and writer Gunnar Vikene has created an epic film about the Second World War, and an intimate and credible story about the human cost of warfare. Aesthetically and dramaturgically original, the film about those who went to sea and those who stayed at home has become a complex portrait, transcending its genre. Exploring how men and women of the working class are ensnared by decisions in which they have no say, and how the trauma of war can be a burden which is simply too heavy, the film is relevant far beyond its historical context. At the heart of the story are two friends, subjected to inhuman tests and handed impossible choices, forcefully portrayed by two of Norway's finest actors: Kristoffer Joner and Pål Sverre Hagen. The spectator is brought along to the magnificent and dangerous ocean, into the claustrophobia of the machine room, and to the life ashore by Sturla Brandt Grøvlen's beautifully present camera work, and by the impressive sound design, in ways which are both terrifying and thoroughly moving.

Screenwriter and director – Gunnar Vikene

Gunnar Vikene (born 1966) is a writer and director based in Bergen. He had his breakthrough in 2002 with his feature debut *Falling Sky* which won the audience prize at the Lübeck Nordic Film Days. His following films *Trigger* (2007) and *Vegas* (2009) were also festival hits and received critical acclaim. He then directed the satire *Here is Harold* (2014) before turning to television drama with *Borderline*, for which he won best director at the national Gullruten television awards. He was also associated with the two hit series *Occupied* (2020) and *Pørni* (2021). His most ambitious feature project to date, *War Sailor*, was the biggest Norwegian hit of 2022 and Norway's Oscar entry in 2023. It also premiered successfully on Netflix as a three-part mini-series.



Producer – Maria Ekerhovd

Maria Ekerhovd (born 1975) is a producer and founder of Mer Film, one of Norway's most established production and distribution companies. Since 2006, she has produced and co-produced more than 40 films and documentaries with both newcomers and seasoned directors. Among the international acclaimed features on her credit list are Ole Giæver's *Out of Nature* (2014), nominated for the Nordic Council Film Prize, Iram Haq's *What Will People Say* (2017), and most recently Itonje Sømmer Guttormsen's *Gritt* and Eskil Vogt's *The Innocents*. In 2022, Gunnar Vikene's *War Sailor* became a massive box office success and was Norway's candidate for the Oscars in 2023. Ekerhovd's numerous co-productions include Wim Wenders' *Every Thing Will Be fine*, Amat Escalante's *The Untamed*, and Jonas Poher Rasmussen's triple Oscar-nominated documentary *Flee*. In 2021, she was handed the Eurimages Co-Production Award.

Production information

Original title: *Krigsseileren*

International title: *War Sailor*

Director: Gunnar Vikene

Screenwriter: Gunnar Vikene

Producer: Maria Ekerhovd

Production company: Mer Film, Rohfilm Factory and Falkun Films

Running time: 151 mins

Norwegian distribution: Scandinavian Film Distribution

International sales: Beta Cinema

Links

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt17633184/?ref_=nv_sr_srsq_0_tt_8_nm_0_q_war%2520sailor

SoMe-Tags:

@nordiskfilmogtvfond (FB/IG) #nordiskfilmogtvfond (IG)

Motståndaren – Sweden

Preamble

The feature film *The Opponent (Motståndaren)* is nominated for the 2023 Nordic Council Film Prize.

Summary

In the aftermath of a devastating rumour, Iman and his family have been forced to flee Iran. As refugees, they end up in a run-down hotel in northern Sweden. Despite feeling powerless, Iman tries to maintain his role as the family patriarch. To improve their chances of obtaining asylum, he breaks a promise to his wife and joins the local wrestling club. But as the rumours start to resurface, Iman's fear and desperation begin to take hold.

Rationale

Powerful, complex, and concentrated. Both a slow burner and an inferno. Milad Alami's multi-layered story unfolds slowly and takes new directions, but without Alami as a director losing sight of the goal along the way. He talks about Sweden, about fleeing, and about forbidden feelings, without making it easy for himself or the audience. The interaction between actor Payman Maadi and the sensitive cinematography of Sebastian Winterø precisely captures every shift between the physicality of wrestling and the physical touch of a completely different nature. In this way, Alami completely baffles us.

Screenwriter and director – Milad Alami

Milad Alami was born in Rasht, Iran, in 1982. He graduated in 2011 from the National Film School of Denmark and has been in steady work ever since in both Sweden and Denmark. His short films *Mini* and *Void* were both nominated for the Danish Robert Film Awards in 2015. His feature-film debut *The Charmer* had its world premiere at San Sebastian and won numerous awards. He went on to direct two episodes of the acclaimed *Follow the Money* (DR) and was concept director for *When the Dust Settles* (DR). His second feature, *The Opponent* is shot in both Farsi and Swedish and had its world premiere at the Berlinale Panorama 2023. Alami's upcoming series *Bullshit* as writer and director is due to premiere later this year on Viaplay. For IMDB: [CLICK HERE](#).

Producer – Annika Rogell

Annika Rogell (born 1981) is an in-house producer at the Stockholm-based Art & Bob Film & Drama.

Rogell trained at the Swedish Institute of Dramatic Art. In 2009 she started working for the documentary company Story AB where she produced Göran Hugo Olsson's award-winning films *The Black Power Mixtape* and *Concerning Violence*. She has also collaborated with other established production companies including Memphis Film, Garagefilm International, and Filmlance. She set up her own company, Tangy, in 2013, where she produced Sanna Lenken's directorial debut *My Skinny Sister* which won the Generation Kplus Crystal Bear at the Berlinale 2015 and went on to pick up a dozen international awards. The sci-fi hit *Aniara* co-directed by Pella Kagerman and Hugo Lilja had a similarly impressive debut and won four national Guldbagge awards in 2020, including best director. *The Opponent* by Milad Alami had its world premiere at the 2023 Berlinale Panorama section. It was voted best film at the Persian International Film Festival and won a Special Jury Prize at Seattle. Rogell was selected as Sweden's Producer on the Move in Cannes 2015. For IMDB: [CLICK HERE](#).



Production information

Original title: *Motståndaren*

International title: *The Opponent*

Director: Milad Alami

Screenwriter: Milad Alami

Producer: Annika Rogell

Production company: Tangy

Running time: 119 mins

Swedish distribution: TriArt

International sales: Indie Sales

Links

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt16311444/>

SoMe-Tags:

@nordiskfilmogtvfond (FB/IG) #nordiskfilmogtvfond (IG)