

## Press Kit: Nordic Council Film Prize – 2024

### About the prize

The Nordic Council Film Prize was first awarded in 2002 and then permanently established in 2005 and is to be juxtaposed with the Nordic Council Literature Prize, the Nordic Council Music Prize, and the Nordic Council Environment Prize.

The purpose of the Film Prize is to promote the selection and circulation of Nordic films in the region with the intention of strengthening the Nordic cultural community and develop the Nordic region as a cultural domestic market. The nominated films are meant to benefit from the Film Prize, both culturally and commercially, in a Nordic and global perspective. The Nordic Council prizes aim to increase interest in culture and in collaboration on environmental issues, to recognise outstanding artistic and environmental initiatives and to raise the profile and increase the visibility of Nordic co-operation.

The prize is awarded to a Nordic full-length feature film or documentary, with cinema distribution. The national premiere of the film must be between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024. 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.

The winner of the prize will be announced on Tuesday, 22 October 2024.

### National and Nordic jury

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 2024 are:

#### Denmark:

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

#### Finland:

Mikaela Westerlund\*, Kalle Kinnunen, Kaisu Isto

#### Greenland:

Klaus Georg Hansen\*, Nina Paninnguag Skrydsbjerg, Ilannguag Petrussen

#### Iceland:

Jóna Finnsdóttir\*, Guðrún Helga Jónasdóttir, Björn Þór Vilhjálmsson

#### Norway:

Inger Merete Hobbestad\*, Emilio Sanhueza, Anne Gjelsvik

#### Sweden:

Emma Gray Munthe\*, Caroline Cowan, Gunnar Bergdahl

The Nordic jury is made up of the chairs (\*) of each of the national juries.

## Previous winners of the Nordic Council Film Prize 2002 - 2023

2023: *Empire (Viften)*, directed by Frederikke Aspöck, written by Anna Neye, produced by Pernille Skydsgaard, Nina Leidersdorff and Meta Louise Foldager Sørensen for Meta Film, Denmark.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

2002: *Mies vailla menneisyyttä (Manden without past)* by Aki Kaurismäki.

To see all the nominated films: [CLICK HERE.](#)

## The Nominees for the Nordic Council Film Prize 2024:

### The Son and the Moon – Denmark

The Danish documentary *The Son and the Moon* (*Min arv bor i dig*) has been nominated for the Nordic Council Film Prize 2024.

#### Synopsis

*The Son and the Moon* consists of a courageous and honest six-year journey by a Danish-Iranian filmmaker, Roja Pakari, portraying her struggle with cancer, her love and her huge project mapping her family's dramatic history. It is existential poetry with no filters, featuring an unforgettable woman on both sides of the camera.

Danish-Iranian filmmaker Pakari faces the most challenging period of her 36-year life. While pregnant and expecting her son Oskar, she is diagnosed with incurable cancer. Terminally ill and responsible for a small child, she tries to find herself. *The Son and the Moon* captures her dramatic journey, candidly documenting her everyday life and thoughts on living with a disease that could cost her everything. How should you live your life when your precious time on Earth may run out too soon? Roja does not feel sorry for herself. She strives to be present and to map her Iranian heritage and her family's dramatic history, which took a new turn when her politically active parents fled Iran after the revolution and ended up in Denmark.

*The Son and the Moon* is very much *not* a film overshadowed by death. It is an unexpected love story and a brave (self-)portrait of a woman who is a mother, wife, daughter and, above all, an artist.

#### Rationale

You might think a director filming her own incurable illness and family life would be just too private. Not so *The Son and the Moon*, in which Pakari turns her situation into an unforgettable letter to her son. The portrayal of Pakari's attempt to pass the story of her life on to her six-year-old boy Oskar is profoundly moving, and the film is a life-affirming story of existence. It is about so much more than cancer and grief. It covers family life, motherhood, being split between cultures, hope and the legacy we leave to the next generation.

The scenes featuring Roja and Oskar are heart-wrenching without ever becoming banal. He doesn't grasp the seriousness of the situation, of course, and looks at his mum like a stranger in the hospital bed. They are genuine, simple scenes, quivering with emotion. Stylistically, the film is an extremely successful mixture of raw video diary and a poetic, essayistic study of the real and metaphorical Iran from which Roja has come and which she hopes to pass on to her son. The film is also a complex study of the present, past and future – crystalised snapshots of moments – the now of which Pakari struggles to be part while she still can, the past she fears will be lost along with her and the future her son will face without her.

*The Son and the Moon* is an honest work of art that never descends into navel-gazing. It poses questions and opens itself up to the world, offering both Oskar and the audience new ways of understanding themselves.

### **Director & screenwriter – Roja Pakari**

Roja Pakari graduated from the National Film School of Denmark in 2015. She worked on various award-winning feature films from 2013 to 2017, including *Love Child*, directed by Eva Mulvad. She has also directed and produced numerous music videos and TV programmes and acted as a mentor in projects involving young adults.

Pakari and her family escaped the Islamic Revolution in the 80s and were granted asylum in Denmark. *The Son and the Moon* marks her feature debut.

### **Director – Emilie Adelina Monies**

Emilie Adelina Monies is a Danish filmmaker based in Oslo and Copenhagen. A graduate of both Fatamorgana – the Danish School of Art Photography and the Norwegian Film School, Monies makes conceptual documentaries. She worked as a production assistant on several documentaries, e.g. *Cherry Tale* (2019), *School of Seduction* (2019), *Aquarela* (2018) and the upcoming *The Missing Films*. She also worked as a cinematographer on *I Walk* (2020) and *Gina Jaqueline – Caught in a Dream* (2018).

### **Screenwriter – Denniz Göl Bertelsen**

Denniz Göl Bertelsen is an editor and screenwriter. He graduated as an editor from the National Film School of Denmark in 2017. Bertelsen has edited a number of documentaries, including *The Cave* (2019), which was nominated for an Oscar. He made his debut as a screenwriter with the documentary *Kandis for Life* (2021), which he also edited.

### **Producer – Sara Stockmann**

Founder of Sonntag Pictures and film producer Sara Stockmann has produced over 30 documentary films and series since 2005. Several of the films have won awards outside Denmark – including Janus Metz' Cannes & Emmy-winning documentary film *Armadillo* and *Bobbi Jene* by Oscar-nominated director Elvira Lind, which won a Tribeca Festival Award. In 2024, Danish Film Directors presented Stockmann with the Ib Award, which goes to courageous, innovative and anarchistic Danish producers. Sara Stockmann is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Science.

**Original title:** Min arv bor i dig

**International title:** The Son and the Moon

**Directors:** Roja Pakari, Emilie Adelina Monies

**Writers:** Roja Pakari, Denniz Göl Bertelsen

**Producer:** Sara Stockmann

**Production company:** Sonntag Pictures

**Distribution company:** Sonntag Pictures

**Premiere in home country:** 18.03.2024

**Total length:** 94 minutes

## Fallen Leaves – Finland

The Finnish film *Fallen Leaves* (*Kuolleet lehdet*) has been nominated for the Nordic Council Film Prize 2024.

### Synopsis

*Fallen Leaves* tells the story of two lonely people who meet by chance in Helsinki one night and try to find the first, only, and ultimate love of their lives. Their path towards this honourable goal is clouded by the man's alcoholism, lost phone numbers, and not knowing each other's names or addresses, not to mention life's general tendency to place obstacles in the way of those who seek happiness.

This gentle tragicomedy is the – previously thought to be lost – fourth part of Aki Kaurismäki's working-class trilogy (*Shadows in Paradise*, *Ariel*, and *The Match Factory Girl*).

### Rationale

The timeless story of *Fallen Leaves* is redolent with sorrow, nostalgia, and the vanishing old Helsinki. Aki Kaurismäki's film tells a simple story of a lonely woman, Ansa, and a man, Holappa, who meet and fall in love. But the budding relationship is threatened by his alcoholism. The Russian invasion of Ukraine serves as background noise to the film. It may only be heard in a few scenes via Ansa's radio, but it echoes throughout. *Fallen Leaves* is very much Kaurismäki: pared down and seemingly of no great consequence, the director/screenwriter's unique vision makes it grand. The flowing narration, humour and the director's signature naïve romance are familiar elements, but this world of the past now unexpectedly meets a highly contemporary longing for optimism, which is brought to life by the fresh presence of Alma Pöysti and Jussi Vatanen, who play Ansa and Holappa. In the end, love and hope are what matters most.

### Director, screenwriter & producer – Aki Kaurismäki

Aki Kaurismäki is a Finnish director who also writes and produces his films. For decades, he has been known around the world and his work has been distributed in many countries on every continent. His latest film, *Fallen Leaves*, has been sold to over 70 countries and was the Finnish cinema's biggest box-office hit last year. Kaurismäki has received many international prizes, the most significant of which are several Fipresci prizes, Berlinale's Silver Bear, and Grand Prix and Prix de Jury at the Cannes Film Festival.

### Producer – Misha Jaari

Misha Jaari is co-founder of Helsinki based production company Bufo, established in 2007. Bufo's productions include Aki Kaurismäki's Golden Globe nominee *Fallen Leaves* & Berlinale Silver Bear Winner *The Other Side of Hope*, Khadar Ayderus Ahmed's multiple award-winning *The Grave-digger's Wife*, Academy Award winner Jörn Donner's *Armi Alive!* & Pirjo Honkasalo's *Concrete Night*. Furthermore, Bufo has been involved in a number of international co-productions.

### Producer – Mark Lwoff

Mark Lwoff is co-founder of Helsinki based production company Bufo, established in 2007. Bufo's productions include Aki Kaurismäki's Golden Globe nominee *Fallen Leaves* & Berlinale Silver Bear Winner *The Other Side of Hope*, Khadar Ayderus Ahmed's multiple award-winning *The Grave-digger's Wife*, Academy Award winner Jörn Donner's *Armi Alive!* & Pirjo Honkasalo's *Concrete Night*.

Furthermore, Bufo has been involved in a number of international co-productions.

**Original title:** Kuolleet lehdet  
**International title:** Fallen Leaves  
**Director:** Aki Kaurismäki  
**Writer:** Aki Kaurismäki  
**Producers:** Aki Kaurismäki, Misha Jaari, Mark Lwoff  
**Co-producer:** Reinhard Brundig  
**Production company:** Sputnik Oy, Bufo  
**Distribution company:** B-Plan Distribution  
**Premiere in home country:** 15.09.23  
**Total length:** 81 minutes

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## Twice Colonized – Greenland

The Greenlandic documentary *Twice Colonized* has been nominated for the Nordic Council Film Prize 2024.

### Synopsis

Renowned Inuit lawyer Aaju Peter has spent her life leading the fight for the rights of her people. Now, just as she is launching an initiative to establish an indigenous forum at the European Union, she also finds herself facing a difficult, personal journey to mend her own wounds after the unexpected passing of her son.

### Rationale

The documentary *Twice Colonized* does what no film co-produced and co-written in Greenland has done before in terms of the subject matter addressed and the international acclaim accrued. Filmmaker Lin Alluna captures the life of Aaju Peter in raw handheld camera footage, and the incredible soundtrack makes the soundscape highly original. The film depicts the calmness of the day-to-day Arctic life of a loving family woman with impeccable intimacy, balancing it with a portrayal of a strong, visionary and energetic woman fighting for the human rights of the Inuit people.

The film also shows the struggles in her personal life as she deals with the loss of her son and is haunted by an abusive ex-boyfriend with raw, unfiltered emotions. In pursuit of her goals, Aaju Peter has to confront her past. Like many of her generation, she was sent to school in Denmark. Not knowing the culture and language, she had to adapt and lose her identity as an Inuk. As an adult, Peter had to move to Canada to rediscover her Inuit identity, and because of that, she is a bridge between two Inuit cultures as she fights for a better future for Inuit and other indigenous peoples.

With its timely and on-the-nose storytelling, *Twice Colonized* highlights the highly political everyday struggle of a people in a post-colonial world. Themes of identity – personal and national – run through this uniquely Greenlandic story.

### Director & screenwriter – Lin Alluna

While cinematically transcending the bounds of reality, Lin Alluna's films focus on brave women who want to change the world. *Twice Colonized* is her debut feature. It premiered at Sundance in 2023 and was the first film to open both CPH:DOX and Hot Docs. Alluna teaches filmmaking, is chair of Danish Film Directors and a graduate of the prestigious National Film School of Denmark.



She is an alumni/lab fellow at IDFAcademy, UnionDocs, DFI Outreach, Nordic Talents and Circle Women Doc Accelerator.

### Screenwriter – Aaju Peter

Aaju Peter is an ardent defender of the rights of Canada's northern indigenous people and campaigns on issues related to sustainability and resources. In 2011, she was awarded Canada's highest honour, the Order of Canada, and since then she has been called upon as an advisor by both the EU and the UN. *Twice Colonized* is Peter's first work as a writer, but her natural flair for storytelling and in-depth knowledge of the colonisation of both Greenland and Canada made this film a natural choice.

### Producer – Emile Hertling Péronard

Emile Hertling Péronard is an award-winning and Oscar-nominated Greenlandic film producer operating out of both Nuuk and Copenhagen. A 2023 Cannes Producer on the Move, his films have screened at Cannes, Venice, Berlinale, Sundance and more. He is chair of the Arctic Indigenous Film Fund, on the Board of Directors at ARTEF – the Anti-Racism Taskforce for European Film, the Executive Director of Nuuk International Film Festival and was awarded the Greenlandic film prize, Innersuaq, in 2023.

**Original title:** Twice Colonized

**International title:** Twice Colonized

**Director:** Lin Alluna

**Writers:** Aaju Peter, Lin Alluna

**Producer:** Emile Hertling Péronard

**Co-producers:** Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, Stacey Aglok MacDonald, Bob Moore

**Production companies:** Ánorâk Film, Red Marrow Media, EyeSteelFilm

**Distribution company:** Reel Pictures Entertainment

**Premiere in home country:** 19.09.23

**Total length:** 91 minutes

## Touch – Iceland

The Icelandic film *Touch (Snerting)* has been nominated for the Nordic Council Film Prize 2024.

### Synopsis

An ageing widower, Kristófer, finds himself at a crossroads at the outbreak of the pandemic. He shuts his restaurant in Iceland – not just because of the pandemic but also because he knows his health is declining. Urged by his doctor to attend to any unfinished business he might have, he spontaneously embarks on a journey to seek answers to a mystery that has haunted him for a long time.

Fifty years earlier, while Kristófer was a student in London, his Japanese girlfriend, Miko, vanished without a trace along with her dad. The couple had been working at her father's restaurant, Nippon. Kristófer turned up for work one day and was surprised to find the place empty and shut down. Nobody seemed to know what had become of the father and daughter. Kristófer was devastated. He and Miko had been head over heels in love during the vibrant summer of 1969, when young people rebelled against the structures of Western society, full of hope and with aspirations of their own.



We follow Kristófer on a journey back to London and then to Japan, where he hopes to find answers to what actually happened. But it is also his journey down memory lane, which takes us back 50 years to when young Kristófer and Miko had their passionate affair.

### Rationale

In this romantic drama, director Baltasar Kormákur tells a story, where the main character's search for long-lost love ends up taking him on an emotional voyage back to a pivotal period in his life and physically halfway across the world.

Through precise use of production design, strong visual elements and beautiful camerawork, the director succeeds in recreating 1960s London in a convincing way as well as contemporary Iceland and Japan. The subtle score effectively and sensitively supports the excellent performances of the actors and helps the narrative as it slowly reveals the strength of young love and how fear, created by past horror threatens the fragile beginning of a blossoming relationship.

Although telling a tragic story of human experience, Baltasar Kormákur manages to leave the audience with a sense of hope and, yes, touched.

### Director, screenwriter & producer – Baltasar Kormákur

After graduating as an actor from the Iceland Academy of the Arts in 1990, Baltasar Kormákur became the leading young actor, the *Jeune Premier*, at the National Theatre for a decade, during which he learned to appreciate the theatre classics, both as an actor and a critically acclaimed director. In 2000, following his debut film as a director with *101 Reykjavik*, which won multiple awards and was an international success, he started his own production company. Since then, Baltasar Kormákur has focused on filmmaking – as director, writer and producer – and enjoyed great success. He is one of Europe's most prolific filmmakers and works on both sides of the Atlantic. His RVK Studios is the biggest production company in Iceland, making feature films and TV series and providing production services.

### Screenwriter – Ólafur Jóhann Ólafsson

Ólafur Jóhann Ólafsson has written several critically acclaimed novels, which have been translated into over twenty languages and received numerous awards. He has also held executive positions in the entertainment and technology industries. In 1991, he founded Sony Computer Entertainment and, as its CEO, was responsible for the highly successful launch of the Sony PlayStation in the United States and Europe. He later became Executive Vice President of Time Warner, where he played multiple roles in strategy, business development, partnerships, technology, mergers and acquisitions and international operations. Ólafsson was instrumental in the sale of the company to AT&T in 2018.

### Producer – Agnes Johansen

After 15 years working in television – in acquisitions, programming, and in-house production at RÚV and Channel 2 and later as Head of Production at Sagafilm – Baltasar Kormákur recruited Agnes Johansen to be line producer on his second feature film, *The Sea* (in 2001).

She subsequently joined Baltasar Kormákur's company and has produced feature films and TV series, which the company started to make in 2012. Her producer credits include *Jar City* (2006), *The Deep* (2012), *Virgin Mountain* (2015), *Against the Ice* (2022) and the TV series *Katla* (2021)

**Original title:** Snerting  
**International title:** Touch  
**Director:** Baltasar Kormákur  
**Writers:** Ólafur Jóhann Ólafsson, Baltasar Kormákur  
**Producers:** Agnes Johansen, Baltasar Kormákur  
**Production company:** RVK Studios  
**Distribution companies:** Focus Features, Universal  
**Premiere in home country:** 29.05.24  
**Total length:** 120 minutes

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## Sex – Norway

The Norwegian film *Sex* has been nominated for the Nordic Council Film Prize 2024.

### Synopsis

*Sex* follows two men in heterosexual marriages whose perceptions of sexuality, gender and identity are challenged by unexpected experiences. One has a sexual encounter with another man without seeing it as a sign of homosexuality or infidelity. The other has dreams in which David Bowie sees him as a woman, stirring confusion and leading him to question how much our personalities are shaped by how others see us.

### Rationale

With *Sex*, director and screenwriter Dag Johan Haugerud has created a sophisticated and entertaining film about masculinity and sexuality. Two colleagues share strange experiences with each other. Both are facing challenges about who they are as men and fathers. The filmmaker treats their attempts to figure it all out with empathy, original dramaturgical choices and a confident aesthetic that confirms Haugerud's position as one of Norway's most exciting filmmakers. His rich and funny dialogue is enhanced by a visual language that almost seems to comment on the plot. Haugerud is ably abetted by the co-leads, Thorbjørn Harr and Jan Gunnar Røise, who both deliver sterling performances. The same applies to photographer Cecilie Semec, who constantly finds exciting wide-screen compositions and new images of contemporary Oslo without distracting from Haugerud's rich script. Along with editor Jens Christian Fodstad, they develop a cinematic, entertaining and interesting portrait of two believable Nordic men going through credible human trials and tribulations.

### Director & screenwriter – Dag Johan Haugerud

Dag Johan Haugerud has established himself as one of Norway's most influential screenwriters and directors and as a novelist. *I Belong* (2012) won the Norwegian Amanda for Best Film, Director, Screenplay and Female Supporting Role, the Film Critics' Award and was Norway's entry for the Nordic Council Film Prize. *Beware of Children* (2019), which had its international premiere in Venice, won Dragon awards for Best Film and Actor at the Gothenburg Film Festival, a record nine Amandas, the Film Critics' Award and the Nordic Council Film Prize. Haugerud also directed the short features *I'm The One YouWant* (2014) and *The Light from the Chocolate Factory* (2020)

### Producer – Yngve Sæther

Producer Yngve Sæther is one of Norway's most experienced and award-winning producers and has produced around twenty features in as many years. He has won the Amanda for Best Film three times, with *The Man Who Loved Yngve* (2008), *I Belong* (2012) and *Beware of Children* (2020). Five of his films have been Norwegian entries for the Nordic Council Film Prize.

### Producer – Hege Hauff Hvattum

Hege Hauff Hvattum is the latest in the line of producers to emerge from the film company Motlys. She started her career as a freelancer, producing two TV dramas for NRK: *Lovleg* (two seasons, 2018–2019) and a 24-episode Christmas calendar called *Luka and the Magical Theater* (2021). So far, 2024 has been a crazy year for Hvattum. The first part of the *SEX DREAMS LOVE* trilogy by Dag Johan Haugerud (*Sex*, 2024, Berlinale Panorama, 10 Amanda nominations) has already had its premiere, and *Dreams* and *Love* to follow in the autumn.

**Original title:** Sex

**International title:** Sex

**Director:** Dag Johan Haugerud

**Writer:** Dag Johan Haugerud

**Producers:** Yngve Sæther, Hege Hauff Hvattum

**Production company:** Motlys

**Distribution company:** Arthaus

**Premiere in home country:** 01.03.24

**Total length:** 126 minutes

### Crossing – Sweden

The Swedish film *Crossing* (*Passage*) has been nominated for the Nordic Council Film Prize 2024.

#### Synopsis

Lia, a retired teacher, made a promise to find out what happened to her long-lost niece, Tekla. When she learns from Achi, a neighbour, that the niece might be living in Turkey, the pair set off to find her. In Istanbul, they discover a beautiful city full of connections and possibilities, but tracing someone who has no intention of being found proves harder than they thought – until they meet Evrim, a trans-rights lawyer. As Lia and Achi weave their way through the city's backstreets, they feel closer than ever to Tekla.

#### Rationale

*Crossing* is an emotional journey that takes us from the poorer areas of the Georgian town of Batumi on the Black Sea coast to the trans community in pulsating Istanbul. Retired teacher Lia embarks on a quest for Tekla, the long-lost niece she promised her late sister she would find. Along comes teenager Achi, who sees an opportunity to escape a life without hope and lies to Lia about speaking Turkish and knowing Tekla's whereabouts in the melting pot of Istanbul. When they finally arrive in the Turkish metropolis, they find themselves far from the tourist hotspots and blue mosques, in a seldom depicted and often excluded community in which the struggle to be who you are never ends. Exposed to new people and experiences, the journey also becomes an inward one for them.

Lisabi Fridell's rich and intimate camera work accompanies the characters with complete and tender solidarity as they evolve while navigating a world where dreams and crass reality collide.

*Crossing* is a complex and humanising exploration of all its characters, and the close bond between the director and his actors creates a sense of presence that reverberates through the audience. Despite the rancorous debate around trans issues, Akin manages to tell a story about the need in all of us to dream and belong, and he does so with humour, empathy and great warmth. To top it all, the devastating closing scene is as cinematically challenging as it is demanding.

### **Director & screenwriter – Levan Akin**

Levan Akin, a Swedish filmmaker of Georgian descent, explores class, gender and sexuality. His body of work includes the critically acclaimed film *And Then We Danced*, which premiered at the Directorss Fortnight in Cannes 2019 and was selected as Sweden's official entry for the Oscars. Akin has also made notable contributions to television, including the series *Real Humans* (adapted as *Humans* for AMC in the US and UK). He was also a co-executive producer and director of AMC's highly regarded adaptation of *Interview with the Vampire* (2022). *Crossing* is Akin's latest film. It premiered at Berlinale in 2024.

### **Producer – Mathilde Dedye**

Mathilde Dedye founded French Quarter Film in 2011, together with Mattias Sandström. The award-winning Swedish indie label makes author-driven films, probably best described as "European art house". It also produces films in multiple formats and works with some of the most interesting directors in Sweden.

Dedye opened the Berlinale Panorama Section 2024 with her latest feature, *Crossing*, by Levan Akin. She also produced *And Then We Danced* by Levan Akin, 2019, which premiered at the Directors' Fortnight in Cannes in 2019 and *Återträffen (The Reunion)* by Anna Odell in 2013, which premiered at the Venice Critics' Week that year. She has also produced two successful comedy series for SVT Play.

**Original title:** Passage

**International title:** Crossing

**Director:** Levan Akin

**Writer:** Levan Akin

**Producer:** Mathilde Dedye

**Production company:** French Quarter Film

**Distribution companies:** Triart Film, Reel Pictures, Mer Film; Cinema Mondo

**Premiere in home country:** 16.03.24

**Total length:** 105 minutes