

JURY MOTIVATIONS FOR ALL NOMINEES FOR THE NORDIC COUNCIL FILM PRIZE 2016

DENMARK

Original title: Under sandet

English title: Land of Mine

Director: Martin Pieter Zandvliet

Telling a compelling story about a person's development is one thing. Recreating history and truly placing us in the middle of it is something else entirely. And it is still something else to dare challenge the Danish national spirit where it hurts. Martin Zandvliet's *Land of Mine* deftly accomplishes all three with its almost unbearably intense story of teenage German soldiers forced to remove mines along the west coast of Jutland after the Second World War. It is impossible to view *Land of Mine* without reflecting on one's view of human nature and one's national sentiments.

Jury: Per Juul Carlsen, Jacob Wendt, Eva Novrup Redvall

FINLAND

Original title: Hymyilevä mies

English title: The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki

Director: Juho Kuosmanen

Do you want to be a world champion or the champion of your own life? On the surface, *The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki* is a period piece based on a character from real life, but at its heart is the age-old question of whether to choose love over glory.

Director Juho Kuosmanen steers this drama – his feature film debut – with an assured hand. Its delicious, understated humour, combined with the nostalgic patina of Jani-Petteri Passi's striking black-and-white cinematography, sets the stage for great performances all round.

Jury: Jaana Puskala, Outi Heiskanen, Harri Römpötti

ICELAND

Original title: Prestir

English title: Sparrows

Director: Rúnar Rúnarsson

Sparrows is the coming-of-age story of teenaged Ari, whose life is turned upside down when his mother decides to move abroad with her husband. Ari has no choice but to leave Reykjavík for his childhood home in the Westfjords to live with his alcoholic father whom he hasn't seen for several years. The film explores various coming-of-age themes, and in particular the father-son relationship from the perspective of an abandoned child. Ari's interactions with women also come into play, and his relationship with childhood friend Lára is central to the narrative.

Director Rúnar Rúnarsson has developed a distinctive personal style based on meticulous observations of traditional Icelandic culture and aesthetics following the advent of modernity, often juxtaposed with complications related to the march of time. *Sparrows* underscores these themes in the conflict Ari experiences between his old and new lives, as well as in the demise of traditional values and the harsh trade-off that growth brings to the fore.

Sophia Olsson's stunning cinematography shows the isolation of the harsh mountainous landscapes of the Westfjords, while her vision emphasises the fjords' ability to project a calm solace.

Jury: Hilmar Oddsson, Börkur Gunnarsson, Helga Þórey Jónsdóttir

NORWAY

Original title: **Louder Than Bombs**

English title: **Louder Than Bombs**

Director: Joachim Trier

Joachim Trier's *Louder Than Bombs* is a study of grief that centres around a father and his two sons three years after their mother has passed away. She has left behind a small, loving family with some complex relationships. They struggle to connect with one another and to speak about their grief and their own existence. Trier and his regular screenwriter, Eskil Vogt, portray events subtly through lucid, organic, original cinematography that addresses the different emotional state of each character. Memories of, longing for, and loss of a dead woman are central to the care that Trier shows for his characters.

Jury: Silje Riise Næss, Kalle Løchen, Britt Sørensen

SWEDEN

Original title: **Efterskalv**

English title: **The Here After**

Director: Magnus von Horn

Magnus von Horn's *The Here After* is a timeless film that raises classical moral questions in unexpected ways that challenge the viewer.

As do Krzysztof Kieślowski's "commandment films", *The Here After* conveys the mechanisms and day-to-day effects of violence with a low-intensity energy, using a camera that depicts both landscape and people as contained in deep desolation. The film's austere visual expression is in tune with a story in which what isn't said has the same weight as the scant dialogue. The sensitive interplay between the father and son in the film also helps to make *The Here After* an unusually mature debut, one that already feels like a classic.

Jury: Jannike Åhlund, Jon Asp, Kristina Börjeson