BEST FILM
BALTIC FILM COMPETITION
TALLINN BLACK NIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL
2020

Estonian Official Entry for the Academy Award for the Best International Feature Film

A film by
VEIKO ÕUNPUU

THE LAST ONES

Pääru OJA • Laura BIRN • Tommi KORPELA • Elmer BÄCK • Samuli EDELMANN • Sulevi PELTOLA

Director VEIKO ÕUNPUU • *Cinematographer* STEN-JOHAN LILL, E.S.C • *Production designer* OTSO LINNALAAKSO
Costume designer JAANUS VAHTRA • *Make-up designer* KAIRE HENDRIKSON • *Editors* WOUTER VAN LUIJN • XANDER NIJSTEN • *Sound designer* MARK GLYNNE • *Composer* SVEN GRÜNBERG • *Scriptwriters* HEIKKI HUTTU-HILTUNEN • EERO TAMMI • VEIKO ÕUNPUU • *Producers* KATRIN KISSA • MARK LWOFF • MISHA JAARI • ELLEN HAVENITH

HOMELESS BOB PRODUCTION
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LOCO FILMS
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Estonian Film Institute
yle
NL FILM FONDS
NL FILM INCENTIVE

A car crash in slow motion, a love letter to a disappearing world.

THE LAST ONES is a nordic western that takes place in the untamed Lapland tundra. The protagonist is young miner Rupi, who hopes to scrape together enough money through excavating the tundra to forever shake the suffocating dust of the mining village from his feet. But the work has come to a halt because Rupi's reindeer herder father refuses to sell his land. What's more, the manipulative mine owner nicknamed the Fisherman has his eye on Rupi's friend's wife, a woman who Rupi is also secretly in love with. Now that life in the mining village is becoming more dangerous by the day, Rupi must decide where and to whom he belongs. Is it the primal tundra of his forefathers or the cold terrain of personal interest?

Watch the trailer

DIRECTOR
VEIKO ÕUNPUU

"The main question for me concerning making films is how to depict this complex flow of sensations, associations, impulses, ideas and dreams that we call reality? How to make something out of it that would not find contentment in being merely a story but is alive and breathing, free from boredom and predictability, yet comprehensible as a narrative film? A good film is to my mind something that opens up possibilities of thinking and seeing that we were previously not aware of. Never mind the subject matter of the film or the quality of analysis. Never mind the morality or violence, or the lies or truth."

Veiko Õunpuu has studied literature, philosophy and painting.

One of Estonia's most acclaimed directors, Õunpuu has garnered 29 career festival wins and nominations. He won the Venice Film Festival's Venice Horizons Award for AUTUMN BALL (2007), and was nominated for the Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury Prize for THE TEMPTATION OF ST. TONY (2010). For the latter film, he was awarded the East of West Award at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival. He has received the European Talent Award and has been chosen as one of the 100 most intriguing contemporary film directors in the book *10*10 in Film* by Phaidon Publishing.

His films have been part of the MOMA Presents curator program and screened at the EYE in Amsterdam. AUTUMN BALL and THE TEMPTATION OF ST. TONY had a U.S. theatrical release. His third film, FREE RANGE. BALLAD OF APPROVING OF THE WORLD, premiered at Berlinale.

THE LAST ONES is his third film selected as the Estonian candidate for the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film.

PÄÄRU OJA
as RUPI

Pääru Oja graduated from the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre. He is a member of the Estonian Drama Theatre and was honored as Best Actor at the Estonian Theatre Awards in 2015. His leading roles on the big screen include MIHKEL by Ari Alexander Ergis Magnússon, for which Pääru received nominations as Actor of the Year at the Icelandic EDDA Awards. He also was deemed Best Actor at the Estonian Film and TV Awards in 2019 for the series THE TRAP. Pääru recently completed filming on the Finnish-Irish-Belgian TV series COLD COURAGE. In 2020, Pääru was selected as one of ten actors in the Berlin Film Festival to be introduced at the European Shooting Stars.

LAURA BIRN
as RIITTA

Laura Birn is currently working on an upcoming American TV series, FOUNDATION, based on the books by Isaac Asimov and produced for Apple TV +.

She is a Finnish actress who in 2018 received the Nordic Flair Award, which is granted each year to a top Nordic talent who is helping to put Scandinavia front and center on an international level. Birn has been awarded for her inspiring and inspired work in a variety of roles she has played in both Finnish and international films and television series. A recent example is her role in the Netflix's show THE INNOCENTS.

In 2013, Laura was selected as one of ten actors in the Berlin Film Festival to be introduced as European Shooting Stars. She has received several international and Finnish awards for her role in PURGE by Antti Jokinen, including a nomination for a Satellite Award for Best Actress.

TOMMI KORPELA
as FISHERMAN

Tommi Korpela is one of the most valued Finnish actors who has won the Finnish Academy Award, Jussi, three times – a feat that has been accomplished only twice in Finnish film history. He's represented by Actors in Scandinavia.

In 2016, he was the lead in the German production DEADWEIGHT by Axel Goenzen, a film that had its international premiere at Berlinale IFF.

In 2017, he starred alongside Sidse Babett Knudsen in the Finnish historical drama THE ETERNAL ROAD by Antti-Jussi Annila, which also made its way to US distribution.

In 2019, Korpela was awarded at the Moscow Film Festival for Best Male Lead in the film VACUUM by Aleksi Salmenperä.

locations	Lapland, Finland Northern Norway
genre	nordic western
length	117’
format	HD
language	Finnish
budget	2 MLN USD

director	Veiko Õunpuu
scriptwriters	Heikki Huttu-Hiltunen, Eero Tammi & Veiko Õunpuu
director of cinematography	Sten-Johan Lill, E.S.C.
production designer	Otso Linnalaakso
editors	Wouter van Luijn & Xander Nijsten
sound designer	Mark Glynne
producer	Katrin Kissa
co-producers	Mark Lwoff, Misha Jaari & Ellen Havenith

cast	Pääru Oja Tommi Korpela Laura Birn Elmer Bäck Samuli Edelmann Sulevi Peltola Jarkko Lahti and others

studios	Homeless Bob Production (EST) Bufo (FIN) PRPL (NL)

What can a young man do at all, under this endless and indifferent sky? Kill, kill, kill? Dance, dance, dance?

Excerpts from a conversation with the director Veiko Õunpuu about the film and the filmmaking.

by Eero Tammi

The idea for the film The Last Ones came from a desire to do something like a western but taking place up north. What was your main motivation?

The chaotic and somewhat rueful life of a mining village seemed like a good metaphor that carried a certain mood. Having lived too long in the city, I thought I would find the remains of some sort of authentic proximity to nature, or some tiny insight into a world before the industrial revolution - indigenous people who would be shocked at the destruction of our planet. But I had romanticized the life up there. I just saw leather couches and plasma TVs in the homes of reindeer herders. Tourist traps and a lot of talk about shooting commercials. Basically, ordinary people coping with life.

Were you even interested in making a western?

Not really. I see westerns as something in which boys fantasize about manliness. In The Last Ones, I was more interested in the collapse of masculinity. And not even that particularly. The characters all dream of something bigger and aren't totally aware of what they're doing. Self-deception, looking for a solution in the wrong place – that was my main interest.

The events in the film are carried by active losers. By underdogs.

I don't like to call them losers. So many people live like this on our planet, forced to sell their labor for nothing while living in inhumane conditions. Life's a struggle. I would describe those characters as a bit clueless, but so are all of us, aren't we? We hope that if we achieve a certain goal, it will make us happy and complete. This never happens, or at least the happiness never lasts. It only creates false hopes and makes us assume wrong roles. The farther you go from your personal state of balance, the hollower

the whole world becomes. And that road leads straight to hell.

The way you make films doesn't meet generally established norms. You forgo the script during the shoot and move closer to a John Cassavetes-like style where you search for something more meaningful behind the scenes. You do many variations with the actors. This is a time consuming and risky approach.

Even crossing the street can be risky. What is the worst thing that can happen when making a film? The film could turn out to be shit. Lifeless, pointless, a sad waste of everyone's time. But you know for sure it will be a shitty film if you begin by worrying, or if you let fear overcome you. So, in a way, risk is essential.

Directing starts before the shooting period. The artists behind the space and costumes need tasks.

Yes, if you want to dance, you first have to build a dance floor. But I don't really comprehend the nuances in the characters' interpersonal relationships until we arrive on set. You can take care of the settings and the costumes and the general structure, but some of it you can work out during the shooting. Cassavetes also said that it's impossible to consider all aspects when writing. The actor always discovers something you could not have thought of. But actors also get blocked and so you need to release them from their fears and allow them to make mistakes.

To you, a film is basically a giant canvas where events line up that keeps people captivated for a few hours. As an artist, you don't work on the short form or gallery piece, you race straight towards the oasis of the entertainment industry – the cinema.

Based on personal experience, I can tell you that the cinema can surprise you. I saw Gena Rowlands in Love Streams and I could practically hear my internal protective layer tearing. The best films always find an amazing middle road – pleasure filled with the truth of existence. In that sense, cinema is one of the cleverest things we have in the form of entertainment. Once you are in the cinema, you are forced to watch. And once the viewer's natural superficiality fades away, another state of being arises, where it becomes possible to present complex ideas in a way that they can have a strong emotional impact.

It's true that a lot of people watch films to find out something about themselves. But most films are based on embedding different consumer identities.

For me, the problem with so-called consumer films is the automatism. You walk to the same spot again and again, stimulating a routine habit. I search for a solution to this problem by trying to meet expectations in the most minimal way necessary. In general, I want a lot of different people to watch my films. Unfortunately, in Estonia I've been made out to be some sort of weirdo who likes to put people in uncomfortable situations only to tell them off. Which isn't true.

Have all your films been made using the same method?

Yes, even though two of them were directed by a crazy person. When I was making Autumn Ball, I thought every day I should kill myself, the tension was too much. But then I would go and sit by myself for fifteen minutes or longer and wait for that feeling to subside. Although confrontations are real during the shoot, the panic only exists in your head. You must wait a little and an idea always pops up how to do something differently. The knowledge that the panic will always subside is my method. Because I am sure that everything will pass.

And that inspiration exists. That is the truth.

The interview in full

contact MEDIAPLAN PR
Tatiana Detlofson
tatiana@mediaplanpr.com

world sales LOCO FILMS
Laurent Danielou
laurent.danielou@loco-films.com

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