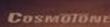


HEARTSTONE

SF STUDIOS PRODUCTION & JOIN MOTION PICTURES PRESENT WITH SUPPORT FROM ICELANDIC FILM CENTRE, DANISH FILM INSTITUTE, EURIMAGES, MINISTRY OF INDUSTRIES AND INNOVATION & TV 2 DENMARK IN COOPERATION WITH RÚV & COSMOTONE. A FILM BY GUDMUNDUR ARNAR GUDMUNDSSON. HEARTSTONE
BALDUR EINARSSON, BLÆR HINRIKSSON, DILJÁ VALSDÓTTIR, KATLA NJÁLSDÓTTIR, JÓNÍNA ÞÓRÐÍS KARLSDÓTTIR, RÁN RAGNARSDÓTTIR, NÍMA DÖGG FILIPPUSDÓTTIR, SVEINN ÓLAFUR GUNNARSSON, MANNA KRISTÍN MAGNÚSDÓTTIR, SÖREN MALLING, GUNNAR JÓNSSON,
DANIEL HANS ERLÉNDRSSON, THEODÓR PÁLSSON, SVEINN SIGURBJÖRNSSON. MUSIC BY ANTON KRISTÍN JÓLLA KRISTJÁNSDÓTTIR. COSTUME DESIGNER HELGA RÓS V. HANNA. PRODUCTION DESIGNER HULDA HELGADÓTTIR. EDITOR KRISTIAN SELVI EIDNES ANDERSEN. SOUND DESIGNER PETER SCHULTZ. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ANNE ØSTERUD & JANUS GILLESKOV JANSSEN
CINEMATOGRAPHER STURLA BRANDTH GRÖVLEN. DFF. PRODUCED BY ANTON MÁNI SVANSSON, LISE ØRHEIM STENDER, JESPER MØRTHORST & GUDMUNDUR ARNAR GUDMUNDSSON. WRITER & DIRECTOR GUDMUNDUR ARNAR GUDMUNDSSON



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FILM FESTIVAL 2016



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HEARTSTONE

(HJARTASTEINN)

a film by

Gudmundur Arnar Gudmundsson

2016 - Drama - Denmark/Iceland - 129min - colour
language : Icelandic w/ English subtitles - image : DCP - 2.39

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SYNOPSIS

A remote fishing village in Iceland. Teenage boys Thor and Christian experience a turbulent summer as one tries to win the heart of a girl while the other discovers new feelings toward his best friend. When summer ends and the harsh nature of Iceland takes back its rights, it's time to leave the playground and face adulthood.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Heartstone is a personal story based on my experience growing up in a small fishing village. The core of the film is a strong, beautiful friendship between two boys, and how their environment and inner conflict drive them apart, before the bond they share manages to reunite them again.

A few years ago, at the time I was searching for a story to write, I had a dream about my childhood friend who took his own life as a teenager. In this dream he showed me around our old village, and as we arrived at his childhood home, he smiled and gave me a map of the village. After this we ran off and played with the other kids. When I woke up, I knew I wanted to write a story inspired from this time.

The village was an environment full of contrasts, where the sun shines without rest during the summer and barely rises at all in winter. A place where the same things you love and give you freedom also tie you down. A place where young kids come to know animals and discover how nature and people can be both amazingly beautiful and incredibly cruel.

I wanted to reflect on this period which I feel very strongly about. As a kid and a teenager, I used to wish that I could show the grown-ups around me how our world really was. And that's what I want to do as a filmmaker; because the years of our youth reflect our lives in a very clear, beautiful, and often harsh manner. I seek inspiration from nature, from the strong feelings that come to you in the mountains, by the sea and when walking over untouched ground, and the ways those feelings relate to our inner emotions.

I believe Heartstone is a story that carries an important message for everyone, especially youth. A story of brotherhood, self-acceptance, strong girls and the importance of family.

IN CONVERSATION WITH GUDMUNDUR ARNAR GUDMUNDSSON

How close is the film HEARTSTONE to your own childhood?

A part of the film is very close to me, and I built the characters around my own life, family and friends. But then slowly in the writing phase the characters started to develop - they became their own individuals and this took over. The main conflict in HEARTSTONE is fictional. I like this way of working; beginning with the foundation I know until the story takes on a life of its own. As I was writing the script, I often felt like I had a house full of kids, and they were each guiding me with their behavior. I wasn't a master of this world I wrote, I was more of a participant.

But then as I shot for the opening scene, and I could smell the diesel oil, the sea and the dead fish, I felt an amazing sense of joy, because I had forgotten about these actual sensations. Now I was back to my childhood reality.

How do Thor and Christian reflect the difficulties, but also the excitement, of making the transition from child to adult?

It's both about the loss of innocence and the process of finding out who you are. The film has a happy ending and the characters do end up finding themselves, even though it takes a sad turn of events in order to get there. It's a process that includes losing something beautiful that you can never fully reclaim.

I think for many kids who are entering the teenage years, the world and the way their lives change leaves a scar that never fully heals. But at the same time, if they have some luck and stay true to themselves, they also get closer to coming into their true identities. Being "themselves" and feeling like they have the power of choice over their lives.

How is the small village setting where the film takes place important to the dynamics between your characters?

It was important for the personal conflict of our two main characters Thor and Christian. They both have a secret that they want to hide. Thor, who still hasn't hit puberty, and Christian who is dealing with the complexity of his sexuality. Since I wanted to avoid exposing these issues with 'on the nose' dialog, I wanted the audience to realize for themselves how this is a society where sticking out is not an option. And that once your secret comes out, it changes how the entire society is going to define you.

I think that in all countries and communities, you will find people who spread rumors and talk about each other. It can be in school classrooms or in the workplace. The main difference in a small town is that you cannot escape it when you leave work or school, it follows you all the time. The only place where you can be free from it is out in nature, away from society. Growing up in Iceland, nature automatically plays a strong role in your life. For me nature has



always been the escape route to get away from mental sorrows. When I feel down I look at the mountains as a place of energy, and a reminder that my problems have no role in nature. It's the place I also go to seek happiness and freedom, and my main characters do the same. I don't talk much about my own feelings in everyday life but I do have conversations about them with the mountains, the trees and the sky. There is truth in nature. It is the source of happiness but at the same time it has the power to take everything away.

Do you think the children and teenagers in the film are more or less free than the adults?

I think the kids in HEARTSTONE are in many ways much more free than their parents, even though the kids have to deal with all of the restrictions and pressure that come from their surroundings. As a kid growing up in Iceland I actually often felt sorry for many grown-ups I knew. Their life seemed harder, and their spirits were in some way broken. The grown ups that were happy and free were the strange ones that people shunned and called weirdos. I never wanted to grow old even though I couldn't wait to have control over my life.

The parents in the film and their adult problems exist in opposition to the freedom the kids enjoy everyday. They are a reminder, that eventually the surroundings and their social pressures are going to start to have a greater effect. That the kids' reality will inevitably merge into the grown-up world at some point.



How did you develop the ensemble of characters around the central pair of Thor and Christian?

The only way for me to tell this story was to show all the different relationships and how they influence our main characters and their personal inner conflicts. I like taking in the details of life and that includes all of my characters, even the "minor" ones.

Having strong female characters is something that is completely natural for me. Growing up around my strong and independent sisters and mother gave me the huge gift of seeing them as role models. I would definitely have a harder time understanding a submissive female character.

The character of Hafdís is based on my sister. She is a great painter, and since we were kids she always had this sense of fantasy, and a personal connection to the dark world of mystical creatures and misfits that she painted in a beautiful and tender way. I have always been drawn to her art and her way of looking at ugliness, and mythology is a strong part of our upbringing in Iceland. Hidden people, elves and demons are always there.

Were there certain depictions of friendship that spoke to you and inspired you? On the other side, were there stylistic approaches that you especially wanted to avoid?

So many elements of inspiration come from all directions in the process of making a film.



Both from co-workers, my family and other artists. My cinematographer Sturla Brandth Grøvlen was a huge inspiration to me, and together we pushed ourselves to follow our vision and inspirations and not to act safe in our choices. When I felt scared I would tell myself that this is something I have to attack. And it's a very nice feeling to dive headlong into your fears. My dreams are also a very important guide for my creative process. Dreams guide and prepare me in the best way possible.

It's often said that films featuring children or animals as central elements are the hardest to make. How did you take on the challenge of a film that features both?

I've only ever made films with children and animals, so I can't say if it is less difficult without the kids and beasts. For me, working with kids is always a lot of fun, it gives me huge inspiration for my own life, but the animals are the difficult ones. They don't listen to reason - so you just cross your fingers and hope to catch the magic when it appears.



BIOGRAPHY & FILMOGRAPHY

Gudmundur Arnar Gudmundsson (born 1982, Iceland) graduated from the Icelandic Art Academy. After graduation he moved to Denmark and studied screenwriting. His short films have been selected for more than 200 festivals and won over 50 international awards. Among these accolades are a Special Mention for WHALE VALLEY (2013) in the Official Competition of the Cannes Film Festival and a nomination for the European Film Awards. Gudmundsson developed and wrote his first feature film HEARTSTONE during a Cannes Cinéfondation Residency. While in development, HEARTSTONE also received an award from the Netherlands Production Platform.

CAST & CREW

Principal Cast Baldur Einarsson, Blær Hinriksson,
Diljá Valsdóttir, Katla Njálisdóttir

Director Gudmundur Arnar Gudmundsson

Production Companies SF Studios Production & Join Motion Pictures

Executive Producers Lars Bjørn Hansen, Lars Bredo Rahbek

Producers Anton Máni Svansson, Lise Orheim Stender,
Jesper Morthorst, Gudmundur Arnar Gudmundsson

Screenplay Gudmundur Arnar Gudmundsson

Cinematographer Sturla Brandth Grøvlen

Editors Anne Østerud, Janus Billeskov Jansen

Production Designer Hulda Helgadóttir

Sound Peter Schultz

Music Kristian Selin Eidnes Andersen

Costume Designer Helga Rós V. Hannam

In collaboration with RÚV, TV 2 Denmark & Cosmotone

With the support of Icelandic Film Centre, Danish Film Institute,
Eurimages & Icelandic Ministry of Industries and Innovation

TECHNICAL DETAILS

English title Heartstone

Original title Hjartasteinn

Countries of production Denmark/Iceland

Year of production 2016

Language Icelandic w/ English subtitles

Length 129 minutes

Format DCP - 2.39

Colour

Drama



FILMS *Boutique*