

OFFICIAL SELECTION

tiff

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL 2023

S O L I T U D E

DIRECTED BY NINNA PÁLMAÐÓTTIR



A FILM WRITTEN BY RÚNAR RÚNARSSON MAIN CAST PRÖSTUR LEÓ GUNNARSSON HERMANN SAMÚELSSON ANNA GUNNÓIS GUDMUNDSDÓTTIR HJÖRTUR JÓHANN JÓNSSON
 DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY DUŠAN HUŠAR PRODUCTION DESIGNER GUS ÓLAFSSON MAKE UP & HAIR ARTIST ANDREA ŠTRBOVÁ COSTUME DESIGN ARNÓIS EY COMPOSER PÉTUR ÞÓR BENEDIKTSSON
 FILM EDITOR IVOR ŠONJE SOUND DESIGN TIHOMIR VRBANEC VFX JÓN MÁR GUNNARSSON CASTING DIRECTOR VIGFÚS ÞORMAR GUNNARSSON CO-PRODUCERS JAKUB VIKTORÍN
 SARAH CHAZELLE ETIENNE OLLAGNIER ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS SNORRI ÞÓRISSON PRODUCED BY LILJA ÓSK SNOBRADÓTTIR HLÍN JÓHANNESDÓTTIR ELLI CASSATA
 RÚNAR RÚNARSSON PRODUCED BY PEGASUS PICTURES HALIBUT IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH NUTIPRODUKCIJA JOURZFÈTE WITH SUPPORT FROM THE ICELANDIC FILM CENTRE
 SLOVAK AUDIOVISUAL FUND MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS NORDISK FILM & TV FOND IN CO-OPERATION WITH RÚV THE PARTY FILM SALES SELECTED FOR THE
 CO-PRODUCTION VILLAGE LES ARCS FILM FESTIVAL 2021 WORK IN PROGRESS LES ARCS FILM FESTIVAL 2022 WORK IN PROGRESS GÖTEBORG FESTIVAL 2023



PEGASUS PICTURES & THE PARTY FILM SALES present

OFFICIAL SELECTION

tiff

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL 2023

S O L I T U D E

DIRECTED BY NINNA PÁLMAÐÓTTIR

ICELAND, SLOVAKIA, FRANCE
DRAMA / ISLANDIC / 2022 / 75' / SCOPE / 5.1

INTERNATIONAL SALES

The Party Film Sales
16, rue Frochot 75009 Paris
01 40 22 92 15
sales@thepartysales.com
www.thepartysales.com



SYNOPSIS

A farmer that lives a quiet life in the countryside is forced by the state to sell his home. He leaves everything behind, relocates to the capital, and soon meets a 10-year-old paper delivery boy. Their friendship proves to be transformative for them both.





DIRECTOR'S INTERVIEW

How did *Solitude* come about as your first feature, did you already know the filmmaker Rúnar Rúnarsson, who wrote this script?

It sounds like a cliché, but it was written in the stars. I was so moved as a 17-year-old watching Rúnar's short film *Sparrows* in my hometown in the north of Iceland. I always thought his work was amazing. He had this script he wanted someone else to direct and when he saw my short film *Paperboy*, he reached out to his producer Lilja Ósk Snorradóttir at Pegasus Pictures to say, 'I found the director.' And the funny thing is that Lilja and I had already started speaking about me making my first feature – after she had seen *Paperboy*. So she sent me the script and said, 'Just see if you connect to it.'

I was so excited but I also had to read it and make sure it was something right for me. I knew immediately it was. It was a world that I knew from my previous work – like two of my short films had been put into one screenplay. It just felt naturally right. My short film *Paperboy* was about a young paper delivery boy and Rúnar had written this character as a different young paperboy, but both of these characters are very sympathetic to the world around them and very curious about the people around them. It felt like the hearts of the stories were similar. I'd also made another short, *All Dogs Die*, about an older person who was a loner in the countryside.

When you decided to direct this story, how did you and Rúnar collaborate?

We started with just talking in depth about the script. Me getting to know where he was coming from with it, and then telling him what I thought was the heart of the story for me. We got on the same page about some minor changes. I really felt the freedom to make it my own, I'm very thankful that the day before the shoot, Rúnar said, 'I'm here when you need me, but this is your film.' I really appreciated that.

A filmmaker's debut feature makes a statement about who you are as a storyteller, what made this the story you needed to tell?

I've always been fascinated by pure connections – especially with people who aren't family. That's always moved me and was something I was exploring in my short *Paperboy*. I like everyday magic – I'm a big people watcher in real life, and have a notebook I always use when I see these moments of connection, the simple everyday magic moments. The film is a coming-of-age story for both of them – for Ari with his parents separating and he's having to grow up very fast in that situation; Gunnar is also coming of age because he's also learning the ropes in a way when he moves away from the family farm.

How did you cast Þröstur Leó Gunnarsson as Gunnar and Hermann Samúelsson as Ari and how did you work with them to have this chemistry together?

I worked with the wonderful Doorway Casting, who were great. With Þröstur, I had been a fan of his for so long, I saw him in theater when I was younger. He's shining through now in a lot of main roles. He's been one of my favourites for a long time and I when I started to envision this film, I thought, 'I have to meet him and make sure.' And after two coffees, we both knew. Now I feel like I've known him forever.

For Ari, we auditioned a lot of boys. My camera is just observing to see if they have presence, if they can forget themselves in the moment. That's what I look for. Hermann was just so present. In rehearsals, I just reminded him, 'I just want you to be you.' You don't want them to think too much about playing a character, it's more just being there.

With Þröstur and Hermann, we met a lot, just to go for cake and get to know each other without doing 'work'. Then we did rehearsals. I've learned more and more how important it is for everybody to do rehearsals. Everyone gets better from it.

Gunnar is not a very talkative man, how did you want this character to come across?

This was a learning process as we started to explore his character. I didn't want him to be an extremely shy man, and he's not an idiot. He's just an empathetic person. He's one of these people that doesn't have a single drop of bad blood.

Solitude is an Icelandic co-production with Slovakia, how did that come about?

We found an amazing co-producer, Jakub Viktorín from NUTPRODUKCIA, from Slovakia when we presented at the Co-Production Village in Les Arcs (in 2021). And our DOP Dušan Husár is Slovakian but living in Prague. So our crew was a mix of Icelandic crew with people from Slovakia and the Czech Republic. It worked great, we were all very tight.

How did you develop the visual language of the film?

With both of my shorts, I've been oriented to still composition more like still painting. But I knew I wanted this film to be more fluid. My DOP Dušan [Husár] and I were more interested in trying for a more handheld camera look. For the camera to be more alive. It's a nice contrast to the nature of the slow-paced story, bringing

life to it, it couldn't be that he went to the city and everything became depressing. It had to be vibrant in colour, and alive with the camera and playing with sounds. The shooting was intuitive.

The music in *Solitude* is beautiful – how did you want it to add to the story?

I worked with the Icelandic musician Pétur Þór Benediktsson – he's worked on all my shorts as well. I love his music, he's very talented. We knew we would have some big moments that could be beautiful with his music, but we never wanted to tell people how to feel with the music. It's a tricky balance to find, especially in a drama. This music is more stripped back and is driven by piano – I'm a piano player and so is my mother, and I thought this calmness of piano would be something that Gunnar would find beautiful.

You grew up in Iceland and also studied film at New York University, so where do you see your filmmaking influences?

My influences come from all over the place, I really love the films of Lynne Ramsay, Sofia Coppola, Joachim Trier, Chloe Zhao, Jennifer Kent & Mike Mills.

In Iceland, you've been able to work in crew positions for big-budget projects like *Oblivion* or *Thor* or *Game of Thrones*, did that help you prepare to make your own film or does that Hollywood work feel totally different?

I started doing film work on the side of studying at university, and it meant I had a lot of experience before I went to film school. Working on those big films and shows, there can be a lot of pressure working as a PA, so it now takes a lot to get me out of balance. It gave me a centre to deal with stress. I think it's beneficial for every director to have a sense of the functions of your crew, what the stresses are, and what you're asking people for. It makes you a better collaborator.





Going forward, do you think you'll work mostly in Iceland or also abroad?

I think you write from what you know. But recently I've had an idea that could be an international project. I'm an explorer.

Do you plan to write your own scripts or direct someone else's scripts again?

Both. I definitely want my next feature to be something I've written - I feel like I'm ready for that and I learned a lot from making *Solitude*. But on this film, I really enjoyed working with someone else's script, you can still bring yourself to it. People have asked me what genres I want to work with. And I think it's all about story. The sci-fi films or the horror films that I enjoy the most are about something deeper. I like to think I could tell all kinds of stories.

How does it feel to be putting the film out into the world starting in Toronto?

I'm really excited. I'm excited to share it with an audience because that's such a big therapeutic moment as a filmmaker to let go of it and to give it away -- it's not going to be mine anymore.



DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Ninna Pálmadóttir is an award-winning Icelandic filmmaker. She graduated with an M.F.A in film directing / screenwriting from NYU Tisch School of the Arts in 2019, and holds a B.A in film studies & literature from the University of Iceland. She grew up in a small town in north Iceland, surrounded by magnificent and raw nature that formed her style and personality in the arts.

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

Ninna's short film 'Paperboy' (2019) has screened at various film festivals around the world, premiering at the 45th Seattle International Film Festival.

In 2019 'Paperboy' won the 'Best Icelandic Short' award at the Reykjavík International Film Festival, was invited to the César Award's 'Les Nuits en Or' short program and selected to screen at TIFF's Short Cuts: Share Her Journey Shorts, event. 'Paperboy' was awarded 'Short of the Year' at the 2020 Icelandic Film & Television Academy Awards, Eddan.

Ninna was a participant of European Short Pitch 2019 with her thesis script 'All Dogs Die' and is a 2019 recipient of the Spike Lee Production Fund for the same project. 'All Dogs Die' premiered at Reykjavík International Film Festival 2020, Zagreb Film Festival 2020 as well as being one of 10 chosen projects for Karlovy Vary's & EFP's 'Future Frames' program 2021.

Ninna was a 'New Nordic Voice' nominee at the 2021 Nordisk Panorama Film Festival in Sweden and is currently in pre production on her debut feature length film 'Solitude'

CAST

Gunnar **Þhröstur Leó Gunnarsson**
Ari **Hermann Samúelsson**
Unnur **Anna Gunnadóis Guðmundsdóttir**
Orr **Hjörtur Jóhann Jónsson**
Contractor **Jóel Sæmundsson**

CREDITS

Screenplay **Rúnar Rúnarsson**
Photography **Dušan Husár**
Sound **Tihomir Vrbanec**
Set designer **Gus Ólafsson**
Music **Pétur Þór Benediktsson**
Editor **Ivor Šonje**
Costume Designer **Arndís Ey**
Make up artist **Andrea Štrbová**
Special Effects **Jón Már Gunnarsson**
Production Manager **Einar Orri Pétursson**
Cast **Vígfús Þormar Gunnarsson**
Producers **Lilja Ósk Snorradóttir**
Hlín Jóhannesdóttir
Elli Cassata
Rúnar Rúnarsson
Associate Producer **Snorri Þórisson**
Co-Producers **Jakub Viktorín**
Sarah Chazelle
Etienne Ollagnier
Production **Pegasus Pictures**
Halibut
Co-production **nutprodukcja**
Jour2fête



