



Nordic Council Film Prize – 2021

Purpose

The purpose of the Nordic Council prizes is to raise interest in the Nordic cultural community and in environmental co-operation, as well as to recognise outstanding artistic and environmental initiatives. In addition, the prizes seek to raise the profile of Nordic co-operation and increase its visibility.

The prize-winning film

The winner of the prize will be announced on Tuesday 2 November 2021, during the Session of the Nordic Council in Copenhagen. The prize is awarded to an artistically significant, Nordic-produced full-length feature film with cinema distribution. The film must have had its cinema premiere between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021. 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.

Criteria for nomination

The nominated films must have deep roots in Nordic culture, be of high artistic quality, distinguish themselves by their artistic originality, and combine and elevate the many elements of film into a compelling and holistic work of art.

National and Nordic juries

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 2021 are:

Denmark:

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

Finland:

Mikaela Westerlund, Kalle Kinnunen, Kaisu Isto

Iceland:

Jóna Finnsdóttir, Guðrún Helga Jónasdóttir, Björn Þór Vilhjálmsson

Norway:

Inger Merete Hobbelstad, Emilio Sanhueza, Anne Gjelsvik

Sweden:

Emma Gray Munthe, Gunnar Bergdahl, Caroline Cowan

The Nordic jury is made up of the heads of each of the national juries.

Previous winners of the Nordic Council Film Prize

The prize was first awarded in 2002, to the Finnish film *Mies vailla menneisyyttä* (*The Man Without a Past*) by Aki Kaurismäki.

Since the prize was made permanent in 2005, it has been awarded on an annual basis.

The winners to date are:

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

2006: *Zozo*, written and directed by Josef Fares and produced by Anna Anthony for Memfis Film, 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), and produced by Thomas Stenderup for Final Cut, Denmark.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nominees for Nordic Council Film Prize 2021

DENMARK

FLEE

SYNOPSIS

Flee tells the extraordinary true story of a man, Amin, on the verge of marriage which compels him to reveal his hidden past for the first time. A secret he has been hiding for over twenty years threatens to ruin the life he has built for himself. He recounts his dramatic journey as a child refugee from Afghanistan to Denmark.

Told mostly through animation, *Flee* weaves together a tapestry of images and memories, to tell the deeply affecting and original story of a young man, grappling with his traumatic past in order to find his true self and the meaning of home.

SCREENWRITER/DIRECTOR JONAS POHER RASMUSSEN

Danish/French writer/director Jonas Poher Rasmussen (1981) graduated from the Danish film school Super16 in 2010. He debuted in 2006 with the acclaimed TV documentary *Something About Halvdan*, followed by a series of radio documentaries. His first feature film *Searching for Bill* -a mix of documentary and fiction- won the Nordic Dox Award at CPH:DOX 2012, and Best International Film at Doc Aviv. His documentary *What He Did* won the Fipresci Award at the Thessaloniki Film Festival 2016.

His animated documentary *Flee* was officially selected at Cannes 2020 and went on to win numerous prestigious awards at world festivals in 2021, including the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance, the Dragon Award-Best Nordic Documentary at Göteborg, and the top Cristal Award-Best Feature at the Annecy Animation Film Festival 2021.

SCREENWRITER AMIN (Anonymous)

PRODUCER MONICA HELLSTRÖM

Monica Hellström holds a MA in film from the University of Copenhagen (DK) and a BA in film from the University of Bedfordshire, UK. She has worked as in-house producer at Denmark's Final Cut for Real since 2010.

Hellström previously worked at Upfront Films and at the Danish Film Institute's Film Workshop. She was selected for the 'Producer on the Move' in Cannes 2020. Over the last 10 years, she has worked on more than 20 films, including Daniel Dencik's *Moon Rider*, Reel Talent Award winner at CPHDOX 2012, Simon Lereng Wilmont's *The Sumo Wrestler's Son* (2013), *The Fencing Champion* (2014) and *The Distant Barking of Dogs*, winner of more than 30 awards including Best First Appearance Film at IDFA 2017.

Her documentary *He's my Brother* by Cille Hannibal and Christina Hanberg won a Special Mention at CPH:DOX 2021 and the Audience Award at DOK Fest München 2021.

Hellström also served as co-producer among others of Tarik Saleh's award-winning thriller *The Nile Hilton Incident* and Rebecca Daly's Irish film *Good Favour*.

ANIMATION PRODUCER CHARLOTTE DE LA GOURNERIE

Charlotte de la Gournerie is co-owner/producer at Sun Creature Denmark and CEO at Sun Creature France.

A graduate of the prestigious Ecole des Gobelins in France with a specialization in animation production and transmedia, De la Gournerie first worked as a production manager in France. After attending the 'Animation Sans Frontières workshop, supported by Creative Europe, she moved to Denmark to work as a producer. In 2015, she became partner at Sun Creature Studio.

Among the animated projects produced at Sun Creature are the Cartoon Networks TV series *The Heroic Quest of the Valiant Prince Ivandoe* and the upcoming Netflix series *Splinter Cell* based on the Ubisoft video game.

Flee is de la Gournerie's first feature length animated film.

PRODUCER SIGNE BYRGE SØRENSEN

Signe Byrge Sørensen (1970) is a producer and CEO of Denmark's leading company Final Cut for Real, twice Oscar® nominated for the documentary films *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence*.

She holds a master's degree in international development studies and communication studies from Roskilde University (1998), Denmark, and is a EURODOC and EAVE graduate. Sørensen has been a producer since 1998, first in SPOR Media, then in Final Cut Productions Aps. In 2009 she and Anne Köhncke founded Final Cut for Real. She has produced more than 50 documentaries from around the world-South Africa, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Thailand, Indonesia, Colombia, Argentina in addition to Scandinavia. Besides Joshua Oppenheimer's international acclaimed *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence*, Sørensen's production credit includes the 2016 Prix Europa nominee *Les Sauteurs*, 2020 CPH:DOX Award winner *Songs of Repression*, 2021 Sundance Special Jury Award-World Documentary winner *President* and 2021 CPH:DOX Award-Special Mention winner *Our Memory Belongs to Us*. Sørensen was celebrated by her peers with the Roos Prize (2014), the Timbuktu Prize (2014) and the Ib Producer award (2016).

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Original title	<i>Flugt</i>
Director:	Jonas Poher Rasmussen
Screenwriter	Jonas Poher Rasmussen & Amin
Producers	Monica Hellström, Charlotte de la Gournerie, Signe Byrge Sørensen
Production company	Final Cut for Real
Running time	90 minutes
Domestic distribution	Reel Pictures
International sales	Cinephil

FINLAND

ANY DAY NOW

SYNOPSIS

13-year-old Ramin Mehdipour and his Iranian family have been living in a refugee centre in Finland. Just as Ramin starts to enjoy the school holidays, the family receives the terrible news their asylum application has been denied. The Mehdipours file a final appeal, and they continue with their everyday lives, trying to keep a positive attitude despite the looming danger of deportation. As Ramin starts the new school year, every moment, every friendship will be more precious than ever.

SCREENWRITER/DIRECTOR HAMY RAMEZAN

Hamy Ramezan (1979) is a Finnish Iranian film director and screenwriter.

Having fled persecution in Iran, and survived Yugoslav refugee camps as a young boy, Ramezan and his family arrived in Finland in 1990. He graduated from the film school at UCA, Farnham, UK in 2007, and has since completed several short films. *Over the Fence* for instance won the Special Jury Mention at Clermont-Ferrand and *Listen* (2015) was selected for the Directors' Fortnight in Cannes and was nominated for Best Short Film at the European Film Awards.

Any Day Now is his feature debut. The film world premiered at the Berlinale Generation 14plus 2021. Ramezan's next feature project *Madly in Love* (working title) written again with Antti Rautava, will be a love story about single parenthood and anger management.

SCREENWRITER ANTTI RAUTAVA

Antti Rautava was born in Helsinki in 1979. Rautava graduated from Lahti Institute of Design's Film and TV programme in 2007. He has written short films, plays and prose. *Any Day Now*, co-written with writer/director Hamy Ramezan, is his first feature-length screenplay.

PRODUCER JUSSI RANTAMÄKI

Jussi Rantamäki (1980) was born in Kokkola, Finland.

Rantamäki has worked for Aamu Film Company since 2008 and became sole owner in 2013. The producer has established long-term relationships with a roster of auteur filmmakers that he nurtures, working with them on their shorts then helping them reach wider audiences with more ambitious international features.

Rantamäki was executive producer of Juho Kuosmanen's *The Painting Sellers* which won the Cannes Cinéfondation Award 2010. He then produced the director's acclaimed feature debut *The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki* which won the Prix Un Certain Regard in Cannes 2016 and was nominated for the Nordic Council Film Prize.

Kuosmanen's sophomore film *Compartment No.6* is nominated for the prestigious Palme d'or in Cannes 2021.

Other writer/directors produced by Rantamäki include Hannaleena Hauru (*Thick Lashes of Lauri Mäntyvaara*), Elina Talvensaari (*Lady Time*) and Mikko Myllylahti (*The Woodcutter's Story*). Rantamäki received the State Art Prize in 2016.

PRODUCER EMILIA HAUKKA

Emilia Haukka is full-time producer at Aamu Film Company where she has worked on half a dozen shorts feature length films and documentaries over the last couple of years. Those include Elina Talvensaari's documentary *Lady Time*, Special Jury Award winner at Thessaloniki 2020, and Hannaleena Hauru's comedy *Fucking with Nobody*. She has produced with Jussi Rantamäki the Palme d'or nominated film *Compartment No.6* and Mikko Myllylahti's upcoming film *The Woodcutter's Story*.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Original title	<i>Ensilumi</i>
Director:	Hamy Ramezan
Screenwriters	Hamy Ramezan, Antti Rautava
Principal cast	Aran-Sina Keshvari, Shahab Hosseini, Shabnam Ghorbani, Kimiya Eskandari
Producers	Jussi Rantamäki, Emilia Haukka
Production company	Aamu Film Company
Running time	82 minutes
Domestic distribution	Nordisk Film Distribution
International sales	New Europe Film Sales

ICELAND

ALMA

SYNOPSIS

After having witnessed her father's brutal murder, three-year-old Alma and her mother fled their war-torn homeland and settled in Iceland. Now, 25 years later, Alma is serving time in a psych ward for murdering her boyfriend, a crime she can't remember. But when she discovers the boyfriend is still alive, Alma decides to escape and kill him after all.

SCREENWRITER/DIRECTOR KRISTÍN JÓHANNESDÓTTIR

Kristín Jóhannesdóttir (1948) is a veteran film and theatre director.

She has master's degree in literature and cinema from Paul-Valéry University, France as well a degree in film direction from the Conservatoire Libre du Cinéma Français in France.

Jóhannesdóttir directed her first feature film *Rainbow's End* in 1982. Her second feature *As in Heaven* was officially selected, out-of-competition at the Cannes Film Festival 1992 and went on to win 12 international awards. She has also directed music videos, shorts, TV films, radio plays and staged several works for the Reykjavik City Theatre and National Theatre of Iceland.

Jóhannesdóttir has been on the selection committee of the Icelandic Academy of the Arts. From 2015 to 2018, she was appointed member of the Council for Icelandic Cinema by the Icelandic Ministry of Culture.

PRODUCER GUDRUN EDDA THORHANNESDÓTTIR

Icelandic-born Gudrun Edda Thorhannesdóttir founded her production company Duo Productions in 2006. She runs in parallel Spellbound Productions, set up in 2009 with Oscar nominated writer/director/producer Fridrik Thor Fridriksson.

Thorhannesdóttir graduated from Cambridge University, England, with a BA and MA in literature and history. Later she studied film theory at the British Film Institute/University of London. Over the last 13 years, she has produced a dozen short films, feature length and TV series that have received wide international acclaim. Those include *Country Wedding* (2008) first feature film directed by celebrated editor Valdis Óskarsdóttir (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*), Fridrik Thor Fridriksson's film *Mamma Gógó*, and TV series *Season of the Witch*. She co-produced among others the Nordic Council Film Prize winner 2014 *Of Horses and Men* by Benedikt Erlingsson, Miximillian Hult's *Hemma* and *Pity the Lovers*, Vera Sölvadóttir's series *Life After Death* and Elfar Adalsteins' *End of Sentence*. *Alma* by veteran director Kristín Jóhannesdóttir premiered in Iceland May 7, 2021.

Gudrun has also held various positions in the film industry, such as director of the Reykjavik Film Festival and Nordisk Panorama, Head of International Relations for the Icelandic Film Centre and drama buyer for RÚV.

PRODUCER FRIDRIK THÓR FRIDRIKSSON

Fridrik Thór Fridriksson (1954) is one of Iceland's most illustrious filmmakers/producers. He runs the production company Spellbound with Gudrun Edda Thorhannesdóttir.

Fridriksson has been one of the driving forces behind the development of the Icelandic film industry since the 1980s and is still playing a pivotal role in nurturing new talent as a producer. He gained international recognition as a director and producer with his second feature film *Children of Nature* (1991) which was nominated for an Oscar-Best Foreign Language Film. Other acclaimed features that he has directed include *Cold Fever*, *Movie Days*, *Angels of the Universe*, *Devil's Island*, *Mamma Gógó*. As a producer, Fridriksson continues to be prolific. Directors that he has worked with include Ragnar Bragason (*Fiasco*, 2000), Hal Hartley (*No Such Thing*, 2001), Hilmar Oddsson (*Cold Light*, 2004), Benedikt Erlingsson (*Of Horses and Men*, winner of the Nordic Council Film Prize 2014), and Ari Alexander Ergis Magnússon (*Mikheil*, 2018). His latest production for Spellbound *Alma* was released in Iceland in May 2021.

PRODUCER EGIL ØDEGÅRD

Norwegian producer Egil Ødegård (1961) is head of the Oslo-based international production services and content creator Evil Doghouse Studios, mother company to the established arthouse distribution company Europa Film.

Ødegård studied history, media and cultural management at university. He produced his first feature film in 1989/90 and has since produced or co-produced more than 40 feature films, including most

films by Fridrik Thór Fridriksson and a few features by Baltasar Kormákur, such as *The Deep*, nominated for the Nordic Council Film Prize 2013. *Alma* is his latest production. He is member of the European Film Academy.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Original title	Alma
Director	Kristín Jóhannesdóttir
Screenwriter	Kristín Jóhannesdóttir
Principal cast	Snæfríður Ingvarsdóttir, Emmanuelle Riva, Kristbjörg Kjeld Hilmir Snær Guðnason
Producers	Gudrún Edda Thórhannesdóttir, Fridrik Thór Fridriksson, Egil Ødegård
Production companies	Duo Productions
Running time	96 minutes
Domestic distribution	Sena

NORWAY

GUNDA

SYNOPSIS

Where his prior documentary *Aquarella*, was a reminder of the fragility of human tenure on earth, in *Gunda*, Viktor Kossakovsky reminds us that we share our planet with billions of other animals. Through encounters with a mother sow (the eponymous Gunda), two ingenious cows, and a scene-stealing, one-legged chicken, Kossakovsky recalibrates our moral universe, reminding us of the inherent value of life, and the mystery of all animal consciousness, including our own.

WRITER/DIRECTOR VICTOR KOSSAKOVSKY

Russian-born Victor Kossakovsky (1961) is an innovative and multi-awarded documentary filmmaker. His distinctive filmography spans many different subjects but always explores the interplay of reality and poetic moments. Kossakovsky often serves simultaneously as director, editor, cinematographer, and writer on his works. Currently based in Berlin, he continues to work as a teacher and mentor to aspiring filmmakers.

Kossakovsky began his film career in 1978 at the Leningrad Studio of Documentaries as assistant cameraman, assistant director and editor. He studied screenwriting and directing at Moscow HCSF from 1986-1988. In 1989 he directed his first feature *Losev* and in 1992, made his name with his documentary *The Belovs*, which won a dozen awards including the VPRO Joris Ivens Award and the Audience Award at IDFA. In 2011, Kossakovsky's *¡Vivan Las Antipodas!* was selected as the opening film of the Venice Film Festival and won the Cinematic Vision Award at Silverdocs Festival among others. *Aquarella*, his technologically ground-breaking and globe-spanning documentary on the shapes of water, also premiered in Venice in 2018 before being shortlisted for Best Documentary at the Academy Awards, among others.

Gunda was selected at nearly 30 international festivals and shortlisted for an Academy Award.

PRODUCER ANITA REHOFF LARSEN

Norwegian producer Anita Rehoff Larsen (1977) has worked with Norwegian and international directors since 2010. She is co-owner of the Oslo-based production company Sant & Usant with producer and director Tone Grøttjord-Glenne.

Rehoff Larsen studied film and TV production at the University of Sunderland, UK, and further developed her skills as an international producer at EURODOC.

Her launch on the global documentary stage came in 2012 with the world premiere at IDFA of both *When the Boys Return* by Tone Andresen and *Bravehearts* by Kari Anne Moe.

Several acclaimed films are coming of age stories, associated with sports- *Dancing for You* by Sichen Aii & Erlend E. Mo, *Maiko-Dancing Child* by Åse Svenheim Drivenes, *Varicella* by Victor Kossakovsky and the latest documentary *Sisters on Track* by Corinne van der Borch and Tone Grøttjord-Glenne. The latter is the first Netflix Original Norwegian documentary.

Kossakovsky's *Gunda* executive-produced by Joaquin Phoenix, world premiered at the 2020 Berlinale's Encounters section, and was an instant hit with the audience and critics. The film was sold to more than 40 territories and was shortlisted for an Academy Award.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Original title	<i>Gunda</i>
Director:	Victor Kossakovsky
Screenwriter	Victor Kossakovsky
Producer	Anita Rehoff Larsen
Production company	Sant & Usant
Running time	93 minutes
Domestic distribution	Arthaus
International sales	Cinephil

SWEDEN

TIGERS

SYNOPSIS

Martin is one of the most promising football talents Sweden has ever seen. At sixteen, his lifelong dream comes true when he is bought by one of Italy's most prestigious clubs. Yet that dream comes at a very high price in terms of sacrifice, dedication, pressure and-most of all-loneliness. Martin begins to question whether this is actually the life he yearned for.

With a unique perspective on the world of professional sports, Ronnie Sandahl tells the true story of 16-year-old football prodigy Martin Bengtsson.

The film is a coming-of-age drama about a young man's burning obsession in a world where everything, and everyone, has a price tag.

SCREENWRITER/DIRECTOR RONNIE SANDAHL

Ronnie Sandahl (1984) is an author, screenwriter, and director, with a background in journalism. Since his feature debut *Underdog* (2015), awarded at the Zurich and Chicago film festivals, Sandahl has been working on a movie trilogy on sports and psychology: in addition to *Tigers*, he also wrote the script for *Borg vs McEnroe* (2017), winner of the Audience Award at the Rome Film Festival, and the upcoming gymnastics drama *Perfect* directed by Olivia Wilde.

Tigers won Best Film at the Busan Film Festival 2020, the Youth Jury Prize at Lübeck-Nordic Film Days, and the Dragon Award-Best Nordic film at the Göteborg Film Festival in 2021.

PRODUCER PIODOR GUSTAFSSON

Piodor Gustafsson (1962) has more than thirty years of experience within film, TV and advertising. Since September 2020, he is Director of Scripted Content at TV4 Media.

Gustafsson has previously worked as CEO for Black Spark Film & TV, Head of Programming and Commissioning Editor at SVT, Commissioner- Feature Film at the Swedish Film Institute. He also co-founded the animation company Happy Life and acted as CEO and producer for almost 10 years. Gustafsson has nearly 40 short, feature length films and TV dramas to his credit. Those include Björn Runge's *The Wife* (2017) for which Glenn Close earned an Oscar nomination, Ali Abbasi's *Border*, Un Certain Regard Prize winner at Cannes 2018, the TV series *Sthlm Requiem*, *Moscow Noir* and *Everything I Don't Remember*.

He is co-producer of the Icelandic film *Lamb* starring Noomi Rapace, selected for Un Certain Regard at the Cannes Film Festival 2021.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Original title	<i>Tigrar</i>
Director:	Ronnie Sandahl
Screenwriters	Ronnie Sandahl
Principal cast	Erik Enge, Alfred Enoch, Frida Gustavsson, Maurizio Lombardi, Liv Mjönes, Johannes Bah Kuhnke
Producer	Piodor Gustafsson
Production company	Spark Film & TV
Running time	116 minutes
Domestic distribution	TriArt
International sales	Wild Bunch