Alexandra Film Kepler 22 Productions URSUS Parvus

Estonian Film Institute, The Cultural Endowment of Estonia, Tartu Film Fund, CNC, Sacem, Icelandic Film Centre, Sundance Institute Documentary Fund, SVT

Present

SMOKE SAUNA SISTER-HOOOD

Writer / Director Anna Hints

Cinematographer

Ants Tammik

Editors

Hendrik Mägar Tushar Prakash Qutaiba Barhamji (France) Martin Männik Anna Hints

Composer Edvard Egilsson (Iceland) & EETER

Sound Designer Huldar Freyr Arnarson (Iceland)

Producer

Marianne Ostrat

Co-producers Juliette Cazanave (France), Hlín Jóhannesdóttir (Iceland), Eero Talvistu † (Estonia)

World Sales: Salma Abdalla welcome@autlookfilms.com www.autlookfilms.com

Short Synopsis (32 words)

In the darkness of smoke sauna, women share their innermost secrets and intimate experiences. Through a sense of communion, women wash off the shame trapped in their bodies and regain their strength.

SMOKE SAUNA SISTERHOOD (2023) Estonia, France, Iceland

89 minutes, English subtitles

No story too shameful, no burden too heavy to carry when you share it with your sisterhood...

The Vana-Võromaa (region in South Estonia) smoke sauna tradition known as "savvusanna kombõ" and listed in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, is one of connecting family and friends to cleanse body and soul inside a place of peace and contemplation. Conflicts are left outside. In Filmmaker Anna Hints' SMOKE SAUNA SISTERHOOD, the history of the smoke saunas as a place of giving birth inspired them to focus on women who "come together in the protective darkness of the smoke sauna, share their deepest secrets and wash off the shame that has accumulated in their bodies".

The first documentary by an Estonian director to compete and win at Sundance, SMOKE SAUNA SISTERHOOD is a deeply moving, intimate and breathtaking approach to issues of trauma, healing, and community. Filmed almost as if a Vermeer or Rembrandt painting, the camera is never intrusive, never mechanical. Rather, the images move as the smoke – lingering, wafting, suspended briefly before disappearing and reappearing. With an authentic voice and authority born of their own heritage, filmmaker Anna Hints has created a transformative experience of being human within a female body, showing women "as they are" with great emotional veracity and deep empathy.

Technical Details

RT:	89 minutes
Year of Production:	2023
Genre:	Documentary
Original languages:	Estonian, Seto, Võro
Subtitles:	English
Image:	Color
Aspect ratio:	Flat - 1.85
Sound:	5.1
DCP Frame Rate:	25fps
Camera:	ARRI Amira
Lens:	Sigma 18-35mm f/1.8 DC HSM Art

Contact:

Alexandra Film Marianne Ostrat <u>marianne@alexandrafilm.ee</u> www.alexandrafilm.ee https://www.facebook.com/alexandrafilm

SMOKE SAUNA SISTERHOOD Director ANNA HINTS

Anna Hints is an Estonian film director with a background in contemporary art and experimental folk music. Having deep roots in the distinct culture of South Estonia, Anna's second home is in India. As an active dumpster diver, Anna's short documentary *For Tomorrow Paradise Arrives* (2021) initiated public discussion and growth of new grassroot movements against food waste in Estonia. Anna's first feature documentary *Smoke Sauna Sisterhood* premiered at Sundance Film Festival World Cinema Documentary Competition program in January 2023 with Anna winning the Directing Award. European Premiere of the film will take place at CPH:DOX competing for the NEXT: WAVE AWARD. Anna's next short fiction is *Weight of Light* (2023) that depicts the life of female rag pickers in Delhi. Anna is a singer in the electronic-folk trio EETER that was nominated in the Best Film Music category at the Estonian Film and TV Awards 2018. EETER collaborated with Icelandic composer Edvard Egilsson for the original score of *Smoke Sauna Sisterhood*. Anna is currently pursueing a Masters Degree at the Department of Drama of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre.

Producer MARIANNE OSTRAT

Marianne Ostrat is an Estonian film producer. She founded Alexandra Film during her MA studies at Baltic Film, Media and Arts School (BFM) in 2006. In 2017 she premiered her first fiction feature: *The End of The Chain* by Priit Pääsuke (Karlovy Vary IFF, 4 Estonian Film & TV Award nominations) and a Spanish-Estonian culinary documentary *Constructing Albert* by Laura Collado and Jim Loomis (San Sebastian, Palm Springs, SXSW, HotDocs). In 2021 she released a youth comedy *Kids of the Night* - the second feature film of Priit Pääsuke, nominee of 7 and winner of 3 Estonian Film & TV Awards (Best Screenplay, Best Actor and Best Actress). In November 2022 an Icelandic-Estonian fiction feature *Driving Mum* by Hilmar Oddsson premiered at 26th Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival Main Competition and won Grand Prix and Best Original Score. In addition to that Marianne has produced two short films by director Tanno Mee - *Helen's Birthday* (2017) and *New Beginnings* (2019), which were both nominated for the Estonian Film & TV Award in Best Short Film category. Marianne Ostrat's first feature documentary *Smoke Sauna Sisterhood* (Estonia-France-Iceland) by Anna Hints premiered at the Sundance Film Festival World Cinema Documentary Competition Program in January 2023 with director Anna Hints winning the Directing Award.

Cinematographer ANTS TAMMIK

Ants Tammik (b. 1990) is an Estonian cinematographer and photographer. With nearly 17 years of experience his main focus is visually demanding documentaries, short and long format films. An extremely sensitive artist and happiest in a nature setting, Ants takes most pride in projects dearest to his soul, projects that pride visual storytelling and not just rich in layers but also filled with social commentary. Ants graduated with a BA from the Baltic Film and Media School in 2013 and has also studied at FAMU - Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. Fragile World - a short nature documentary that Ants directed himself - won the Estonian Film & TV Award in Best Short Film category, The Cultural Endowment of Estonia Best of the Year Award and the Grand Prix at the Baikal Film Festival in 2016. Ants has worked on commercial projects on the Arabian peninsula, shot fiction features Chasing Unicorn (2019) and Child Machine (2022) by director Rain Rannu and amongst other Estonian fiction features did B-camera for Academy Award shortlisted Truth or Justice (2019) by Tanel Toom. Ants latest work to date - Smoke Sauna Sisterhood by Anna Hints - celebrated it's world premiere at Sundance Film Festival World Cinema Documentary Competition in January 2023 with director Anna Hints winning the Directing Award. Director Madli Lääne's cinematographically challenging short drama Jungle Law is also set to premiere in 2023.

Editor HENDRIK MÄGAR

Hendrik Mägar is an Estonian film editor based in Tallinn. His creative focus has been mainly on fiction features and feature length documentaries. Hendrik's style is very subtle, personal and emotional. He graduated from the Baltic Film, Media and Arts School (BFM) with a BA in film editing in 2012 and with a MA in 2015. Hendrik's most recent work is an Estonian-French-Ice-landic feature documentary *Smoke Sauna Sisterhood* by Anna Hints that premiered at Sundance Film Festival World Cinema Documentary Competition in January 2023 with director Anna Hints winning the Directing Award. Prior to that Hendrik edited an Icelandic-Estonian fiction feature, dark comedy *Driving Mum* by Icelandic director Hilmar Oddsson that premiered and won Grand Prix and Best Original Score at 26th Tallinn Black Nights FF in November 2022. Before that Hendrik edited feature documentaries *A Loss of Something Ever Felt* by Carlos Eduardo Lesmes Lopez (2020, HotDocs) and *A Year Full of Drama* by Marta Pulk (2020, New Zealand IFF) and fiction features *Portugal* by Lauri Lagle (2018, Tallinn Black Nights FF) and *The Days That Confused* by Triin Ruumet (2016, Karloy Vary IFF). In 2017 Hendrik won the Estonian Film & TV Award for Best Editing with *The Days That Confused*, in 2020 was nominated for *A Year Full of Drama* and won again in 2021 with *A Loss of Something Ever Felt*.

Editor TUSHAR PRAKASH

Tushar Prakash Born in New Delhi, a graduate of the National Polish Film School in Łódź. His graduation film *Jestem OK* was screened at various festivals across the world including the New Horizons Film Festival in Wroclaw. He co-directed *Karma Killings*, the first Indian documentary to be acquired by NETFLIX. He has participated at "La Fabrique Des Cinémas Du Monde" at the Cannes Film Festival (2015) where he was mentored by Claire Denis. He has been creatively collaborating with Estonian film director Anna Hints since 2019. They have written together two short fiction scripts *Weight of Light* (in post-production) and *Sauna Day* (in pre-production). *Weight Of Light* won Baltic Producers Media Award at Baltic Pitching Forum in Vilnius 2021. Tushar Prakash is one of the editors of Anna Hints's debut feature-length documentary *Smoke Sauna Sisterhood* that premiered at Sundance Film Festival World Cinema Documentary Competition in January 2023 with director Anna Hints winning the Directing Award.

Sound Recordist TANEL KADALIPP

Tanel Kadalipp is an Estonian sound editor and musician. In 2009 Tanel graduated from the University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy as a jazz musician/instrument teacher (double bass), and in 2015 from Tallinn University Baltic Film, Media and Arts School (BFM) as a sound designer/sound recordist. Since 2016, Tanel has been working as a freelance sound recordist and sound designer. In 2018 he was nominated for the Estonian Film Award in the Best Composer category for *Lembri Uudu* by Eeva Mägi, in 2019 was nominated in Best Sound Design for *Portugal* by Lauri Lagle, in 2020 he won the Estonian Film & TV Award for Best Sound Design for *The Old Man Movie* by Oskar Lehemaa and Mikk Mägi and was nominated again for Best Sound Design in 2022 for *Wednesday* by Eeva Mägi. Tanel works and teaches in University of Tallinn Baltic Film, Media and Arts School. Currently, Tanel is finishing his MA studies at the Estonian Academy Music and Theatre in Recording Arts curriculum.

Composer EDVARD EGILSSON

Eðvarð Egilsson is a composer hailing from Reykjavík, Iceland. Eðvarð studied piano and percussion, fine tuning his skill and love for music from an early age. Eðvarð is driven by his passion for music production and classical composition. With his electronic influence deeply rooted in synthesizers and sound manipulation, Eðvarð creates complex musical narratives that are rife

with emotion by using a variety of rhythmic cadences, from soft-forming musical waves to hardknocking tunes.

Eðvarð is also a founding member of the music group Steed Lord, in which he was the music producer. Formed in 2006, Eðvarð and Steed Lord have performed and collaborated with many well-known artists all over the world.

After residing in Los Angeles for 8 years, working in the music and film industry, Eðvarð moved back home to Iceland and graduated in classical composition from the Iceland University of the Arts. Eðvarð's notable work includes original score for *Quake* by director Tinna Hrafnsdóttir (2021) co-composed with Páll Ragnar Pálsson, television series 'Líf Kviknar / Líf Dafnar' (2018-2022), 'Útsending' soundtrack for The National Theatre of Iceland, solo project 'Kíruma' and numerous commercial works for clients such as Mercedes-Benz. Eðvarð most recent work is the original score for Estonian-French-Icelandic feature documentary *Smoke Sauna Sisterhood* by Anna Hints for which he collaborated with Estonian folk-electronic trio Eeter. Onwards, Eðvarð is wrapping up his upcoming debut solo album and scoring a new true crime series in Iceland.

Composer EETER

EETER is an Estonian electronic-folk trio that encourages having fun experimenting and taking pleasure in making mistakes. Ethereal worlds where smooth yet scratching ambient meets psychedelic raw folk are created combining electronics, voice and piano. The band is made up of Anna Hints, Marja-Liisa Plats and Ann Reimann, who are all actively involved in various spheres of the creative world. They have been making music together since late autumn of 2013. EETER was nominated to the Estonian Film & TV Award for the original score of nature documentary *Wind Sculpted Land*. EETER collaborated with Icelandic composer Edvard Egilsson on the original score of *Smoke Sauna Sisterhood* that premiered at Sundance Film Festival World Cinema Documentary Competition in January 2023 with Anna Hints winning the Directing Award.

MARIANNE OSTRAT, Producer's Statement

My roots from father's side are in South Estonian soil, and I felt the connection with Anna's documentary project about smoke sauna already back in 2016 when Anna was developing the project with its initial producer Eero Talvistu: it was being presented at IDFA Forum under the name *Smoke Sauna Symphony*.

Three years later in March 2019, after Eero - whom I knew briefly in person - had tragically passed, Anna offered me to take over the project on which they had worked with Eero already for three years. French co-producer Juliette Cazanave from Kepler22 Productions with production support from CNC and SACEM was already attached. Inspired by the main subject of the film - smoke sauna - and Anna's treatment of it - women sharing stories in this dark safe space - my response was a Full-Body-Yes.

As we joined forces with Anna a strong vision of a sisterhood coming together in front of the camera, and expanding behind the camera into life, took over: The new and final title of the film, **SMOKE SAUNA SISTERHOOD**, was born.

SMOKE SAUNA SISTERHOOD was shot over approximately 70 shooting days. The principal photography of started in 2018, and the majority of the shooting took place during the pandemic from March 2020 till January 2021.

We shot in a remote place with a small crew and hence could resume the shooting two months after the outbreak of COVID-19. Director Anna Hints - normally residing in Tartu, the capital of South Estonia - moved to a farm house in South Estonian wilderness with a smoke sauna for the summer and this became our basecamp.

While Anna lived in South Estonia, the rest of the crew drove in for 4-5 day shooting periods. Usually, we had 5-6 crew members on location: Director Anna Hints; Cinematographer Ants Tammik; Sound Recordist Tanel Kadalipp or Patrick McGinley; 1st Assistant Camera, a production assistant and me.

These shooting trips were magical: we lived in the farm house in Southern Estonian wilderness, took water from the well, went for swims together. I and the production assistant took turns in cooking for the crew and characters - often over an open fire.

During the shooting my role as a producer was to hold space for our crew and first and foremost for Anna, who was holding space for our subjects in the sauna. After the shooting session in sauna the crew and subjects had a feast together and now the crew members operating outside of the sauna during the shoot, had a change to go to the smoke sauna. Nobody involved was left untouched by the spirit of smoke sauna. In addition to that we shot in 3-4 other saunas belonging to Anna's friends.

During that same summer in the farm house in South Estonia, Anna edited a 20-minute scene with editor Martin Männik, based on which Sundance Institute Documentary Program decided to support the film.

The shooting period of **SMOKE SAUNA SISTERHOOD** was a beautiful, deep, transformative and life-affirming journey and exploration of South Estonia and it's smoke sauna culture through different seasons for me, and I believe for the whole crew.

The film is shot with ARRI Amira. Temperatures in the sauna went up to 90 degrees Celsius in the sauna and during the production we lost two lenses and a monitor to heat and humidity.

Feeling a strong connection and similarities between Estonian and Icelandic sensibility both me and Anna had dreamt of collaborating with Icelandic talent. In autumn 2021, our co-producer, Hlín Jóhannesdóttir, secured funding from Icelandic Film Centre and brought on board composer Eðvarð Egilsson to collaborate with an Estonian experimental folk trio EETER (that Anna is a member of), as well as an acclaimed Icelandic sound designer Huldar Freyr Arnarson.

Between August and December 2022 our journey to complete **SMOKE SAUNA SISTER-HOOD** took us to Iceland twice - for Anna to work on original music with Eðvarð Egilsson and later together with editor Hendrik Mägar to complete the sound post-production of *Smoke Sauna Sisterhood*.

The film ends with a runic verse "*Thank You Song for Smoke Sauna*" performed by director Anna Hints (chorus by producer Marianne Ostrat), to thank the spirit of smoke sauna, the women sharing stories in the film, the crew, financiers and every single person - on this and other side of the veil - who helped **SMOKE SAUNA SISTERHOOD** come to life.

Festivals and awards

Sundance Film Festival World Cinema Documentary Competition - Directing Award January 2023, Park City, UT, USA

CPH:DOX in competition for NEXT: WAVE Award March 2023, Copenhagen, Denmark

Stockfish Film Festival - Sundance Corner March-April 2023, Reykjavík, Iceland

Hong Kong International Film Festival - Main Competition April 2023, Hong Kong

San Francisco International Film Festival / Main Competition - McBaine Documentary Feature Award April 2023, San Francisco, CA, USA

Alexander Valley Film Festival April 2023, Healdsburg, CA, USA

HotDocs Canadian International Documentary Festival - Persister April-May 2023, Toronto, OT, Canada

Millennium Docs Against Gravity - Main Competiton - Newsweek Psychologia Award; Special Mention The City of Poznań Freedom Award May 2023, Warsaw, Poland

Beldocs - Eurimages Audentia Award for Best Female Director May 2023, Belgrade, Serbia

DocsBarcelona - Opening Film / Main Competition May 2023, Barcelona, Spain

Seattle International Film Festival - Competition May 2023, Seattle, WA, USA

Sydney Film Festival - Europe! Voice of Women in Film June 2023, Sydney, Australia

Sheffield DocFest - Memories June 2023, Sheffield, UK

Transilvania International Film Festival - What's Up, Doc? Competition June 2023, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Sundance FF festival logo

ALEXANDRA FILM

in co-production with

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&

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with the support of

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with the support of

SUNDANCE INSTITUTE DOCUMENTARY PROGRAM THE CULTURAL ENDOWMENT OF ESTONIA TARTU FILM FUND

a film by Anna Hints

SMOKE SAUNA SISTERHOOD

END ROLL

SMOKE SAUNA SISTERHOOD	
AITJUMMA DEAR	
Kadi Kivilo	
Maria Meresaar †	

Elsa Saks		
Marianne Liiv		
Eva Kübar		
Liis Kuresoo		
Eda Veeroja		
Maria Aasa		
Merit Kask		
Leno Kuura		
Kerttu Kuslap		
Sandra Lepik		
Signe Mällo		
Kaarin Parts on garmon		
and all the others who shared their heart and stories amongst Smoke Sauna Sisterhood!		
In loving memory of Eero Talvistu and Maria Meresaar		
FILM CREW		
Director and screenwriter	Anna Hints	
Consultants in development	Ice and Fire Docs	
	Mikael Opstrup	
	Jesper Osmund	
	Anaïs Clanet	
Cinematographer	Ants Tammik	

	Anna Hints
Production Assistants in Estonia	Edina Csüllog
	Merit Kask
	Tushar Prakash
	Urmas Reisberg
	Eneli Rohtla
Head of Production in France	Pierre Jestaz
Production Manager in France	François Giesberger
Administrator in France	Geneviève Cosson
Production Trainees in France	Inès Antri
	Clément Diot
Editors	Hendrik Mägar
	Tushar Prakash
	Qutaiba Barhamji
	Martin Männik
	Anna Hints
Story Consultant	Merit Kask

Offline editing co-ordinator	Uku Toomet / Orbital Vox
Assistant Editor	Mihkel Oksmann
Editing consultants / Rough Cut Service	Rough Cut Service
	Jordana Berg
	Yaël Bitton
Post-production co-ordinator	Priit Pääsuke / Luxfilm
Colorist	Sten-Johan Lill
VFX	Hendrik Proosa
Online Editor	Priit Pääsuke
Sound Designer	Huldar Freyr Arnarson
Co-Sound Designer	Eðvarð Egilsson
Composers	Eðvarð Egilsson & EETER
Vocalists	Anna Hints
	Unnur Jónsdóttir
	Marja-Liisa Plats

Flutist	Sara Di Costanzo
Original score recorded at	Hljómandi Recording Studio / Iceland
Accountant	Daisy Leismann / Profia Arvestuse OÜ
Lawyer	Kaido Uduste
Graphic designer	UNT / TAMMIK
Credits designer	Eva Reiska
Trailer Editor	Marion Koppel / Tallinn Postworks
Translators	Tushar Prakash
	Piret Õunapuu
	Margus Õunapuu
Subtitles	Film Tower
PR	Agenda Public Relations
	See-Through Films
SPECIAL THANKS!	

Triin Pruul	
Mark Zirk	
Anu Adermann	
Liisu Arro	
Sarita Gupta	
Anneli Ehlvest	
Külli Eichenbaum	
Ülle Harju	
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Tiit Joala	
Anneli Juhkam	
Tarmo Juhkam	
Kalev Järvik	
Roosi Mai Järviste	
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Maigi Kalluste	
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Liisi Kivilo	

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Melissa Masing	
Põvvat Matjus	
Säde Matjus	
Helena Nahkor	
Jonas Nahkor	
Lille Nummert	
Marian Nummert	
Mihkel Nummert	
Koit Nummert	
Laurits Nummert	
Siret Närja	
Astrid Org	

Pihel Parts	
Maiken Pius	
Karl Purga	
Jan Rahman	
Andres Riivik	
Heldur Saag	
Katrin Saag	
Ats Sepp	
Meelis Sepp	
Pipi-Liis Sepp	
Iris Adelia Sikk	
Tormi Sikk	
Villem Sikk	
Kati Soon	
Mihkel Soon	
Silvi Valdas	
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Estonian Documentary Guild	
THANK YOU SO MUCH!	
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Taavi Toom	
Tanel Toom	
Jaan Tootsen	
Kristel Tõldsepp	

Kersti Uibo	
Maria Ulfsak Sheripova	
Taisto Uuslail	
Katre Valgma	
Meel Valk	
likka Vehkalahti	
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Arvo Vilu	
Björn Viktorsson	
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND DONATION!	
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Sirje Sauga		
Katrin Seidelberg		
Ülle Trumm		
FOLK TUNES IN THE FILM		
"Sauna Chant"		
South Estonian family heritage chant passed on to A	nna Hints	
Improvised and performed by Anna Hints, Liis Kuresoo, Marianne Ostrat, Eneli Rohtla		
"Kargus"		
Traditional Seto dance		
Performed by Kaarin Parts		
"Cheater Bridegroom"		
Estonian folk song		
Lead vocal by Liis Kuresoo		

Chorus by Anna Hints, Merit Kask, Kadi Kivilo	
"Kom lunkom"	
Traditional Småland polska	
Performed by Kaarin Parts	
"Thank You Song for Smoke Sauna"	
South Estonian folk song	
Improvised and lead vocal by Anna Hints	
Chorus by Marianne Ostrat	
ORIGINAL MUSIC BY EÐVARÐ EGILSSON & EETER	
"Smoke Arises"	
Composed by Eðvarð Egilsson	
Flute by Sara Di Costanzo	
Vocals by Anna Hints	
"Nobody Wanted a Girl"	
Composed by EETER and Eðvarð Egilsson	
Electronics by Marja-Liisa Plats and Eðvarð Egilsson	
Vocals by Anna Hints	
"Nothing but a Kiss Was Allowed"	
Composed by EETER and Eðvarð Egilsson	

Bells by Eðvarð Egilsson		
Vocals by Marja-Liisa Plats		
"As You Slept I Drew You"		
Composed by EETER and Eðvarð Egilsson		
Bells by Eðvarð Egilsson		
Vocals by Anna Hints		
"Water, Take the Pain Away!"		
Composed by Eðvarð Egilsson		
Bells, percussions, piano by Eðvarð Egilsson		
Vocals by Unnur Jónsdóttir, Anna Hints		
EETER is Anna Hints, Marja-Liisa Plats, Ann Reimann		
Shot in South Estonia		
EQUIPMENT		
Camera equipment	Tammik Film	
Lightning equipment	High Voltage	
Sound equipment	BFM	
SHOT WITH ARRI AMIRA		
Edited with Adobe Premiere Pro		logo

Developed at "Ice and Fire Docs 2019-2020"		+ logo
Presented at Nordisk Panorama Forum		+ logo
This film was pitched at IDFA Forum 2016		+ logo
Editing consultation by Rough Cut Service		+ logo
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