



A WHITE, WHITE DAY

BY HLYNUR PÁLMASSON
ICELAND, DENMARK, SWEDEN 2019



SEMAINE
DE LA CRITIQUE
CANNES 2019



SYNOPSIS

In a remote Icelandic town, an off-duty police chief begins to suspect a local man of having had an affair with his late wife, who died in a tragic accident two years earlier. Gradually his obsession for finding out the truth accumulates and inevitably begins to endanger himself and his loved ones. A story of grief, revenge and unconditional love.

INTERVIEW WITH HLYNUR PÁLMASSON BY MARTA BALAGA

You open the film with a quote about how “when everything is white, and you can no longer see the difference between the earth and the sky, the dead can talk to us who are still living”. Which immediately made me think of it as a ghost story of sorts, with a man chasing the truth about his late wife.

I think I'm drawn to things that I find mysterious and have a certain amount of ambiguity over it. Things that are hidden are full of possibilities and stimulate one's imagination. I think one of the main drives in working is the passion and desire for exploring the unknown.

There are some odd moments in the film, like the TV show for kids that is shown for quite a long time. Why?

I don't think it's that odd, not if you watch TV or see what's playing on people's phones. I think the scene touches upon things that the film is exploring and does it in a playful way. There is a Chinese saying that I like “The more you know, the less weird it is.”

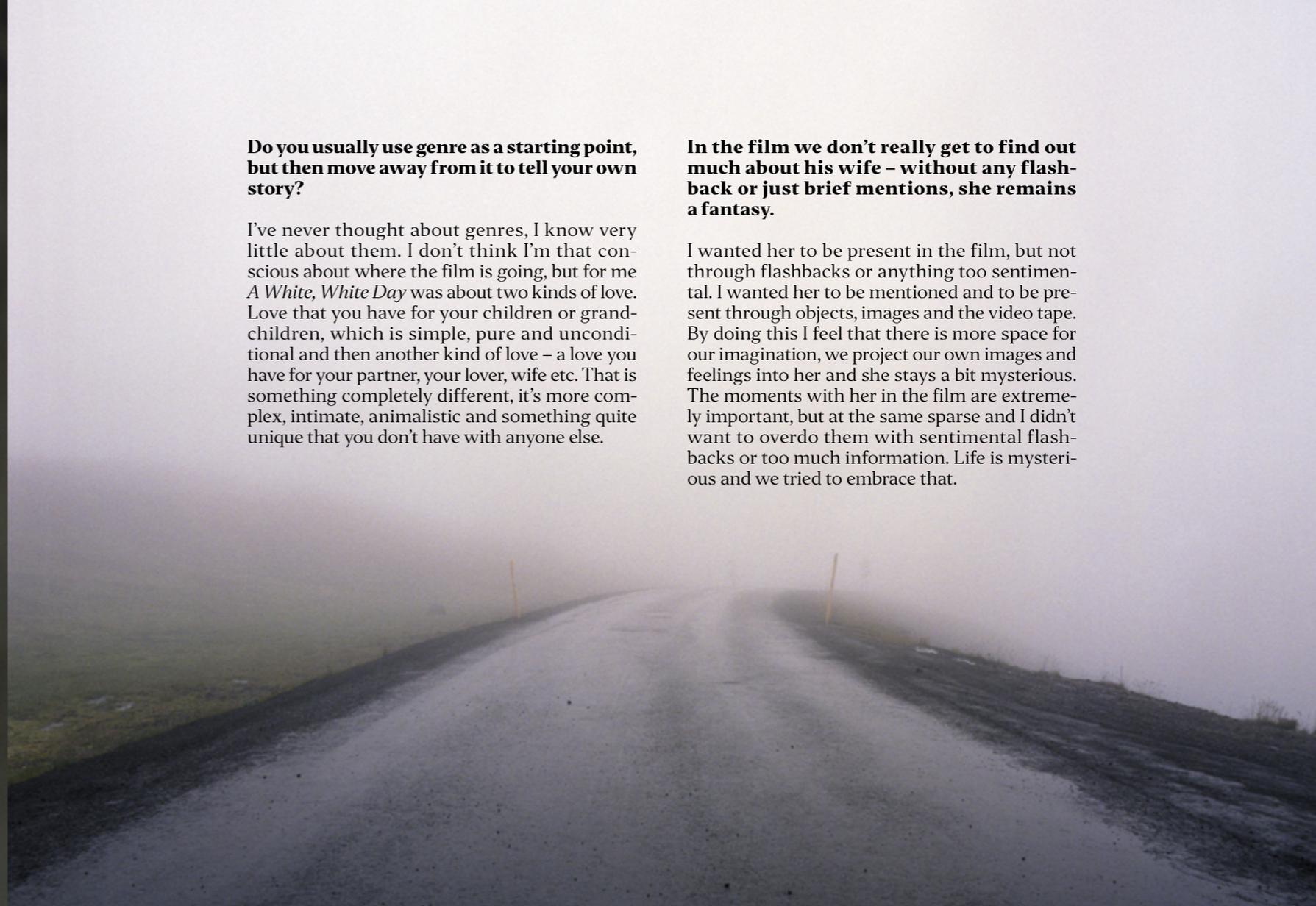


Do you usually use genre as a starting point, but then move away from it to tell your own story?

I've never thought about genres, I know very little about them. I don't think I'm that conscious about where the film is going, but for me *A White, White Day* was about two kinds of love. Love that you have for your children or grandchildren, which is simple, pure and unconditional and then another kind of love – a love you have for your partner, your lover, wife etc. That is something completely different, it's more complex, intimate, animalistic and something quite unique that you don't have with anyone else.

In the film we don't really get to find out much about his wife – without any flashback or just brief mentions, she remains a fantasy.

I wanted her to be present in the film, but not through flashbacks or anything too sentimental. I wanted her to be mentioned and to be present through objects, images and the video tape. By doing this I feel that there is more space for our imagination, we project our own images and feelings into her and she stays a bit mysterious. The moments with her in the film are extremely important, but at the same sparse and I didn't want to overdo them with sentimental flashbacks or too much information. Life is mysterious and we tried to embrace that.





The soundtrack echoes that. What kind of feelings did you want it to convey? Also because it suggests something is about to go wrong basically from the very beginning.

I wanted the music to fit the film's temperament, to sound very bright and beautiful and move effortlessly into something more dark and mysterious. It was very exciting to work with the music by Edmund Finnis. I'm a big fan of his work and I think his music works so wonderfully with sound. It gives air for sound and the film gives air for music, so I think these two elements work very well together, without suffocating each other.





You actually got to work with Ingvar Sigurðsson before on *The Painter* (2013), your graduation film from the National Film School of Denmark. What made you think of him again, and especially for this role?

I loved working with Ingvar on my graduation film and felt that there were so many things we could explore together, so I wrote and developed *A White, White Day* with him in mind and in close dialog with him. Ingvar is an extremely physical actor, but at the same time very emotionally present and a great collaborator. He has a very deep understanding of how to move and work with all the effortless gestures that we are able to capture with the film camera. So he is very good technically with both dialog and movement and this gives me a lot of freedom to write and play out very long and complex scenes and scenarios that are often difficult to execute. I also feel that he devoted himself 100% to the project and was very present and involved emotionally and that's basically what I really want and need from my close collaborators.

We didn't really discuss his relationship with his granddaughter, one that's probably one of the most important in the film. How did you see these two interact, and also this interaction to change?

His granddaughter is the apple of his eye and represents the unconditional love you have for your child or grandchild. It's simple, pure and it has an almost healing effect on the protagonist. It was very important for me that I enjoyed being with them and that they had this natural way of hanging out together.

It's interesting that while surrounded by family, Ingimundur is still very much on his own with his pain. Why were you drawn to grief, which is slowly boiling here until it pretty much bursts?

Having something you love already gives into the possibility that you will experience great loss. Ingimundur lost someone he adored and loved and then something... some dark doubt started to make him question what they had together. When someone is in this kind of state, in a moment of weakness, you often find him in the most human state. That's what I wanted to explore.



A large, dark, jagged rock sits on a wet, reflective surface, possibly a beach or a paved area. The rock is dark brown or black with some lighter, reddish-brown patches. The surface is wet and shows a clear reflection of the rock. There are some smaller pieces of rock or debris scattered around the main rock.

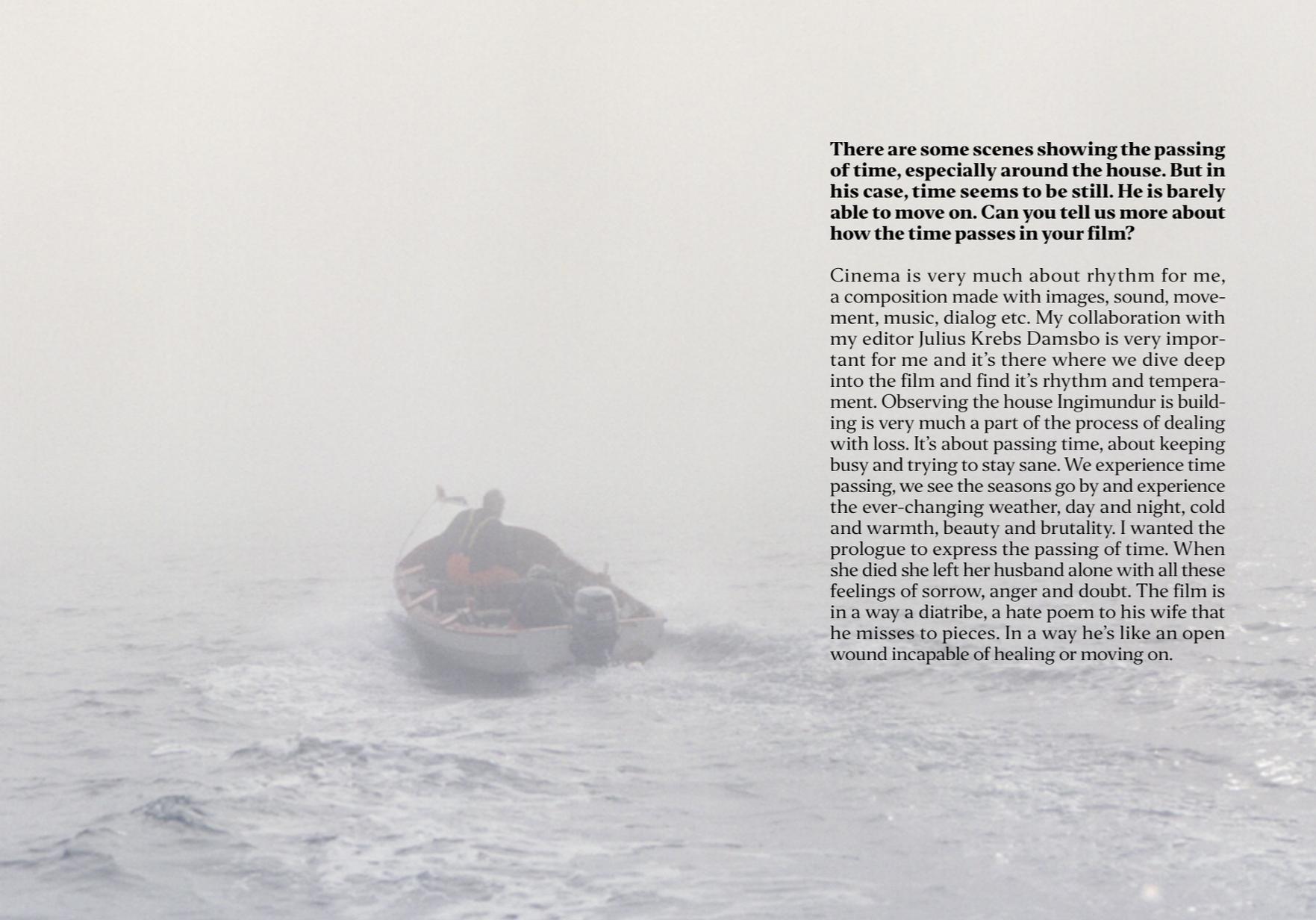
It's true – instead of cherishing his memories, it's almost as if he was trying to sabotage them. Why does he decide to find out the truth? It's a journey that can't possibly bring him peace, or can it?

I think they must have had something very special together so he doesn't really have a choice. It's up to the individual that experiences the film to find out if they think it can bring him peace or if he's just hurting himself. I hope the film is open for interpretation, so it depends very much on the individual watching the film. I think that the films and other works of art that I really like are always very respectful and open for interpretation. All good art probably is.

A young girl with blonde hair, wearing a dark sweater, is shown in profile, looking down. Her eyes are closed, and she has a somber expression. The background is a blurred, green, outdoor setting, possibly a field or a park.

You explored a sense of isolation before in *Winter Brothers*. What draws you to these “strong, silent types”, so unwilling to open up? And also, while that film was billed as “a lack-of-love story”, this one seems to be about a gradual destruction of one, interestingly enough by a person that still feels it so deeply.

I find Emil, the protagonist in *Winter Brothers*, very different from Ingimundur in *A White, White Day*. But perhaps they both feel left behind in a way or unfulfilled or unsatisfied, I don't know. Emil lacks love, being seen by someone, wanted and desired. Ingimundur is left behind with all these feelings of sorrow, doubt and anger. I think that *A White, White Day* is a story of love and hate at the same time because the most beautiful thoughts are often close to the darkest ones. The people you love and adore often experience your worst sides and the line between loving someone and hating someone is very thin.



There are some scenes showing the passing of time, especially around the house. But in his case, time seems to be still. He is barely able to move on. Can you tell us more about how the time passes in your film?

Cinema is very much about rhythm for me, a composition made with images, sound, movement, music, dialog etc. My collaboration with my editor Julius Krebs Damsbo is very important for me and it's there where we dive deep into the film and find it's rhythm and temperament. Observing the house Ingimundur is building is very much a part of the process of dealing with loss. It's about passing time, about keeping busy and trying to stay sane. We experience time passing, we see the seasons go by and experience the ever-changing weather, day and night, cold and warmth, beauty and brutality. I wanted the prologue to express the passing of time. When she died she left her husband alone with all these feelings of sorrow, anger and doubt. The film is in a way a diatribe, a hate poem to his wife that he misses to pieces. In a way he's like an open wound incapable of healing or moving on.



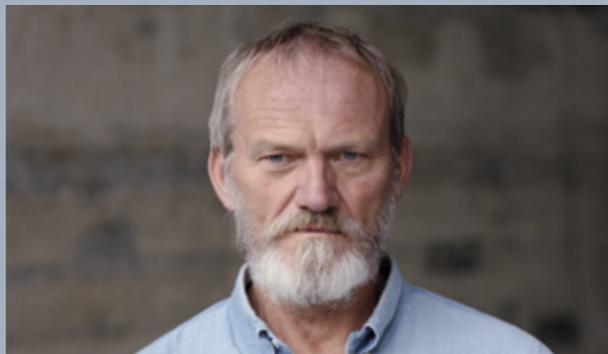
CAST





ÍDA MEKKÍN HLYNSDÓTTIR | ACTRESS

Born 22. August, Iceland 2008. When she grows up she wants to be a horse trainer and a part-time actress. *A White, White Day* is her first feature film.



INGVAR SIGURDSSON | ACTOR

Ingvar Sigurdsson graduated from The Icelandic Academy of the Arts in 1990 and has become an established leading stage performer in Iceland, the UK and throughout Europe. Recent international film work includes *A White, White Day*, *The Oath*, *The Swan*, *Sparrows and Of Horses and Men* as well as English language roles in American studio movies including *Fantastic Beasts: The crimes of Grindelwald*, *Justice League* and *Everest*. Ingvar has received several awards as a performer; he represented Iceland as European Shooting Star at the Berlin film Festival, received The European Film Award for Best European Actor, People's Choice and seven Icelandic Edda awards for Best Actor. Ingvar Sigurdsson is also a film screenwriter and producer.



HLYNUR PÁLMASON DIRECTOR AND SCREENWRITER

He started out as a visual artist and evolved his career later into filmmaking by pursuing an education at the Danish National Film School, which he graduated from in 2013 with the award-winning short *A Painter*. Pálmason's feature debut *Winter Brothers* world premiered in the main competition of the Locarno Film Festival in 2017, where it won 4 awards. Since then it has been sold to over 20 territories and continued its festival success, winning over 30 awards. *A White, White Day* is his second feature film.

2017 *Winter Brothers*, Feature
2014 *Seven Boats*, Short
2013 *En Maler*, Short
2012 *A Day or Two*, Short

MARIA VON HAUSSWOLFF | DOP

Maria von Hausswolff lives and works in Denmark as a cinematographer and filmmaker. In 2017 and 2018 she got awarded with a Bodil – the Danish academy awards – for her cinematography work on *Parents* (director: Christian Tafdrup, 2017) and *Winter Brothers* (director: Hlynur Palmason, 2018). In 2017 she also got the Camera Image award for best cinematography (debut feature category) for her camera work on *Winter Brothers*. The most recent feature film she shot is Hlynur Palmason's *A White, White Day*.

JULIUS KREBS DAMSBO | EDITOR

Julius Krebs Damsbo. Film editor, based in Copenhagen, Denmark. Graduated from The National Film School of Denmark in 2013. *A White, White Day* is his fourth production together with Hlynur Pálmason (*Winter Brothers*, *A Painter*, *Seven Boats*). He has experience in both fiction, documentary and tv from working with various directors and productions like May El-Touky (*Herrens Veje*) and Malene Choi (*The Return*) as well as on Simon Staho's latest project. Julius Krebs Damsbo is currently in post with Maria Bäck's feature *Psychosis* in Stockholm.

JOIN MOTION PICTURES | PRODUCER

Join Motion Pictures (JMP) was established in 2007 in Reykjavík and is owned by producer Anton Máni Svansson and writer-director, producer Guðmundur Arnar Guðmundsson. The company was founded with the main goal of forging close working relationships with talented writer-directors, a dynamic that has resulted in films selected in competitions at major festivals and receiving over 150 awards. Among these accolades are festivals such as Cannes, Venice, Locarno, IDFA and Toronto. In the last 6 years, JMP has established itself among Iceland's leading production companies with films like *Whale Valley* (2013), *Heartstone* (2016) and *Winter Brothers* (2017). The company continues to develop and produce films and TV with high artistic value and potential for broad international distribution.



SNOWGLOBE | CO-PRODUCER

Snowglobe is a film production company established in Copenhagen in August 2015 by producers Mikkel Jersin, Katrin Pors & Eva Jakobsen. With its strong international roots, and particularly strong affiliation with Latin America, Snowglobe is a dynamic production company working with feature films across borders. In 2016, Snowglobe won the Silver Lion in the official competition in Venice for *The Untamed (La Región Salvaje)* by Amat Escalante and the Golden Leopard in the official competition in Locarno for *Godless* by Ralitza Petrova. In May 2018 Snowglobe world premiered *Birds of Passage* by Ciro Guerra and Cristina Gallego as well as *Petra* by Jaime Rosales in the Directors' Fortnight section in Cannes. Recently released titles include Danish feature films – *Lifeboat* by Josefine Kirkeskov and *Brakland* by Martin Skovbjerg and documentary *Western Arabs* by Omar Shargawi, which premiered in the Panorama section at Berlinale 2019.

HOBAB | CO-PRODUCER

HOBAB is a dynamic film production company based in Stockholm, Sweden with a track record of 30 features produced. Heads of the company are Peter Krupenin and Nima Yousefi. Hobab's philosophy is to create and provide the authors we work with the necessary attention and tools to crystallize their visions. A strong focus is producing films that have a social aspect integrated in the story because we believe movies are the ultimate power tool to embrace bridges between people and cultures. Among films HOBAB has produced are *Freud Leaving Home* by the Oscar winner Susanne Bier or the Crystal Bear winner *Four Weeks in June*, nominated for the European Film Awards. Hobab's recent productions include *Stupid Young Heart* by Oscar nominated director Selma Vilhunen (winner of the Crystal Bear in Berlinale Generation 14+) and *A White, White Day* by Icelandic director Hlynur Pálmason.



FESTIVALS

World Premiere: Semaine de la Critique,
Cannes 2019

FILM INFORMATION

Original title: Hvítur, Hvítur Dagur
English title: A White, White Day
Genre: Drama
Country: Iceland, Denmark,
Sweden
Language: Icelandic
Year: 2019
Duration: 109 min.
Picture: Color
Aspect ratio: 2.39 : 1
Sound: 5.1
Available format: DCP

CAST

Ingvar Sigurðsson: Ingimundur
Ída Mekkín
Hlynisdóttir: Salka
Hilmir Snær
Guðnason: Olgeir
Björn Ingi Hilmarsson: Trausti
Elma Stefania
Ágústsdóttir: Elín
Sara Dögg
Ásgeirsdóttir: Ingimundur's wife

CREW

Director: Hlynur Pálmason
Screenplay: Hlynur Pálmason
Cinematography: Maria von Hauswolff
Editing: Julius Krebs Damsbo
Production Design: Hulda Helgadóttir
Costume Design: Nina Grönlund
Hair and Makeup: Katrine Tersgov
Sound Design: Lars Halvorsen
Music: Edmund Finnis
Production company: Join Motion
Pictures
Co-pro. companies: Film i Väst,
Snowglobe, Hobab
With support of: Icelandic Film Centre,
Danish Film Institute,
Icelandic Ministry
of Industry, Nordisk
Film & TV Fond,
Swedish Film Institute,
Creative Europe MEDIA
In collaboration with: RUV, Sena, Kukl, Danish
Broadcasting Corporation
Producer: Anton Máni Svansson
Executive producers: Guðmundur Arnar
Guðmundsson,
Hlynur Pálmason,
Ingvar Sigurðsson
Co-producers: Eva Jakobsen,
Katrín Þors,
Mikkel Jersin,
Nima Yousefi,
Anthony Muir

PRODUCER'S CONTACT

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