

MARTTI SUOSALO

MEDIAINFO

A FILM BY HEIKKI KUJANPÄÄ

LAUGH OR DIE

HUMOUR IS A DEADLY SERIOUS MATTER

MARTTI SUOSALO JANI VOLANEN LEENA PÖYSTI PAAVO KINNUNEN RÜDIGER KLING VESA VIERIKKO JUSSI NIKKILÄ TOMMI LERONEN JUSSI LEHTONEN PANU VAUHKONEN KARRI MIETTINEN MARCUS HÄGG PETTERI KAUKORANTA
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EDITOR JUSSI RAUTANIEMI CINEMATOGRAPHER HEIKKI FARM F.S.C. LINE PRODUCER SAARA KANKAANPÄÄ CO-PRODUCER STEPHAN APELGREN / FILMPOOL NORD CO-PRODUCER TONY ÖSTERHOLM / LJUBBANG AB
PRODUCER KLAUS HEYDEMANN / INLAND FILM COMPANY OY SCRIPT WRITERS HEIKKI KUJANPÄÄ, MIKKO REITALA DIRECTOR HEIKKI KUJANPÄÄ

INLAND FILM COMPANY OY

LjubBang

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media luna

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Creative Europe

SOUTH EAST FINLAND FILM COMMISSION



JV, KARJALAINEN



TA, ETELÄ-SAIMAA



KRISTER UGGELDAHL, HBL



JUP, FORSSAN LEHTI

"Laugh Or Die is an optimistic and human commentary about the healing power of Art."

JK, AAMULEHTI

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"...the film's skilful portrayal of events taps into intense emotions."

KH, EEVA



"The tension between the characters played by Suosalo and Volanen is something quite fantastic to watch. Both men fit their roles perfectly, not resorting to clichés of any kind."

JR, EPISODI



"Laugh Or Die is a film completed on the sly, one that hopefully will attract similar mass audiences as Unknown Soldier. It is a film for everyone."

"What a fine classic story! It is so pure that it needs no additional clamour to support it."

LV, HELSINGIN SANOMAT

"The balance between humour and tragedy the film strives for is best perceived in Martti Suosalo's measured acting. Paavo Kinnunen as the reluctant commander of the execution squad and Leena Pöysti as Mrs Kalm growing attracted to Parikka are also doing outstanding work."

TP, ILTA-SANOMAT

Directed by Heikki Kujanpää
Written by Heikki Kujanpää, Mikko Reitala
Cinematography Heikki Färm, f.s.c.
Music Timo Hietala
Set Design Kaisa Mäkinen
Costume Design Marjatta Nissinen
Editing Jussi Rautaniemi
Sound Design Tony Österholm
Makeup Artist Pia Mikkonen
Cast Martti Suosalo, Jani Volanen,
Leena Pöysti, Paavo Kinnunen,
Jussi Lehtonen, Vesa Vierikko,
Jussi Nikkilä, Panu Vauhkonen ja
Karri Miettinen (aka Paleface).

Producer Klaus Heydemann,
Inland Film Company Oy.
Distribution in Scandinavia Egmont Nordisk Film
In co-operation with YLE, Nordisk Film, The Finnish Film Foundation, Finland 100, The Church Media Foundation, Filmpool Nord, Creative Europe, South East Finland Film Commission, and The Niilo Helander Foundation.
Duration 103 min
Age restriction K12
Production year, country © 2018, Finland
Original title Suomen hauskin mies
Swedish title Skratta eller dö
English title Laugh or Die

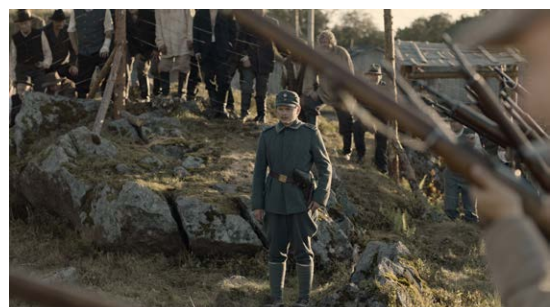


THE STORY

Laugh Or Die is a film about a zest of life and the power of laughter, tinged with dark humour. Prisoners already once sentenced to death prepare a play to entertain their guards and the commander of German troops visiting the prison island. If the audience is amused, they won't be shot. The theatre group is led by Toivo Parikka, once called the funniest man in Finland.

Laugh Or Die uses grotesque situations, showing mankind in a comical light. Everything is relative on the prison island isolated from the rest of the world, things previously self-evident become ridiculous. In the midst of distress, humanity and warmth force their way to surface as the prisoners work together for a common goal. Small humane acts gain vast significance, and humour wells up from the same source as the greatest pain: the fear of death and injustice.

Towards the end of World War One Finland made a choice between a German King and the Republican constitution. Independent Finland was born. Finns, just like the prisoners and the guards in the film, discovered unity through culture despite differences of opinion.





DIRECTOR'S WORD

The true event on which the script is based is an incredible one. The "Death Island" of Iso Mjölö was a barren place. Starvation reigned in the camp, the prisoners were in skeletal condition.

Yet a group of the Workers' Theatre actors wrote and rehearsed a comedy about the King of Finland to perform it to their fellow prisoners and some trusted guards. Something gave them the strength to perform and sing. The rehearsals of the mock-play attracted the guards' attention. Some of them became guardians of the project, by and large making it possible for the prisoners to perform.

Laugh Or Die is a film about a zest of life and the making of a comedy. The central character is a Workers' Theatre actor, but the others are also forced to perform certain roles, especially the White officers and guards. The film demonstrates the power of laughter, its ability to demolish borders constructed between people.

Laugh Or Die participates in the Finland 100 celebration as a dark horse, its final centenary project. It does not attempt to prop up our nation's nationalistic ego. Instead it strives to increase understanding towards the dichotomy and its consequences still in existence today. Even in distressing circumstances, it suggests, any society will survive if able to deal with its issues with the means of humour.

Combining humour and prison camp surroundings in a film is a surprising challenge to its visual realization. Thus the idea of opposites is employed everywhere in the cinematic language. The extremes: hilarity and cruelty, inconsolability and faith, the base and the noble, are present in every scene.

For me, the starting point of creating the locations was not found in photographs or realistic sceneries but in visions and ambiances. Together with my excellent designers (e.g. Cinematographer Heikki Färm, Set Designer Kaisa Mäkinen, and Costume Designer Marjatta Nissinen) we attempted to create a powerful, original reality that nonetheless would not lose its realistic foundation.

My own life situation entwined with this project, whether I wanted it or not. *Laugh Or Die* became a dearly loved project for me, and after approximately seven years of work this dream of mine was finally fulfilled both in this film and quite recently on stage. A major credit for this goes to Mikko Reitala, the other scriptwriter of the film.

Through our background as actors we believe that we are able to understand, to a certain extent, what it is like to put on a performance with your life on stake, and to succeed by the skin of your teeth. Yet to my mind, a personal stance in this is not navel-gazing. I believe the finished film is timeless and universal, and its story recognizable everywhere.

Heikki Kujanpää

DIRECTOR-
SCRIPTWRITER
**HEIKKI
KUJANPÄÄ**

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

2013 Pocket-parking, Short film, Inland Film Company
2011-2012 Kotikatu, TV series, director, YLE
2010 The Beginning of the End, Two-part TV film, Making Movies Oy
2009 Joulukuusivarkaat, TV film, Tuotantoyhtiö Sähkö
2008 Falling Angels, Feature film, Blind Spot Pictures
2000 Little Pilgrimage, Short film, Dada-Filmi Oy

AWARDS

2014 State Prize for Cinema, Pocket-parking
2009 Nordic Glory, Honorary mention, best script, Falling Angels
2000 The Golden Venla Award for Best Film, Little Pilgrimage
2000 Honorary mention, Orlenok International Children's Film Festival, The Icebreaker
2000 Grand Prix, Laon International Film Festival, Little Pilgrimage
2000 State Prize for Cinema, Little Pilgrimage
2000 National Competition Winner, Tampere Film Festival, Little Pilgrimage
1998 State Prize for Cinema, The Icebreaker



PRODUCER
**KLAUS
HEYDEMANN**

Heydemann is the founder and owner of Inland Film Company Oy, based in Helsinki.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY, PRODUCER / PRODUCTION MANAGER

2015 Chronicles of Melanie, Feature film, director: Viestur Kairiss
2014 Changes, Feature film, director: Sami Laitinen
2012 Soundbreaker, Documentary, director: Kimmko Koskela
1997 Midsummer Stories, TV film, director: Esa Illi
1996 Drifting Clouds, Feature film, director: Aki Kaurismäki
1992 The Bohemian Life Feature film, director: Aki Kaurismäki
1990 Amazon Feature film, director: Mika Kaurismäki

CAST



MARTTI SUOSALO (TOIVO PARIKKA)

Suosalo has acted in 20 films with 14 leading roles, and in dozens of TV roles. Suosalo has worked for several Finnish theatres and been awarded i.a. The Golden Venla, the Ida Aalberg Acting Prize, three Jussi Awards, and the Critics' Spurs Award. He received the Pro Finlandia Medal in 2016.

JANI VOLANEN (CAPTAIN KALM)

Volanen is an actor, director, and scriptwriter. He has acted i.a. in the KOM and Q Theatres, in the latter also as a Director. Volanen belonged to the Julmahuvi team making the series with the same name. Volanen has acted in several films, winning two Jussi Awards.

LEENA PÖYSTI (HELEN KALM)

Pöysti is a Finnish actor with roles in several TV series (*Roba*, *Syke*) and feature films like *Ganes* and *Off Key*.

PAAVO KINNUNEN (ALFRED NYBORG)

Kinnunen has acted i.a. in the feature films *Six-Pack Movie*, *Gloriously Wasted* and *The Hijack That Went South*. He plays the role of Eero in the Turku City Theatre play *Seven brothers* and has also acted in the *Tripla* TV show.

VESA VIERIKKO (JOHANSSON)

Vierikko has acted in close to 100 films, and has for a long time been one of the driving force of the Ryhmäteatteri stage. He worked as Professor of Acting at Theatre Academy during 2002-2012. Vierikko has been awarded i.a. the Golden Venla and Jussi Awards, the State Prize for Stage Art, and the Pro Finlandia Medal.



PANU VAUHKONEN (RAUTIO)

Vauhkonen has acted in several film and TV roles since 1996. He has performed several stage roles at the Helsinki City Theatre, among others.

JUSSI NIKKILÄ (AULIS)

Nikkilä has made several film roles (*Six-Pack Movie*, *Love And Other Troubles*, *Ganes*) and acted i.a. the Finnish National Theatre, Q-teatteri and KokoTeatteri. He has also directed two plays for Q-teatteri.

JUSSI LEHTONEN (HANNULA)

Lehtonen is a Finnish National Theatre actor working as The Finnish National Theatre's Touring Stage unit Artistic Director. He has received the Finnish National Prize from the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the The Award for Culture issued by the Finnish Medical Society Duodecim.

TOMMI ERONEN (ELO)

Eronen is best known for the feature films *Wash Your Sins* and *Bad Luck Love*, receiving the Jussi Award for Best Supporting Actor for the latter. He actively performs several roles in the theatres in the Capital Region. Eronen has been awarded the Golden Venla Prize for the TV series *Hooked*.

KARRI MIETTINEN (ÄIMÄLÄ)

Miettinen, aka Paleface, is a Finnish rap artist and protest singer. Paleface has translated the lyrics for e.g. the film *8 Mile*, and written the theme song *Palamaan* for the recent feature film *Flowers of Evil*. The Finnish Cultural Foundation has bestowed an award on him as a modern poetry reciter.

RÜDIGER KLINK (VON DER GOLTZ)

Rüdiger Klink is an award-winning German actor known for i.a. the films *The People vs. Fritz Bauer*, *Atomiser* and the TV series *Die Manns*.

INLAND FILM COMPANY

Inland Film Company Oy is a production company based in Helsinki. Its owner **Klaus Heydemann** has worked as a Production Manager and Producer since 1985. Inland has produced e.g. the documentary films *The New Finn* and *The Finns*, the short films *Pocket-parking* by **Heikki Kujanpää** and *An Autobiography* by **Mari Mantela** as well as the feature film *Changes* by **Sami Laitinen**. Inland Film Company is a co-producer of the Latvian feature film *Chronicles of Melanie*. The documentary *Sokeiden unet* by **Mies Mikkonen** is currently in production. Inland Film has presently four films at development and preproduction stage. The Inland Film Company philosophy is simply: the script is the most important thing.



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