

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF
LETTERS TO FATHER JACOB
& MOTHER OF MINE

FINNISH ENTRY FOR THE
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A FILM BY **KLAUS HÄRÖ**

THE FENCER

www.thefencermovie.com



T H E F E N C E R



Fleeing from Stalin's secret police, an ambitious young fencer finds himself teaching small town children in a godforsaken Estonian coastal village, only to realize that this is exactly what he wants to do in life.

A young man, Endel Nelis, arrives in Haapsalu, Estonia, in the early 1950s. Having left Leningrad to escape the secret police, he finds work as a teacher and founds a sports club for his students. Endel becomes a father figure to his students and starts teaching them his great passion - fencing, which causes a conflict with the school's principal. Envious, the principal starts investigating Endel's background...

Endel learns to love the children and looks after them; most are orphans as a result of the Russian occupation. Fencing becomes a form of self-expression for the children and Endel becomes a role model. The children want to participate in a national fencing tournament in Leningrad, and Endel must make a choice: risk everything to take the children to Leningrad or put his safety first and disappoint them.



*“WELL-ACTED,
SMOOTHLY
CRAFTED”*

- JUSTIN CHANG, VARIETY



Director's THOUGHTS

Reading **Anna Heinämaa's** script was a wonderfully surreal experience. The story begins with a quiet man teaching fencing to children – a promise of a good story. The script captivated me, and I kept waiting for the story to flatten, never imagining that it could hold that level of fascination. But the story kept its grip on me till the very end. It's a story with everything a good film needs and a good number of challenges for a director. With all the elements a director could want, a wish entered my mind: Could I get to direct this film?

This exceptional story was a great foundation for the production and attracted the interest of financiers. The entire crew gave their all, working long days because the story had meaning for each and every one of them.

Stories about encounters between children and adults have always interested me. Almost all of us can remember an adult whose presence or words at the right time in our childhood have inspired or given us the crucial nudge in the right direction, helping us to realize a dream or pursue our dream job. I had teachers who encouraged me to make films, and I don't think I would be a director without them.

The core theme of *THE FENCER* is the role of adults in children's lives, how adults see children and their interests, and how adults can steer children in the right direction. It's a question that fascinates and puzzles: how do people become who they are?

I want to tell stories that tell the truth about life.

Klaus Härö



Director
KLAUS HÄRÖ

THE FENCER is **Klaus Härö**'s fifth feature film. Härö is one of the most internationally praised Finnish directors, and his films have been festival hits as well as audience and critic favorites both in Finland and Sweden.

Härö grew up in Porvoo, Finland, and loved films as a little boy. His love for them turned into a passion in his early teens and in 1999, Härö graduated with a master's degree in directing and screenwriting from the Department of Film, TV and Scenography at the University of Art and Design Helsinki.

Klaus Härö received the Ingmar Bergman Award at the 2004 Guldbagge Gala, the Swedish equivalent of the Oscars. This was the first time the award had been given to a non-Swedish director. Härö then received a letter from Bergman himself in which the Swedish film legend thanked the young man for his excellent work in film.



KLAUS HÄRÖ'S FILMOGRAPHY

The Fencer (Miekkailija, 2014)

Two Homes (Kaksi kotia, 2013, for TV)

Letters to Father Jacob (Postia pappi Jaakobille, 2009)

- Finland's official representative at the Oscars in 2010
- Winner of the Jussi Award, the Finnish equivalent of the Oscars, for best film, director, male lead and music.
- Several awards at international film festivals, including The International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg, Nordic Film Days Lübeck, Cairo International Film Festival, Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival, Santa Barbara International Film Festival, Gothenburg Film Festival, Festival du Cinéma Nordique, Hong Kong International Film Festival.

The New Man (Uusi ihminen, 2007)

Jury Grand Prix at the Shanghai International Film Festival

Mother of Mine (Äideistä parhain, 2005)

- Finland's official representative at the Oscars in 2006
- Several awards at international film festivals, including Nordic Film Days Lübeck, Cairo International Film

Festival, Palm Springs International Film Festival, Film by the Sea.

The Extra (Statisti, 2003, documentary)

Elina – As If I Wasn't There (Näkymätön Elina, 2002)

- Finland's official representative at the Oscars in 2003
- Several awards at international film festivals, including Berlinale Kinderfilmfest, Grand Prix de Montreal, Toronto Sprockets International Film Festival for Children, Festival Internacional de Cine de Valencia Cinema Jove, Kinoshock Film Festival, Cinekid, Vienna International Children's Film Festival.

Three Wishes (Tre önsknigar, Kolme toivetta, 2001, documentary)

Kadut kuin kultaa (Gator av guld, 2000, documentary)

Meren yli kotiin (Hem över havet, 1999, documentary)

Syntymättömien runoilijoiden seura

(Ofödda poeters sällskap, 1998, documentary)

Kaksi rakkautta (1998, documentary)

Producer

KAI NORDBERG

Seldom have I come across such a fine and ready script as **Anna Heinämaa's** *THE FENCER*. The story enthralled me, and it was clear that it had to be made into a film.

Even though *THE FENCER* is a touching film about people and the choices they make, it also deals with a very current European theme; people of a small country surviving under occupation.

THE FENCER tells of people's universal need to hold onto their freedom and the right of a small country to defend itself against a superior opponent. Due to the events in Ukraine, I feel our film is astonishingly current. Shivers went down my spine when the second Crimean War began on the same day as our filming.

Kai Nordberg
Making Movies





KAI NORDBERG'S BIOGRAPHY

Kai Nordberg was born 1968 in Helsinki, Finland. 1989 he moved to West Berlin where he studied film and journalism at the Freie Universität. He developed an ambition for cinema and started to direct his own films. Since 1996 he works as a CEO in his co-owned production company **Making Movies Oy** in Helsinki.

He has produced/directed documentaries and short films, and produced feature films **THE FENCER** (2015), **TSAMO** (2015), **THE PRINCESS OF EGYPT** (2013), **RAT KING** (2012), **BLACK ICE** (2008) and **HOMESICK** (2005).



Cast

MÄRT AVANDI

AS ENDEL NELIS

Märt Avandi (born 26.02.1982) is Estonian actor, singer and television host. He is one of the most established comedians in Estonia. His controversial comedy show "Moodkiller" ("Tujurikkuja") is legendary. His film debut was in 2005 in a period feature film about the Middle Ages "Men at arms" ("Malev"). He is married to Liis-Katrin Avandi and has a son and a daughter.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:

2010 **Red Mercury** (Punane elavhõbe)

2008 **I Was Here** (Mina olin siin)

2006 **Mindless** (Meeletu)

2006 **Extraterrestrial** (Tulnukas)

2005 **Militia** (Men at Arms)

2002 **Names in Marble** (Nimed marmortahvlil)



URSULA RATASEPP

AS KADRI



Ursula Ratasepp graduated from the Drama School of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre in 2006 and also has a degree in psychology from the University of Tartu. She debuted in the TV series *Home in the City* (*Kodu keset linna*) in 2005 and has since worked in the Tallinn City Theatre. Her first role on the big screen was the female lead in *Love Is Blind* (*Kertu*, 2013), a film hailed by critics in Estonia and abroad.

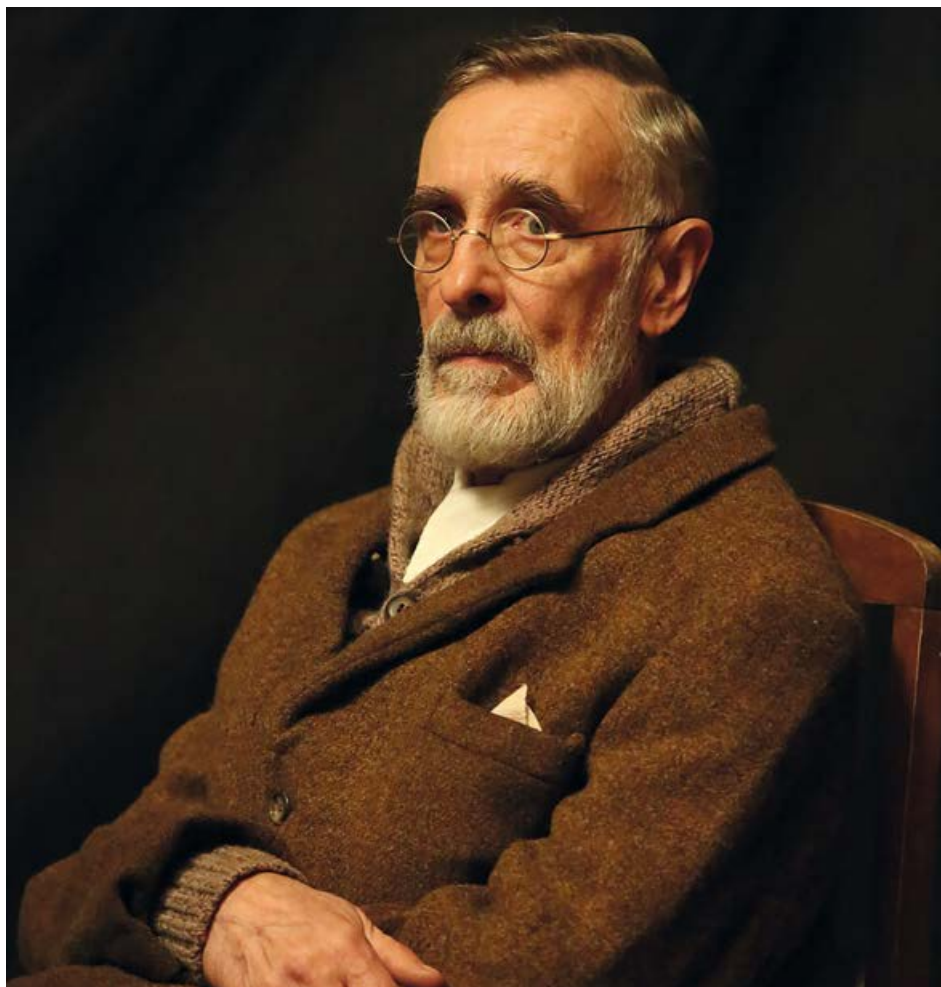
SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:

2014 **Ivan's Day** (*Ivanipäev*) short feature
2013 **Love is Blind** (*Kertu*. *Love is Blind*)
2010 **Statesmen** (*Riigimehed*) TV-series

LEMBIT ULFSAK

AS JAAN'S GRANDFATHER

Lembit Ulfsak (born 04.08.1947) is without a doubt the most famous Estonian actor, director and writer. His film debut was in 1969 in the film "Story of a secret agent". Ever since he has been working in film, television and theatre. One of his recent films, where he played the main lead "Tangerines" (2013) won over 30 international awards and was nominated for the Golden Globe and Oscars. He is married to Epp Ulfsak and has a son and two daughters.





LIISA KOPPEL

AS MARTA



“Fencer is my favorite film shooting period this far.”

“In the cinema I was very close to crying.”

Liisa Koppel

THE FENCER

IN FESTIVALS

WORLD

EXCLUDING U.S.
IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Festival du Film Historique ASBL

(Liège, Belgium)

15-18 October

Screening Friday, 16 October @ 4:30 in the Panorama section.

No budget to extend invitations.

Kyoto Historica International Film Festival

(Kyoto, Japan) 31

October - 8 November

Opening night film.

Arras Film Festival

(Arras, France)

06 - 15 November - Accepted

Cameralmage International Film Festival

(Bydgoszcz, Poland) - TBD

Cairo International Film Festival

(Cairo, Egypt) 11 - 20 November

Una Finestra sul Nord

(Florence, Italy)

11 - 13 December

Les Arc Film Festival

(Les Arc, France)

12 - 19 December - Pending

U.S.A.

IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Palm Springs International Film Festival

(Palm Springs, CA)


1 - 11 January - Accepted

Nordic Lights Film Festival

(Seattle, WA)

mid 14 - 17 January - Accepted



A photograph of three men smiling and standing in front of a brick wall and a glass structure. The man in the center is wearing glasses and a blue scarf. The man on the left is wearing a dark jacket over a checkered shirt. The man on the right is wearing a checkered shirt.

Producers Kaarle Aho and Kai Nordberg
with the director Klaus Härö.

Production Company MAKING MOVIES

Making Movies Oy (Ltd.) is a Finnish film production company based in Helsinki. Established in 1996 the company produces and co-produces fiction and documentary films for international market. The managers, founding members and shareholders of the Making Movies are **Kai Nordberg** and **Kaarle Aho**.

Since 1996 Making Movies has produced eight feature films and more than 40 documentary and short films and tv-dramas. The films produced by Making Movies have been distributed in more than 40 countries worldwide.

The feature films include Petri Kotwica's *RAT KING* (Tribeca and Shanghai International Film Festival 2012) *Black Ice* (2007) premiering in the Berlinale 2008 competition, and *Homesick* (2005), a prize winner in several international film festivals, as well as Jan Forsström's *The Princess of Egypt* (Mannheim-Heidelberg Competition 2013).

At the moment Making Movies has just finished Klaus Härö's (the winner of the Crystal Bear award in Berlinale 2003 and the Ingmar Bergman prize in Sweden 2004) new feature film *The Fencer* as well as Markku Lehmuskallio's and Anastasia Lapsui's (seven films in different Berlinale sections over the last 30 years) new feature film *Tsamo*. We have in development several feature and documentary films.



PRODUCTION AND ART DEPARTMENT CREW

Director Klaus Härö
Script Anna Heinämaa
Cinematography Tuomo Hutri
Music Gert Wilden Jr
Production Designer Jaagup Roomet
Costume Designer Tiina Kaukanen
Editors Tambert Tasuja,
Ueli Christen
Producers Kai Nordberg
Kaarle Aho
Coproducer (Estonia) Ivo Felt
Coproducer (Germany) Jörg Bundschuh
Duration 99 min
Production Company Making Movies, ©2015

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MUSIC GERT WILDEN JR. EDITING TAMBERT TASUJA, UELI CHRISTEN. PRODUCTION DESIGN JAAGUP ROOMET. CO-PRODUCERS IVO FELT, JÖRG BUNDSCHUH. PRODUCERS KAI NORDBERG, KAARLE AHO



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