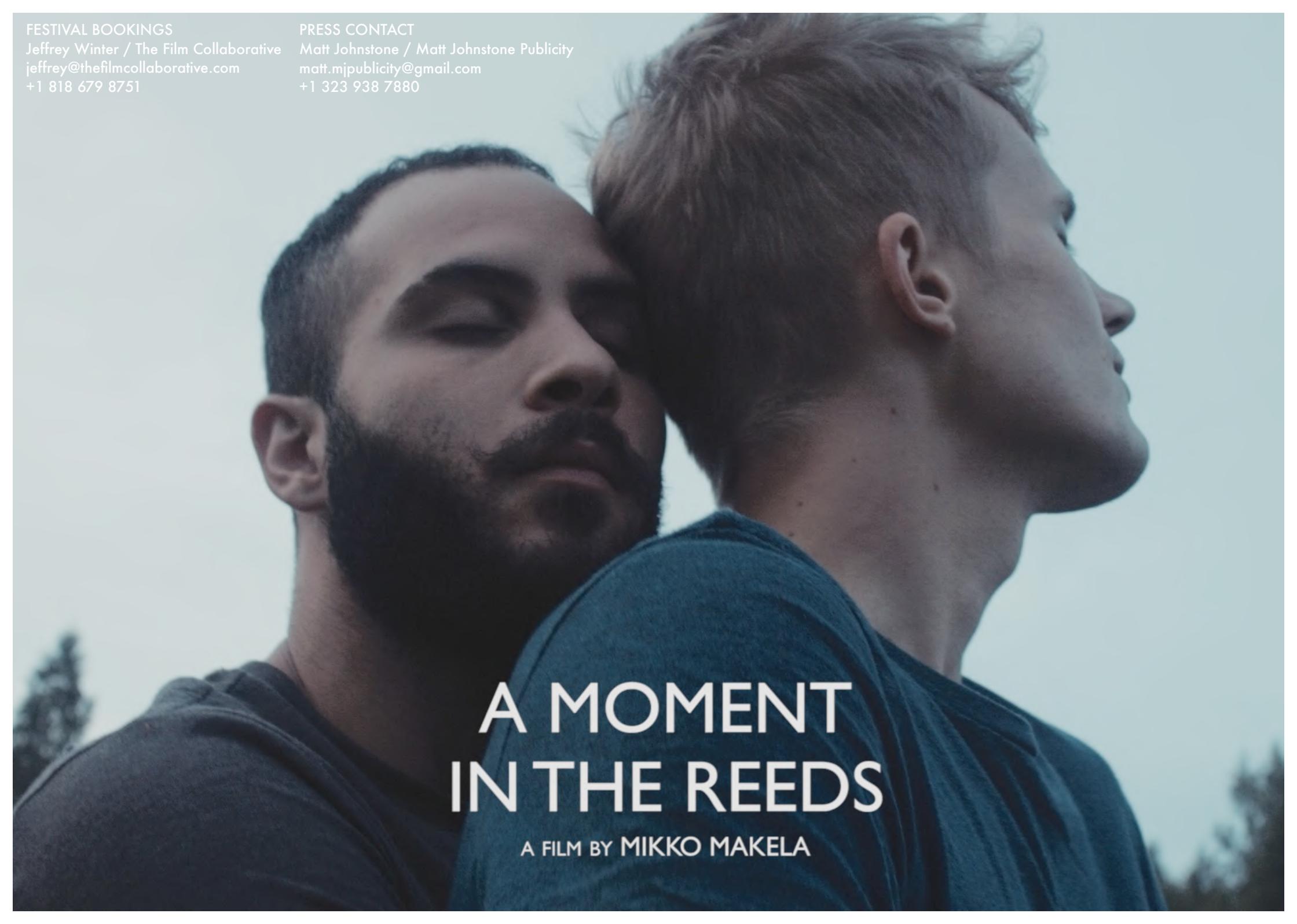


FESTIVAL BOOKINGS

Jeffrey Winter / The Film Collaborative
jeffrey@thefilmcollaborative.com
+1 818 679 8751

PRESS CONTACT

Matt Johnstone / Matt Johnstone Publicity
matt.mjpublicity@gmail.com
+1 323 938 7880



A MOMENT IN THE REEDS

A FILM BY MIKKO MAKELA

SYNOPSIS

Having moved to Paris for university, Leevi returns to his native Finland for the summer to help his estranged father renovate the family lake house so it can be sold. Tareq, a recent asylum seeker from Syria, has been hired to help with the work, and when Leevi's father has to return to town on business, the two young men fall in love and spend a few days discovering one another during the Finnish midsummer.

QUEER FINNISH CINEMA

A response to the dearth of queer narratives in Finnish cinema, *A Moment in the Reeds* is among the first queer feature films ever made in the country. Viewing Finland from the perspectives both of an immigrant and an emigrant, the film casts the long-marginalised voices of sexual and ethnic minorities centre-stage in a story about the search for freedom, acceptance and a place to call home.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Mikko Makela is a London-based filmmaker who, feeling compelled to fill the queer void in Finnish cinema, decided to return to his native Finland to make his debut feature. Since studying English Literature and French at Nottingham University and University College London, in London Mikko has directed music videos and fashion films alongside working as an editor in drama and commercials. Having studied Drama at City Literary Institute, he has also recently been seen acting on stage in the Arcola Queer Collective's revival of Mae West's *The Drag* as well as making an appearance in John Cameron Mitchell's film *How to Talk to Girls at Parties*.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

QUEER CINEMA AND FILMMAKING

There has been a real lack of queer narratives in Finnish cinema, and that is in large part why I initially set out to make this film - to fill the queer void, so to speak. For a country that legalised same-sex civil unions in 2004 and that likes to think of itself as quite progressive, it felt odd to me that by the time we shot the film in 2016, Finland had yet to produce a single feature film with same-sex love as its central focus. Thus it felt increasingly urgent to provide audiences something more specifically relatable than a *Brokeback Mountain* or a *Beautiful Thing*: a queer story from Finland that would at once allow even a small section of the Finnish queer community to see themselves represented on screen as well as give us some representation in the eyes of straight film audiences. To ensure the authenticity of this representation, I sought to make this a queer film not simply in subject matter but also in terms of the production team: whilst 2017 saw the world premieres of two other Finnish queer films (about time!), *A Moment in the Reeds* is the only one written and directed by an openly gay director, with both leading actors and all of its producers also openly gay.

COLLABORATION

Striving for a sense of naturalism and to tell an authentic story that was firmly rooted in today's world, I wanted to approach the writing of the film in a more collaborative way, involving my actors in crafting their characters as well as in shaping the dialogue. Inspired by various filmmakers who use improvisation in their work, rather than writing a traditional screenplay I wrote a 30-page mainly prose "scriptment" in which the film's plot and scenes with their beats were outlined in detail, but which for the most part left the exact words of the dialogue for the actors to come up with. I involved all the actors in developing the backstories for their characters. In particular with our two leading actors, Boodi and Janne, I also encouraged them to introduce some elements from their own life experiences. This was especially important in the case of the character Tareq, as Boodi, a gay Syrian himself, was able to bring to the role detail and authenticity drawn from lived experience.

Finland/UK - 2017 - 108 minutes - English/Finnish - www.amomentinthereeds.com



I continued to work on and expand the scriptment up until principal photography, integrating ideas and detail generated in the audition (which was staged as an improvisational exercise) as well as in a couple of rehearsal workshops that I held for Janne and Boodi, to allow them to become more familiar with each other and to try out some of the scenes - and the method - before the shoot.

On set, before each scene I would go through its intended content and its beats with the actors, but I always asked them to use their own words to express the ideas of the scriptment. We shot as chronologically as possible and as the shoot went on, I increasingly relied on the actors to know their characters well enough to involve them in making decision about their behaviour within a scene. I wanted to give the actors freedom to explore and experiment - on the shoot, my primary interest lay in capturing truthful moments around which I could then continue to "write" in the edit, sculpting these moments into scenes. On this film, the dictum about a film being written three times over - once in the writing, once in the shooting and once in the edit - rang particularly true.

IMMIGRATION

At its heart, the film is about two people who have fled their native countries - one of course in far more privileged circumstances than the other - for a freer, safer life elsewhere: a common trajectory for queer people migrating from hostile environments to safer spaces. The two characters view Finland very differently: Leevi's privilege evident in his having been able to reject this relatively liberal society that for Tareq appears as a place where he can finally live freely, and it was the tension inherent in this unexpected and problematic crossing of paths that I wanted to explore.

The topic of immigration and racism, both latent and explicit, in Finnish society, Europe, and the world in general felt incredibly pressing when I began writing the film in the winter/spring of 2016 in the wake of the Syrian migrant crisis, when the sudden arrival of large numbers of asylum seekers had provoked a swell of xenophobic sentiment amongst parts of Finnish society, opening up a deep chasm between right-wing nationalists and those responding to the refugees with empathy.

In this context it felt urgent to me to explore the contemporary experience of a Syrian refugee coming to Finland: to humanise and provide a multidimensional portrait of someone who is too often in people's minds reduced to a stereotype built up simply from news headlines, or worse, xenophobic political discourse. I hoped that by staging an intimate love story between two fully-formed, human characters with not dissimilar hopes and dreams - one Finnish, one Syrian - I might get some audiences to see beyond their prejudices.

Whilst it is a film with a very firm sense of place in Finland and Europe, I think now even more than at the time of filming that the story will find resonance in many Western societies that currently find themselves grappling with nativist and xenophobic political movements that have gained traction in reaction to immigration and economic problems. I think that the film can be seen as representing most things antithetical to Trumpism and Brexitism: open borders, freedom of movement, international solidarity, and not only tolerance but respect for ethnic, sexual and religious diversity.

INSPIRATION

In the use of the collaborative method of inviting the actors to contribute to character backstories and to improvise dialogue, I was inspired by the working styles of a number of contemporary US filmmakers like Joe Swanberg, Lynn Shelton, Drake Doremus and The Duplass brothers, all of whom continue to tell contemporary stories with an exciting sense of authenticity and immediacy that I was myself hoping to achieve in this film.

In my research into this method, I also looked at the work of one of my long-time favourites Ingmar Bergman as well as John Cassavetes, whose own success with this method encouraged me in charting this unknown terrain.

In terms of theme and mood, my two biggest inspirations were Andrew Haigh's *Weekend* and Richard Linklater's *Before Sunrise* - both classic romantic dramas that so movingly capture the bittersweet excitement of a brief chance encounter and a meaningful connection between two people who are ultimately destined to part ways because of practical circumstances.

THE CAST

JANNE PUUSTINEN (LEEVI)

A multi-tasker in the theatre, having graduated as a theatre director from Metropolia University, Janne works as an actor, director, writer and drama instructor. In addition to numerous stage roles (Metropolia theatre, Kuopio City theatre), he has made appearances in several Finnish films and TV shows.

BOODI KABBANI (TAREQ)

Boodi Kabbani is a Syrian artist who has done theatrical work in Syria, Lebanon and Finland. Kabbani worked in theatre production and talent management before emigrating to Finland in 2014. In Finland, he joined Saimaan Teatteri (touring the country in summer 2016 with their comedy 'The Wedding'), has worked in scenography and has run integration-themed audience related workshops in collaboration with Viirus Teater.

MIKA MELENDER (JOUKO)

A Helsinki-based actor, Mika has recently appeared in The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki (2016), Virality (2016) and the TV series Black Widows.



Finland/UK - 2017 - 107 minutes - English/Finnish - www.amomentinthereeds.com

THE CREW

JAMES WATSON (PRODUCER)

The other half of Wild Beast Productions, James has produced a number of music videos, shot fashion and art promos, as well as directing 'The Ladies in Waiting', a documentary on student drag queens. As a journalist and documentary filmmaker he has interviewed the likes of John Waters, Boy George and many other queer artists. He is currently developing his debut feature film.

JARNO PIMPERI (PRODUCER)

Jarno is a freelance actor, producer and director in Helsinki, best known for his stage work in the Helsinki Gay Theatre (HGT) Association. Jarno has also acted in several Finnish film and TV shows as well as directing and producing the short film 'The Tidbit', celebrating HGT's 10th anniversary.

IIKKA SALMINEN (DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY)

Iikka Salminen is a Helsinki-based cinematographer who has worked in the industry since 2012 gaining experience in various productions while getting his BA in cinematography. His work has been seen at film festivals world-wide and on national television.



PRESS

A fresh new voice in queer cinema...pitch perfect performances, a remarkably mature debut.

Edge

One of the most moving gay romances of recent years...full of sexually charged, intimate moments...all depicted in a beautifully loving way.

Film Inquiry

An admirable quiet intensity...a spare, intense gay romance.

Variety

A sensitive and insightful film...one that lingers.

Eye For Film

The result...is nothing short of stunning. *A Moment in the Reeds* is a romance that hits every cinematic note with fine-tuned delicacy.

The Stake

Subtle brilliance...where *A Moment In the Reeds* finds its strength is in how it portrays modern romance.

Cinema Scandinavia

A remarkable achievement...one of the year's best LGBT discoveries.

Gay Essential

Reflects a modern-day reality that we very rarely see on screen. With *A Moment in the Reeds*, Makela...asserts himself as one of the major figures in the emerging scene of Finnish LGBT cinema with great determination, courage and sensitivity.

Cineuropa

Makela's directorial debut is a breath of fresh air in Finnish film... skillfully written by Makela with natural acting performances.

Helsinki Times



FESTIVALS

2017

BFI London Film Festival (World Premiere)
Hamburg International Queer Film Festival (Closing Night)
Nordic Film Days Lübeck
QUEER-Streifen Regensburg
Les GaiCineMad (Madrid)

2018

Göteborg Film Festival
Pink Life Queer Fest (Ankara & Istanbul)
Pinx (Ghent)
Mardi Gras Film Festival (Sydney)
Mannheim Gay & Lesbian Film Festival
Divers Valencia
Roze Filmdagen: Amsterdam LGBTQ Film Festival
Brisbane Queer Film Festival
Melbourne Queer Film Festival
Leeds Queer Film Festival
Chicago European Union Film Festival
qFLIX Philadelphia
Wicked Queer: The Boston LGBT Film Festival (Opening Night)
Cleveland International Film Festival
Zinentiendo LGBT Film Festival (Zaragoza)
Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival
Geelong Queer Film Festival (Opening Night)
Bendigo Queer Film Festival
OutView: Athens International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival
Reel Affirmations (Washington D.C.)
OUTshine Film Festival (Miami)
LGBT Film Festival Poland
Lovers: Torino Gay & Lesbian Film Festival
Freiburg Gay & Lesbian Film Festival
Pink Apple Filmfestival (Zurich)
Homochrom (Köln)
Kiev Molodist IFF (Sunny Bunny Opening Night)
Fairy Tales Film Festival (Calgary)

Inside Out Toronto LGBT Film Festival
Seattle International Film Festival
Cinépride Nantes
LGBT Movie Review (Mantova)
Midnight Sun Film Festival (Sodankylä, Finland)
Frameline (San Francisco)
Out Here Now: The Kansas City LGBT Film Festival (Centerpiece)
Caims Queer Film Festival
GAZE Dublin
Out on Screen: Vancouver Queer Film Festival
Honolulu Rainbow Film Festival
Blue Sea Film Festival (Rauma, Finland)
Outflix Film Festival (Memphis)
Vilnius Queer Film Festival
Humen Film Festival (Budapest)
Taiwan International Queer Film Festival
Carl International Film Festival (Karlskrona, Sweden)
Cinéfest Sudbury
Oslo Fusion International Film Festival
Fresno Reel Pride
Reeling: The Chicago LGBTQ+ International Film Festival
Helsinki International Film Festival
Cinema Diverse (Palm Springs)
Portland Queer Film Festival
Hell's Half Mile Film & Music Festival (Bay City, MI)
ImageOut: The Rochester LGBT Film Festival
Tampa International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival
Shropshire Rainbow Film Festival
Out on Film Atlanta
Florence Queer Film Festival
Iris Prize (Cardiff)
Reel Pride Winnipeg
NewFest: The New York LGBT Film Festival
Nordic International Film Festival (NYC)
Seoul Pride Film Festival
Mix Copenhagen
Nordic Film Week Israel
Pink Screens (Brussels) (Closing Night)
Image+Nation (Montréal)
Chéries Chéris (Paris)

“A MOMENT IN THE REEDS”
A FILM BY MIKKO MAKELA

A WILD BEAST PRODUCTION

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY
MIKKO MAKELA

PRODUCED BY
MIKKO MAKELA
JAMES ROBERT WATSON
JARNO PIMPERI

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
WILLIAM R. CARTER

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS
STUART MALCOLM HONEY
ELINA ERVASTI-MÄKELÄ
ERKKI MÄKELÄ

STARRING
JANNE PUUSTINEN
BOODI KABBANI
MIKA MELENDER
VIRPI RAUTSIALA

ADDITIONAL DIALOGUE BY
THE CAST

POEM BY
JANNE PUUSTINEN

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
IIKKA SALMINEN

1ST ASSISTANT CAMERA
JANNE HÄKKINEN
JENNI RIUTTA

SOUND RECORDIST
JAAKKO KAUTTO

MUSIC BY
SEBASTIAN KAUDERER
LUKE RICHARDS

FILM EDITING BY
MIKKO MAKELA

ADDITIONAL EDITOR
JOJO ERHOLTZ

COLOURIST
ANDRÉAS BERNSTRÖM

DIT
NICOLE EDWARDS

SUPERVISING SOUND EDITOR &
RE-RECORDING MIXER
ENOS DESJARDINS

DIALOGUE & SOUND EDITOR
ARTTU VOLANTO

SOUND FX EDITOR
DARIO SWADE

FOLEY ARTIST & EDITOR
ANNA MAGDALINO

FOLEY ARTIST
NICK COLE-HAMILTON

ADR RECORDIST
SAMI SARHAMAA

STYLIST
KATI SILO

1ST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
JARNO PIMPERI

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
ROSE JUUTI

