



FESTIVAL DE CANNES  
UN CERTAIN REGARD  
2021 OFFICIAL SELECTION

# LAMB

(Dýrið)

a film by Valdimar Jóhannsson

2021 // Iceland, Sweden, Poland // 106 min // Color // 2.39:1 // 5.1 // Icelandic

**PRODUCER**

**GO TO SHEEP**

Hrönn Kristinsdóttir & Sara  
Nassim  
hronnkristins@gmail.com  
+354 899 2210  
saranassim@gmail.com  
+354 695 1699

**INTERNATIONAL SALES**

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Natalia Dabrowska  
festivals@neweuropefilmsales.com  
com  
+48 698 903 038

**INTERNATIONAL PRESS**

**WOLF Consultants**

Gordon Spragg, Laurin Dietrich,  
Michael Arnon  
+49 157 7474 9724  
hello@wolf-con.com  
www.wolf-con.com

## **SYNOPSIS**

A childless couple in rural Iceland make an alarming discovery one day in their sheep barn. They soon face the consequences of defying the will of nature, in this dark and atmospheric folktale, the striking debut feature from director Valdimar Jóhannsson.

## **DIRECTOR'S NOTE**

### **STORY / INSPIRATIONS**

As a child I spent much time at my grandparents' sheep farm, so lambs, sheep and rams are animals I know very well. I always wanted to tell a story that was based on folktales, a story that reflected the nature in people and people in nature. I started working on a mood board and a graphic novel to put together a story that could become a film. My producers then introduced me to the writer Sjón back in 2010, which was to bring much luck. We started talking about this idea of mine, that later became LAMB (Dýrið). He liked my inspirations, he was fascinated by the same things I was; we had a very slow and organic process of working on the script and got to know each other very well.

Cinema is a visual-audio medium that moves you on many levels and when writing the script we focused on telling the story through visuals and sounds, keeping the dialogue minimal.

Our film draws a lot from the Icelandic folk tales, not one in particular but a mixture of many. We are both interested in stories that are in their nature mostly realistic – but then have one absurd or surreal element that is never addressed, and so becomes as realistic as the rest.

### **LOVE / LOSS**

The story could be anyone's life; dark at times, but a moment of joy is never far away. For me the film is first and foremost a visual poem about a loss so painful you are willing to do almost anything to bring back the joy and happiness that was there before. There is guilt and remorse in the life of the couple Maria and Ingvar, who have been unable to overcome their loss and their sorrow. Because of it, they are willing to give in to something that they both know will only last for a short while – an attempt to regain balance and joy in their lives.

But as Maria attempts to protect the family from any and all outside forces that threaten their carefully composed new surreal reality, she knows that this reality has to be lived here and now in love and acceptance until the inevitable end. In the moment, barely thinking back and surely not thinking about the future.

Maria's strength and determination were inspired by my grandmother, who just recently passed away. Her and my grandfather had a sheep farm and they had five children together, all born within an eight-year period. At their farm there was no male vs. female division of labour.

They did everything together from fixing machinery to cleaning and cooking dinners. Life on the farm was not always easy, but my grandmother would never let anything break her spirit.

Maria also has this resilience. She is unbreakable and refuses to give up on life. And although her and her husband's loss has robbed them of all passion and joy, it has also brought them closer together.

## **NATURAL / SUPERNATURAL**

The film was shot on and around a farm in the North of Iceland. The animals in the film, the farm and its surroundings are also essential characters in the film. The seasons, each with their own light and mist, and the two worlds – the lush and vulnerable world of the humans on the farm and the unknown mythical world of the harsh highlands, where nature is not to be toyed with or controlled.

My cinematographer Eli Arensson and I carefully studied the available natural light for the exterior scenes and made the most of it. Interior scenes were also lit naturally as much as possible. It took me, my producers, Hrönn Kristinsdóttir and Sara Nassim and my production designer Snorri Freyr more than a year of searching to find the right location. We had been around the whole island twice, visiting every other farm in Iceland.

When I finally settled for the farm Flaga in north of Iceland, I was still skeptical. The farm had not been inhabited for 20 years, so there was a lot of work that had to be done to make it the place I had in mind for my characters. I am quite specific on layouts, shapes, directions and colors, so it took a while until I was prepared to shoot there. Just two weeks before we started filming, the place was ready and finally became my characters' home. The magical landscape and the isolation of the farm turned out to be the perfect place for the shoot and the film.

Without nature, humanity does not exist. In my mind nature is not only what we see but also what we feel, and therefore it is deeply connected with the supernatural. Nature can't be predicted or controlled, and us humans are pretty fragile, feeble and dependent as we have experienced in 2020. We are always subject to forces beyond our control, in everyday reality as well in our supernatural every day. Loss and tragedy are never far away. In a world where almost everything can be achieved we should not forget that we cannot fight nature, and our fate cannot be escaped.

## **CAST / COLLABORATION**

I was very happy with the cast. Noomi Rapace added an extraordinary layer to the character of Maria, showing immense courage to take on this role and accepting to work at times in difficult circumstances. Noomi was born to take on challenges, so acting in Icelandic was something she easily mastered. We were a crew of 35 people and Noomi had never worked with such a small crew or in such isolated circumstances.

We had a mutual understanding of Maria's character. She brought in the exact cold but caring element that was needed for Maria, the driving force in the film. Noomi shaped Maria's character in a way I think no other actress could have done. Hilmir Snær brought the vulnerable strength to Ingvar's character. I had worked with Hilmir Snær before and knew him and his strengths very well. Apart from being a fantastic actor he was also a great support for me during the shoot. Finally, Björn Hlynur who played Pétur brought forth the right amount of conflict and relief as he broke into the surreal world of the couple, daring them out of their illusion.

For a first feature this film was maybe not the easiest one, but I had an army of very talented people around me to help me make the film I wanted to make. I am not always well connected to reality and my producers have the amazing ability to make my unrealistic ideas come true. Their approach and the resources they mobilised to make the film may be the most supernatural element of this production. For that I am very grateful.

*Valdimar Jóhannsson*

## **DIRECTOR & WRITER**

### **VALDIMAR JÓHANSSON**

Valdimar Jóhannsson was born in 1978 in the north of Iceland. He has been active in the Icelandic film industry for two decades, as a leading crew-member both in Icelandic films as well as larger service productions.

Lamb is Valdimar's first feature film. He has previously directed short films, some of them award winning and widely distributed. From 2013–2015 he was in the PhD program at Béla Tarr's Filmfactory in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina. His mentors there included Tilda Swinton, Gus Van Sant, Carlos Reygadas and Apichatpong Weerasethakul among others.

Valdimar currently lives in Reykjavík, Iceland with his wife and daughters.

## CAST

### **NOOMI RAPACE** as Maria

Noomi Rapace captured the eyes of the international entertainment community with her commanding, unnerving and critically acclaimed portrayal of 'Lisbeth Salander' in the film adaptations of Stieg Larsson's Millennium Trilogy: *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*, *The Girl Who Played With Fire*, and *The Girl Who Kicked The Hornet's Nest*. In addition to her powerful presence on screen, as a gifted creative and thought leader, Rapace has a discerning eye with strong instincts that aid in translating and realizing storytelling for audiences.

Recent roles include Yuval Adler's *The Secrets We Keep*, opposite Joel Kinnaman and Chris Messina, in which she stars and also executive produced as well as Oscar nominated director Tom Van Avermaet's short film, *Hearts of Stone*. Rapace was also recently featured in season two of Tom Clancy's *Jack Ryan*, opposite John Krasinski for Amazon in 2019. She is currently in production and starring in director Tommy Wirkola's Norwegian-language thriller film, *The Trip*.

Rapace, who grew up in Iceland, began her acting career at the age of seven, with the Icelandic film *In the Shadow of the Raven*. She has since gone to appear in over twenty films and television shows. Additional film credits include Kim Farrant's *Angel of Mine*; Robert Budreau's *Stockholm*, co-starring opposite Ethan Hawke; Vicky Jewson's *Close*, David Ayer's fantasy realm film *Bright*, alongside Will Smith and Joel Edgerton; Mikael Hafstrom's *Unlocked*; Tommy Wirkola's *What Happened to Monday?*; Steven Shainberg's sci-fi adventure thriller *Rupture*, alongside Peter Stormare and Kerry Bishe; Daniel Espinosa's film adaptation of the critically acclaimed Tom Rob Smith novel, *Child 44* opposite Tom Hardy, Gary Oldman, Joel Kinnaman and Jason Clarke; Michaël R. Roskam's crime-drama *The Drop* alongside Tom Hardy and James Gandolfini; Niels Arden Oplev's *Dead Man Down* in which she reunited with director and starred opposite Colin Farrell; Guy Ritchie's sequel, *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*, opposite Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law; as well as Brian DePalma's *Passion*, alongside Rachel McAdams and Karoline Herfurth.

### **HILMIR SNÆR GUÐNASON** as Ingvar

Hilmir Snær Guðnason is an Icelandic actor and voice actor. He is famous in his native country for his appearances both in film and on stage. In 2000, he was named as one of European film's 'Shooting Stars' by European Film Promotion. He is best known for his roles in the films *101 Reykjavík*, *Hafið*, *Blueprint* and *Guy X*.

Hilmir graduated from Iceland Academy of the Arts in 1994. His work with the National Theatre of Iceland includes among others: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth*, *West Side Story*, *Hamlet*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and *Ivanov*.

### **BJORN HLYNUR HARALDSSON** as Pétur

Björn Hlynur Haraldsson is an actor, writer and director. He graduated from the Icelandic Drama Academy in 2001. His acting credits for the internationally recognized theatre group Vesturport include *Romeo and Juliet*, *Woyzeck*, *Brim*, *Faust*, *The Housewife* and *Key Around the Neck*. Other stage credits include *Blood Wedding* at The Almeida Theatre in London, *Death of a Salesman* for the City Theatre in Reykjavik and *Peer Gynt* at The National Theatre of Iceland and The Barbi- can in London.

Björn Hlynur Haraldsson's Film and TV work includes acclaimed series and television productions such as *Fortitude* on Sky Atlantic (2015-2018), *Trapped* (2015-2016), *The Borgias* on Showtime (2013), *December* (2009), *The Cliff I & II* (2010 & 2014) on RUV, the Icelandic National Television Network as well as feature films such as *City State* (2011), *Polite People* (2011), *Brim / Undercurrent* (2010), *King's Road* (2010), *Country Wedding* (2008), *Jar City* (2006), *Eleven Men Out* (2005), and *Cold Light* (2004).

## WRITER

### SJON

Sjón, born in Iceland in 1962, is an internationally acclaimed author and screenwriter.

Along with writing the screenplay for Valdimar Jóhannsson's *Lamb*, Sjón's most recent work is the Viking revenge drama *The Northman*, co-written with its director Robert Eggers. Currently he is working on a screen adaptation of Hamlet with Ali Abbasi, director of *Border*.

In 2001 he received a joint Oscar nomination with Lars von Trier and Björk for a song in the movie *Dancer in the Dark*.

A film enthusiast from an early age, Sjón has served as a jury member for the Nordic Council's Film Prize and as a board member of the Stockfish Film Festival. Since 2012 he has been on the curating team behind the cult and classics program *Black Sundays* at Bíó Paradís, the art house cinema of Reykjavík.

Sjón's novels and collections of poetry have received numerous awards and been translated into thirty-five languages. He received the Nordic Council's Literature Prize for his novel *Skugga-Baldur (The Blue Fox)* in 2005.

## DOP

### ELI ARENSON

Eli Arenson's cinematography has been praised for its strong compositions and raw subversive esthetic.

He started his career as a military photojournalist before shifting his skills from embellishing coarse reality to the field of commercial and narrative films. Often shooting on 16mm and 35mm, he has filmed music videos for artists such as A\$AP Rocky, Mark Ronson and Lykke Li and worked for the world's top fashion brands with supermodels Kim Kardashian, Naomi Campbell and Kaia Gerber. A cinematography graduate of the AFI Conservatory, his passion for long-form narrative filmmaking is rooted deep. In addition to Valdimar Jóhannsson's Icelandic supernatural drama *LAMB* starring Noomi Rapace and co-written by the poet Sjón, he is currently filming the 3rd season of Baltasar Kormakur's series *Trapped* for Netflix.

Eli believes in cinematography that is simple and graceful – his visual approach always begins from the minds of the characters. The world as perceived through their eyes.

## EDITOR

### AGNIESZKA GLINSKA

Agnieszka Glińska was born on November 30th, 1975 in Warsaw, Poland. She studied History and the Theory of Film at the University of Łódź (1996-2000), before studying Film editing at PWSFTViT in Łódź (1999-2001). She is a member of the: Polish Association of Editors (PSM), the Polish Film Academy (PAF) and the European Film Academy (EFA). An accomplished editor, her belief in collaboration with like-minded people has led to numerous awards and nominations across the globe, including projects edited in Europe, America and Africa.

In 2015 she was recognized with an award for Best Editing at the Gdynia Film Festival for *11 Minutes* by Jerzy Skolimowski and *The Here After* by Magnus von Horn. In the same year she was nominated for an Orły award for Best Editing for *Jeziorak* by Michał Ołowski. In 2017 she worked on the acclaimed documentary *Communion* by Anna Zamecka, culminating in a Best European Documentary award and

the film being shortlisted for the Oscars. Another of Agnieszka's latest projects – *Sweat* by Magnus von Horn was selected by the Cannes Film Festival in 2020.

## **COMPOSER**

### **THORARINN GUDNASON**

Pórarinn Guðnason (Thorarinn Guðnason) is a composer and guitarist from Reykjavík, Iceland. LAMB is his first score as a sole composer after having worked as an arranger and composer's assistant with a variety of renowned artists. Some notable work includes the Oscar-winning original score for *Joker* (2019) by his sister Hildur Guðnadóttir, BAFTA-winning soundtrack for *Broadchurch* (2015) by Olafur Arnalds, and score for Netflix series *KATLA* (2021) by Högni Egilsson.

Pórarinn graduated in classical composition from the Iceland University of the Arts and has been a touring musician both with his art metal band Agent Fresco and the late Jóhann Jóhannsson. Working closely with Jóhannsson on various film and studio works, Pórarinn contributed both musical direction and arrangements for his pieces. Agent Fresco quickly found international notice and have become a household name in the progressive experimental music scene.



## PRODUCER

### HRÖNN KRISTINSDÓTTIR

Hrönn Kristinsdóttir was born in Reykjavík, Iceland. She is the owner and CEO of the production company Go to Sheep. Hrönn studied Literature and Theater Studies at the Freie Universität in Berlin from 1985 to 1989 and Cinema at Columbia College, Hollywood graduating in 1991. She also earned a diploma in Practical Journalism from the University of Iceland in 1995 and is a graduate of the 1998 EAVE/Media program.

Hrönn has been an active member in the Icelandic and international film industry since 1997, having line-produced and produced over 20 films. She is one of the founding members of WIFT in Iceland, sat on the board of Association of Icelandic Producers from 2007-2012, and served as a jury member for the Nordic Council Film Awards 2005-2007. She is a winner of the Edda national film award for production.

Hrönn lives with in Reykjavík, Iceland with her husband and daughters.

## PRODUCER

### SARA NASSIM

Sara Nassim was born and raised in Iceland to an Icelandic mother and a Persian father. She is a prolific producer who was practically raised on movie sets and has never really gotten away. She has an extensive background in physical production and early on in her career served as a Production Coordinator on the Iceland unit of HBO's *Game of Thrones* and Darren Aronofsky's *Noah*.

In 2013 she moved to LA to join the American Film Institute Conservatory. During her studies she produced numerous short films and was deeply involved in both the creative and the physical side of the productions. In 2018, Sara was nominated for a Grammy Award for the music video *Mumbo Jumbo* by Tierra Whack that she produced. She has been a frequent collaborator of director Andrew Thomas Huang (Björk's *The Gate*, *Flesh Nest*, *Kiss of the Rabbit God*) and worked with acclaimed Icelandic filmmakers including Grímur Hákonarson, Guðmundur Arnar Guðmundsson, and Rúnar Rúnarsson.

Sara splits her time between Iceland and Los Angeles developing and producing independent feature projects.

## PRODUCTION COMPANIES

### GO TO SHEEP

GO TO SHEEP was formed in May 2015 by Hrönn Kristinsdóttir, one of Iceland's most experienced feature film producers. In 2016 Sara Nassim joined GTS. The company aims to develop, finance and produce quality feature films and fiction material for television. We are passionate about artistic, challenging, experimental and imaginative films that appeal to the global film market. We want to focus on working with talented people who have a personal artistic vision and are willing to fight for it with as little compromise as possible. Benefiting from new technology in shooting and post-production as well as the extensive government tax rebates (25%) and the high standards of local professionals enables us to produce projects within the budget frame normally at hand in smaller countries with a low audio-visual production capacity. After producing Valdimar Jóhannsson first feature film *Dýrið* (LAMB), Go To Sheep is currently in production on Gústav Geir Bollason's (*Carcasse*, 2017) next feature film *Mannvirki* and developing Jóhannsson's next feature film.

## **SPARK**

SPARK is a Swedish production company founded by Piodor Gustafsson in 2015. The ambition since then has been to develop and produce high end features and TV-series, going forward only with the projects that resonates with the team. Recent feature productions include *Busan* and *Rome* awarded TIGERS, Cannes Film Festival awarded *Border* (2018) and Oscar nominated *The Wife* (2017) starring Glenn Close and Jona-than Pryce, as well as TV-series *Stockhold Requiem* (2018) and *Moscow Noir* (2018), both commissioned by TV4/C more.

## **MADANTS**

MADANTS is a Warsaw based production company, founded in 2015 by Klaudia Smieja and Beata Rzeźniczek with the aim to produce independent films with international festival and distribution potential.

Since then it has become one of the most active Polish production outlets and produced such lms as Claire Denis' *High Life* (TIFF, San Sebastian FF 2018, US distribution by A24), which starred Robert Pattinson and Juliette Binoche and was shot partly in Poland, and co-produced Hafsteinn Gunnar Sigurdsson's *Under The Tree* (Venice FF, TIFF, US distribution by Magnolia Pictures) and Babis Makridis' Sundance-selected *Pity*, among others.

Madants' other co-production credits include So a Exarchou's *Park* (TIFF, San Sebastian FF), Gabe Klinger's *Porto* starring Anton Yelchin and executive produced by Jim Jarmusch, Emir Baigazin's *The River* (Venice FF, TIFF) and Janis Nords' *Foam At The Mouth*.

Smieja's other credits include producing Agnieszka Holland's upcoming \$8.5m Gareth Jones and Polish local hit *Chemo*, co-producing Anne Fontaine's *The Innocents* and executive-producing Wojciech Smarzowski's *The Might Angel*.

## CREDITS

Original Title: Dýrið  
English Title: Lamb  
Genre: Supernatural drama  
Country: Iceland, Sweden, Poland  
Language: Icelandic  
Year: 2021  
Duration: 106 min.  
Picture: Color  
Aspect Ratio: 2.39:1  
Sound: 5.1  
Available Format: DCP

## CAST

Noomi Rapace  
Hilmir Snær Guðnason  
Björn Hlynur Haraldsson  
Ingvar Sigurðsson

## CREW

Director: Valdimar Jóhannsson  
Screenplay: Sjón & Valdimar Jóhannsson  
Cinematography: Eli Arenson  
Editing: Agnieszka Glińska  
Production Design: Snorri Freyr Hilmarsson  
Art Direction: Anna María Tómasdóttir, Steingrímur Ingi Stefánsson  
Costume Design: Margrét Einarsdóttir  
Makeup & Hair Design: Kristín Júlía Kristjánsdóttir  
Sound Design: Ingvar Lunderg & Björn Viktorsson  
VFX: Peter Hjorth & Fredrik Nord  
Music: Þórarinn Guðnason  
Production companies: Go to Sheep, Spark Film&TV, Madants  
Co-production companies: Film i Väst, Chimney Sweden, Chimney, Poland, RabbitHole Productions, Helgi Jóhannsson  
With the support of: Icelandic Film Centre, Swedish Film Institute, Polish Film Institute, Ministry of Industry and Innovation Iceland, Eurimages, Nordic Film And TV Fund  
Producers: Hrönn Kristinsdóttir, Sara Nassim, Piodor Gustafsson, Erik Rydell, Klaudia Smieja-Rostworowska, Jan Naszewski  
Executive Producers: Noomi Rapace, Béla Tarr, Håkan Petterson, Jon Mankell, Marcin Drabiński, Peter Possne, Zuzanna Hencz

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