

PRESS RELEASE:

39th OULU INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH FILM FESTIVAL WINNERS 2020

Free for publication

Children's Film Competition

Starboy Award given by the Children's Jury:
directors Marina Andree Škop and Dražen Žarković
Film: MY GRANDPA IS AN ALIEN

ECFA Award

Given by the International Jury: THE CROSSING
Director: Johanne Helgeland

Youth Film Competition

Global Future Prize given by the Youth Film Competition Jury: I AM FREE
Director: Ilya Severov

Finnish Competition

Look at Me... Award of the Media Foundation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland:
MY DEAR MOTHER
Director: Paul-Anders Simma

STARBOY AWARD: MY GRANDPA IS AN ALIEN

The Children's Jury gave the Starboy Award, sponsored by Oulun Energia, to the directors of the best film in the Children's Film Competition. The award consists of 1000 euros and a Starboy statuette made by sculptor **Sanna Koivisto**.

The winners of the Children's Film Competition are **Marina Andree Škop** and **Dražen Žarković** with their film *MY GRANDPA IS AN ALIEN*.

Jury statement: *"We had trouble in deciding the winner movie. The winner movie was amazing. Some things could change about editing. Acting was good, and music was very good. Movie was emotional, funny, and it was created really well. There were almost no bad sides in the movie."*

Directors Marina Andree Škop and **Dražen Žarković** comment: *"We are thrilled that our film MY GRANDPA IS AN ALIEN won the Children's Film Competition Starboy award. It is an honour to us that children jury selected our film as the best. It took us almost seven years to make this movie and it's incredibly satisfying to see it traveling all around the world and winning awards... Thank you dear jury. Thank you to the organizers of Oulu festival."*

For us it is important that the message of friendship and respecting of alien friends came to the Finnish audience."

ECFA AWARD: THE CROSSING

The ECFA Award was founded by the European Children's Film Association in 2010. It is given to the best European film in the Children's Film Competition by the International Jury – the CEO and artistic director of the Montreal International Children's Film Festival **Jo-Anne Blouin**, screenwriter, director, producer and the

CEO in the German KEVIN LEE FILM production company **Norbert Lechner** and the polymath of the Finnish children's culture, screenwriter and presenter **Veera Degerholm**.

The winner is *THE CROSSING* directed by **Johanne Helgeland**.

Jury statement: *"The ECFA jury was unanimous in its decision to award the ECFA prize to the Norwegian film THE CROSSING by Johanne Helgeland.*

The excellent script and the sensitive and empathetic directing tell this exciting story consistently at the eye level of the children. The child actors are outstanding, and the storyline is audacious. The heart/world of Astrid Lindgren meets the dark and cruel reality of war including hard experiences to the collective story which resonates in this time of Corona."

Director Johanne Helgeland: *"Dear Jury, dear organizers and dear audience at the Oulu Children's Film Festival in Finland. Thank you so much for this award, it means the world to all of us who made the film. We hope that THE CROSSING can start a conversation between children and grown-ups about the Second World War. We still have 17 million refugees in the world and half of these are children under the age of eighteen. So it's still a very topical film unfortunately.*

Thank you to all of you guys who organized the film festival in these challenging times. It's so important that we get our films out there and we really appreciate your work. Thanks again from Norway and lots and lots of love."

GLOBAL FUTURE PRIZE: I AM FREE

Awarded by The Finnish 4H Organisation's Association in Oulu, the 1000-euro Global Future Prize is given by a jury of young people to the best youth film in the festival. The winner is *I AM FREE* by **Ilya Severov**.

Jury statement: *"The movie was odd in a good way. Characters were different and unique and not just some bland people. The movie's premise was beautiful and raw. The main character was authentic and his problems were relatable. The movie's plot was very well done and it kept the audience interested for the whole time. There was a lot of thought put in to the characters and their personal stories. Everybody was easy to relate to in a way or another."*

Director Ilya Severov: *"I am very pleased that my film participated in your film festival, and even more pleased that we received this prize! It is a pity that the borders are closed now. I love Finland very much and have visited you many times. Even I have Finnish blood in my veins-my grandmother was a Karelian and Finnish is her native language. Thank you again for this award!"*

LOOK AT ME... AWARD OF THE MEDIA FOUNDATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF FINLAND: MY DEAR MOTHER

The Media Foundation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland grants a 1500-euro award to a Finnish feature or short film at the festival. This year the recipient was chosen by **Monica Vikström-Jokela**. The award goes to *MY DEAR MOTHER* and its director **Paul-Anders Simma**.

Comments by **Monica Vikström-Jokela:** *"The face of a child. The face of a young person. This is the most valuable resource in a children's and youth film.*

Five out of seven finalists in this year's national category tell a story where the relationship between children and parents is essential. The real challenge in such a film is to maintain the perspective of the child. If the director manages to do this, the result is strong.

*The 2020 Look at Me... Award goes to the documentary MY DEAR MOTHER and director **Paul-Anders Simma**. Throughout, the makers of this film stay close to the faces of Dasha and Alyonna as they grow from children to teenagers on the verge of independence. This consequent use of close-ups draws the viewer close to the main characters, while the visual storytelling keeps the grown-ups at a distance. This is probably why this otherwise conventionally built documentary brakes the screen with surprising force and gets under the skin of the viewer. Waking up the next day, you still find yourself thinking of Dasha and Alyonna and wondering what happened to them.*

The poetically prosaic voice-over also colours the film. Religious elements evoke respect as well as questions: How can an abandoned teenager think that she is paying for the sins of her mother?

MY DEAR MOTHER makes you feel how desperately everyone longs for the love of one's parents. The film also shows you that there is comfort in learning about your own history. And above all; if your parents fail you, others may step in and become your safety net. You are not necessarily alone."

Director Paul-Anders Simma: *"We are grateful that the jury has selected RÁHKIS EADNAN/ MY DEAR MOTHER for the Look at Me... Award.*

The film is Tasha's life story of Tasha, a saami girl who is an orphanage inmate, even if both her parents are alive. She wanted to tell the unheard story of the voiceless children inside the institution walls. The Look at Me... Award is a confirmation that Tasha succeeded in her desire to be seen. As filmmakers, we are happy that we have been able to help Tasha to give a voice to those who have been silent."

You can find photos on our homepage: www.ouluilmfestival.fi/en/press/

THE FIRST OULU CHILDREN'S FILM FORUM NOV, 17th 2020

The first Oulu Children's Film Forum was held on Tuesday the 17th of November 2020 in Oulu. The online Forum consisted of addresses given by professionals and panel discussions where all attendees were encouraged to bring their questions. This year forum discussed the challenges in international production, distribution and financing of Nordic children's films. We heard success stories and presentations of upcoming Nordic films. Co-produced films were also in focus as well as the question of how co-production affects distribution.

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