OFFICIAL SELECTION 2025
sundance
film festival

A FILM BY VLADIMIR DE FONTENAY

SUKKWAN ISLAND

SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL PRESS NOTES



Photo Credit: © 2024 – HAUT ET COURT – MAIPO FILM – VERSUS PRODUCTION – GOOD CHAOS – RTBF

Directed by: Vladimir de Fontenay
Written by: Vladimir de Fontenay
Based on “Sukkwan Island “ by David Vann
Produced by: Carole Scotta, Eliott Khayat, and Caroline Benjo
Co-Produced By: Synnøve Hørsdal, Petter Onstad Løkke, Jacques-Henri Bronckart, Tatjana Kozar, Mike Goodridge, Sydney Oberfeld
Cast: Swann Arlaud, Woody Norman, Alma Pöysti, Ruaridh Mollica and Tuppence Middleton

LOGLINE

On the remote Sukkwan Island, 13-year-old Roy agrees to spend a formative year of adventure with his father deep in the Norwegian fjords. What starts as a chance to reconnect descends into a test of survival as they face the harsh realities of their environment and confront their unresolved turmoil.

SYNOPSIS

An intense psychological thriller unfolds on the remote Sukkwan Island, as 13-year-old Roy agrees to spend a formative year of adventure deep in the Norwegian fjords. What starts as a chance to reconnect with his father, Tom, descends into a test of survival as they face the harsh realities of their environment and confront their unresolved inner turmoil and the raw power of nature.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The aesthetic approach of the film reflects my desire to experience everything with the characters without ever being able to look away. To do this, I wanted to anchor us in Roy and Tom's point of view at all times, and connect us to their emotions, without judgment.

I wanted the island to be a sensory arena where we can "feel" what the characters go through during their stay. If they seem free when they arrive on the island, a feeling of confinement and paralysis develops throughout the film. And, as the relationship between father and son deteriorates, it is their overall connection to nature and their very experience of the island that is altered.

Heavy rain, snow, thick fog, muddy rocks, and harsh cold replace glowing sunsets and midnight swims under the northern lights. The transcendent landscapes suddenly become oppressive. The virgin territory becomes tormented and, like the father's inner demons, the imaginary bears come out of their dens. As for the cabin, it is a bit like the underground world of the film. First a nest, then a refuge, it becomes the characters' inner prison and the theatre of their broken dreams.

Filming in the Norwegian fjords was a true challenge, as well as an epic adventure. We filmed on two separate seasons, first in February to capture the harsh winter, and then in June to shoot the beginning of the film. The Arctic weather was relentless. Freezing temperatures, brutal winds, endless nights - it was survival filmmaking at its best. In the Summer we had perpetual daylight, a beautiful light, as well as animals showing up. We had crows, a reindeer, and even a bear on set. Watching the seasons change while working on the same story gave the project a sense of evolution.

I want the audience to connect viscerally to the situations portrayed in the film so that the emotion reaches us without mannerism. In order for the situations to emerge from reality, we adopted a naturalistic approach, filming with a hand-held camera and in natural settings, while leaving a lot of room for more choreographed movements with more stylized lighting. I wanted the landscapes to create a contrast between the scenes to create emotional build-up and have us experience Tom's inner demons with him. To me, the landscape had to be a reflection of Tom's deteriorating mental health so as his downfall gets steeper the terrain that surrounds him as well.

Slow tracking shots and nervous panning give an epic feel to the narration. Wide shots alternate with very close subjective shots to fully immerse the audience into the characters' minds. I want to be as close as possible to the truth of the situations, to the heart of the drama that is played out and the beauty that surrounds it.

As in my previous film, I worked within a light and flexible crew, in order to provoke and film the unexpected, and focus on the actors. I was blessed to work with such talented actors. The father-son connection between Swann Arlaud (Tom) and Woody Norman (Roy) was beyond what I could have imagined. When I first saw Woody's performance in Mike Mills' film C'MON C'MON and his amazing chemistry with Joaquin Phoenix, I knew he had to play Roy. Then I wanted Swann Arlaud (ANATOMY OF A FALL) to play Tom because of his vulnerability and dramatic density, but also so that the audience could identify with him. Impenetrable and inhabited, I want Tom to be able to move us, touching us despite his violence, irresponsibility and confusion.

— Vladimir de Fontenay, Writer and Director of SUKKWAN ISLAND

FROM DAVID VANN, AUTHOR OF SUKKWAN ISLAND

I wrote the novella Sukkwan Island toward the end of the 10 years it took me to write Legend of a Suicide. The reason it took so long is that everyone in my family had a different version of what had happened to my father, what it meant, and who he was. And the story itself ambushed me. Halfway through, there's an enormous shock I had no idea was coming, even though it's the central event. After this, I understood that writing is mostly subconscious, and what I love about this film is that the director and actors, also, were willing to push beyond what was comfortable in order to discover, in order to have moments surprise them and come to life. It's a beautiful film, haunting and immersive, and I'm grateful for what they've done. It's all I could have hoped for.

— David Vann, Author of "Sukkwan Island" included in the book "Legend of a Suicide"

CAST

SWANN ARLAUD, "Tom"



Credit : Vincent Desailly

2023 – ANATOMY OF A FALL – Justine Triet
Cannes Film Festival 2023 – Palme d'Or
Academy Awards 2024 - Best Original Screenplay
Golden Globes 2024 – Best Screenplay & Best International Motion Picture
César Awards 2024 - Best Supporting Actor

2023 – L'ETABLI (THE WORKBENCH) – Mathias Gokalp

2022 – TANT QUE LE SOLEIL FRAPPE (AS LONG AS THE SUN SHINES) – Philippe Petit
Venice International Critics' Week 2022

2022 – ABOUT JOAN – Laurent Larivière

2019 – THE BARE NECESSITY – Erwan Le Duc
Cannes Directors' Fortnight 2019

2018 – BY THE GRACE OF GOD – François Ozon
César Awards 2020 – Best Supporting Actor

2018 – A CLEVER CROOK – Lucas Bernard

2017 – BLOODY MILK – Hubert Charuel
César Awards 2018 – Best Actor

2016 – A WOMAN'S LIFE – Stéphane Brizé
Venice Film Festival 2016 – Golden Lion Nominee
César Awards 2017 – 2 Nominations

2016 – THE APPLE OF MY EYE – Axelle Ropert
Locarno Film Festival 2016 – Golden Leopard Nominee

2016 – BADEN BADEN – Rachel Lang
Magritte 2017 – 1 Prize (Most Promising Actress) and 2 Nominations

2015 – LES ANARCHISTES (THE ANARCHISTS) – Elie Wajeman
César Awards 2016 – Most Promising Actor Nominee

2011 – ELLES – Malgorzata Szumowska

WOODY NORMAN, "Roy "



2024 - THE ELECTRIC STATE – Anthony Russo and Joe Russo

2021 - C'MON C'MON – Mike Mills
BAFTA Awards 2022 – Best Supporting Role Nominee

2019 - THE SMALL HAND – Justin Molotnikov

2019 - THE WAR OF THE WORLDS (3x52') – Craig Vieros

2019 - POLDARK (8x52') – Debbie Horsfield
BAFTA Awards 2016 – Audience Award

2019 - BRUNO – Karl Golden

2019 - CATASTROPHE (12x24') – Sharon Horgan et Rob Delaney
BAFTA Awards 2016-18-20 Nominee –Primetime Emmy Awards 2016-17 Nominee

2019 - LES MISÉRABLES – Andrew Davies

2018 - TROY: FALL OF A CITY (8x60') – David Farr
BAFTA TV Craft Award – BAFTA Awards 2019

ALMA POYSTI, “Anna”



Credit : Marica Rosengård

2023 – A DAY AND A HALF – Fares Fares

2023 – FALLEN LEAVES – Aki Kaurismäki
Cannes Films Festival 2023 – Jury Prize
Golden Globes 2024 – Nominee for Best Performance by a Female Actor in a Motion Picture

2023 – FOUR LITTLE ADULTS – Selma Vilhunen
Göteborg Film Festival – Dragon Award for Best Acting

2023 – THE GOOD DRIVER – Tonislav Hristov

RUARIDH MOLLICA “Adult Roy”



Credit: ©YellowBellyPhoto

2024 – SEBASTIAN – Mikko Makela
*BIFA Awards 2024 - Nominee for Breakthrough Performer*2023 – BOYS ON FILM 23: DANGEROUS TO KNOW – Irasj Asanti, Máté Konkol and Sean Lìonadh

2022 – RED ROSE – Michael Clarkson & Paul Clarkson

TUPPENCE MIDDLETON “Elizabeth”



Credit : Joseph Sinclair

2022 - DOWNTON ABBEY 2 - A NEW ERA - Simon Curtis

2020 - MANK - David Fincher -
Academy Awards 2021 – Best Achievement in Production Design
Academy Awards 2021 – Best Achievement in Cinematography
Critics Choice Awards – Best Production Design

2019 - DOWNTON ABBEY - Michael Engler

2016 - WAR AND PEACE- Tom Harper

FILMMAKERS

VLADIMIR DE FONTENAY, Director/Writer
Born in Paris in 1987, Vladimir de Fontenay studied and worked in France, Italy and the United States. A graduate of NYU Tisch School of the Arts, he is a Spike Lee Production Fund laureate and resident of the MacDowell Colony and the Villa Medici.

His first feature film MOBILE HOMES, starring Imogen Poots and Callum Turner, was selected for the Cannes Film Festival's Quinzaine des Arts Directors' Fortnight in 2017 and in more than twenty festivals around the world.

In 2020, he directed the first three episodes of VAMPIRES, a drama series adapted from Thierry Jonquet's unfinished novel by Thierry Jonquet, starring Oulaya Amamra, Dylan Robert and Suzanne Clément.

He is currently shooting a TV series, which he co-created with Marie Monge for HBO Max.

CAROLE SCOTTA, Producer (Haut et Court)
As founder and CEO of Haut et Court, Carole Scotta manages the company's activities: production (cinema, TV and documentaries), distribution and the running of 7 cinemas. Their main credits include : Laurent Cantet's THE CLASS (Palme d'Or 2008); Alain Berliner's MA VIE EN ROSE (Golden Globe Best Foreign Film 1998); Dominik Moll's THE NIGHT OF THE 12TH (7 César awards 2023). Through Haut et Court TV, Carole has produced several series: THE RETURNED (International Emmy Awards for Best Drama Series) CONSTELLATION (with Turbine Studios for Apple TV+) and MISTER SPADE (with Black Bear Pictures for AMC, CANAL+) being the latest. Haut et Court is a co-founding member of THE CREATIVES, a federation of 10 international independent production companies.

ELIOTT KHAYAT, Producer (Haut et Court)
Eliott Khayat is a producer at Haut et Court. After having participated in the production of films such as "Only the Animals" and "The Night of the 12th" by Dominik Moll (7 César Awards), Gagarine by Fanny Liatard and Jérémy Trouilh (Cannes Film Festival 2020), or "A Chiara" by Jonas Carpignano, he has gone on producing first feature films and acclaimed international coproductions such as "Santosh" by Sandhya Suri (Cannes -Un certain Regard 2024, shortlisted for the 2025 Academy Award for Best International Film), the animated film, "Hola Frida", which premiered at the 2024 Morelia Film Festival, or "Nino in Paradise", by Laurent Micheli.

CAROLINE BENJO, Producer (Haut et Court)
Since joining Haut et Court in 1995, Caroline Benjo has produced over 60 feature films, which include Laurent Cantet's Cannes Palme d'Or winner THE CLASS (2008) and Dominik Moll's THE NIGHT OF THE 12th (7 César awards in 2023). In 2011, Caroline launched Haut et Court TV, responsible for acclaimed series such as: International Emmy winner THE RETURNED (CANAL+), and BAFTA-nominated THE LAST PANTHERS (CANAL+/Sky International). Caroline has also co-produced THE YOUNG POPE and THE NEW POPE (with Wildside for CANAL+, Sky, and HBO), and more recently CONSTELLATION (with Turbine Studios for Apple TV+) and MONSIEUR SPADE (with Black Bear Pictures for AMC, CANAL+). This year brings a new season of NO MAN'S LAND, coproduced with Spiro Films for Arte and Hulu.

DAVID VANN, Author of the original book
Published in 23 languages, David Vann's internationally bestselling books have won 14 prizes, including best foreign novel in France and Spain (Prix Medicis Etranger and Premi Llibreter), and appeared on 84 Best Books of the Year lists in a dozen countries. He has been featured in more than 100 international literary festivals and had book tours in 32 countries. He has written for the Atlantic Monthly, Esquire, Outside, The New York Times, The Sunday Times, The Guardian, and many other magazines and newspapers. A former Guggenheim fellow, National Endowment for the Arts fellow, and Wallace Stegner fellow, he holds degrees from Stanford and Cornell.

CO-PRODUCERS

SYNNOVE HORSDAL, Co-Producer (Maipo Film)
Synnøve Hørsdal is the CEO of Maipo Film and one of Norway's most renowned producers. With a career spanning over two decades, she has been instrumental in producing more than 50 feature films and drama series, including hit series "*State of Happiness"*, the Sundance favorites "*Happy, Happy"*, "*Homesick"*, and "*Sonja: The White Swan"*, as well as numerous critically acclaimed box office hits in Norwegian cinema.

PETTER ONSTAD LOKKE, Co-Producer (Maipo Film)
Petter Onstad Løkke is a producer in Maipo Film. In 2024, he released the internationally acclaimed mini-series *Dates in Real Life*, which earned prestigious accolades at Rose d'Or, Prix Europa, Series Mania and Cinema Jove. Løkke's filmography also includes the critically acclaimed dramedy "*Thomas vs. Thomas"*, the Emmy-nominated vampire series *"Heirs of the Night"*, and the American horror film *"Polaroid"*.

JACQUES-HENRI BRONCKART, Co-Producer
Jacques-Henri Bronckart oversees the development and executive production of films for Versus Production, a company he founded in 1999 with his brother Olivier. Committed to supporting a new generation of filmmakers in Belgium and abroad, he has produced or co-produced numerous feature films, short films, and documentaries, while building lasting relationships with talents such as Bouli Lanners, Olivier Masset-Depasse, Joachim Lafosse, Stefan Liberski, Delphine Girard, Guillaume Senez. Most of the films he has produced have been selected for prestigious festivals like Cannes, Berlin, Venice, and Toronto, garnering awards worldwide. In 2005, together with his brother, he created Inver Invest, a Tax Shelter structure to support the financing of their films. This was followed in 2009 by the establishment of a film distribution company, O'Brother Distribution. Jacques-Henri Bronckart is a member of the Union of Film Producers (UPFF), which played a key role in the creation of the Tax Shelter law.

TATJANA KOZAR, Co-Producer
In 2008, Tatjana Kozar joined Savage Film as a producer where she managed a wide range of international projects for 8 years. From 2016 to 2018, she worked as an associate producer specializing in international co-productions for a Belgian Tax Shelter company before joining the team at Eklektik Productions as a producer. In 2020, she became part of the Versus Production team as a producer focusing primary on international co-productions. Tatjana brings 15 years of experience in the industry to the Versus group, strengthening the network and expanding the international partnerships of the company. *VERMIGLIO* by Maura Delpero, which won the Silver Lion at Venice, is an excellent example of this outreach.

MIKE GOODRIDGE, Co-Producer (Good Chaos)
Mike Goodridge is the founder and CEO of the UK-based production and management company Good Chaos. Mike, who was previously CEO of Protagonist Pictures, set up the company in 2017. An EP on Jasmila Zbanic's Oscar-nominated Quo Vadis, Aida and co-producer on Ruben Ostlund's Palme d'Or winning Triangle Of Sadness, Good Chaos has also executive produced Jalmari Helander's box-office hit Sisu, and were the lead producers on Sandhya Suri's Santosh, which premiered in competition at the Cannes Film Festival in 2024, and Baltasar Kormakur's Touch distributed by Focus Features. They are currently in post production on films with directors Shih-Ching Tsou, Edward Berger and Laszlo Nemes. Good Chaos secured backing from the BFI's Global Screen Fund in 2021.

SYDNEY OBERFELD, Co-Producer
Sydney Oberfeld is an Associate Producer at the UK-based production and management company Good Chaos Originally from Montreal, she previously worked across films such as Isabel Sandoval's *Lingua Franca* and Ladj Ly's *Les Misérables*. She is currently working on Anna Biller's (*The Love Witch*) second feature, a feminist horror set in medieval England, and Edem Kelman's debut feature backed by Film4, both set to shoot in 2025.

FULL FILM CREDITS

Director	Vladimir de Fontenay
Screenwriter	Vladimir de Fontenay
Adaptation	based on Sukkwan Island from David Vann's book “Legend of a Suicide”
Producers	Carole Scotta Eliott Khayat Caroline Benjo
Co-Producers	Synnøve Hørsdal Petter Onstad Løkke Jacques-Henri Bronckart Tatjana Kozar Mike Goodridge Sydney Oberfeld Julia Andersen
Executive Producers	Niki Leskinen Roosa Toivonen Ari Tolppanen SO.GA. FILMS
Line Producer	Rémi Veyrié
Cinematographer	Amine Berrada
Editor	Nicolas Chaudeurge
Music By	Florent Chronie-De Maria Jeremy Villecourt
Costume Designer	Sybille Langh
Production Designer	Eve Martin
Sound	Mathieu Villien Damien Tronchot Kath Pollard
Make-Up	Saara Räisänen Tanita Aaram
1st AD	Valerie Wery Thomas Colban
Casting	Matt Western
Additional casting	Nicola Chisholm

Continuity	Elisabeth Alexandris	
Cast	Swann Arlaud	Tom
	Woody Norman	Roy
	Alma Pöysti	Anna
	Ruaridh Mollica	Adult Roy
	Tuppence Middleton	Elizabeth

A film produced by
HAUT ET COURT

In coproduction with
MAIPO FILM
VERSUS PRODUCTION
GOOD CHAOS

In coproduction with
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