

IMPACT REPORT
2012-2021 | FINNISH FILM AFFAIR

LAUNCHPAD TO THE WORLD

A DECADE OF FINNISH FILM AFFAIR



Helsinki International Film Festival
– Love & Anarchy



Finnish Film Affair Funders & Partners 2022

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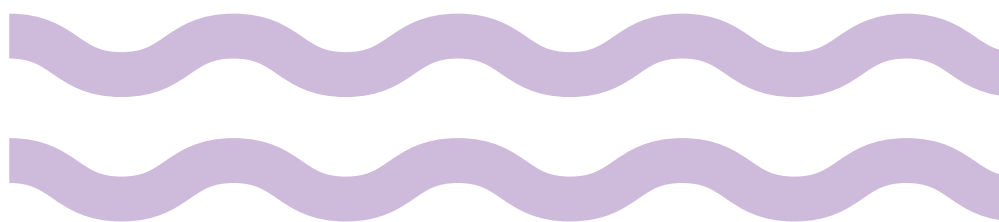
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Summary of Highlights

- 234 fiction and documentary projects were pitched in 2012–2021, with a further 250 completed films in the event's film programme
- Altogether 212 different production companies from around the world have been represented in the programme
- A wider Nordic focus has grown since introducing the Nordic Flair training programme in 2017, and the Nordic Selection in the showcase day in 2020
- Attended by guests from 43 different countries, with decision makers from the likes of Netflix, HBO, Tribeca, Festival de Cannes, Marché du Film and Berlinale in attendance
- Over 2000 curated meetings between guests and project representatives
- International attendance quadrupled during the event's first decade
- Overall attendance doubled in 2012–2021, with a further 25% growth for the event's 11th edition in 2022

Just a few of the projects that have been showcased at Finnish Film Affair

Khadar Ayderus Ahmed's **The Gravedigger's Wife**, awarded at Toronto International Film Festival • Klaus Härö's **The Fencer**, Golden Globe nominee • Selma Vilhunen's **Hobbyhorse Revolution**, winner of Best Documentary at Jussi Awards • Mohamed El Aboudi's **School of Hope**, Special Jury Prize at Hot Docs • Pirjo Honkasalo's **Concrete Night**, world premiered at TIFF • Teemu Nikki's **The Blind Man Who Did Not Want to See Titanic**, winner of the Orizzonti Extra audience award at Venice International Film Festival • Juho Kuosmanen's **The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki**, winner of the Un Certain Regard prize at Cannes Film Festival • Xavier Picard's **Moomins on the Riviera**, an animation based on the beloved Finnish characters



FFA has hosted guests from **43** different countries

1. Opening Words From the Industry

"Finnish Film Affair has had an extremely big impact on our film sector's international funding and general knowledge of Finnish films abroad. FFA has grown more important every year and it has succeeded to invite more and more significant guests to Helsinki. Internationalisation of Finnish films and the audiovisual industry is essential to ensure growth and possibilities for projects with bigger budgets and therefore better abilities to succeed abroad."

Lasse Saarinen, CEO, Finnish Film Foundation

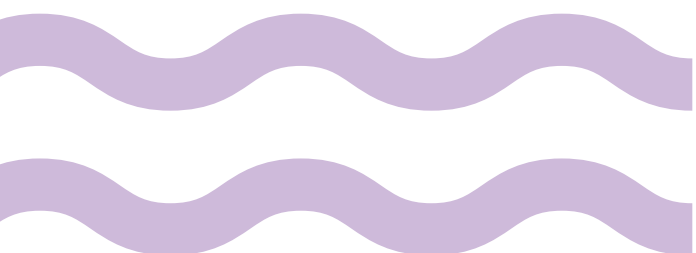
"Young adults of today have grown up with global access 24/7, also in Finland. The domestic is mirrored against the international more than ever before. High-end productions combine a unique national identity with global quality.

Finnish talents and productions are travelling today but deserve to do so even more. Finland needs events that build Nordic and international bridges, that enlighten professionals, inspire film makers, and promote collaboration. Finnish Film Affair has done exactly that."

Liselott Forsman, CEO, Nordisk Film & TV Fond

"Finnish Film Affair has enhanced the Finnish film industry's possibilities in creating international relationships and networks. It is especially important to young filmmakers and producers, but also for more advanced ones in testing their projects in international contexts already in the early development stages. Access to the international market in a very safe environment makes FFA very important for the Finnish filmmakers."

Ulla Simonen, Director, AVEK



"The Finnish audiovisual sector has become much more international during the past years. Finnish films are travelling to international festivals, series are watched in many countries and our reputation as a trustworthy partner is expanding. Finnish Film Affair has done a lot of work to become one of the most interesting events in the Nordic area. They are setting an example by combining feature films, documentaries and series under one umbrella. Keep up the good work!"

Hanna Vuorinen, Head of Film in Finland, Business Finland

"The Finnish audiovisual industry has grown fast during the past years and there's still a lot more potential for international growth. FFA has provided the producers an easy platform and access to international co-producers, sales agents, distributors and valuable contacts for their future projects. Having the event in Helsinki and offering the important guests a nice stay and well curated programme makes it easier to build networks also for those filmmakers who do not have a project in an active stage but need the network later."

Laura Kuulasmaa, CEO, Audiovisual Producers Finland – APFI ry

"The Finnish film industry has been on a good track these past 10 years. More Finnish films are handled by international sales agents and this is for sure thanks to Finnish Film Affair. FFA has since its beginning paid a lot of attention in getting the best possible sales people to attend the event and to get connected with our production companies. Over the years the good reputation of the event has been growing and you don't have to convince people to come to Helsinki: they know that the event is well executed and in 3 days they have the opportunity to meet all the key industry people. It's been a pleasure to witness how Finnish Film Affair has taken its place on the annual European event map as a place to visit."

Jaana Puskala, Head of International Department, Finnish Film Foundation

"When I arrived in Finland six years ago, FFA was one of the first places that welcomed me warmly as a filmmaker. I have made some of my first professional connections in the film industry because of FFA. Since then, I have witnessed and participated in its activities, and in my opinion, it is one of those platforms that is accessible, embraces fresh perspectives, and is open to bold ideas that could contribute to the development of the film industry. Now, we are working and collaborating to create more space for new viewpoints. I see FFA as a space where the past, present, and future of the film industry come together on an international level. If we want our stories to reflect our pluralistic societies, we have to understand the importance of diversity and cross-cultural interactions. I hope the Finnish audiovisual industry follows FFA and works for a more open and diverse industry that is not oppressing or ignoring different voices but welcomes them."

Erol Mintaş, Founder and Artistic Director, The Academy of Moving People and Images (AMPI)

2. 10 Years of FFA

Finland has a rich cinematic history, from war story gems that pull from Finnish literary classics such as *Unknown Soldier*, to touching documentaries that weave through Finland's cultural side in stunning visuals and important topics. Of course Finland's very own claim to fame, Santa Claus, has also made it onto Finnish big screens, through animated reindeer fantasies and a gory dose of Nordic horror.

Historically Finland has produced many films that have garnered international attention, however it is only recently that there has been a dedicated focal point in Finland for film industry professionals looking to expand their films' reach to overseas markets. Throughout the years, there have been several organisations that have popped up in Finland to help the film industry and support Finnish films. The **Finnish Film Foundation** for example was created in 1969, offering aid in funding and productions. In the 1980's the **Promotion Centre for Audiovisual Culture Finland, AVEK**, jumped on the scene to promote Finland's audiovisual industry using copyright remuneration.

However, none of the organisations had the capacity to fill Finland's need for a central cinematic marketplace, where once projects got their feet off the ground they could showcase their idea, and in the process, search for their missing ingredients; whether it was the right director, a financial source, an international sales agent, or visibility and contacts. During a study by AVEK and the Finnish Film Foundation, producers had also noted a need in Finland for a wider variety of aid in funding, additional help in international cooperations and deals, juridical advice, as well as contacts in international productions.

By the early 2000s industry players were more and more aware of the need for a dedicated film industry forum in Finland, in addition to the well-established film industry events in the Nordics such as Göteborg's Nordic Film Market and Haugesund's New Nordic Films.

A new springboard was the missing key in the Finnish film industry, and it was precisely this that Finland's producers decided to come together and fix.

The Finnish producers association, **SEK**, created a film industry event in Finland called Finnish Film Market, which could serve as a unified hub for film industry professionals. Whilst the Finnish Film Market in Tampere was short-lived due to a variety of factors, it nevertheless provided the perfect first steps for **Helsinki International Film Festival – Love & Anarchy** to step up to the stage and create a new iteration. Under former Executive Director Sara Norberg's helm, Love & Anarchy was the ideal setting to house an industry event dedicated to bringing international players to the Finnish field. The Love & Anarchy brand was an internationally respected festival which could easily attract the right international guests with an interest in Finnish productions. An additional bonus was the fact that the festival operated from Helsinki, an exotic selling point for international buyers.

As part of Love & Anarchy, the festival held an event focused on Finnish films, and in 2011 when a journalist from **Variety** was on-scene and asking about it, Norberg realised that the festival could do more for international guests who showed an interest in the domestic productions. Based on extensive feedback from the industry and clear international interest, the first **Finnish Film Affair**, FFA, was put together and held the following year.

FFA was created to provide a space in Finland for industry professionals to convene, and to propel Finnish productions into the international sphere. FFA gathered the most internationally promising projects in the works in Finland, and provided them with a platform where they could present their work. In attendance were a slew of international film industry guests, as well as a roster of national audiovisual pros. During its first decade,, FFA has introduced Finnish films to over 550 international professionals from around the world, with many of them having visited the event multiple times throughout the years.

Since its conception, FFA has explored various avenues and initiatives, each with the aim of bolstering the Finnish audiovisual trade. From early on, panels have been a part of the event as they tackle not only relevant topics, but also difficult ones in the industry, such as 2020's panel 'Representation. Now!' which faced head-on the lack of diversity in Finland's film and TV industry.

FFA has also branched out to include several Nordic initiatives; from offering training to Nordic pros in the fields of directing, acting, film distribution, and leadership, to presenting the Nordic Flair Award in recognition of an individual's or organisation's contribution which has pushed Nordic excellence into the international spotlight. Past winners include Danish actor *Pilou Asbæk*, Finnish actor *Laura Birn*, Danish director *Lone Scherfig*, and Finland's very own foley artist extraordinaire *Heikki Kossi*.

The main attraction of FFA is arguably its showcase. A day dedicated solely to up-and-coming projects in various stages of completion. During the day each project gets a chance to step up to the stage and sell their idea to a crowd consisting of various national and international industry players. FFA has seen many successful films stride across its stage, from the *Hobbyhorse Revolution* doc and the *Lake Bodom* horror, to the dramas *Eden* and *Aurora*, as well as a *Moomin* and *Ricky Rapper* flick or two. Following the presentations is a matchmaking session of curated meetings between international guests and project representatives. There is also a curated selection of completed films in the programme.

In 2020 FFA continued expanding even further into the Nordic wheelhouse by including Nordic films in the showcase. Competing in their own series called Nordic Selection, one project from each Nordic country presents its work alongside the numerous Finnish projects.

The effects of a marketplace event such as Finnish Film Affair are not easily measured, nor necessarily immediately seen, as the success and effects of the event are often witnessed years later in the film's final product, or sometimes later in the filmmaker's career. Collectively however, the past decade has borne witness to a new rise of skilled Finnish filmmakers crossing the national threshold and making a name for themselves in the international film sphere.

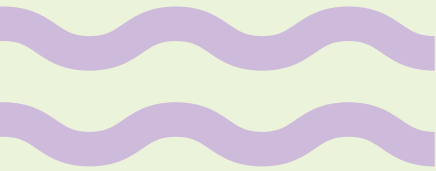
Many of these heavy hitters that have made headlines in recent years have in one form or another traversed through Finnish Film Affair. This roster includes director Juho Kuosmanen, whose Cannes award-winning film *The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki* was pitched at FFA. Similarly Oscar nominee Selma Vilhunen had her FFA project *Little Wing* premiere in Toronto, whilst Klaus Härö's FFA alumni *The Fencer* nabbed a Golden Globe nomination.

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Finnish Film Affair: Through the Years

2012: The very first FFA served as an introduction to Finnish films at Helsinki International Film Festival, and was the first year of FFA's showcase

2013: In the second year FFA brought an online project library into the mix, providing a new virtual platform for Finnish films

2014: The third FFA spread the spotlight on a selection of films from neighbouring countries, by giving participants a chance to watch screenings of Scandinavian, Estonian and Russian films from the HIFF programme

2015: The fourth year of FFA grew more than ever before, showcasing 19 titles in the Works in Progress section, and bringing 70 international guests to Helsinki

2016: FFA's fifth year saw industry guests by the likes of producer Adam Leipzig, Claudia Lewis of Fox Searchlight Pictures, and acquisitions manager Monika Halounová of HBO Europe attend the event

2017: The sixth year of FFA saw the launch of the Nordic Flair award, presenting the inaugural award to actor Pilou Asbæk, as well as a record number of projects directed by women

2018: The seventh edition saw a huge jump in the total number of attendees from 2017, increasing by nearly 100 individuals

2019: FFA season 8 continued the tradition of presenting the Nordic Flair award to Nordic heavy-hitters, by awarding Danish director Lone Scherfig

2020: FFA's ninth year was the first step into hybrid form with FFA hosting events in Helsinki and online. The showcase day also featured Nordic Selection for the first time, and the theme of Nordic Flair was the rising stars of distribution and sales agents

2021: The 10th edition saw FFA step into a new era with a new design (courtesy of Olli Nurminen), and saw Love & Anarchy also appalude FFA's success with past FFA films screened in their official festival programme

3. Let's Talk About Results

The main mission of Finnish Film Affair's first decade has been to provide a place for the Finnish industry to market their films and knowledge, as well as to learn new skills and hone the old ones. At the same time the event is the industry event of Helsinki International Film Festival, Finland's largest film event, and as such provides an even more lucrative place for networking.

The event presents Finnish films and companies to international audiences and creates networks

Jani Pösö – Producer, Writer, CEO / It's Alive Films

It's Alive Films is the company of producer-writer Jani Pösö and director-writer Teemu Nikki who have known each other since 2001 when they met making commercial work. Their move to fiction films started off with a bang when their first short film *A Mate* (*Kaveri*, 2007) premiered at Sundance Film Festival and played at over 50 festivals after the premiere.

Since then, they've made four features including *Euthanizer* (*Armomurhaaja*, 2017) which premiered at Toronto Film Festival, one of the leading film festivals in the world, 17 short films including *All Inclusive* (2019) that premiered in the Official Selection at Cannes Film Festival and also TV series such as Elisa Viihde's *Mister8* (2020) and the youth hit series *#lovemilla* (2013–2014) with 12 million views in Finland alone as well as *Mental* (*Sekasin*, 2016–2021). *Mental* has been adapted as a formatted series already in France and Italy with Germany and possibly more to follow.

From what we understand *Euthanizer* and Finnish Film Affair share some history, could you tell us more?

It does indeed. We pitched the film at Finnish Film Affair in 2016 as part of the Works in Progress. It was a great platform to do that since after the pitch we had so many meeting requests that we didn't have time to meet everyone and we equally

had plenty of offers to consider as well. The turnout at the festival was great since three sales agents from our top 5 were there and two of them we met for the first time at Finnish Film Affair.

Sounds like you found your sales agent thanks to Finnish Film Affair?

Yes, we did but the funny thing is that they actually weren't even there that year! **Wide** (our sales agent) couldn't make it to Finnish Film Affair that year because of some work-related reason but one of their industry friends was in the audience and messaged them that this is a great pitch and a project, you need to talk to these guys. So Wide chased us from abroad based on our FFA pitch, which is crazy. I think it says a lot about the level that the FFA event operates on now. It's not just an event appreciated by the Finnish industry but has a reputation abroad as well.

Has Finnish Film Affair had any other benefits to you besides the pitching event?

I think the fact that FFA brings programmers from A-list festivals each year is a very big thing. We the producers get to meet them face to face but perhaps even more importantly the programmers meet the directors as well and get to see their work and then they start tracking their projects.

Pitching at the events also helps in the long run as well. I've had several people come to me at festivals abroad and say that they remember me from our FFA pitches and we've been able to build a relationship from there. It also works in reverse. We've met people casually at FFA and then pitched them our projects at a later date but we already had an established relationship.

The FFA team have been very kind and helpful at festivals abroad as well since they've often introduced us at events when we're all abroad at a festival and they know someone we don't, which is great.



Euthanizer by Teemu Nikki / It's Alive Films

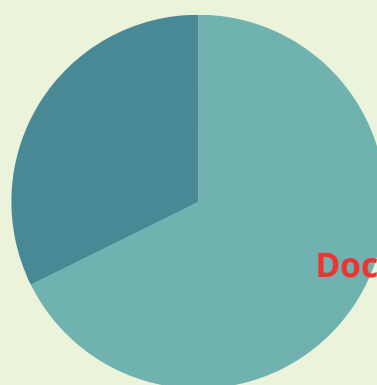
From 30 to Over 200

Finnish Film Affair has been a great way for Finnish films and upcoming projects to present themselves to the international industry. Overall, 234 projects (173 fiction and 61 documentaries) have been pitched at the Finnish Film Affair since the first edition in 2012. A similarly impressive number of 250 finished films have been presented in the line-up for international guests to discover the whole breadth of Finnish films.

Quick Stats

During the active years FFA has had

- **234** projects and
- **250** completed films.



Fiction: 274
68.7%

Documentary: 125
31.4%

In total **399 individual films** have been a part of the FFA programme from **212** different production companies.

The first Finnish Film Affair ever in 2012 clearly catered to an industry need. The first edition already had 30 project pitches and the amount of projects has remained fairly steady since then.

As the event has grown in size and reputation so has the interest to pitch at FFA. In total well over 100 production companies have pitched their film at FFA during its history, with the figure being 212 companies when you count in completed films that have been in the line-up.

Due to demand from both the local industry and international guests in 2019, **FFA introduced the presentation of TV series from Finland**. 'Highlights from Finnish TV' showcased five series and was presented in co-operation with **Audiovisual Producers Finland – APFI ry**. Due to the pandemic, expanding further into series was put on a short hold, but returned in 2022 with a series of development labs.

Over 2,000 meetings

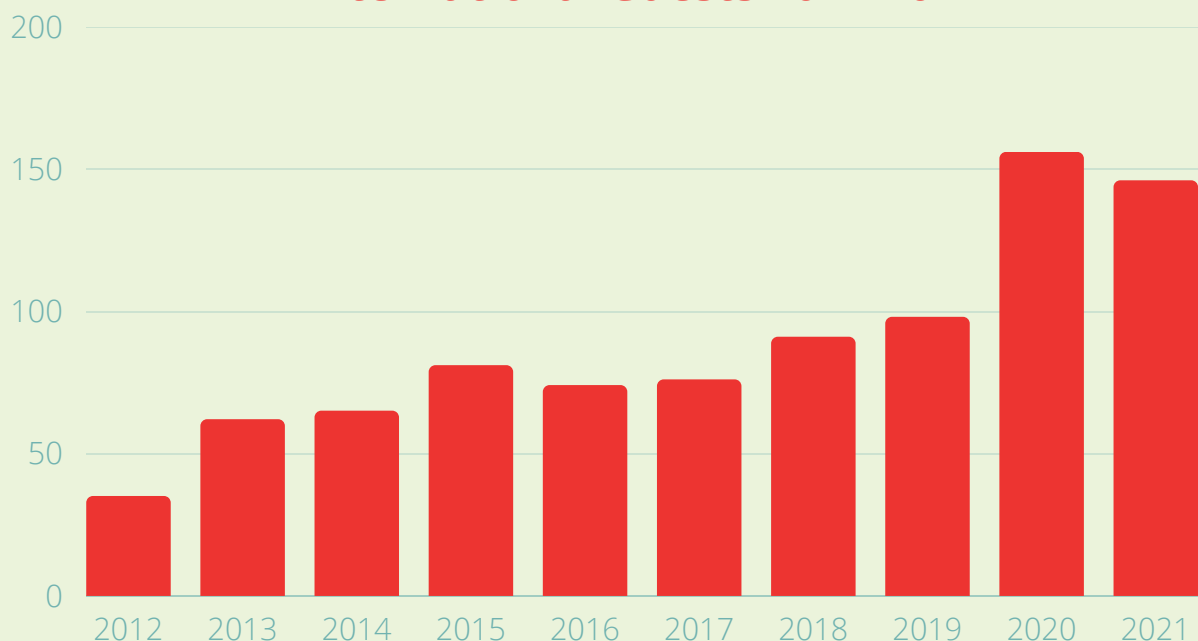
Since 2012, the event has curated over 2,000 meetings for the Finnish industry and international guests. A big help has been having the role of a matchmaker in the team. Since 2015, FFA's matchmaker has been Marta Balaga.

Make it International

The attendance of international guests has been one of the biggest contributions of Finnish Film Affair to the Finnish film industry. From the first edition's intimate 37 guests, the guest list has expanded to 98 guests in 2019, the last physical event before the pandemic, and the hybrid event in 2020 attracted a whopping 156 international guests!

Thanks to the curated list of guests, Finnish producers and filmmakers have been able to meet and network with professionals ranging from key European sales agents and distributors to major US talent agents as well as international film festivals, film institutes and funds. The guest list has always included film industry press too, providing great exposure for the Finnish film industry and the country as a filming location.

FFA International Guests 2012-2021





Timo Argillander – Managing Partner / Co-Founder, IPR.VC

IPR.VC is an alternative investment fund manager based in Helsinki, founded in 2014 and has invested in several media companies and projects ranging from film and TV to games and music. The IP projects that have benefitted from IPR.VC's involvement range from the animated series *Gigglebug* (*Kikattava Kakkiainen*) to the TV series *Bordertown* (*Sorjonen*), the *Tom of Finland* film and Salla Silmukka's *The Snow White* trilogy of books (*Lumikki* Anderson trilogy).

Recently in Finland IPR.VC has been in the headlines because of the US film production *Dual* by Riley Stearns. The film was shot in Tampere in the summer/fall of 2020 with stars Karen Gillan (*Guardians of the Galaxy*) and Aaron Paul (*Breaking Bad*) and was produced by the leading US independent genre producer and sales agent XYZ Films (*The Raid, Mandy*), which has been a guest at Finnish Film Affair three times since 2016. IPR.VC and XYZ joined forces in 2019 to raise a \$100m fund that would back a slate of 15–20 genre features that XYZ would produce and sell internationally.

IPR.VC has taken part in nearly every Finnish Film Affair since you founded the fund. How would you describe your relationship with Finnish Film Affair?

For a small company like us (you have to remember that in the end we are managing a lot of other people's money) an event like Finnish Film Affair has been very helpful. It has provided us with a much more intimate setting to network with high-level international sales agents and distributors than is possible at a busy market like Cannes for example.

We've also taken this a step further and have hosted a VIP dinner for key international guests each year and the FFA team has been a big help with this. They've been able to hand select the best people that would be relevant to us. Equally the international guests get to attend a dinner which gives their visit a nice extra flavour.

It seems like these dinners have been a success for you?

Yes, and we will definitely keep doing them once it is possible again. We've met good contacts and learned a lot about the market. We've even had a potential investment lead that started at the dinner and if the dinners continue more might follow. While the initial conversations with XYZ started earlier, the dinner and FFA was a great way to bring XYZ's Aram Tertzakian and our team in London together so we could all meet in person and get to know each other better.

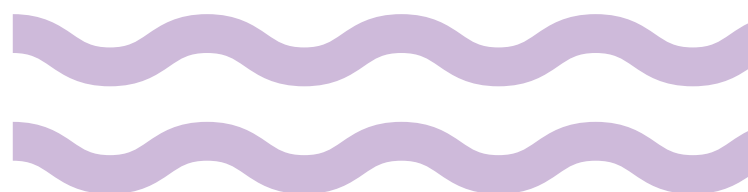
What other benefits has the Finnish Film Affair provided you or the wider industry?

Of course, the chance to meet and network with international people without attending an expensive and hectic market is a big help. The other is that it also boosts the reputation of the Finnish industry and the country as a location. Because XYZ was already familiar with Finland, they'd attended several FFAs, we felt it wasn't a ridiculous idea to suggest Finland as a location for *Dual* when the pandemic hit. XYZ did their research on filming here and independently came to the decision to film in Tampere. We didn't push them in any way, only suggested Finland as an option. They were very happy with the experience, have made further plans to work in the Tampere region and this should help spread the reputation of Finland as a location even further.

As Finnish producers become more interested in creating projects that have commercial interest internationally, Finnish Film Affair should be a great platform for them to network with the industry. As commercial investors we would like to see the industry grow from just looking for an MG from any sales agent possible, to building relationships with the right sales agents for the right projects who offer good terms. Through these relationships they can develop projects that have international and commercial appeal and help the industry grow and Finnish films travel. Finnish Film Affair would be a natural starting point to start building these relationships because of its intimate nature.

Finns in the International Press

Helping Finnish films gain more spotlight in the international press has been another result of Finnish Film Affair. The event's awards and highlights have been reported in publications such as **Variety**, **Screen International**, **Hollywood Reporter**, **Cineuropa** and **Nordic Film & TV News**.



**Isabella Karhu – Producer, Danish Bear
& Tania Moilanen – Director-Writer, *The Mission***

The Mission is a feature documentary that details the intimate coming-of-age story of young Mormon missionaries. The director Tania Moilanen has a background in journalism and *The Mission* is her debut feature-length documentary. *The Mission* won the very first Best Documentary Award at Finnish Film Affair in 2020, sponsored by AVEK. The film received its international premiere at Sundance Film Festival 2022.

Isabella Karhu is the 'bear' ('karhu' in Finnish) at Danish Bear, a Helsinki-based production company focusing on documentary and fiction films as well as commercials and music videos. The company is behind *Waiting for Barcelona* (2018) directed by Juho-Pekka Tanskanen, which was nominated for both the Jussi Award and the CPH:DOX Best Nordic Documentary Film Award. Juho-Pekka Tanskanen ('little Denmark' in Finnish is the Danish part of Danish Bear and also a producer of *The Mission*.

Was this your first year attending Finnish Film Affair?

Tania Moilanen: The first one for me, yes!

Isabella Karhu: I had attended FFA once before but without a project. I had bought a pass and was meeting distributors independently, but this was the first time I was pitching.

How did you find the preparation for the pitching?

TM: I remember the pitching itself being the best experience I had pitching! We'd pitched the project before, but this was the best setup. Earlier we had pitched in front of a small audience which was nerve-wracking; one pre-recorded pitch which was terrible; and once completely online but then you don't get any feedback. This was a good combination since there was a director to tell you what to do, there was a camaraderie with the other projects pitching and the structure was wonderful.

IK: The pitching itself was also very intimate as we were sitting on the cinema seats. We also met with Freddy Neumann, the FFA-assigned pitching coach. We met him for an hour and he was very encouraging and a really nice person to talk to. He wasn't the type of coach that just tells you all they know, he wanted to know more about the project first. Asked what the strong points of the project are and what the possible problems are and how to sell them as possibilities. It was great to work like that to try and find the strengths of your project and not just follow a list of what to do when pitching.

Sounds like it worked since you won the first year attending the event! How has the award helped the project or you going forward?

IK: It definitely helped when we were doing the follow-up after the event with the distributors and other parties. They all pointed out and congratulated on winning the award! It also sparked additional interest. Before the Finnish Film Affair we had pitched at Nordisk Panorama the week before. When we were doing follow-up with our contacts from that event, people who hadn't even attended FFA congratulated us since they had heard about the award. This brought some extra advantages for us. It was also very useful to be able to mention the award going forward with other contacts.

TM: It also helped with the documentary itself. When we've been in contact with the LDS Church in the United States (subject matter of the film) it's been very helpful. It encourages the people whom we're making this film about. They feel the project has some resonance and is landing somewhere. Overall, it seems the more clout a project gets, the more people are willing to continue participating in it. It was really good in that sense.

IK: Awards like these also help us as filmmakers. You can have this in your filmography and it shows that you have experience and that someone else has also acknowledged it.



The Mission by Tania Moilanen / Danish Bear Productions

4. Spreading Knowledge Amongst Finnish Professionals

As mentioned, Finnish Film Affair has been a great networking opportunity for Finnish filmmakers. Since the first year, FFA has also aimed to provide the Finnish film industry access to new knowledge through talks and panels with local and international panelists. The topics have covered everything from distribution and international sales to contracting and IP rights and the rise of streaming.

Not everything has been purely business oriented, as panels and workshops have helped actors understand the casting process better and how to work with agents. Panels focused on sustainability in filmmaking, representation both in front of the camera and behind and many other panels focusing on contemporary issues have made sure FFA is doing its part to help the Finnish film industry continue developing into a fair and sustainable industry.

The programme has also presented both established talent through masterclasses, such as Lone Scherfig and the Finnish sound guru Heikki Kossi, as well as newer talent through the Nordic Flair programme launched in 2017.

The event's popularity among the Finnish film professionals has been steady since the first iteration and each year hundreds of Finnish industry professionals attend the event. The amount of accredited professionals has remained steady for many years, a sign of lasting popularity, and has been growing especially since 2018. FFA really is an event for the entire Finnish industry.



Pitch Training

For the companies pitching their projects, the event has also offered pitching training, currently done in partnership with **Audiovisual Producers Finland – APFI ry**. At the same time, Finnish Film Affair takes pride in the fact that it's a safe space for the pitchers, whether you are introducing the project for the first time or are a seasoned vet.

Mika Ritalahti, Producer, Silva Mysterium

Silva Mysterium is the production company of brothers Mika Ritalahti and Niko Ritalahti. Since the company was founded in 1994 Silva Mysterium has produced fiction feature films such as *Diva of Finland* (2019) and *Star Boys* (*Kaiken se kestää*, 2017), TV Series such as *Mediataide* (2014) and *5 Ways to Cosmology* (*5 kulmaa kosmologiaan*, 2008) as well as documentaries like *Koho* (2020), short films and even radio plays.

Silva Mysterium's latest feature is Hanna Bergholm's feature debut *Hatching* (*Pahanhautoja*, 2021), a coming-of-age horror film written by Ilja Rautsi. *Hatching* was sold in advance to established US genre distributor IFC at the Cannes 2020 Marché du Film while the film was still in post-production. A great feat for most films and a very rare feat for a Finnish debut feature.

How do you see Finnish Film Affair's impact on the Finnish industry?

I can only describe it as extremely important. I've been in the industry even before we founded the company in 1994. Finnish Film Affair has had an incredible impact on making the industry more international. It has enabled me, and many others, to get to know people properly at international sales companies and other international organisations. You do know roughly who works where and you might have briefly met them, however, thanks to FFA I've gotten to properly know them as people, so now it is much easier to go and talk to them at events and they remember me as well.

The timing of Finnish Film Affair is also quite perfect since I only have to go to two festivals, Berlin in February and Cannes in May, and then everybody comes to Helsinki after the summer. For a producer that is great since you also have to produce. The event is such a precious thing for the Finnish industry that I hope it continues at the level it is.

A lot of producers say the same thing. It sounds like networking and visibility is important in your industry?

Absolutely. It also takes time to break in and you need regular visibility each year to stay in people's minds. It also gives you credibility. This industry is full of both producers and sales agents that arrive at the scene, make big noise about how they are the next big thing and then a few years later they've disappeared. You need to figure out who is the real deal and the sales agents and distributors need to do the same. FFA is a big help in building your profile with long-term thinking in mind.

Do you feel it helped you with *Hatching* as well?

For sure. We got to know our sales agent Wild Bunch over a long period of time. We pitched the project twice in Helsinki, once in Works in Development while we were still looking for a sales agent, the second time as a Work in Progress once they were on board. The first year the pitch was so well received that we had a full schedule. Which was great since we needed to make sure we talked to all the relevant people since we required a fairly large minimum guarantee to close the finance. It was also funny that the next year, once Wild Bunch was already on board, people came to both congratulate but also regret that they couldn't get the project. Which is a good thing in the long run for the company's reputation. Also, now both Wild Bunch and other people reach out to find out what other projects we've got in development in a much earlier stage.



Hatching by Hanna Bergholm / Silva Mysterium

5. Shining the Brand Image of Finland and Helsinki

It's already in the name: Finnish Film Affair takes place in Finland and aims to represent the industry. The event has co-operated with local film commissions and the production incentive. At the same time, the city of Helsinki is the location for the event's physical edition. Locations are chosen with the international congress audience in mind.

Elli Toivoniemi & Sini Hormio, Tuffi Films

Production company **Tuffi Films** has been making films since 2010 and has gone from strength to strength. They had early success with their Academy Award nominated *Do I Have to Take Care of Everything?* (*Pitääkö mun kaikki hoitaa?*) by Selma Vilhunen. Since then their film *Stupid Young Heart* (*Hölmö nuori sydän*) (d. Selma Vilhunen) has won the Crystal Bear at Berlinale and Jenni Toivoniemi's *The Date* (*Treffit*) won the Short Film Jury Award at Sundance. In 2020 alone their film *Games People Play* (*Seurapeli*) (d. Jenni Toivoniemi) won two awards at the Nordische Filmtage Lübeck and their multi-director feature film *Force of Habit* (*Yksittäistapaus*) was awarded the Finnish State Prize for Cinema.

Tuffi is dedicated to producing provoking yet inspiring content and also as an employer is driven by their core values of sustainability, equality and diversity.

Tuffi has taken part in nearly every Finnish Film Affair possible and has also won the Best Project Award an impressive three times. What has been your experience attending Finnish Film Affair throughout the years?

It's been amazing to see Finnish Film Affair grow throughout the years into the big professional event it is now. It is important to recognise it as that: the only truly professional film event in Finland. Throughout the years it has been a great chance to meet international professionals and also a platform where our projects get dedicated attention. Also, for the international guests I think it feels special since the programme is clearly curated so it feels special since it showcases the uniqueness of Finnish projects and has an exclusive feeling.

Do you feel it helps give Finnish films a more specific brand?

I would say yes and not just Finnish films but the country as well. It is definitely a better way to build a country and a film industry and a culture's brand by having people visit our country and experience uniquely Finnish things. It is a cliché but I wouldn't dismiss the impact of the traditional sauna event and the archipelago trips the guests have been treated to. The timing of the event is great since it is not in direct competition with any of the major fiction film festivals. It has also helped us build our Tuffi Films brand. We are presenting ourselves at our own festival!

Has it helped you create new contacts?

The event has definitely been a big part in helping us build a network. Interestingly a lot of international guests remember us often by our pitch at FFA even if we meet somewhere else later. Also, as an example **SVT's** Agneta Perman got in touch with us to say we should catch-up since we didn't get to see at FFA because of the pandemic. The pandemic has really shown how important the network we've been able to build is. It is difficult to forge relationships over Zoom and commit to working with someone for several years on a co-production if you haven't met or only met briefly at a busy festival.

Have there been any specific projects or collaborations that have come out of Finnish Film Affair for you?

It's often difficult to say what project or connection lead got started which is why networking like this is so important. However, we did meet the sales agent of *Force of Habit* at FFA a few years ago. Jussi Rantamäki from Aamu Film Company (*The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki*) knew Berenice Vincent of **Totem Films** and said we should sit down and talk and it was so great that he introduced us. Totem have been a great partner for us since they completely understood the project and didn't see it as just a single film like many other sales agents would have.

In what way is the project different and how did Totem help you with this?

They understood that it was not just a feature film but a whole topical cultural conversation that could travel the world with the film being just one part of an anthology package. The package is the film itself but also the larger collection of short films that the film is made of as well as a programme of Q&A sessions and talks and a whole impact campaign related to sexual harassment and the misuse of power in gender relations. The film has now travelled to 15 festivals and won multiple awards and will have a cinema release in some of these countries, which is a bit of a success during a pandemic. Totem also got the film onto **European Film Promotion's** curated festival programme so we've been very happy with them since they've distributed it as a whole package.

The International Place to Be

The international guests have enjoyed their stay in Helsinki. For a young event, good word-of-mouth is crucial.

"Over the last decade, Finnish Film Affair has been a key market in the Pan-European film industry, it offers competitive and culturally diverse films in a very friendly atmosphere. I would never miss this rendez-vous!"

Marie-Pierre Valle, Wild Bunch

"I think everyone is having an affair with FFA – it's simply great, on the spot, well organized, and the amount of great projects being both screened and pitched is truly amazing. My entry to the Finnish market came through me attending FFA and many great projects have flourished since, both when it comes to coproduction as well as distribution. We have even ended up opening a division in Finland."

Kim Magnusson, Scandinavian Film Distribution

"FFA is a truly well-organized event that gives you a great opportunity to meet film professionals from Finland. Especially during one-on-one meetings, you can network with filmmakers and learn about their upcoming projects. I would recommend attending FFA to everyone who is interested in not only the local film industry but who is up for enjoying a proper Finnish sauna with other participants."

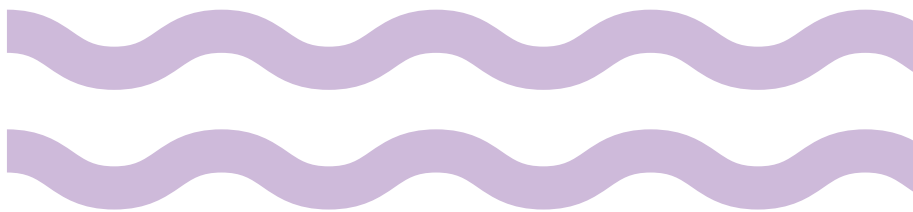
Sandra Hezinova, Karlovy Vary International Film Festival

"For me FFA is a great window into the Nordics, one of the richest territories in terms of films at the moment! And the team is great and always the nicest and more organised so it's always a great pleasure to join!"

Céline Dornier, Logical Pictures

"Finnish Film Affair is the quintessential showcase for Finnish films, food and frolicking. A must-go showcase of Finnish content. And, as you know, I bought myself a Finnish sauna."

Xavier Henry-Rashid, Film Republic



"FFA is a very effective platform enabling the connection with Finnish and Nordic filmmakers and producers. At a time when knowing about upcoming projects before they are made has become crucial in all segments of the film industry and Finland and the Nordic countries are proving to be amongst the most exciting regions for new content; it has become a must-attend industry gathering."

Paolo Bertolin, Venice International Film Festival

"Finnish Film Affair is very well structured, which makes it super efficient for us to attend. We reconnect and meet new filmmakers every year, and our catalogue of Finnish projects continues growing."

Tine Klint, LevelK

"EastWest picked up a lot of Finnish films especially as the quality improved a lot during all the years. Additionally I like the Finnish strange humour, the coldness, the drinks and the food. I've visited Finland many times not only at the festival, but also in summer time with my family."

Sasha Wieser, EastWest Filmdistribution

Helsinki International Film Festival – Love & Anarchy has an internationally popular brand as well. Tilda Swinton, Danny Boyle and Baz Luhrmann have all visited Helsinki during the festival, as well as Spike Lee.



6. Bridging towards a Co-Nordic Mentality

In 2017, Finnish Film Affair launched Nordic Flair, its sidebar for talent development that culminates in a yearly award ceremony.

As both the Finnish film industry and the event continue to grow, the question was: *where to next?* Adding a curated selection of Nordic emerging projects to the pitching slate was an addition welcomed by both the local industry and international guests. In 2021, the event also introduced its first Best Nordic Project Award, that went to *The Great Silence* (Denmark).

Pernille Tornøe – Producer, Monolit Film / Denmark

In regards to your project, what did you hope to get out of Finnish Film Affair? Did you get it or any other benefits from attending the event?

Katrine (director of *The Great Silence*) and I were very happy to get the chance to pitch at Finnish Film Affair, and present the project to an industry audience for the first time. Our main goal was to get in touch with possible collaborators, and with the film being the first feature for both of us, it was a great opportunity to expand our network and gain knowledge of the industry. An additional benefit for us was that engaging in dialogues and experiencing the reactions to the material presented, shed light on new perspectives. In the process, you inevitably also learn more about the project yourself.

We were so fortunate to win the Best Nordic Project award, which gave us a great opportunity to present our project more thoroughly through other platforms such as the interview in **Variety** in which Katrine could elaborate on her intentions and the background for the film.

Did Finnish Film Affair have the type of guests / attendees that you were looking for with your project?

We had the possibility to speak to different sales agents, international distributors, financiers as well as festival programmers. For us it was important to learn of the

different possible collaborators' visions and ways of working, so we could tune into which collaborators would be the best for this specific film and director. We wanted to wait until later in the process to make an agreement on international sales, but it sparked the first interests, and made it possible for us to follow up on these conversations later on in the process.

Attending Finnish Film Affair was also a great way to expand our general knowledge of what would be a good match for future projects in terms of vision, style and type of film. This has left us better prepared to identify and reach out to possible collaborators in the future.

How useful did you find Finnish Film Affair? Do you think you will return to it in the future?

We found Finnish Film Affair a very ambitious and yet intimate event, meaning that it was actually possible to book the meetings that we wished for, given the event was more curated and of manageable size. We had a very pleasant experience with the people behind FFA who really guided us through the process and provided us sparring and help. Hopefully next time we'll get the opportunity to attend in person!

What stage are you at with *The Great Silence* now (in June 2022)?

We are currently in the final stages of post-production and we are very happy that TrustNordisk has boarded the project and are handling international sales. Now we are just excited to be able to share the film with an audience!

Would you like to see the event growing and developing even more in a Nordic direction?

Presenting Nordic projects in addition to Finnish films opens the possibilities for further great collaborations across the Nordics. For this specific project, we were already fully financed at the time we pitched, but for a future film it would be a very good venue to look for possible co-production partners within the Nordic territories. It would definitely also be a good possibility to look for new and interesting projects to come on board as a co-producer.

The Great Silence by Katrine Brocks / Monolit Film
credit: Mia Mai Dengsø Graabæk, DFF



7. Looking Forward to the Next 10

*When writing this, **Finnish Film Affair** is already close to its 11th edition in September 2022, with a record-breaking number of guests joining us in Helsinki for a 3-day celebration of Finnish and Nordic audiovisual talent.*

FFA keeps on growing, as does the Finnish audiovisual industry, and we want to keep on strengthening the international collaborations and opportunities created through our event. Continuing both our Nordic focus as well as developing ways to showcase more Finnish series are factors that will be prioritised in FFA's strategy for upcoming years.

*Nurturing the next generation of local talent is a key goal as well. An example of this is the **Filmmaker in Residence** scheme we launched in 2021 with the **Academy of Moving People and Images**, providing a promising emerging filmmaker the opportunity to network and showcase their work at our event.*

*This report, the quotes and case studies show that the impact of Finnish Film Affair on the Finnish audiovisual industry is strong and clear. At the same time, the work towards internationalisation is now more important than ever and there's still a lot that both the local industry and our event can do. **For this, we need the continued support of our current and new partners in the future.***

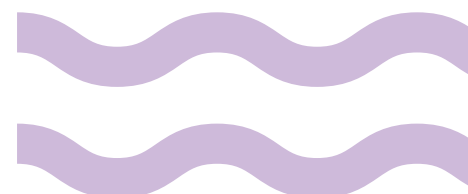
Finnish Film Affair wouldn't be Finnish Film Affair without all our funders, partners, filmmakers and dedicated industry audiences. We are looking forward to the next 10 years with all of you.

As the tradition goes: we hope you keep on having a film (and TV!) affair to remember!

Maria Pirkkalainen-Barber

Head of Finnish Film Affair and Nordic Flair (2019–)

Helsinki International Film Festival – Love & Anarchy ry



We thank you for your ongoing support of our event

Finnish Film Affair would like to thank all the interviewees, attendees, funders and partners.

We have a dedicated audience that has kept spreading the good word since our first edition. Thank you for the support and we hope to see you again in the next 10 years!

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Mysterium

Helsinki International Film Festival – Love & Anarchy ry, 2021–2022