

CORINTH FILMS

PRESENTS

ROAD NORTH

A Film By Mika Kaurismäki

PRESS BOOK

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ROAD NORTH

FULL SYNOPSIS - Timo is an esteemed concert pianist whose personal life is on the rocks. One day Timo finds an older, shabby-looking man at his door. The man, Leo, turns out to be his long-lost father who left the country when Timo was three — and hasn't been in touch in 35 years. Leo, an eternal trickster with a positive outlook on life, had to leave his homeland thanks to a series of messy entanglements. Now he's come back to hand over a rather mysterious legacy to his son and to answer questions regarding the past. To do this, the two will have to embark on a trip together and hit the road north.

Acclaimed filmmaker Mika Kaurismäki (*The House of Branching Love*, *Three Wise Men*, *Brothers*) wrote, directed and produced **Road North**, a darkly comic and touching road movie about a prodigal father who returns to see his son 35 years after abandoning him. Set against the vast expanse of the Finnish landscape, **Road North** stars the country's leading film and music icons, Vesa-Matti Loiri (Leo) and Samuli Edelmann (Timo) as the estranged father and son. Comically polar opposites, the two head north in a stolen car, journeying through quirky pit-stops and shocking revelations until Timo comes to understand and empathize with his father's past.

Loiri, who brings the charismatic and eccentric Leo to life, is a multitalented actor who during the course of a career spanning 50 years has appeared in more than 70 films and has recorded 32 top-selling music albums. Starring in the role of Timo is Samuli Edelmann, one of Finland's most popular actors and singers, best known to North American audiences for his role as henchman Wistrom in *Mission Impossible – Ghost Protocol* (2011).

Road North was number one at the Finnish box office in its first 3 days of release (August 24-26, 2012), racking up 36,659 admissions and easily outdistancing all the Hollywood competition, including Disney's *Brave*, which followed in second place with 16,406 admissions.

ROAD NORTH

TIFF PROGRAMMER'S NOTE - The great American film critic Pauline Kael once wrote that any man over forty who hasn't resolved his issues with his father is pathetic. This may be true, but as Mika Kaurismäki's most recent film **Road North** demonstrates, there are a lot more of us in the pathetic camp than not. This is definitely the case with Timo Porala (Samuli Edelmann), a successful fortysomething concert pianist who lives a forlorn existence in a nearly empty condo. His wife has left him and taken their child because Timo was so consumed by his career. He is clearly unhappy, but he's hardly going to change course now.

That is until his long-lost father, Leo (Vesa-Matti Loiri), returns unannounced from the Far East to get reacquainted. A lifelong rascal who's barely been able to commit to anything for more than a few months — even his own identity: he seems to have several fake IDs — Leo pleads with Timo to take him to northern Finland for reasons he won't fully explain. Against his better judgment, and despite still being furious over the way Leo abandoned his mother, Timo acquiesces and winds up on a wild ride with one unsettling — and usually comic — revelation after another.

A sly riff on the Prodigal Son story with a nod to traditional regional stories about the value of reconnecting with one's roots, **Road North**'s is a distinctly satirical take on paternal influence. We all grow up determined not to make the same mistakes our parents did, but as we age we realize that's a lot harder than we thought. Those who do manage to break patterns sometimes, like Timo, end up overcorrecting: Leo sought pleasure and ran when he encountered trouble, so Timo has structured his life with such single-mindedness that pleasure is not even a consideration. (When greeted with a rapturous response after his latest performance, he looks as disgruntled as he does when he's shipping off his son's toys.)

A savvy analyst of machismo, Kaurismäki has proven especially adept at this subject with his recent films, such as the 2008 Festival hit *Three Wise Men* and 2011's *Brothers*. This may be his funniest and most cogent statement on male relationships yet.

- Steve Gravestock

ROAD NORTH

VESA-MATTI LOIRI

As Leo

Vesa-Matti Loiri is one of Finland's greatest national treasures: a multitalented actor who has appeared in more than 70 films and a remarkable musician who has recorded 32 top-selling music albums.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Loiri's long and distinguished career throughout which he has maintained his position as one of Finland's most successful and beloved performers. Loiri made his acting debut in 1962 when he touchingly played the role of Jake in the film *Pojat (The Boys)*, directed by Mikko Niskanen. After attending The Finnish Theatre School from 1963 to 1966, Loiri became a household name for his unforgettable performances in film and television and on stage. As a comedic actor, he has played several characters that have become immortal popular classics, but it is the role of the bumbling Uno Turhapuro whom he has portrayed in 19 movies between 1973 and 2004, for which Loiri is best known.

In addition to his comedic talent, Loiri is also well known for his compelling dramatic performances. On stage he has starred in national classics such as *Lapualaisooppera* (by Arvo Salo) and *Seitsemän veljestä (The Seven Brothers)*, directed by Kalle Holmberg) as well as in a version of Dostoyevsky's *The Demons* by Nikolai Stavrog. Some of his most notable dramatic credits include *Rakastunut rampa* (1975), *Pedon merkki* (1981), *Sokkotanssi* (1999) and *Pahat pojat* (2003). In 1982 he played the imposing role of blacksmith Ilmarinen in the four-part TV mini-series *Rauta-aika (The Iron Age)*, based on the Finnish national epic saga *Kalevala*.

Loiri has won numerous accolades and awards for both his acting and music, including three Jussi Awards (Finnish Oscars®) for his roles in *Pojat* (1963), *Rakastunut rampa* (1976), *Pedon merkki* (1982). His TV awards include three Telvis (Finnish Emmys) for his performances in 1984, 1986, and 1987. In addition, he was awarded a special Venla in 1989 and a Golden Venla in 2011 for his outstanding contributions in TV entertainment.

An accomplished singer, songwriter, and flutist, Loiri performs a wide range of musical styles. He has earned three Emma Awards (Finnish accolades for outstanding achievement in music) for best male artist in music in 2003, 2006 and 2007. He is currently the fifth-best-selling soloist and ninth-best-selling artist of all time in Finland. He also provided the voice of the Genie in the Finnish dubbed version of Disney's *Aladdin*, performing the musical number *Friend Like Me*.

In December 2011, Loiri was honoured with a State Art Award for his "experimentation, search and discovery that follow the vision of an uncompromising artist".

ROAD NORTH

SAMULI EDELMANN

As Timo

Best known to North American audiences for his role as henchman Wistrom in *Mission Impossible – Ghost Protocol* (2011), Samuli Edelmann is one of is one of Finland's most popular actors and singers whose career spans two decades.

Edelman is a five-time nominee for the Jussy Award (Finnish Oscars®) for his roles in *The Tough Ones* (1999), *Restless* (2000), *Me and Morrison* (2001), *Vares: Private Eye* (2004), and *Rock'n Roll Never Dies* (2006). However, it was the role of Vähy in the film *Veturimiehet heiluttaa* (1992) that catapulted him to fame. Some of his other film credits include *Helsinki* (2009) and *A Man Exposed* (2006). In addition, his voice acting credits include the role of Shrek in the Finnish dubbed version of the film.

On Finnish Television, Edelmann has starred in numerous series, including *Tappajan näköinen mies*, *Vintiöt* and *Irtiottoja*, among others.

Edelmann is also one of Finland's best-selling male artists. He shot to fame as a singer in 1991, the same year he graduated from the Theatre Academy of Finland. His breakthrough hit was "Pienestä Kii," followed by the song "Peggy," which was selected as the Finnish entry for the Eurovision Song Contest that year. Edelmann has been awarded three Emmas (Finnish accolades for outstanding achievement in music) for New Male Artist of the Year (1991) and two Emmas for Artist of the Year (1994 and 2001). His three platinum and three gold albums make him one of Finland's best-selling male artists.

Edelmann also recorded an album entitled *Vaiheet* (1997), which consisted of settings composed by his father, Toni Edelmann, for texts by Hesse, Goethe, Shakespeare and Denisov.

MIKA KAURISMÄKI

Director, Producer, Co-Screenwriter

Mika Kaurismäki's first film *The Liar* (1980) was an overnight sensation when first shown in Finland. It marked the beginning of the cinema of the Kaurismäki brothers and started a new era in Finnish cinema.

After graduating from high school, Mika Kaurismäki worked as a house painter in the town of Kuusankoski in the Southeastern part of Finland. In the autumn of 1976, with winter approaching and painting jobs in decline, Mika thought about doing something else in life. Still wearing his painter overalls, he walked into a bookstore and bought the newly published "History of Cinema" by Peter von Bagh. After reading it cover to cover, he decided to become a film director.

Mika Kaurismäki studied cinema in Munich, Germany, (Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen) from 1977-1981 and made his diploma film, *The Liar* in Finland in 1980. His younger brother, Aki Kaurismäki, a journalism student at the time, played the lead role and also co-wrote the screenplay. After the success of *The Liar*, Mika Kaurismäki decided to stay in Finland, and with his brother and a group of friends founded the production company Villealfa Filmproductions, which soon became home to exciting, independent low-to-no budget filmmaking. By the end of the 80s, Villealfa had become Finland's third largest film production company of all time.

In addition to the Kaurismäki brothers, the Villealfa film family consisted of many colleagues and friends, including the actors Matti Pellonpää and Kari Väänänen and the cinematographer Timo Salminen. Mika Kaurismäki's films of this era included the road movies *The Worthless* (1982) and *Rosso* (1985), the action comedy *Helsinki-Napoli All Night Long* (1987), and the environmental adventure *The Amazon* (1990), among others. Aki Kaurismäki, who had worked as Mika's assistant and as a screenwriter, began his career as a director when Mika produced Aki's first film *Crime and Punishment* (1984). During the active Villealfa years, Mika co-founded the legendary Midnight Sun Film Festival (1986), the distribution company Senso Films (1987) and the Andorra Cinema in Helsinki.

The 1990s witnessed the gradual disappearance of the Villealfa spirit and both Mika and Aki started to produce films through their own separate production companies. Mika founded Marianna Films in 1987 and its first independent production was the award-winning *Zombie and the Ghost Train* (1991). In 1994, Mika returned to the Brazilian jungle with Samuel Fuller and Jim Jarmusch to make the feature length documentary *Tigrero: A Film That Was Never Made*, which was honoured with the International Critics' Award at the Berlin International Film Festival in 1994.

In the 1990s, Mika established his base and second home in Rio de Janeiro and started to concentrate more on international co-productions. In 1996, he directed the no-budget thriller *Condition Red* with James Russo, Cynda Williams and Paul Calderon, in Philadelphia. His biggest production to date is the comedy *LA Without a Map* (1998), with David Tennant, Julie Delpy, Vincent Gallo, Johnny Depp, James Le Gros, Anouk Aimée and Joe Dallesandro.

Mika's first production of the new millennium was the acclaimed documentary about Brazilian music, *Moro no Brasil* (2002). During the production of this film, Mika opened a live music club "Mika's Bar" in Rio de Janeiro, which he subsequently gave up to concentrate primarily on film making. In 2003, he directed *Honey Baby*, a road movie set in Germany and Russia starring Henry Thomas, Irina Björklund and Helmut Berger. In addition, *Brasileirinho*, a documentary about Brazilian "choro" music, premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2005, while *Sonic Mirror*, a film about legendary drummer Billy Cobham, had its premier in Nyon, Switzerland in 2007.

In 2008, Mika directed the award-winning *Three Wise Men*, which has been compared to John Cassavetes' *Husbands*, with a Finnish twist. The following year *The House of Branching Love* premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival. *Vesku From Finland*, a documentary about Vesa-Matti Loiri ("Vesku"), Finland's most popular film and TV actor, was released in 2010.

Kaurismäki is currently in pre-production on his first period piece, *Kristina of Sweden*, which is expected to start shooting in Sweden in February, 2013. Canadian Michel Marc Bouchard (*Lilies*) wrote the screenplay, and partners for the international co-production include Kaurismäki's Marianna Films (Finland), Sweden's Anagram Film, Canada's Triptych Media, Germany's Starhaus and France's Arsam. Rising Swedish actress Malin Buska will star as the lead, immortalized by screen legend Greta Garbo, who played the part in the 1933 classic by US director Ruben Mammoulian.

ROAD NORTH

a MIKA KAURISMÄKI FILM

CORINTH FILMS A MARIANNA FILMS PRODUCTION

STARRING

VESA-MATTI LOIRI - *as Leo Porola*

SAMULI EDELMANN - *as Timo Porola*

MARI PERANKOSKI - *as Minna Paakku*

IRINA BJÖRKLUND - *as Tiia*

PETER FRANZEN - *as Pertti Paakku*

ELINA KNIHTILÄ - *as Maarit*

SET DESIGNER Sasu Joutsu

SOUND DESIGNER Joonas Jyrälä

MUSIC Kaihon Karavaani and Mauri Sumen

EDITING Jukka Nykänen

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY Jari Mutikainen

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER Pete Eklund

ORIGINAL IDEA Mika Kaurismäki

SCREENPLAY Sami Keski-Vähälä and Mika Kaurismäki

PRODUCED BY Pete Eklund and Mika Kaurismäki

DIRECTED BY Mika Kaurismäki

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