

GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

a film by Jenni Toivoniemi

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Tagline

A comedy about the tragedy of being forever young.

- OR -

The last weekend of being young.

Short synopsis

An old group of friends gathers to celebrate Mitzi's surprise birthday party over a nostalgic weekend at an idyllic seaside villa - just like they used to do as teenagers. Familiar surroundings and the old rituals get to the core of the group and make them forget their adulthood. Revelations, not meant to harm the balance, make them reassess their past as well as their present

Long synopsis

An old group of friends in their thirties gathers to celebrate Mitzi's (**Emmi Parviainen**) surprise birthday party over a nostalgic weekend at an idyllic seaside villa - just like they used to do as teenagers. The party sets off on wrong tracks immediately, as the birthday girl is not so pleased about the surprise.

A tense situation is broken up, when Mitzi's best friend Veronika (**Laura Birn**) brings along her new boyfriend Mikael (**Christian Hillborg**), a Swedish Hollywood star.

Familiar surroundings and the old rituals get to the core of the group and make them forget their adulthood. Revelations, not meant to harm the balance, make them reassess their past as well as their present.

Technical Data

Title: Games People Play
Original Title: Seurapeli
Genre: Comedy, Drama, Romance
Production Year: 2020
Month of start & end of shooting: June – August 2019
Country of Origin: Finland
Language Spoken: Finnish, Swedish, English
Duration: 1h 59min
Shot on: ARRI Alexa Mini
Screen Ratio: 2:1
Format (ex. DCP, 35mm): DCP
Sound format: 5.1
Domestic release: September 2020
Incl. Distributor name: Nordisk Film
Admission/rating: TBA
Target Group: 30 -45 yrs, women, couples
Copyright line: © 2020 Tuffi Films Oy, all rights reserved
Production Company: Tuffi Films
Producer: Venla Hellstedt, Elli Toivoniemi
Co-producer and Company/Country: Helsinki Film Sound Ltd. / Tuomas Klaavo / Finland
Executive Producer(s) n/a
Cinematographer: Jarmo Kiuru
Editor: Samu Heikkilä
Sound Editor: Tuomas Klaavo
Composer: n/a
Still photographer: Vilja Harala, Mitro Härkönen
Scriptwriter: Jenni Toivoniemi
Director: Jenni Toivoniemi
Cast: Emmi Parviainen (Mitzi), Eero Milonoff (Härde), Christian Hillborg (Mikael), Laura Birn (Veronika), Iida-Maria Heinonen (Natali), Paula Vesala (Ulla), Paavo Kinnunen (Janne), Samuli Niittymäki (Juhana)
Budget (EUR): 1 381 000 €
Financiers / Investors or other involved production partners: The Finnish Film Foundation, Yle, Nordisk Film, Creative Europe

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Director's statement – by Jenni Toivoniemi

A few years ago, many of my youth friends got divorced and suddenly I was in parties where people behaved like they were teenagers again. Surprisingly many hooked up with the same people they were together with - or wanted to be together with - as teenagers. The denial of aging and longing for carefree youth that never existed in the first place, intrigues me. I believe we all are several different versions of ourselves at the same time and we need nostalgia and regression to visit those former identities.

In my film, a group of old friends is gathered on an island to reconstruct a birthday party for Mitzi, 35, a party as good as the one they had ten years ago. Not everybody, including the birthday girl, wants to even be there. While the jolly festivities are re-enacted the old dramas start to resurface.

I cannot escape my dark sense of humor and aversion towards sentimentality, but I find it's important to make a film that has a gentle, humanistic core. I want my film to feel like a good conversation with an old friend: one where you realize something new about yourself and your past, one that is brutally honest yet comforting. "I see you. You need to get your head out of your ass. You're being stupid. You are wonderful. We are going to be ok. Or die trying."

Jenni Toivoniemi - Director's bio

Jenni Toivoniemi (b. 1978) is a writer-director. Toivoniemi's debut as a director, short comedy *The Date* (2012), won several awards including International Short Fiction Jury Award at the Sundance Film Festival and a Special Mention at the Berlinale Generation 14+ in 2013. She has directed several short films, of which *The Committee* (2016), written and directed together with the Norwegian **Gunhild Enger**, premiered in Locarno 2016 and *The Door* (2017) was selected to Palm Springs Short Film Festival, Nordisk Panorama and other festivals. Toivoniemi has also written theatre plays, an audio play and a feature film *Korso* (2014) together with **Kirsikka Saari**. Their latest collaboration, children's film *Sihja*, will premiere in 2020. Toivoniemi was also part of the writer-director team of *Force of Habit* (2019). Her first feature film *Games People Play* premieres in 2020.

KEY CAST

Emmi Parviainen

<http://lnordic.com/people/emmi-parviainen/>

Eero Milonoff

<http://actorsinscandinavia.com/actors/eero-milonoff/>

Laura Birn

<http://actorsinscandinavia.com/actors/laura-birn/>

Christian Hillborg

<http://www.olivia-bell.co.uk/talent/christian-hillborg/>

Samuli Niittymäki

<http://lnordic.com/people/samuli-niittymaki/>

CREW

Venla Hellstedt – Producer

Venla Hellstedt (b. 1973) studied literature and film in London and gained an MSc in Social Anthropology from the London School of Economics and Political Science. In UK, she worked in a number of documentary, drama and news productions for BBC, ITV and the Discovery Channel. Venla returned to work in her native Helsinki in 2009, after nearly 14 years in the UK, and has since worked as a producer of many award-winning Finnish films and international co-productions. Two of the films that she produced have received the national film award for the best documentary. In 2012, the documentary film *Dance of Outlaws* was awarded at Locarno IFF. In 2018, her first feature film production as a producer, *Stupid Young Heart* premiered in Toronto IFF and received the main prize, the Crystal Bear in 2019 Berlinale Generation 14+ competition. She has taken part in several international film professionals' courses, such as EAVE Producers' Workshop and Crossing Borders, and is a member of the EFA.

Elli Toivoniemi – Producer

Elli Toivoniemi (b.1984) is an award-winning producer-director from production company Tuffi Films based in Helsinki, Finland. She has been working as a producer since 2009, and has produced and co-produced films and series in all forms and lengths, including five feature films. Toivoniemi is an EAVE & ACE producer graduate, and is a co-founder-owner of the production company Tuffi Films, and behind acclaimed films like the Academy Award nominated short fiction *Do I Have to Take Care of Everything?* (2014). Films produced by her have been distributed all over the world and awarded at festivals for instance at Sundance (*The Date* 2013) and Chicago (*The Good Son*, 2011), one of the latest productions, *Stupid Young Heart* (2018) is Berlinale Crystal Bear Winner and Finland's official Oscar Entry 2019. The newest project she is behind is anthology series *Force Of Habit*, exploring how women are discriminated against because of their gender in public and private life. This all-female production covers 11 episodes and a single feature film by fifteen writers and directors, including herself.

Jarmo Kiuru – Director of Photography

Jarmo Kiuru (b. 1985) has been working as a cinematographer since 2009. He has gathered experience from working in both fiction and documentary films, television series, music videos and commercials. Internationally he has worked in Estonia, Sweden and Lithuania. His films have been awarded in such film festivals as Sundance and Berlinale and competed in Cannes, Toronto and Clermont-Ferrand. Jarmo was nominated for Golden tadpole in Camerimage (2013).

Samu Heikkilä – Film Editor

Samu Heikkilä (b. 1971) is one of Finland's most respected film editors. Since early 2000's he has worked with many highly-acclaimed Finnish directors, including Aki Kaurismäki, Zaida Bergroth, Aleksi Salmenperä, Aku Louhimies, Klaus Härö and Selma Vilhunen. During his career, he has edited a total of over twenty feature films and ten documentaries. He is known for his devotion to each project, and is sometimes co-credited for sound design and screenplay. Heikkilä is frequently nominated for Finnish Jussi awards, and he's received the award for editing six times.

COMPANY PROFILES

Tuffi Films

<http://www.tuffifilms.com/>

Tuffi Films is a production company established in Helsinki, Finland in 2010. The company is owned and run by Elli Toivoniemi, Venla Hellstedt, Kirsikka Saari, Jenni Toivoniemi, Selma Vilhunen.

Tuffi develops projects with a wide range of genres from contemporary drama to comedy, as well as versatile creative documentaries. Tuffi's films have enjoyed international success at the Academy Awards, and at festivals such as Sundance, Berlinale, Locarno, Hot Docs, Visions du Reel and Clermont-Ferrand. Tuffi Films produces quality films and series on contemporary topics with a human touch, made to stand the test of time.

International Distribution - LevelK

<http://www.LevelK.dk>

LevelK is handling international sales and distribution and acting as a digital partner for distributors in their home country.

We are specialised in rights optimization that are reflected through our innovative approach to cross-platform/cross-country distribution combining theatrical and traditional means - alongside digital distribution and marketing. Our goal is to bring our films to the market with an individual strategy so the film finds its own path to its audience and hereby increase royalties.

We are a passionate team, based in Copenhagen, focusing on long-term relationships and transparent professional cooperation.

Contacts

Sales: Lauren Valmadre, lauren@levelk.dk

Press: Natascha Degnova, natascha@levelk.dk

LevelK