



Presents

ANIARA

A film by Pella Kågerman and Hugo Lilja

(106 mins, Sweden, 2018)

Language: Swedish with English Subtitles

Distribution

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LOGLINE

A spaceship carrying settlers to Mars is knocked off course, causing the consumption-obsessed passengers to consider their place in the universe.

SYNOPSIS

ANIARA is the story of one of the many spaceships used for transporting Earth's fleeing population to their new home-planet Mars. But just as the ship leaves the destroyed Earth, she collides with space junk and is thrown off her course. The passengers slowly realize that they'll never be able to return.

The protagonist, MR, runs a room where a sentient computer allows humans to experience near-spiritual memories of the Earth. As the ship drifts further into the endless void more and more passengers are in need of MR's services.

Pressure builds on MR as she is the only one who can keep the growing insanity and lethal depression at bay.

In Aniara's inexorable journey towards destruction there is a warning that cannot be emphasized enough. There's only one Earth. It's time to take responsibility for our actions.

BACKGROUND

Swedish Nobel Laureate Harry Martinson wrote the poem Aniara in 1956. It consists of 103 cantons. Harry Martinson dictated the first 29 in a fever after a troubling dream, affected by the Cold War and the test detonations of the Hydrogen Bomb.

The novel has been translated into a number of different languages, including English, Arabic, Russian, Japanese and most recently Chinese. It has been staged as opera and several theatrical productions. This is the first film adaptation.



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Photo: Kuba Rose

FILMMAKER Q&A

Pella Kågerman and Hugo Lilja

How did this idea, turning the book/poem Aniara into a film, originate?

(Pella) Growing up, I was very close to my grandmother. She was extremely playful and interested in literature. We often role-played books we had read, even when I got older. Together we went to see a theater play of Aniara. The following night she got a stroke. I started to read the book loud to her at the hospital. As she was getting better we started to role-play it and pretend that the big hospital was the space ship Aniara. Every doctor and patient its passengers. That's when the story truly hit me/us, on a very deep level.

What inspired you to make the film?

We both felt the necessity! The apocalypse has already started, hasn't it? There's a risk that Aniara might become our future and the questions the film deals with are extremely relevant today.

It also felt important to focus on a woman. It's not 100% clear what gender the main character has in the book, although it's probably a man. But we love our female lead and always had her in mind. In the film she has a relationship with another woman and

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her best friend, the astronomer, is a woman. For a science fiction piece, the film is very female centered.

Was there something special technically that you utilized in making this film and why were that important?

As much as possible, we avoided building expensive studio sets and shot most of the film on location. In shopping malls and on Scandinavian Ferries. It was both an economical and an aesthetic choice. We're pretty sure that we can't escape the time we live in. For example all the science-fiction films from the 60's looks very much like the 60's, even if they are to depict the future. Then it's better to be pragmatic and realistic. And in our case, we really wanted to create a 'here and now' feeling. We wanted the ship to feel familiar. If we were to emigrate in large scale to Mars today, we're pretty sure that the ships will contain both shopping malls, bowling and spas. But especially shopping malls.

How did you get into filmmaking?

When it comes to filmmaking, we have really different backgrounds. Hugo, growing up in Northern Sweden, did a lot of role-playing gaming, like Warhammer RPG and Call of Cthulhu. While Pella, who grew up in Stockholm, has a background in documentary filmmaking, art and psychoanalysis.

But we've been working with each other for over ten years now. And since the beginning of our collaboration, we've been highly influenced by each other and stolen each other's interests.

What were the challenges in making this particular film?

Almost everything was a real challenge. We probably wouldn't have dared to make it, if we weren't debutants and didn't fully understand what was a head of us. Now we just jumped! Luckily we had a lot of fantastic and super talented people catching us.

How long did it take, from concept to finish?

It took a double elephant pregnancy - four years in total. We ended up having a way longer post production than we had expected and actually did some additional shooting a year after the real shoot. We even shot some inserts in our living room and at the farm where our DoP lives in the south of Sweden.

What do you want the audiences to take away from this film?

We want them to reflect on the space craft they're already onboard, called *Earth* and the extremely short period of time we have on it. It might sound depressing, but it's actually the opposite. We are here today. There is still some time.

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Photo: Kuba Rose

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Pella Kågerman is educated at the Royal Institute of Art and Hugo Lilja at the National College of Film & Television, both in Stockholm Sweden. They have collaborated since 2009. In the UK they are represented by ITG and in the US by WME.

Together they created *The Unliving*, a philosophical zombie short, that won prizes at Berlinale, Sitges, Clermont-Ferrand and other film festivals. *Aniara* is their first feature film.

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Photo: Kuba Rose

LEADING ACTRESS

Emelie Jonsson

Emelie Jonsson is educated at The Royal Swedish Ballet School in Stockholm. After only a few years as a dancer she started theatre and has since worked as an actor in theatre, television and film. Apart from Aniara, which is her first leading role, Emelie Jonsson has also acted in Pella Kågerman's and Hugo Lilja's short films The Unliving and Stormaktstiden.

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TWO QUOTES FROM THE BOOK

"How mighty outer space is,
How powerful it's mystery
How small a part I play."

"My questions of myself got no reply,
I dreamed a life up, but I lived a lie.
I ranged the universe, but passed it by-
for captive on Aniara here was I."

HARRY MARTINSON

When the Swedish Academy awarded Harry Martinson the Nobel Prize, it was for "writings that catch the dewdrop and reflect the cosmos". With an unquenchable thirst for knowledge, he acquainted himself with advanced modern physics and its consequences for the rapidly changing world.

Where science eventually grinds to a halt – because there are no tools for empirical research – Martinson feels at liberty to carry on the search for our innermost truth. Early in his career, Martinson became a voice warning of the course modern civilisation was taking. Martinson even suggested the world might possibly be heading to its doom.

The Harry Martinson Society

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PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

Pella Kågerman and Hugo Lilja are two of the most interesting up and coming directors. I've followed them since film school and have the utmost respect for what they have produced. Not least *The Unliving*, which showed how sci-fi can become more naturalistic and create a presence that often is lacking in this type of genre films, that often concentrate on the form and forget the drama.

I also think the three originators of *Aniara* is what makes it unique. Martinson's poem once brought to the world, Kågerman's history coming from the philosophical art world who understand to translate Martinson's emotional depth, and Lilja's sense of magical sci-fi film making.

My goal as a producer is to highlight problems in our times, and tell stories about them in an entertaining and moving way. Mankind's unwillingness to see the consequences of global warming is one of them. There are many documentaries that list statistics. But there are few fiction films that really show on a psychological level, what actually happens when mankind is confronted with the fact that all visions and dreams are going towards their demise. In *Aniara* the humans come to realize that all they've ever dreamt of will never occur - and they are faced with the choice of giving up hope.

I want the audience to feel that they actually have been on board *Aniara* when they've seen the film. Even if the book was written in the 1950's, the story feels very up to date. Just have a look at this hot summer and environmental challenges we face. I want the film to be a powerful warning - if we don't do anything, Earth and Human will soon be a paradise lost.

Annika Rogell

SHORT BIO

Annika Rogell's track record contain exclusively award-winning features: *The Black Power Mixtape*, *Concerning Violence*, *My Skinny Sister* and *Kiki*. All premiered at A-festivals, with high rating and world wide spread.

META FILM STOCKHOLM

Executive Producer Meta Louise Foldager Sørensen has produced several of Lars von Trier's movies, among those *The Boss of It All*, *Antichrist* and *Melancholia*.

Her own company Metafilm was established in 2010. Meta Film recently released *The Saint Bernard Syndicate* and *The Wife*.

The Swedish sister-company, Meta Film Stockholm's first feature was the successful *Gräns/Border*, which received best film in *Un Certain Regard* at Cannes this year.

CREDITS

Directors

Pella Kågerman
Hugo Lilja

Cast

Emelie Jonsson
Arvin Kananian
Bianca Cruzeiro
Anneli Martini
Jennie Silfverhjelms
Peter Carlberg
Emma Broomé

Director of Photography

Sophie Winqvist Loggins

Set Design

Linnéa Petterson
Maja-Stina Åsberg

Editors

Björn Kessler
Pella Kågerman
Michal Leszczyłowski

Executive Producers

Meta Louise Foldager Sørensen
Nina Bisgaard
Eddy Moretti
Danny Gabai
Natalie Farrey
Vincent Landay
Glenn Lund

Producer

Annika Rogell

Associate Producer

Markus Waltå

Screenplay

Pella Kågerman
Hugo Lilja

Sound Design

Calle Wachtmeister

Visual Effects

Andreas Wicklund
Per Jonsson

Arild Andersson

Composer

Alexander Berg

ANIARA is a Meta Film Stockholm Production **In Co-Production with** Moretti Films, Viaplay, Film Capital Stockholm Fund & Gotlands Filmfond, Ljud & Bildmedia **In Collaboration with** Sveriges Television, Vice With Support from The Swedish Film Institute, Nordisk Film & TV Fond, EU Programme Creative Europe, STHLM Debut **Distributor Sweden** SF Studios **World Sales** Film Constellation