

SISU

CERTIFICATE 15 91M 11S

DIRECTOR	JALMARI HELANDER
SCREENPLAY	JALMARI HELANDER
CINEMATOGRAPHY	KJELL LAGERROOS
EDITOR	JUHO VIROLAINEN
PRODUCTION DESIGN	OTSO LINNÄLÄÄKSO
MUSIC	JURI SEPPÄ
COSTUME DESIGN	TUOMAS WAINOLA
CAST	ANNA VILPPUNEN
	JORMA TOMMILA
	AKSEL HENNIE
	MIMOSA WILLAMO

SYNOPSIS

1944: following the signing of the Moscow Armistice between Finland and the USSR, Nazi forces wreak devastation in the Lapland wilderness as they withdraw from Finland. When prospector and former Finnish army commando Aatami encounters a convoy of German soldiers and captured Finnish women, the SS officer in charge attempts to take his gold. A vicious battle ensues.

REVIEWED BY JASON ANDERSON



TO HELSINKI AND BACK Aksel Hennie as Bruno

Sisu takes place in a familiar movie universe in which German soldiers speak to each other in English and the grizzled hero says almost nothing at all. The film's title, however, cannot easily be translated for an international audience. What the Finnish word connotes is 'a white-knuckled form of courage and unimaginable determination,' a quality that manifests 'when all hope is lost.' The definition's lurid phrasing is suggestive of an alternate history for Jalmari Helander's satisfyingly grisly action thriller. Surely in some other dimension, the story of Aatami Korpi (Jorma Tommila), a former soldier turned gold-hunter who will stop at nothing to protect his bounty from the Nazis, exists as a pulp novel sitting on a rack in a Helsinki bus station circa 1958, back when memories of the war were not as faint as they may be for *Sisu's* viewers.

Conversely, it's easy to imagine this as a Nordic answer to the punchy brand of WWII thriller that emerged in the 70s, when the spaghetti-western templates of Sergio Leone and Corbucci were applied to tales of Nazi savagery and Allied vengeance. Of course, genre aficionados may just see a whole lot of *Inglourious Basterds* in *Sisu's* onscreen violence, which includes mine explosions that send body parts in all directions and hapless enemy troops deployed as bullet-ridden human shields.

That said, *Sisu* has enough brio to rise above the current standards of similarly

Tarantino-indebted fare. Moving briskly from one burly set piece to the next, it's equipped with a bracing sense of economy and drive – Helander's preferred mode for mayhem proves as brutal and relentless as his protagonist. Convincing even in the film's most ludicrous moments, Tommila invests proceedings with the same stony gravitas he conveyed as the Santa Claus hunter in *Rare Exports* (2010), Helander's enjoyably gruesome feature debut. Tommila's hard-nosed sensibility as Aatami is well-complemented by Mimosa Willamo as Aino, a female captive who's increasingly emboldened by Aatami's rising kill count.

For all the pleasure viewers may take in the sight of nameless Nazis being dispatched and dismembered, they may be surprised by the film's solemnity, too. Helander takes pains to root his revenge fantasy in his country's harrowing experiences at the hands of both German and Soviet forces. The worst of the suffering may be suggested by the presence of Aino and the other captives sitting stone-faced in one of the German convoy's trucks. And while there are perhaps questions to be asked about raising the spectre of wartime sexual violence within the neo-B movie context that Helander embraces, at least *Sisu's* creator makes sure there's plenty of payback to go around.

In UK cinemas from 26 May

Surely in some other dimension this story is a pulp novel sitting on a rack in a Helsinki bus station circa 1958

SISU

PORTRAIT OF KAYE

UK 2021
CERTIFICATE 12A 56M

DIRECTOR	BEN REED
CINEMATOGRAPHY	BEN REED
EDITOR	BEN REED

SYNOPSIS

A charming documentary about a septuagenarian agoraphobic, Kaye, who has spent the vast majority of her life within the four walls of the same London house. Her story is conveyed through a series of comical soliloquies to camera, combined with cutaways to kitschy clutter and old home videos.

REVIEWED BY BEN NICHOLSON



NOT GOING OUT Kaye Mannion

Ben Reed's *Portrait of Kaye* is a loving, kitschy monument to one woman's life, presided over by Kaye herself, a lifelong agoraphobic who acts as freewheeling tour guide and storyteller. While the Londoner's funny tales and curious asides abound, they accumulate into a richly textured account of several interwoven lives. Kaye's mother once told her that, if she could live her life again; she'd have been "a high-class prostitute". Kaye makes this revelation with a twinkle in her eye, but as we learn more about her mother and father's relationship, it becomes emblematic of her mother's life, lived without physical intimacy after a devastating heartbreak. In Kaye's own story, we hear about a neighbour, Lorenzo, with whom Kaye has become infatuated since her husband's recent death. It begins as a throwaway remark about a crush on a handsome young man but evolves into a far more poignant tale of romance, intimacy and what it means to be isolated.

There is something theatrical about the film's set-up. Kaye relays anecdotes directly to the camera, animating them with cockney patter and colourful detail, while typically framed against the saturated and crammed interior that she's spent 70 years looking at and adding paraphernalia to – from the page of a 30-year-old calendar to a tattered scrap of Christmas wrapping paper. A playwright and set designer at the top of their craft

couldn't have fashioned a more perfect distillation of a particular working-class milieu – a world of music halls and seaside photo opportunities that Kaye herself, ironically, has little direct experience of. The form allows her the space to express herself but also echoes the limitations of a life restrained by walls, and the hoarded trinkets that connect her to, and shield her from, the outside.

While the film is, to some extent, a 60-minute monologue, in which Kaye guides the audience through her personal snow-globe universe – one populated by a library of VHS tapes, bawdy jokes and pictures of Barbara Windsor – the director feels ever-present. Reed rarely interjects but Kaye's recurring phrase of "what d'you reckon, Ben?" reminds us that she is performing to someone in the room. This not only emphasises her larger-than-life persona but also draws our attention to the evident reciprocal warmth of their relationship. Reed lived next door to Kaye for a time, and the affection that he has for her shines through in this gem of a film. It is part character study, part time-capsule, but somehow far more expansive than either of those terms might immediately suggest. Much like its protagonist, *Portrait of Kaye* transcends its confines through the preservation of memories.

On True Story Film from 18 May