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- **FILM** Thursday 23rd Aug 7.30pm
THE POST
- **SOCIAL** Thursday 13th Sept 6.30pm
KLCCC's 8th Birthday in Crofters
- **FILM** Thursday 13th Sept 7.30pm
LADY BIRD
- **CLOSE-UPS EVENT**
Thursday 20th Sept 7-9pm
In Colour

further details klccc.uk

Of Horses And Men

Benedikt Erlingsson, Iceland 2013

Icelandic title *Hross í os*
Written by Benedikt Erlingsson

Ingvar Eggert Sigurðsson

... Kolbeinn

Charlotte Bøving Solveig

Johann Pall Oddson Jon

Kristbjörg Kjeld Hildur

Steinn Ármann Magnússon

... Vernhardur

Halldóra Geirharðsdóttir Ása

Helgi Björnsson Egill

Vilborg Halldórsdóttir Thorgardur

Kash Erden Baater Gengis

Juris Zablockis Russian #1

Ikor Lezhenko Russian #2

Atli Rafn Sigurðsson Óli

Kjartan Ragnarsson Grimur

Sigríður María Egilsdóttir

... Jóhanna Sælignska

Produced by Friðrik Þór Friðriksson

Music by Davíð Þór Jónsson

Cinematography by Bergsteinn

Björgúlfsson

Film Editing by David Alexander

Corno

Production Design by Sigurður Óli

Pálmarsson

Costume Design by Þórunn María

Jónsdóttir



Ronald Reagan used to say: "There is nothing better for the inside of a man than the outside of a horse." I wonder what the Gipper would have made of this short, sharp, startling little movie from Iceland: a rather bracing film in which the insides of humans interact with the outsides of horses. Humans' outsides feel the benefit of horses' insides, too.

It is a drama in which horse and human meet on equal terms. The original Icelandic title is *Hross í oss*:

that is, *Horse in Us*. There is something very significant in its human-equine relations. The inter-penetration is largely spiritual, although interspecies sexual congress could be said to have taken place by proxy when a stallion unselfconsciously mounts a mare, on which a man is already, as it were, mounted. In many ways *Of Horses and Men* puts me in mind of the subversive erotic tales filmed by the Polish director Walerian Borowczyk who, in 1975, got into big trouble here

for a glimpsed horse erection in his robustly conceived film *The Beast*.

Almost everything in *Of Horses and Men* happens in the great Icelandic outdoors: a colossal and wildly beautiful valley plain that is, in effect, one single unbroken location. It is like a giant natural stage. The human inhabitants are smallholders and horse breeders who take a certain curtain-twitching interest in each other's business. This means patient surveillance using binoculars. The director is Benedikt Erlingsson, an actor-turned-film-maker who performed in Lars von Trier's Gervaisesque comedy *The Boss of It All* in 2006. He brings something of Von Trier's deadpan humour to this film.

The story is a Venn diagram of overlapping lives: at the approximate centre is Kolbeinn, played by Ingvar Eggert Sigurðsson, an actor who – not counting Björk – could be the nearest thing we have to a famous Icelandic movie star; he was the grizzled cop in Baltasar Kormákur's tremendous procedural thriller *Jar City* in 2006. Kolbeinn is courting Solveig, a widow (or conceivably divorcee) played by Charlotte Bøving; she lives a short horse-ride away with her elderly mother and small son. Kolbeinn is a tense, fastidious character who lavishes a great deal of unwholesome and possessive emotion on his dainty little white mare. The way he finally gets a bridle on it looks like seduction and conquest – and coercion. He looks faintly absurd, trotting over to see the object of his affections; she happens to be the owner of a black stallion that takes a very great shine to this gentleman's mare. The result is farce, violence and tragedy and the template is set down for the rest for the picture.

This is a world of roiling emotions that are natural and dignified in horses, but clenched and unhappy for their human masters. The horses, of course, are candid about what they feel: so honest, so calm, so unaffected, so unencumbered with any need to pretend, that they don't appear to be feeling anything at all. The humans are quite different.



One alcoholic, desperate for the kind of strong liquor that seems to be unavailable, uses a strong-swimming horse to ferry him out to a Russian trawler where he might be able to buy vodka: a purchase that ends in disaster. A neighbour dispute over a barbed wire fence leads to a similar catastrophe and two funerals produce two widows who compete with Solveig for Kolbeinn's affections. A Spanish horse-enthusiast falls in love with a Swedish woman: he can't keep up with her, in many different senses, and another calamity seems to be in the offing. The horses assume a tragic, almost sacrificial bearing.

Of Horses and Men is a hugely enjoyable film from the wild side of the wild side; it comes with an excellent musical score by David Thor Jonsson, and it really resembles nothing else around. I found myself thinking of Peter Schaffer's once-shocking play *Equus*, about dysfunctional sexuality displaced into an obsession with horses. But actually this film makes that play's solemnity and shock value look self-conscious and silly.

Erlingsson gets up close and personal with horses in a way that is earnest and romantic rather than erotic or ironic; in particular, he has a montage of horseflesh surfaces, close-up shots that allow you to appreciate the texture and feel of a horse's hide – clearly the work of a connoisseur. It is a love story about horses, with horses, almost like a silent movie with words. Horses are the language that allow the human characters to speak to each other. This film deserves its cult status.

“ **What is your relationship with rural life like the one presented on the film? Did you grow up in a place like the one your characters lived in? Or are you simply fascinated by that lifestyle?**

I was brought up in downtown Reykjavik, but as a teenager I worked on a horse farm in the highlands of northern Iceland. I worked there for four summers as a "harvest boy" This was a culture shock. Maybe you could say that this film has been a therapeutic healing program for me. And yes, you could say that I am fascinated by this lifestyle and it has become my own. I got my first horse when I was 16 year old. Her name was Roshildur and she was part of my salary from the farm. She has been my life companion for 30 years until I had to put her down this winter.

There is a darkly comedic tone in your film? Is this something that you were conscious about while writing it or did it develop organically because of your own sensibilities?

Maybe it's part of my style as a storyteller. You could say that in my target group is only one person that I have to amuse. And that person is me.

What do you think is particular about horses in comparison to all other domesticated animals?

I think horses are the most codependent domestic animals that can you find. You really need to be in the "program" to fully understand them.

The human/horse interaction in your film seems to be driven by the animal's gaze and their somehow human-like expression, could you talk about why this interested you?

The eye can be a mirror. Sometimes that is what happens when a human really looks into the eye of an animal. If I were better in English, I could answer this question with a poem. ”

Benedikt Erlingsson interviewed by indiewire.com

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