

THE MAN WITHOUT A PAST

A film by Aki Kaurismäki



*55th FESTIVAL DE CANNES
2002 GRAND JURY PRIZE
BEST ACTRESS FOR KATI OUTINEN
ECUMENICAL JURY PRIZE
TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
TELLURIDE FILM FESTIVAL
NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL
ACADEMY AWARD NOMINEE FOR BEST FOREIGN FILM 2003*

A Sony Pictures Classics Release.
Running time 97 minutes. Rated PG-13 by the MPAA.
In Finnish with English Subtitles.

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Director's Statement

My last film was black and white and silent, which clearly shows that I am a man of business. However, going forward on that road would demand skipping out on the picture next. What would we have then-- a shadow? So, always ready for compromises, I decided to turn around and make this film here, which has loads of dialogues plus a variety of colors - not to mention other Commercial values.

I have to admit that deep in my subconscious, there might have been a hope that this step would make me seem normal, too. My social, economical and Political views of the state of society, moral and love can hopefully be found from the film itself. - **Aki Kaurismäki**

CAST

Man.....	Markku Peltola
Irma.....	Kati Outinen
Nieminen.....	Juhani Niemelä
Kaisa Nieminen.....	Kaija Pakarinen
Anttila.....	Sakari Kuosmanen
Flea Market Manageress.....	Annikki Tähti
Bar Owner.....	Anneli Sauli
Shipyards Clerk.....	Elina Salo
Bank Clerk.....	Outi Mäenpää
Bank Robber.....	Esko Nikkari
Investigating Officer.....	Perlti Swehoim
Lawyer.....	Matti Wuori
Ex-wife.....	Aino Seppo
Ovaskainen.....	Janne Hyytiäinen
Electrician.....	Antti Reini
Hannibal.....	Tähti
The Salvation Army Band.....	Marko Haavisto Jouni Saario Jukka Teerisaari Jyrki Telilä
Muggers.....	Risto Korhonen Panu Vauhkonen Tom Wahlroos

CREW

Directed by.....	Aki Kaurismaki
Written by.....	Aki Kaurismaki
Produced by.....	Aki Kaurismaki
Cinematography.....	Timo Salminen
Sound.....	Tero Malmberg
Editor.....	Timo Linnasalo
Set Design.....	Markku Pätilä Jukka Salmi
Wardrobe.....	Outi Herjumatana
Make-up.....	Nadja Delcos
Gaffers.....	Olli Varja Kalle Penttil Markku Pätilä
Assistant Director.....	Nadja Delcos
Assistant Cameraman.....	Rauno Ronkainen

2nd Assistant Cameraman.....Nea Salminen

**“Another classic from one of my favorite film directors. It’s sad enough to make you laugh, and funny enough to make you cry.”
-Jim Jarmusch**

SYNOPSIS

Internationally renowned filmmaker and auteur, Aki Kaurismaki, has given us the second installation of his FINLAND TRILOGY, the funny and amusing THE MAN WITHOUT A PAST. A man (comically played with deadpan panache by Markku Peltola) must start his life anew when he is mugged and loses his memory on his way to Helsinki to find work. On his travels to rebuild his life, the man encounters a whole set of new quirky townspeople including a helpful and lovely Salvation Army officer (award winning Kati Outinen). He also must deal with a whole new way of rebuilding his life. With an equal balance of dignity, humor and a bit of melancholy typical of the films of Charlie Chaplin, Kaurismaki’s THE MAN WITHOUT A PAST has been revered with awards from film festivals around the world as well as a nomination for the Best Foreign Language Film Academy Award.

CAST

Markku Peltola as the Man

Since 1978, Markku Peltola has worked on numerous experimental music and theatre projects. He has appeared in several supporting roles in the Aki Kaurismaki films, JUHA and DRIFTING CLOUDS.

He also appeared as the lead in Aki Kaurismaki's short film DOGS HAVE NO HELL (an episode of the Ten Minutes Older Project). Markku Peltola has recently been working with his theatre group in a restaurant that he founded.

THE MAN WITHOUT A PAST is his first leading role in a feature film.

Kati Outinen as Irma

In 1980, Kati Outinen entered the Theatre Academy. After her graduation in 1984, she joined Helsinki's KOM Theatre for ten years.

She has since appeared in numerous films including many leading roles in Aki Kaurismaki's; *SHADOWS IN PARADISE*, *HAMLET GOES BUSINESS*, *DIRTY HANDS*, *THE MATCH FACTORY GIRL*, *TAKE CARE OF YOUR SCARF TATJANA*, *DRIFTING CLOUDS*, *JUHA*, *DOGS HAVE NO HELL* (episodes in Ten Minutes Older-project) and *THE MAN WITHOUT A PAST*.

Annikki Tähti as The Flea Market Manageress

Annikki Tähti published her first recording in February 1953 and in 1955 she recorded the nostalgic waltz *Muistatko Monrepos'n (Do you remember Monrepos)*, which became the first Finnish gold record seller.

Annikki Tähti still performs regularly. She is one of the most famous and beloved grand old ladies of Finnish popular music.

Marko Haavisto & Poutahaukat as the Salvation Army Band

In 1997 "Marko Haavisto & Poutahaukat" was formed and released their first record, *Täydellinen Maailma (A Perfect World)* in 1999.

The leader of the band, Marko Haavisto, previously fronted a band called "The Badding Rockers" whose songs were used in Aki Kaurismaki's earlier films: *DRIFTING CLOUDS* and *THE MATCH FACTORY GIRL*.

The second album of Marko Haavisto & Poutahaukat, *Lamppu Palaa* (The Lamp is Alight), was released in March 2002.

Tähti as Hannibal

Tähti is a descendant of a famous dog-actress family; her grandmother *Laika* had the unforgettable role of Baudelaire in the film *LA VIE DE BOHÉME* by Aki Kaurismaki and her mother, Pittu, performed one of the principle roles in Kaurismaki's *JUHA*.

Filmography - Aki Kaurismäki

Actor:

- 1980 **Valehtelija** (The Liar)
- 1982 **Arvottomat** (The Worthless)
- 1983 **Huhtikuu on kuukausista julmin** (April is the Cruellest Month)
- 1985 **Viimeiset rotannahat** (The Last of the Ratskins)
- 1986 **Varjoja paratiisissa** [hotel receptionist] (Shadows in Paradise)
- 1990 **Lej aldrig yrkesmoerdare i rivningskaakar!** [man selling dark glasses]
(I Hired a Contract Killer)
- 1994 **Iron Horsemen** (Bad Trip)

Director:

- 1981 **Saimaa ilmiö** (The Saimaa Gesture)
- 1982 **Arvottomat** [assistant director] (The Worthless)
- 1983 **Rikos ja rangaistus** (Crime and Punishment)
- 1984 **Calamari union**
- 1986 **Varjoja paratiisissa** (Shadows in Paradise)
- 1986 **Rocky VI**
- 1987 **Thru the Wire**
- 1987 **Rich little Bitch**
- 1987 **Hamlet iikemaailmassa** (Hamlet Goes Business)
- 1988 **Ariel**
- 1989 **Tulitikkutehtaan tyttö** (The Match Factory Girl)
- 1989 **Likaiset kädet** (Dirty Hands)
- 1989 **Leningrad Cowboys go America**
- 1990 **Lej aldrig yrkesmoerdare i rivningskaakar!** (I Hired a Contract Killer)
- 1992 **Those were the Days**
- 1992 **These Boots**
- 1992 **Boheemielämää** (La vie de Bohème)
- 1993 **Leningrad Cowboys meet Moses**
- 1994 **Total Balalaika Show**
- 1994 **Pidä huivista kiini, Tatjana** (Take care of your Scarf, Tatiana)
- 1994 **Iron Horsemen** (Bad Trip) [assistant director]
- 1994 **A propos de Nice**
- 1996 **Kaus pilvet karkaavat** (Drifting Clouds)
- 1999 **Juha**

Producer:

- 1981 **Saimaa ilmiö** (The Saimaa Gesture)
- 1984 **Calamari union**
- 1986 **Rocky VI**
- 1987 **Thru the Wire**
- 1987 **Rich little Bitch**
- 1987 **Macbeth**

1987 **Hamlet iikemaailmassa** (Hamlet Goes Business)
1988 **Sirppi ja kitara** [executive producer] (From Russia With Rock)
1988 **Ariel**
1989 **Tulitikkutehtaan tyttö** (The Match Factory Girl)
1989 **Leningrad Cowboys go America**
1990 **Lej aldrig yrkesmoerdare i rivningskaakar!** (I Hired a Contract Killer)
1992 **Tuhlaajapoika** (The Prodigal Son)
1992 **Those were the Days**
1992 **Boheemielämää** (La Vie de Bohème)
1993 **Ripa ruostuu** (Ripa Hits the Skids)
1993 **Leningrad Cowboys meet Moses**
1994 **Total Balalaika Show**
1994 **Pidä huisvista kiini, Tatjana** (Take Care of your Scarf, Tatiana)
1994 **Iron Horsemen** [assistant director] (Bad Trip)
1994 **A propos de Nice**
1996 **Kaus pilvet karkaavat** (Drifting Clouds)
1997 **Vaiennut kylä** (The quiet Village)
1999 **Juha**
1999 **Kovat miehet**

Writer:

1980 **Valehtelija** (The Liar)
1982 **Jackpot 2**
1982 **Arvottomat** [assistant director] (The Worthless)
1983 **Rikos ja rangaistus** (Crime and Punishment)
1984 **Klaani - tarina Sammakoitten suvusta** (The Clan Tale of the Frogs)
1984 **Calamari union**
1986 **Varjoja paratiisissa** (Shadows in Paradise)
1986 **Rocky VI**
1987 **Tilinteko** (The Final Arrangement)
1987 **Thru the Wire**
1987 **Hamlet iikemaailmassa** (Hamlet Goes Business)
1988 **Ariel**
1989 **Tulitikkutehtaan tyttö** (The Match Factory Girl)
1989 **Likaiset kädet** (Dirty Hands)
1989 **Leningrad Cowboys Go America**
1990 **Lej aldrig yrkesmoerdare i rivningskaakar!** (I Hired a Contract Killer)
1992 **Those Were the Days**
1992 **These Boots**
1992 **Boheemielämää** (La Vie de Bohème)
1993 **Leningrad Cowboys meet Moses**
1994 **Total Balalaika Show**
1994 **Pidä huisvista kiini, Tatjana** (Take Care of your Scarf, Tatiana)
1996 **Kaus pilvet karkaavat** (Drifting Clouds)
1999 **Juha**
2002 **The Man Without A Past**

Excerpts from a profile with Aki Kaurismäki in Cahiers du Cinema N° 573
(November 2002)

"I am very Japanese in my work"

In Kaurismäki's oeuvre of over 20 films, the Cannes Film Festival award-winning "The Man Without A Past", is undoubtedly one of the most accessible.

Kaurismäki's movies are most successful when the director gives in to his penchant for depicting pessimism, the cruelty of existence, fatality and the inhumanity of his fellow man (as in "The Match Factory Girl",) without allowing any sudden act of benevolence or any miraculous goodwill to come and rescue the characters. This occasionally puts him alongside Fassbinder, with whom he shares the same appetite for melodrama and destitute characters who are humiliated by society. But while his German counterpart favored wickedness, Kaurismäki's extreme kindness always comes through, so that there is often a gentleness and nonchalance behind the misery.

Kaurismäki is an impenitent humanist, who proclaims that what moves him in Ozu's work is "his humanity, his honesty, his rectitude". Ozu, whom he discovered when he was about 19 years old with "Tokyo Boshoku" ("Twilight in Tokyo"), reigns with Bresson and a few others in Kaurismäki's pantheon of influences. And he now claims their method of simplicity for himself. "In a sense, I am very Japanese in my work. No ornamentation-- the basis for all art is reduction. You go from an initial idea that you progressively reduce until it is sufficiently bare enough to be true. Then, and only then, are you ready."

Hollywood. As this aesthetic asceticism goes hand in hand with his indifference for money, the filmmaker often works with restricted budgets and, in order to keep his freedom, serves as his own producer. "American cinema died in 1962", he asserts. Why 1962? "Because my Cadillac is from 1962." This deadpan punch line is telling of what haunts the director, whose film making seems not to have changed in ages: the belief that cinema, like cars (which he collects at the rate of one per movie), no longer produces valid films, that there is a sort of death of the work, due in large part to money and the general commercialization of the world. No matter how often one argues that each year brings its own share of masterpieces and aesthetic trends, Kaurismäki remains skeptical, replying with a childlike lucidity: "It's because you're optimistic." Nevertheless, he very much likes the Dardenne brothers' "Rosetta," which he compares to Bresson's "Mouchette". "For me it has always been clear that it is the same story. It's a sort of copy, of variation directed with their own style." With the exception of a few friends (Idrissa Ouedraogo, Jim Jarmusch, Abbas Kiarostami), Kaurismäki has lost hope with contemporary cinema (while admitting to not having much interest), and especially with the new generation of young Finnish directors. "There have been great Finnish filmmakers but never at the same time [he has a particular fondness for Teuvo Tulio and Nyrki Tapiovaara]. It is a kind of curse. I have been waiting for five generations for someone to come and beat me because I am too old and tired, but nobody has come. So I have to do the job. The young are too lazy. One has to choose

between the work and the bar, and if you go to the bar you can't work seriously." But, he adds: "Personally, I practice both." What do the young filmmakers lack? "Humility", he says, before proclaiming the following: "Above all it is necessary to forget oneself. Start with the beginning, meaning you are nothing, only dust. Then you watch hundreds of movies, during which you stay silent. Then you walk alone in the forest while telling yourself that you're nobody. After that, you must concentrate, which means you must watch about a hundred more movies. Then you start to work."

Actors. With Kaurismäki, one never really knows what is irony, some kind of pagan mysticism, or disillusioned talk. Nevertheless, he is not a cynic. His movies, often illuminated by a great moral purity, prove it, and walk the line between silent cinema (with their great aesthetic expression) and modern style (the inexpressive faces of his actors' "mugs", particularly Kati Outinen's.) Again like Fassbinder, Kaurismäki works with a regular troop of actors. "Go ask Ford and Hawks why they filmed so often with this moron John Wayne. You know why? For his walk. Jean-Luc Godard said once how much he hates John Wayne when he's a villain and how much he loves him when he takes Natalie Wood in his arms at the end of 'The Searchers'. So why bother with new actors when the ones you have are good?"

Colors. Aki Kaurismäki is a filmmaker that's consistent, faithful, even when he alternates between dark movies and lighter works, between black and white and color, colors that he is literally in love with, that remind him of some of the 50's Hollywood movies. "Technicolor has disappeared, so I cannot make the same thing anymore. But it is true that some movies, such as Victor Fleming's 'Gone with the Wind' and Douglas Sirk's 'Written on the Wind,' deeply influenced me in their way of playing with backgrounds. Which is much more difficult to express with black and white." He recounts that he even carries color swatches on set, comparing purple with purple to obtain a satisfactory color scheme.

While not as exaggerated as in some of the 50's films, the colors in Kaurismäki's films are, nevertheless, unrealistic. "Some stories call for color, some for black and white-- never in between. I am a realist, but you have to be successful in making colors become surreal. One definition of surrealism for me would be that it defines your own realism."

This poetic use of color imbues a timeless beauty to stories nevertheless anchored in an immediately recognizable reality. Kaurismäki is above all a poet, never reducible to the label of "social filmmaker". He even gets upset that the French no longer know Baudelaire like the back of their hands ("You, being French and working at the Cahiers du Cinema!?!") and gets a kick out of quoting, in English, some verses he asks us to identify: "We run and run, and in the end, we stop in front of an open grave; no time to say a word, no time to breathe." The answer? Henri Michaux.

Jean-Sébastien Chauvin, (from a Paris October 11th 2002 interview)

