

ABOUT THE FILM

A low budget movie, "Small Mountain" is an original script by Einar Thor, an art house movie set in a remote part of the country, when on an election day, Emil, is asked to take the ballot box to the airport, but he misses the plane.

Though inspired by the story of Abraham and Isaac, it is strictly speaking not a story of Christian faith, but moreover inspired by its simple story line, its reflection on faith in what is important, and the idea that though society changes, men doesn't. It also echoed with the director's wish to make an uncomplicated film on the surface, by heart an Icelandic movie which would in an easy way mirror the doubts emerging in some circles in Iceland at the time, doubts about where their country was going and its sense of values. In the introduction to the project prior to shooting, the director's note read: *"This is an atmospheric feel-good movie, set against a rugged landscape in a small and remote community which has already had its share of social changes. Changes which are common place, unification of small and rural regions, vague plans of building heavy industry to create jobs, inhabitants moving away to the city, incursion new methods and means. The idea behind the story is when changes occur cracks can come about within a community, and when technical and systematic solutions such as democratic election do not have all the answers, some sort of civilisation kicks in, a moral that holds the community together. In "Small Mountain", these contrasts form the universal themes of the story, and in its final scenes a metaphorical circumstances are drawn up where the key characters are forced to watch the technical solution be blown away. "Small Mountain" is a universal tale about a small town which can be found in all corners of the world."*

SOME POST-PREMIER MIXED REACTION

"Small Mountain" premiered in Iceland in 2008, few months prior to the collapse of its banks and the historical revolt against the government in January 2009. Mostly well received by critics and the media, though mocked by some, it was relatively overlooked in the local cinema circles. Famously its producers however received hate emails from few young cinemagoers because of a scene including a slaughtering of a lamb. One critic gave it only "One Star" because the producers killed a lamb. But a certain level of hostility towards the film seemed apparent in some media which few Icelandic film have received.

One of the most respected critic in Iceland, O. Torfason, said on National Radio 2 that the director approached his subjects differently than other Icelandic directors, and that "he continues to develop the art of filmmaking in the country, with fresh approach, courage and stimulates us to reflect." Haugesund Film Festival in Norway described the film as "a highly appealing blend of stunning Icelandic locations, great characters, quirky comedy, with an undertone of sadness and menace". Susanne Schutz, Germany, wrote in the Die Rheinpfalz that "Small Mountain" were a Roadmovie with a superb rhythm and its own character.

In one of key Icelandic film site (kvikmyndir.is), “Small Mountain” was described as “A typical Icelandic pile of shit. A horrible movie”. The critic of the most widely read paper in Iceland, Frettabladid, called the film “thin”, and a renowned theatre critic who writes for the daily paper, DV, poked fun of its story line and the director’s personal relation to the countryside, calling him inexperienced. After the film was selected to its first A list festival in Shanghai in June, which was the first A list festival an Icelandic film had was screened in 2009, Derek Elley wrote in Variety; *"Small Mountain," a typically mordant slice of Icelandic character comedy marbled with warm, inclusive moments. Sophomore outing by writer-director Einar Thor Gunnlaugsson ("The Third Name") mines his island's rich sense of the ridiculous to milder effect than some of its forebears, but has a quietly kooky charm.."*

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