

A SILENT CHILD

A SHORT FILM BY JESPER KLEVENÅS

»A Silent Child« is a film about a child who neither cries nor screams when she gets injured – and the terrible consequences involved. The child's young parents are played by Sverrir Gudnason and Tuva Novotny.



Thoughts about the film – and on film in general

I have always reflected a great deal on the value of film and its place, and whether it genuinely serves a function in people's lives, particularly in the age of the digital revolution. The conclusion I have reached is that the moving image – not necessarily that which we today call film and insist on dividing into genres, but *the moving image* – has an enormous and far-reaching impact. It plays a crucial role in the process of shaping basic human values and aesthetics, perhaps more so than of any other type of media. This is why those of us who produce moving images have an enormous responsibility both in terms of what is depicted and how it is depicted. I feel that this responsibility is rarely exercised and that the power of film is not taken seriously.

I re-watched Kieslowski's *The Decalogue* a while ago, which dares to address basic normative values. This is rare and not often considered to be a responsibility of contemporary film. Furthermore, *The Decalogue* deals with huge moral issues in a human and day-to-day manner. This series contains something that I seek. I also find this sense of responsibility and importance in Michael Haneke's films.

Watching *The Decalogue* again generated ideas on how to make films today in this way – characterized by a genuine sense of importance and responsibility – and what they might be about. I started to explore the ethical and moral codes and even the standards by which we claim to live, such as the belief that every person is equal or the right to freedom of speech. I found the issue of freedom of speech and expression to be particularly relevant in these times of surveillance and terrorism scares. During this period, I was on a train once after a long day at work. There was a woman with a small child on the train. Because I was so tired I hoped, as we all do sometimes, that the child wouldn't scream or cry during the trip. Soon the boy, who was around two years old, started to wander through the train. The mother was nowhere to be seen so I began to watch him. Not far from where I sat, he fell as the train swayed and there was a loud thud when his head collided with the armrest. He didn't make a sound or cry at all. His mother soon came and lifted him up, but he still remained completely silent. Then I regretted hoping he wouldn't cry or scream before.

Instead, I became aware of how it can be a matter of survival for children to cry; the consequences can be devastating if a child neither cries nor screams when it is injured. In keeping with my thoughts on making films about the values by which we live, it occurred to me that freedom of speech is not just a right. It is also a matter of life and death to be able to express yourself. This is how the idea for the film came about. *A Silent Child* can be interpreted as a film about the importance of being able to express oneself. The story is very concrete, and as it involves a small child and two young parents, it is a film that is moving on a deeply human level regardless of how it is interpreted.

Jesper Klevenås

Stockholm, June 2009

Synopsis

A little girl is playing at day care. Suddenly, she falls and hits her head hard on the floor. But she doesn't cry or scream. The kindergarten maid expresses her concern, and the little girl's parents begin to worry. Soon, however, the day-to-day routine takes over again. But a much more serious accident is just around the corner. *A Silent Child* is a film about a child who neither cries nor screams when it gets injured – and the terrible consequences involved.

Profiles

Jesper Klevenås has worked primarily with Roy Andersson as a cinematographer on numerous commercials and the award-winning feature film *Songs from the Second Floor*, recipient of the Special Jury Prize at Cannes in 2000. *A Silent Child* is Klevenås' fourth short film as a director. His previous awards include the Montecatini International Short Film Festival's premier Golden Heron Award [Airone d'Oro] for his second film *Just a Kid*, and the 1 km Film award at the 2000 Stockholm International Film Festival for his directorial debut *Anja*, with which he began his collaboration with Tuva Novotny and Sverrir Gudnason.

Tuva Novotny is one of Sweden's most well-respected actresses. She has worked with directors such as Kjell Grede and Simon Staho in Sweden and Denmark and recently appeared in the major international productions *Stoned* directed by Stephen Woolley and *Eat, Pray, Love* with Julia Roberts.

Sverrir Gudnason has appeared in a number of films and television series, including Sveriges Television's popular and critically-acclaimed mini-series *How Soon is Now?* Gudnason won the Best Actor award at the 2009 Shanghai International Film Festival for his role in *Original*, which received the award for best film.

Gustav Danielsson is a cinematographer whose work includes Roy Andersson's most recent feature *You, the Living*.

Hend Aroal has studied TV-production and Economics, and has worked as a Production Manager and Script Supervisor. She is currently Head of Production at Roy Andersson's Studio 24.

Jesper Klevenås Filmography:

Anja [Short, 2001]
Just a Kid [Short, 2003]
Homo Sapiens [Short, 2007]

Awards:

Anja: 1 km film award
[Stockholm Film Festival, 2001]
Just a Kid: Airone d'Oro [Montecatini
International Short Film Festival, 2003]

Production facts

Title:	A Silent Child
Swedish title:	Ett tyst barn
Production company:	Jesper Klevenås Filmproduktion Getfotsv.1 SE-122 46 Enskede Sweden
Producers:	Hend Aroal Jesper Klevenås
Co-producer:	Sveriges Television AB
Running time:	11:40 min.
Screenwriter/Director:	Jesper Klevenås

Contact information

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Festivals

Andreas Fock	Swedish Film Institute andreas.fock@sfi.se +46 8 665 11 36 www.sfi.se
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Sales

Premium Films	www.premium-films.com
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Actors:

Mother: Tuva Novotny
Father: Sverrir Gudnason
Daughter: Sisi Sverrisdóttir Uggla

Day Care Teacher: Casandra Cornelio
Grandmother: Beatrice Järås
Doctor: Malin Arvidsson
Nurse: Frida Beckman

Team:

Director of Photography: Gustav Danielsson
Production Manager: Victoria Svanell
Sound Technician: Robert Hefter
Wardrobe/Make-up/Continuity: Sophia Frykstam
Sound Mixing: Robert Hefter, Owe Svensson/Studio 24
Post-production: Markus Strömqvist/Film Fatale
The Chimney Pot
Graphic Design: Petter Cohen
English Subtitles/Translation: Karl Shinn
Producers: Hend Aroal, Jesper Klevenås
Screenwriter/Director/Editor: Jesper Klevenås



Produced by Jesper Klevenås Filmproduktion in association with Sveriges Television AB together with Roy Andersson Filmproduktion AB and Film Fatale AB. Production support provided by Svenska Filminstitutet, film commissioner Andra Lasmanis.



For more info, stills and press material please visit:
www.jesperklevenas.se