

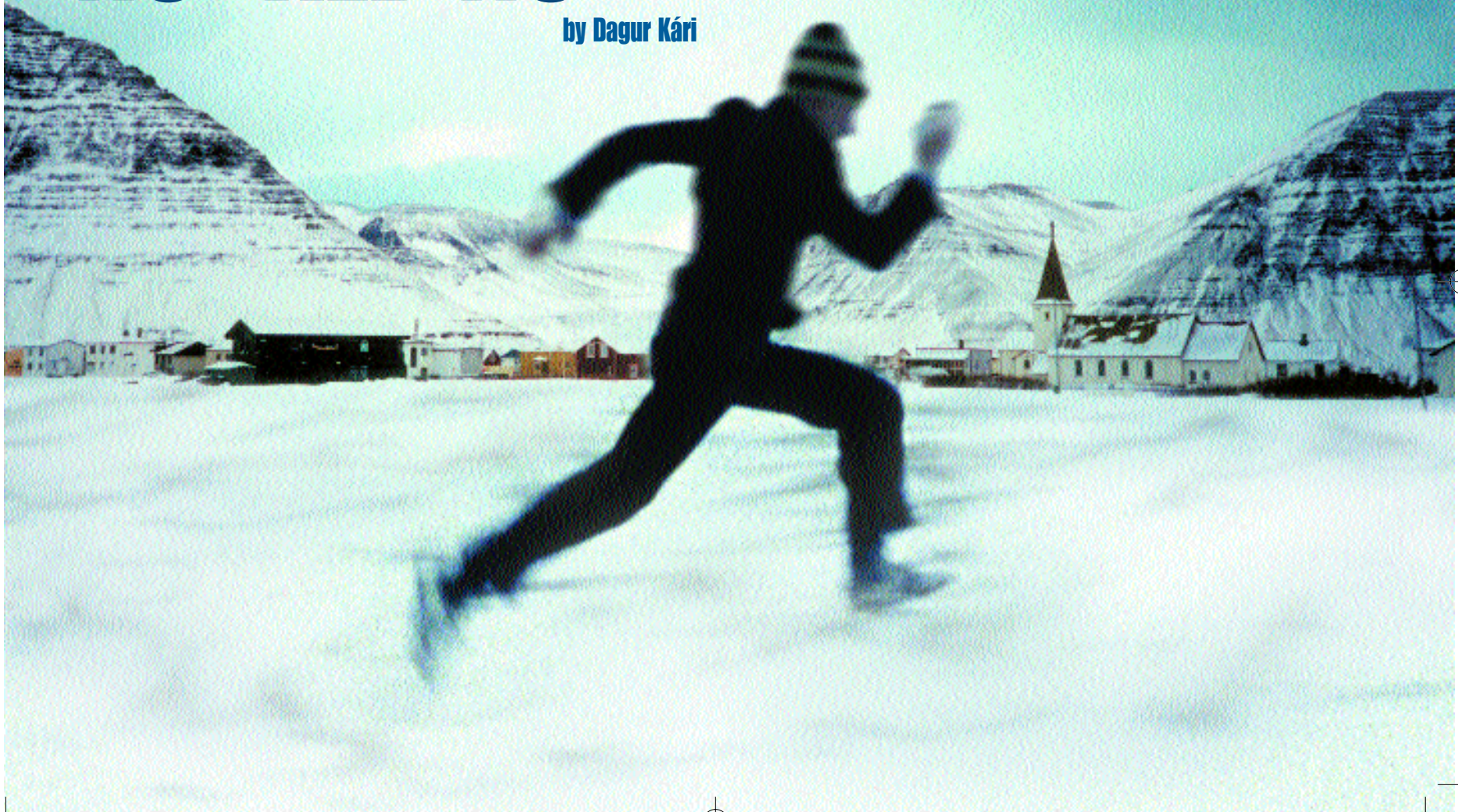


2003 PAPER VIEW / DESIGN: ERIC PÉREZ PROJECT



# NÓI ALBINÓI

by Dagur Kári











# NÓI ALBINÓI

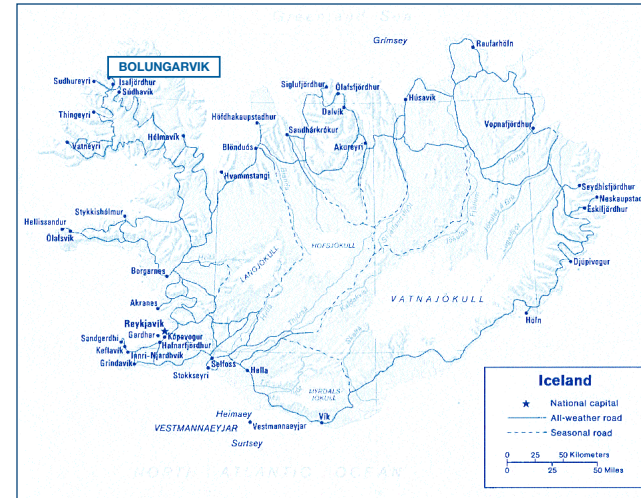
**NÓI ALBINÓI**  
a film by Dagur Kári  
Color 93 min 35 mm Iceland/Germany/UK/Denmark 2003

**World Sales**  
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# ICELAND

Geographically, **ICELAND** is the second biggest island in Europe after the United Kingdom. Its land mass originated 65 million years ago as a result of continental drift. It enjoys a temperate, oceanic climate, surprisingly mild in winter and cool in the summer.

Over the last hundred years, the temperature climbed above 20 degrees six times. There is constant daylight in the three summer months, and Icelanders enjoy only three hours of light in the winter. Iceland has only known a single war: The Cod War of the '70's against England, from which it emerged victorious. Iceland is the largest European producer of bananas, the first country to have democratically elected a woman as president, and has more writers per capita than any other country in the world. The Icelanders are charming people; many claim to believe in elves and trolls, buy their drinks at the State owned liquor-stores, and welcome you with the phrase "How do you like Iceland?"



**Surface area:** 103 000 km<sup>2</sup> of which 12 000 km<sup>2</sup> is covered by glaciers

**Arable land:** 1000 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population:** 280 000

**Sheep:** 1 350 000

**Cod fished per Inhabitant per year:** 2780

**Capital:** Reykjavík (170 000 inhabitants)

**Tourism:** 150 000 visitors per year

**Religion:** 98 % Protestant, 1 % Catholic

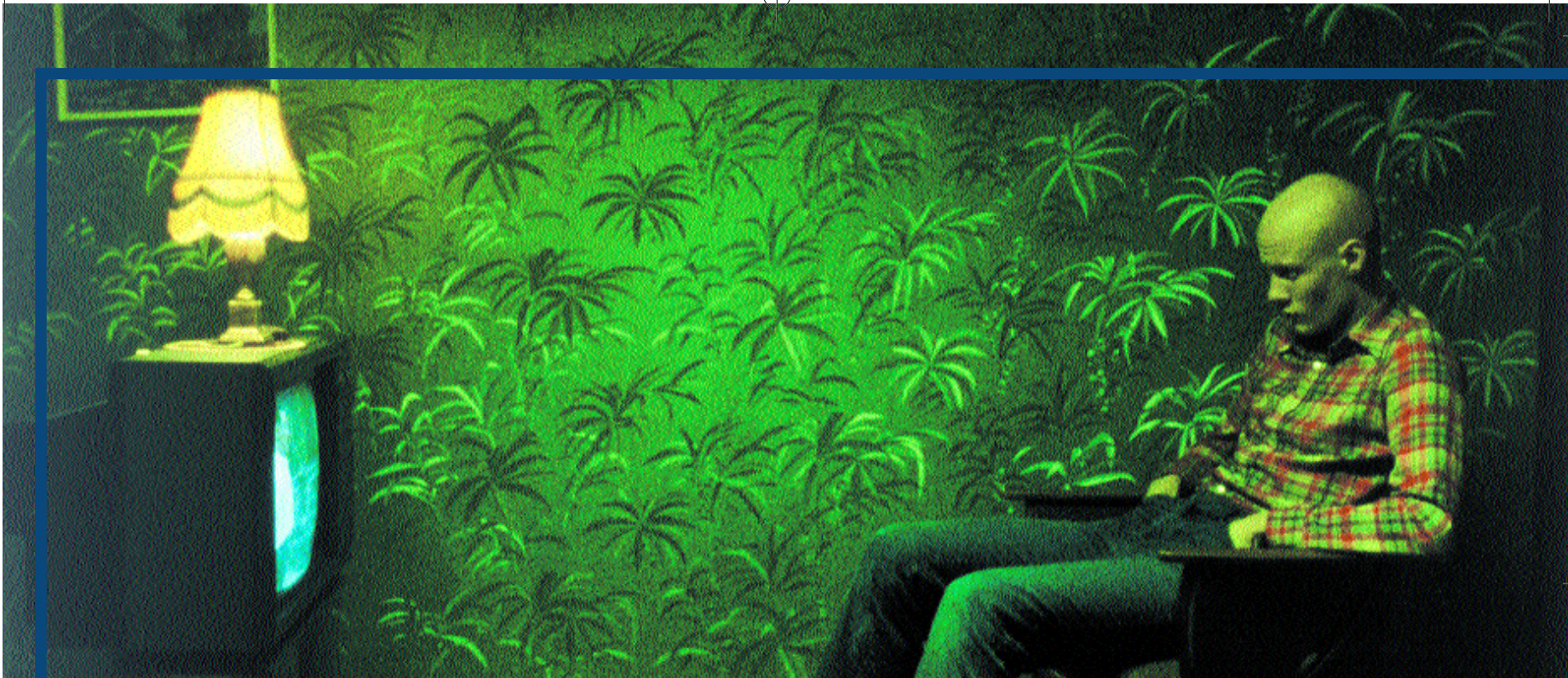
**Exports:** cod (80 %), industrial products (17 %).

**Bolungarvík** (location of Núi Albínó): 957 inhabitants

## TO SURVIVE IN ICELAND:

- **Hello:** Góðan dag
- **I'm lost:** Ég er tynd
- **I don't understand:** Ég skil ekki
- **The cold is killing me!:** Kuldinn er að drepa mig!
- **Let's go out for dinner:** Förum út að borða.
- **I'm allergic to cod:** Ég er með ofnæmi fyrir thorski.
- **When is the next volcano eruption?:** Hvenær er næsta eldgos?
- **What the hell are you doing on my roof?:** Hvað í andskotunum ertu að gera á thakinu mínu?
- **How often do you masturbate?:** Hvað fróar þú þér oft?
- **Give me the money or else I'll blow your brain out!:**  
Láttu mig fá peningana eða ég skyt af þér hausinn!





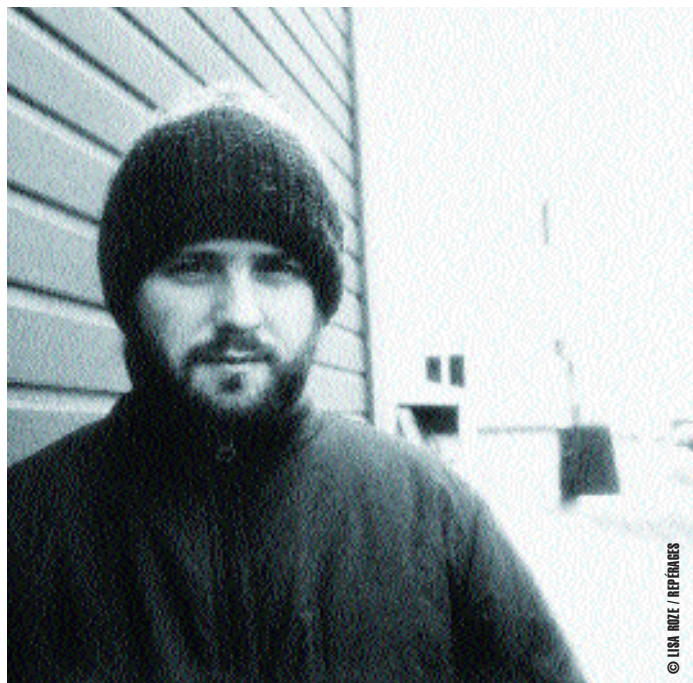
## SYNOPSIS

Is he the village idiot or a genius in disguise? 17 year old Núi drifts through life on a remote fjord in the north of Iceland. In winter, the fjord is cut off from the outside world, surrounded by ominous mountains and buried under a shroud of snow. Núi dreams of escaping from this white-walled prison with Iris, a city girl who works in a local gas station. But his clumsy attempts at escape spiral out of control and end in complete failure. Only a natural disaster will shatter Núi's universe and offer him a window into a better world.

## THE DIRECTOR DAGUR KÁRI

Icelandic filmmaker born in 1973. Graduated from the National Film School of Denmark in 1999. His graduation film *Lost Weekend* won 11 international prizes (incl. Brest, Angers, Poitiers, Munich and Tel Aviv). *Núi Albinói* is Dagur Kári's first feature film.

Dagur Kári also works as a musician with the band "slowblow" which has released two albums and composed the soundtrack of *Núi Albinói*. He is currently working on a Dogma film in Copenhagen.



# DAGUR KÁRI

## INTERVIEW WITH DAGUR KÁRI

### Did you always plan to return to Iceland after school in Denmark?

In 1995 I started The Danish Film School and graduated in 1999 with a 40 min. long film, called **Lost Weekend**, shot in Denmark. For some time I knew that my films would not necessarily take place in Iceland. But **Nói Albinói** is a very old idea I strongly associated with Iceland, and I always wanted to do my first feature film there, to establish where I come from.

### What's the origin of Nói Albinói?

The character of Nói Albinói has been living inside me for many years. He is even older than my interest in films, and at some point I considered making cartoons or comics with that character. Throughout the years I have collected all kinds of ideas around him, and by the time I graduated from film school, these ideas were ripe to be locked into a script.

### What about the location of the film?

At first, the film was not supposed to take place in an isolated village; I was thinking more about Reykjavík. But finally I thought that Reykjavík was too connected to reality; I wanted to create a universe that did not really exist but could exist. To me the West Fjords were most interesting because of the eerie atmosphere and beautiful, extremely visual scenery. Of course we were very dependent on snow and that was the area that was most likely to have snow. During winter it can be completely cut off from the rest of the world due to extreme weather.



### Was the casting difficult to do?

Iceland is small and everybody knows everybody. If you sit in a bar long enough in Reykjavík you will have met all your cast and crew. In **Nói** I didn't go after blockbuster names. Most of the actors are new to cinema and not celebrities. I mainly went after the right types, and that is why it is a combination of non-professional and professional actors. The woman who plays Lina, the grandmother, delivers the mail in my neighborhood; I met the girl who plays Iris in a vegetarian restaurant. Many members of the cast are personal friends, like the psychologist. Regarding the character of Nói, it was clear to me that he would need to have a very distinctive and almost alienated look. And since I do not know any Icelandic albinos of that age that are good actors, Tómas Lemarquis was by far the best choice. Not only is he a very dedicated and talented actor, but he also has the look that I wanted.

### You composed the music for **Nói Albinói**?

Yes, with my friend Orri. Together we form a band called "slow-blow". There are very few things in life that I enjoy more than making music. That's why we try to stay away from the business aspect of it. Music is a holiday from our professional lives and we don't allow anything into the chemistry that can ruin the pleasure. But we have nevertheless managed to release two albums independently and a new one is in the pipelines.

### Do you think the theme of the film is very "Icelandic"?

It was not my intention to make a typically Icelandic film. I like to make films that take place in an isolated microcosm, in a confined universe that is not really a part of the world as we know it, but not surreal either. Somewhere in between. But apart from that, I guess the film is just my version of a story that has been told over and over again: The young rebel, who doesn't fit in anywhere, and tries to escape... It is an old cliché but I wanted to do my own version of this kind of story.

### Is it something you particularly notice in Iceland, people wishing to escape or to move away? Is it a favourable environment to develop this kind of story in?

Most people move away from Iceland at some point in their lives. It is somehow necessary when you live on an isolated island. But almost everybody returns sooner or later. However, regarding this particular story, I wasn't dealing with Icelandic reality, since I wanted the film to have its own universe.

### What are your influences as a filmmaker?

Everything but movies! I very much enjoy making movies, but watching them can be like doing algebra or something. I guess it has something to do with the fact that it has become my profession, because before it wasn't like that at all. But right now I'm very hooked on sitcoms. And I learned very much about filmmaking from The Simpsons.

### Do you particularly like the loser type of character like **Nói's father** or even **Nói himself**?

To me heroes are extremely boring, I mean people who can do everything. I think it's more interesting when people are miscommunicating and don't know how to deal with things. Like in sitcoms, where the characters have the same problems in every episode. They never learn and it just continues for ten years! If they were heroes they would just need one episode to solve everything and move on.

### Is there a biblical or metaphysical interpretation of the film?

I am very interested in working with myths in a subconscious way. I want the audience to feel with their guts and emotions a connection to something mythical and universal, but if they become intellectually aware of exactly what it is, while they watch the film, then the task has failed. Nothing is more pathetic to me than stories that have obvious biblical or other references. If a film has a character called Eve, and she picks up an apple, I walk out of the cinema. So it has to be very subtle.



**Without telling the end of the film, could we say that the final event is caused by Núi? Could it be seen like some kind of a punishment, and if yes why?**

The ending is supposed to have this double meaning that sometimes the worst thing possible can also be a new beginning. You've lost everything and it's terrible but then you're also liberated from everything. For me it was the only possible escape for Núi, but I don't want to dig deeper into it than that. It is open for interpretation and the audience has to decide for themselves.

**There are some comic and absurd elements integrated into what can be called a tragic story. Is it something you intentionally put into the film in order not to make it too tragic?**

For me it's the other way around: there are some tragic elements integrated into what can be called a comic story. I always start from humour, and I try to avoid plot. But I like to put a definite ending. That's what makes it a film, instead of a pilot for a sitcom! It's the same structure in *Lost Weekend* as in *Núi Albinói* with strange and humorous situations and then a curse at the end. I've always used this structure, and it seems that my future projects will be no exception. But I find it strange that my scripts are like a comic-book, but then the film itself always turns out to be much more serious than anyone had expected, myself included. I don't know why this happens. It's one of these things that I can't really control.

**Is it something that you agree with or do you try to fight it?**

It is definitely not a conscious thing, but I accept it and find it quite exciting. I always thought *Lost Weekend* would be more funny than anything else, but when we started shooting, I realized that the actors were speaking and moving extremely slowly. I didn't ask them to do this, and it was definitely working against the comedy, but it must have come from somewhere, so I decided not to change it and see what would happen to the film.





### This happened with *Nói Albinói* as well?

A little bit, but not as radically as in *Lost Weekend*. The reason is perhaps that *Lost Weekend* takes place in one very specific location that is heavily atmospheric. So it creates a particular mood. In *Nói* it's different because there are many different locations so you don't get absorbed by one mood.

### Was it hard to shoot the film?

It was very hard. We had to depend very heavily on the snow, but that winter there was almost no snow. Actually we were extremely lucky because the only snow for the whole winter fell exactly while we were shooting the exterior scenes. I'm very happy that no artificial snow was used in the whole film, and yet it is snowing in almost every shot. 95% of the indoor scenes were shot on location. The shooting schedule was tight, and all in all it would have been impossible if we hadn't been in these small Icelandic villages. Very few movies have been made there, so people are not fed up with film crews coming and everybody is so helpful. When in other countries you often have to face monstrous bureaucracy, in this area you just need to make one phone call to be able to shoot! The solution for every problem you might have is always just a phone call away.

### How does the snow fit into the graphic elements and the atmosphere of the film?

It adds a lot of production design just by nature. Also it gives a physical dimension to the film because it's difficult to move through snow. Especially, when you are being chased by cops. Physically, it is impossible to get away from a place like this. For the escape scene, I tried to imitate a B-movie car chase, by just adding the snow as a surprise obstacle.

### Was it technically difficult to shoot in these weather conditions?

Yes, it's a strange situation to be hoping for the worst possible weather every day, knowing how difficult it is to shoot in these conditions and how much the equipment suffers from the cold. It's also difficult for the DP to shoot in so much snow, because the contrasts are so exaggerated and hard to deal with.

### Where did you meet the DP, Rasmus Videbæk?

At the Danish Filmschool. That's also where I met the editor Daniel Dencik. It's the good thing about spending four years together in a school. You develop solid relationships that continue after you leave school.

### You have a film project in Denmark. Do you want to continue shooting in Iceland?

I have two or three ideas for film projects but none of them take place in Iceland. One is a Dogma film that I'm currently developing in Copenhagen. I think it's much easier to work abroad in a foreign language. It helps to abstract things. In Iceland, I know the country and the language so well that it is a little bit difficult to get the necessary distance to create a universe of its own. It comes much easier to me when I'm abroad.





# TÓMAS LEMARQUIS

## INTERVIEW WITH TÓMAS LEMARQUIS

### How have you arrived where you are today, personally and professionally?

I was born to a French father, and an Icelandic mother. I grew up in Iceland and I still live there today, after having gotten my degree in dramatic arts from the Cours Florent in Paris. I acted in several short films, and in a feature film, *Villiljos*, where I met up again with Dagur Kári, whom I already knew since we went to high school together. I was also a newscaster on Icelandic television, a theater actor (one show I did was entered in several festivals in Scandinavia), and a member of a group of artists that submitted a number of pieces to the “Reykjavík, Cultural City 2000” event. I am currently studying at the Reykjavík School of Fine Arts, because I think that there is a resonance between all the arts, in any case if the creation is honest and sincere. Also, I’ve always been interested in the visual aspects of dramatic art.

### What does it mean to be an actor in Iceland?

It means that you can easily make a name for yourself and very quickly make contacts in the industry. The drawback, on the other hand, is that it’s a small milieu, and you’ve quickly made the rounds. I would like to have a career as a film actor and continue parallel work in the plastic arts, because it’s something very Icelandic to have more than one occupation. But I’ll work wherever the projects are interesting, no matter which country they’re in. I must say that Iceland is a country isolated geographically, but also culturally to some extent. That’s why lots of Icelanders go abroad. For example, it’s very common to take a long trip overseas after finishing school. But the ties to Iceland general remain very strong: the majority of Icelanders eventually come home.



**Núi, as a rebellious adolescent revolting against his father, has but one dream: to leave. Is he like you in this way?**

I admit to a constant need to travel, to be mentally open to new influences. It's not good to attach yourself too much to certain places. As to the question of rebellion, I did most of mine as an adolescent, even if you can uncover certain aspects of that in my work. When I first read the script for *Núi Albinói*, I felt an immediate sympathy for the character. Núi is very human, a good person, but someone terribly misunderstood. A feeling that I know well! I think that Núi and I have lots of things in common. He has a kind of devil-may-care attitude which helps him follow his own way and not take life too seriously.

**What prevents Iris from leaving with Núi?**

Unlike Núi, she is afraid to follow her path. She's making her second attempt at building her life, after having failed to make it in the capital, so she's not ready to take risks. I think that she loves Núi, though. I want to believe that, at least.

**Is Núi in one way or another responsible for the catastrophe that occurs?**

I don't think Núi is responsible for it. He's a very mature person, someone who doesn't attach himself to places or to people. For him, things last as long as they last. He concluded a long time ago that he couldn't count on anyone but himself. On one hand, that could facilitate his departure, allowing him to find a place that fits him, which I think is the only possible escape, whether that place has palm trees or not. It's not whether the catastrophe is something good or not, but life goes on, sad or not. I tend to see the positive aspects of this sad story.



# COMPANY PROFILE

## ZIK ZAK FILMWORKS COMPANY PROFILE

Zik Zak Filmworks was established in 1995 by Skúli Fr. Malmquist and Thorir Snær Sigurjónsson while they were still attending university. The initial impulse was to help young, first-time filmmakers realize their ideas, as few Icelandic film companies were concentrating on the works or ideas of first-time filmmakers.

### FILMOGRAPHY

- 2003 **NÓI ALBINÓI** by Dagur Kári  
Official Selection Rotterdam 2003 (in competition)
- 2002 **MOBILES** by Mikael Torfarson
- 2001 **DRAMARAMA** Collective film
- 2000 **FIASCO** by Ragnar Bragason

## THE COPRODUCTION OFFICE COMPANY PROFILE

The Coproduction Office is a label for film production and international sales. The company was founded 1987 by Philippe Bober, and has a reputation for discovering and promoting directorial talent. The Coproduction Office produces and sells a small but very select number of art house feature films (2-3 per year) with great care.

### FILMOGRAPHY

- 2003 **NÓI ALBINÓI** by Dagur Kári  
Official Selection Rotterdam 2003 (in competition)
- 2003 **PLEASANT DAYS** by Kornél Mundruczát  
Silver Leopard Locarno 2002
- 2002 **JAPON** by Carlos Reygadas  
Director's Fortnight, Special Mention Caméra d'Or,  
Cannes 2002
- 2001 **LOVELY RITA** by Jessica Hausner  
Official Selection Cannes 2001, FIPRESCI Vienna 2001
- 2001 **DOG DAYS** by Ulrich Seidl  
Grand Jury Prize Venice 2001, Grand Jury Prize Gijon 2001
- 2000 **SUZHOU RIVER** by Lou Ye  
Tiger Award Rotterdam 2000, Grand Jury Prize Tokyo  
Filmex and 4 other festivals
- 2000 **SONGS FROM THE SECOND FLOOR** by Roy Andersson  
Special Jury Prize Cannes 2000
- 2000 **AUDITION** by Miike Takashi  
Fipresci Rotterdam 2000
- 1996 **BREAKING THE WAVES** by Lars von Trier
- 1996 **THE KINGDOM** by Lars von Trier









## CREDITS

# NÓI ALBINÓI



### CAST

**Nói** Tómas Lemarquis



**Kiddi Beikon** Thröstur Leó Gunnarsson



**Íris** Elín Hansdóttir



**Lina** Anna Fríðriksdóttir

**Óskar** Hjalti Rögnvaldsson

**Prestur** Pétur Einarsson

**Gylfi** Kjartan Bjargmundsson

**Dabbi** Greipur Gíslason

### Produced by

Zik Zak Filmworks  
Essential Filmproduktion  
The Bureau  
M&M Productions

### Producers

Philippe Bober  
Kim Magnusson  
Skúli Fr. Malmquist  
Thorir Snær Sigurjónsson

### Executive Producers

Lene Ingemann  
Tivi Magnusson  
Susanne Marian  
and  
Prof. Dr. Klaus Keil  
Thorfinnur Omarsson  
Lucas Schmidt  
Michael Schmidt-Ospach  
Paul Trijbits  
Vinca Wiedemann

### Co-Producer

Sol Gatti-Pascual

### Director

Dagur Kári

### Director of Photography

Rasmus Videbæk

### Script

Dagur Kári

### Editor

Daniel Dencik

### Music

slowblow

### Sound Design

Pétur Einarsson

### Set Design

Jón Steinar Ragnarsson

### Costume Design

Linda B. Árnadóttir  
Tanja Dehmel

### Hair and Make up

Frida Metúsalemsdóttir

