

MY FATHERS' DAUGHTER

A FILM BY EGIL PEDERSEN

OFFICIAL SELECTION

tiff

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL 2024



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KEY FACTS

ORIGINAL TITLE	Biru Unjárga
COUNTRIES & YEAR	Norway/Sweden/Finland 2024
LENGTH	78 min.
FORMAT	4k, 16:9
LANGUAGES	Sámi, Norwegian, English, Danish (with English subtitles)
TAGS	Modern Family, Small Town, Teenage Life, High School, Sami
WRITER & DIRECTOR	Egil Pedersen
PRODUCERS	Mathis Ståle Mathisen, Pål Røed, Aleksander Olai Korsnes
CAST	Sarah Olaussen Eira, Ingá Elisá Påve Idivuoma, Aslat Mahtte Gaup, Sara Sofia Mienna, Amund Lode, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau
WORLD PREMIERE	Toronto International Film Festival 2024 - Discovery Program



LOGLINE

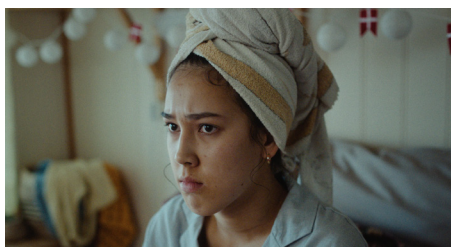
Egil Pedersen's delightful feature debut follows the wistful teenage Elvira as she discovers the truth about her father's identity.

SYNOPSIS

Elvira, a confident Sámi* teenager, firmly believes that her mother conceived her at a Danish fertility clinic. She often daydreams about her father, envisioning him as a charismatic movie star. However, her world is turned upside down when her real biological father unexpectedly steps into her life. Set against the breathtaking backdrop of Norway's northernmost region, this family film features quirky dialogues, a captivating female protagonist, and an unforgettable cameo by Nicolaj Coster-Waldau.

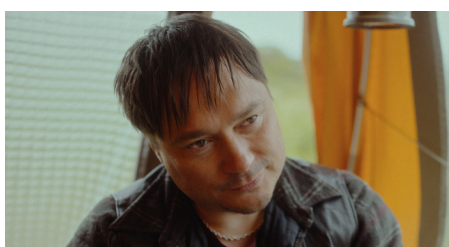
** The Sámi are the traditionally Sámi-speaking Indigenous peoples inhabiting the region of Sápmi, which today encompasses large northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and of the Kola Peninsula in Russia.*

CAST



Sarah Olaussen Eira as Elvira

Sámi actress Sarah Olaussen Eira, here making her film debut, was born and raised in Alta. Before she got the part of Elvira, she was already experienced in singing, dancing and stage performance. Currently in high school studying music, she has already been cast in other film projects since *My Fathers' Daughter*.



Aslat Mahtte Gaup as Terje

Aslat Mahtte Gaup is a Sámi actor based in Guovdageaidnu. When he is not filming, Aslat works as a reindeer herder. Previous titles include TV drama series *Saving the Fucking Planet* and Nils Gaup's feature *The Kautokeino Rebellion*.



Ingá Elisá Påve Idivuoma as Beate

Ingá Elisa Påve Idivuoma is an interdisciplinary artist whose skills include acting, yoiking/singing, duodji (traditional Sámi handcraft) and visual art. She started dancing as a child and then continued with theatre and acting. Ingá studied at the Sámi University of Applied Sciences and gained a masters art degree in Duodji, Design and Art. In addition to her acting career, she is employed by Dáiddadállu, the Sámi art network.



Nicolaj-Coster Waldau as Himself

Danish actor, producer and screenwriter Nikolaj Coster-Waldau graduated from the Danish National School of Theatre in 1993. His breakthrough performance was his role in the Danish film *Nightwatch* (1994). Since then he has appeared in numerous films in his Scandinavia and Europe in general, including *Headhunters* (2011) and *A Thousand Times Good Night* (2013). In 2001, he began his U.S. career in Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down*. Since April 2011, Coster-Waldau has played Jaime Lannister in the HBO hit series *Game of Thrones*.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The film *My Fathers' Daughter* (Biru Unjárga) continues my satirical exploration of identity, which I previously achieved success within the short film *Koftepolitiet* (Indigenous Police).

As a child, teenager, and young adult, I struggled with my Sámi identity. I didn't feel fully accepted as Sámi among other Sámi people, and my Sámi appearance and identity were sometimes burdensome when interacting with Norwegians. However, once I finally accepted that I was good enough to be both a Sámi and a Sámi filmmaker, I embarked on a long process to understand what kind of Sámi filmmaker I wanted to become.

My firsthand experience of the complexities of having a minority identity, combined with my sense of humor, led me to become a Sámi satirist. I aim to tell stories about minority identity in ways that audiences haven't seen before. Through humor, I want to portray the absurdities of being a minority. Much of what I share is inspired by my own experiences and real-life events I've heard from others.

In *My Fathers' Daughter* (Biru Unjárga) I return to my childhood paradise and the village where my mother grew up. Unjárga–Nesseby is a small Sámi coastal community in northeastern Norway, characterized by its unique environment and natural beauty, which make the story both personal and distinctive.

Egil Pedersen



EGIL PEDERSEN

Writer and Director

Born in Tromsø in 1976, Egil Pedersen graduated as a film director from The Norwegian Film School in 2002. He has directed 18 music videos, 15 shorts, several commercials, and corporate films.

His latest short film, the satirical comedy Koftepolitiet (Indigenous Police) created much public debate in the Sami community. My Fathers' Daughter (Biru unjárga) is his feature film debut, both as a director and screenwriter.

FILMOGRAPHY

Biru Unjárga (My Fathers' Daughter, 2024, teenage/family, 78min)

Koftepolitiet (Indigenous Police, 2021, comedy, 12 min) - Best short Film/Nuuk International Film Festival 2023

Fávru speadjalis (The handsome in the mirror, 2020, horror, 5 min)

Guollesáгат (What we talk about when we talk about fish, 2018, comedy/drama, 13 min)

Nieiddaš ja guollečik?a (Girl with a fish necklace, 2017, drama, 13 min)

Giksašuvvon ealli (The afflicted animal, 2015, drama, 15 min)

Ealli guođđá joavkkus (Leaving the herd, 2013, art film, 5 min)

Outcast in the mirror (2011, drama, 5 min)



A CONVERSATION WITH THE DIRECTOR

EGIL PEDERSEN

What inspired you to create *My Fathers' Daughter* and how did you come up with the idea for the film?

Several ideas inspired me. Many years ago, I spoke with a dear friend who, like me, is from a small village. She said, 'In small villages, a stranger can suddenly put up a tent in your backyard.'

This sentence reminded me of something familiar in the small places I know. I pondered who this person could be, the one who put a tent in a garden. That's when the idea for the film was born. In an early version, the film was a supernatural thriller, but my regular script consultant helped me shape the story in a tone that's closer to me — a drama told with a lot of humour. The humour around identity in the film is strongly inspired by actual quotes I've heard in real life or that have been retold by others. Several of these quotes ended up as lines in the film.

Elvira's journey resonates with themes of identity, belonging, and acceptance: She feels like an outsider. How does this connect to your own experiences growing up as a Sámi?

I always knew that I was Sámi, but as a child, I never felt good enough to be a real Sámi among other Sámi people. Later, as a teenager, I experienced racially-motivated violence because I looked like a Sámi. When I graduated from The Norwegian Film School, I didn't think I could be a Sámi filmmaker — I considered myself a Northern Norwegian filmmaker. Around 2010, the Sámi film community, represented by the International Sámi Film Institute (at that time still a film centre), embraced me as part of their community. During the 2010s, I slowly transformed with doubt and hesitation into a Sámi filmmaker.

Initially unsure of what kind of Sámi stories I could tell in films, I eventually realized that my own story of doubt and feelings of inferiority about my identity was a goldmine for film ideas. All these years, I witnessed and was told a lot of absurd and funny stories about how people deal with minority identity issues. My latest short film, *Koftepolitiet* (Indigenous Police), an identity satire, compresses all my experiences into 12 minutes. *My Fathers' Daughter* continues the tone and humour I developed in this short film.

Could you share any personal experiences or cultural influences that shaped your storytelling?

I grew up in a small village 50 kilometre (31 miles) from the nearest movie theatre, so I only watched maybe four or five films in the cinema before I was 16. Despite this, I still longed for films and watched as much as I could on video. When I watched *Twin Peaks* as a teen, I was shocked at how a TV series that was confusing and mysterious could be so intriguing. I fell in love with the characters, the mystery, the romantic parts, the horror, the music, *Twin Peaks* as a place, and cherry pie. I believe the mix of a serious story with absurd elements in *Twin Peaks* has had a huge impact on my way of telling stories. People can be silly — it's a part of life — so I create characters who act in this way. Other filmmakers who have inspired me in my career include Lars von Trier, Adam McKay, Jason Reitman, Ruben Östlund, Ulrich Seidl, Danny Boyle, Paulo Sorrentino, Nicolas Winding Refn, and two Norwegian filmmakers, Gunhild Enger and Even Hafnor who have made some really great and funny short films. Some of them have inspired me visually, some in terms of tone and characters, and some in all aspects.

When I was a teenager, my favourite actor was Arnold Schwarzenegger, especially for his roles in *Terminator 2* and *Total Recall*. I had a tough childhood with a lot of bullying, so I had this fantasy that Arnold would come and fix my life — kind of like Elvira in the film, who also dreams about a famous Hollywood actor. This part of the film was inspired by my teenage fantasy.

How important was it for you to authentically represent Sámi culture in your feature debut? How will the audience relate, especially those unfamiliar with Sámi culture?

I believe it is important that all the actors have Sámi as their mother tongue, so the Sámi-speaking audience will connect to the story. I wanted to make a film set in a village where the traditional Sámi way of life, including reindeer-herding doesn't exist. It's a village where there are Sámi-speaking people, but many don't speak Sámi at all. Therefore, for the sake of authenticity, the journalist, the police woman, and the guards at the concert speak Norwegian. I believe people will understand enough of the story to be engaged, and the Sámi element will pique their curiosity. The story deals with universal themes and has many elements from our present day. I believe this film will be understood and loved by people around the world.



Did you encounter any challenges in portraying Sámi life and traditions on screen? Or did you encounter any challenges in general?

I didn't want to make a story that was rooted in Sámi traditions or the Sámi way of living. The characters were going to speak Sámi, and being a Sámi myself, I knew a story about identity would include many aspects of Sámi identity. Since they were based on my own experiences or things I had read or heard from others, I felt it was authentic. So the Sámi part of the story came about naturally. The biggest challenges came from non-Sámi people in the film industry, who have strong ideas about what a Sámi story should be like, even though they know little about Sápmi and Sámi people. It's a strange mix of ignorance and ego.

Besides traditional culture, there are also many contemporary influences noticeable in the Sámi community Elvira is part of. There are social media influencers, newly composed families, and Elvira is raised by her mother and her lesbian girlfriend. How important was it for you to also have these elements as part of the story?

One of the key elements from day one in the development of the story was to make a modern-day narrative, where the characters are Sámi, but none of them are connected to the traditional way of Sámi living. In a focus group meeting with kids in Unjárga, we quickly learned that they were all quite open to queer people. Because of this, Elvira's antagonist in school was changed in the script from a homophobic girl to a social media influencer who as a supporter of queer people also wants to capitalise on Elvira's lesbian mother.

The Norwegian Film Institute's Neo and audience insights — in a few words: what are they and how crucial were they for your feature debut?

Neo is The Norwegian Film Institute's programme that finances debut films for talented directors. Without Neo, the film wouldn't have been made. After many years of rejections from The Norwegian Film Institute, we were accepted by Neo. Also important was the Publikum audience insight programme that uses Artificial Intelligence, analysed by people, and in combination with interviews with potential audiences. All this is aimed at expanding the potential of the story. For me, I became more daring in how I used political and other references from the real world.

How does it feel that your feature debut is to receive its world premiere in Toronto, Canada – a country with distinct indigenous peoples with unique histories, languages, cultural traditions and spiritual beliefs.

I've been to Toronto twice before, screening short films at the world's largest indigenous film festival, imagineNATIVE. Witnessing the strong indigenous communities there inspired me and significantly influenced my own identity journey. Learning about the indigenous people of Canada has helped me to feel pride and come to peace with how I see myself as a Sámi.

And finally... What would you describe as the main characteristics of a Sámi? And of a Sámi filmmaker?

Sámi people have diverse characteristics. Some maintain a strong connection to traditional ways of living, while others live in cities and have ordinary jobs. Language fluency varies: some speak Sámi fluently, while others don't speak it at all. However, all Sámi people share the common experience of being a minority, which influences how they perceive themselves. They are something different from the majority of people living in their country.



ABOUT THE PRODUCERS

Mathis Ståle Mathisen

Mathis Ståle Mathisen grew up in northern-Norway, but currently lives in Oslo. He toured Japan and Europe as a guitarist in a heavy metal band, then started working as a DOP before founding his production company, Rein Film. More recently he began composing music for film. Mathis has produced and co-produced several Norwegian and international shorts, documentaries, TV dramas and feature films.

Pål Røed

Producer Pål Røed has made films as a professional in Norway since he graduated from film school in 2006. He is currently focusing on juggling projects for his Norwegian company Paasan, as well as establishing a new branch: Fysaan in Denmark.

Aleksander Olai Korsnes

Aleksander Olai Korsnes is from the Arctic town of Kirkenes in northern-Norway, where he grew up close to the border between Finland and Russia. Co-founder of Rein Film and with a passion for the Arctic, he has produced and co-produced international and domestic TV-dramas, feature films, documentaries and shorts.



INTERNATIONAL SALES

PLUTO FILM

Pluto Film is a Berlin-based world sales and festival distribution company committed to engaging global cinema. We are devoted to bringing quality feature films to the international market and audiences. Our focus is on arthouse and cross-over films, especially those by emerging talents. But we also have a passion for family films and elevated genre.

With a boutique approach, we add around eight titles to our lineup each year, allowing us to give each film the attention and care it deserves. We then navigate the world beyond the window system by finding the right place and time for our films at festivals, in theaters, on TV, and online. Our objective is to circulate our films globally and make them available across all possible distribution channels.

Pluto Film takes an innovative and individual approach to distribution. We work closely with filmmakers and producers to position their films effectively. Our dedicated team possesses extensive knowledge of the market. Each team member brings a unique perspective from a different part of the industry, along with a strong international network of contacts cultivated over the years.

Please contact us to receive a screener link of MY FATHERS' DAUGHTER:

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CREDITS

WRITER & DIRECTOR

Egil Pedersen

CAST

Sarah Olaussen Eira, Ingá Elisá Pålve Idivuoma, Aslat Mahtte Gaup,
Sara Sofia Mienna, Amund Lode, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau

DOP

Anna Myking

EDITING

Thomas Grotmol, Toril Strøm, Geir Ørnholt

PRODUCTION DESIGN

Emma Skoog

SOUND DESIGN

Johannes Dekko

SOUND MIX

Johannes Dekko, Nils Viken

MUSIC

Remi Semshaug Langseth, Mathis Ståle Mathisen

PRODUCERS

Mathis Ståle Mathisen, Pål Røed, Aleksander Olai Korsnes

PRODUCTION COMPANIES

Rein Film, Paasan

CO-PRODUCERS

Joonas Berghäll, Svante Tidholm, Sandra Warg

CO-PROD. COMPANIES

Oktober (Finland), Bautafilm (Sweden), Filmpool Nord (Sweden)

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The International Sámi Film Institute, Norwegian Film Institute (NFI),
Nordic Film & TV fund, Filmfond Nord, Filmpool Nord, Sámi Parlia
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