

A movie poster for the film 'The Reef'. The background is a dramatic, high-contrast scene of a shark attack. The water is dark and turbulent, with a shark's head and open mouth visible on the left side, lunging towards the viewer. The sky is a mix of dark, stormy clouds and a bright, golden light source, possibly the sun setting or rising, which creates a strong silhouette effect on the water and the shark. The overall color palette is dominated by dark blues, greys, and a bright, warm orange-gold light.

THE

A FILM BY PHILLIP DONNELLON

REEF

## KEY FACTS

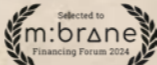
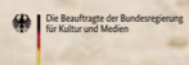
**Director:** Phillip Donnellon  
**Screenwriter:** Jytte-Merle Böhrnsen  
**DOP:** Daniel Lindholm  
**Production Designer:** Kirsi Tali  
**Produced by:** Eyrie Entertainment (Germany)  
Split Second Films (Ireland)  
Stellar Film (Estonia)  
Tack Films (Finland)  
**Genre:** Mystery / Adventure  
**Target audience:** Family, 10+  
**Format:** Feature Film, 100 min.  
**Shooting language:** English  
**Estimated delivery:** Autumn 2027

## MOOD TEASER

<https://vimeo.com/eyrieentertainment/thereef>



Development supported by



## LOGLINE

When Kath (14) and her brother Mika (12) head off in a campervan for a summer vacation with their mother, they are actually looking to escape the dark shadow that a recent tragic accident has cast over them. But adventure awaits the siblings in “Land’s End” where they meet an eccentric Girl who lives in an abandoned hotel and a wild gang of children on the beach who are involved in some kind of territorial battle. Only by joining forces can Kath and Mika help end this war and unravel the secret that lies behind why these children appear somehow stranded between two worlds.

## THE NOVEL

Based on the Finnish novel “Karikko” by Seita Vuorela.



## AWARDS

2013 Winner of the Finnish Literary Export Prize  
2013 Winner of the first Nordic Council Literature Prize for Children and Young Adults



## SYNOPSIS

THE REEF is an adventure mystery story about siblings KATH (14) and MIKA (12) and their mother, NORA (35), as they set off on a summer holiday in an old campervan. But the painful memory of a recent tragic accident involving Mika's best friend, who was also Kath's first love, overshadows everything. The family arrives at the run-down seaside campground called "Land's End", a mysterious place where the sun never sets.

Shortly after arriving, an argument erupts, which sees the children leave camp to explore the surroundings separately. Kath discovers a large old and derelict house called the "Hotel Horizon", which is hidden in the forest, and when she enters the abandoned building, our story takes a fantastic course. Within its gloomy interior, Kath runs into the hotel's sole inhabitant, a mysterious GIRL (15). Kath and this eccentric character become friends, and the neglected hotel their special refuge. When Mika meets the WRECKS, a gang of wild children who have built a fortress near the beach, their feral ways reignite his spirit for adventure. After proving himself worthy, Mika is initiated into the Wrecks' inner sanctum. But his new friends fear the strange Girl. It is rumoured that she is a witch who lured one of them to the hotel, who has never been seen since.

When Kath disappears from camp one morning, having left a note saying "not to worry", Mika indeed worries. He believes he has to save his sister from the Girl, and he immediately proceeds to round up his closest friends among the Wrecks who help him locate the Hotel Horizon. But everything turns upside down when Mika jumps through a broken window; he lands in another world. The Hotel Horizon is, for Mika, a mystical place which initially overwhelms him. The Girl reveals to the siblings that she is the Guardian of the

Horizon and has the task of receiving and guiding children who arrive at this "last shore". She explains that the Wrecks are these children, but they are caught between worlds because of their unofficial leader, MEDUSA (15), who is holding them back. The children need a copper coin to cross the horizon to freedom as a magical payment. Without this coin, the children are trapped on the beach forever. They lose their memories and turn into restless ghosts. The Girl informs them that Medusa has stolen these coins. She begs Mika for his cooperation as he is the only one who can help her and Kath save the Wrecks from Medusa. Initially, Mika thinks this is all just children's play gotten out of hand, but when the most trustworthy of the Wrecks, little JOSHUA (8), confirms his worst fears, Mika realises what has to happen.

A race against time begins, in which Kath and Mika must turn everything around for the better in a parallel world between life and death. With the help of Mika's closest Wrecks friends, they succeed in helping the Girl defeat Medusa and his allies in a final climactic and cliff-top battle. The coins are located, the Wrecks are freed, and the Girl guides them across the horizon where they can continue their stories.

But before Mika is ready to leave, he asks Kath, "What is my story?" and she confirms that it was he who died in the tragic accident preceding their trip and not his friend. Kath's revelation concludes her story about her final summer with her little brother, a story she had to tell to come to terms with his death, a story she needed to tell to be ready to finally return home.



## DIRECTOR



**PHILLIP DONNELLON** was born in Melbourne, Australia, where he studied at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, where he also met his first mentor Richard Franklin. The collaboration outside the university intensified and Phillip soon became an integral part of Franklin's film sets. The guidance of his second mentor Jan Sardi led to his first films being successfully introduced within the Australian film industry.

Phillip then continued to develop creatively as a film director in the environment of various production companies and gained international recognition with his short films that were presented in over a hundred film festivals worldwide, including in the official competition at Cannes. Phillip's films are about characters who can find beauty even in bleak and seemingly hopeless situations. His personal mission is to give a voice to the voiceless through his films. As an artist, Phillip fights with perseverance and passion to make meaningful content accessible to the masses through his films. Phillip moved from Australia to Germany in 2012 for love. Starting anew, Phillip's films now, as then, are universal stories that are timeless, poignant and speak from the heart.

Showreel: [www.vimeo.com/912364373](http://www.vimeo.com/912364373)



## FILMOGRAPHY (SELECTED)

### Bring'Em Back! (2010)

Documentary, 56 min

- ★ Melbourne Intern. Film Festival (2010)

### Cheap Seats (2005)

Shortfilm, 13 min

[www.vimeo.com/139868507](http://www.vimeo.com/139868507)

- ★ Cinema des Antipodes, Cannes (2007)
- ★ Festival Kolibri, BOL (2006)
- ★ St Kilda Film Festival (2005)

### Bird in the Wire (2001)

Short Film, 2 min

[www.vimeo.com/912495856](http://www.vimeo.com/912495856)

- 🏆 Festival de Cannes, Short Film Palme d'Or nomination (2001)
- 🏆 AFI Award, Best Cinematography in a Non-feature Film (2001)
- 🏆 Australian Cinematographers Society Awards (2001)
- ★ Tiburon International Film Festival, USA (2001)
- ★ Venice International Film Festival, IT (2001)
- ★ Sao Paulo International Film Festival, BRA (2001)

- ★ Aspen Shortsfest, USA (2001)
- ★ Tampere International Short Film Festival, FIN (2001)
- ★ Uppsala International Short Film Festival, SWE (2001)
- ★ Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, CZE (2001)
- ★ Interfilm Berlin (2001)
- ★ Flickerfest International Short Film Festival, Best Short Film (2000)
- 🏆 Runner up Best Picture – Cinema Sprints 2000 (2000)
- 🏆 Runner up Best Film – NESCAFE short film awards (2000)

### Return Trip (1999)

Short Film, 13min

[www.vimeo.com/910689636](http://www.vimeo.com/910689636)

- ★ St. Kilda Film Festival (2000)
- ★ CineRail International Festival Trains on Film, FR (2000)
- ★ Interfilm Berlin (2000)
- ★ Melbourne International Film Festival (1999)

## SCREENWRITER



**JYTTE-MERLE BÖHRNSEN** is an award-winning German screenwriter born in Hamburg. Looking back on 35 years of experience as an actress on stage, TV and film, she has gained a lot of knowledge about storytelling. She studied acting, singing and screenwriting at the Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute in New York as well as philosophy and literature at the Freie Universität Berlin and made her directorial debut in 2013. The multi-award-winning feature film MOUNTAIN MIRACLE (2017) was the first film for a young audience for which she co-wrote the screenplay, followed by THE PATH (2022), both of which won the German Film Award in the Best Children's Film category and the Golden Sparrow Award. In 2023, writer Rüdiger Bertram and Jytte also received the Kindertiger Award for the best screenplay for THE PATH.

## SCREENPLAYS (SELECTED)

### The Path (2022)

Feature film, dir. Tobias Wiemann, screenplay together with Rüdiger Bertram  
Eyrie Entertainment / Warner Bros.

🏆 Kindertiger – Best Screenplay for Children's Film (2023)

🏆 German Film Award – Best Children's Film (2022)

🏆 BUFF International Film Festival – The City of Malmö Children's Film Award (2022)

### Mountain Miracle (2017)

Feature film, dir. Tobias Wiemann, screenplay together with Natja Brunckhorst  
Lieblingsfilm / Farbfilm Verleih

🏆 Kindertiger – Best Screenplay for Children's Film (2018)

🏆 German Film Award – Best Children's Film (2018)

🏆 Oulu International Children's And Youth Film Festival – Best Feature (2017)

🏆 Int. Filmfest Kids Zlín – Golden Slipper – Best Feature Film For Children (2017)

## DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY



**DANIEL LINDHOLM** is a Finnish-Swedish, internationally awarded cinematographer, including Best Cinematography at the European Independent Film Festival ÉCU and a Silver Award at the London International Awards (LIA). He has also been twice nominated for Cinematographer of the Year by the Finnish Society of Cinematographers. His feature credits include SUBSERVENCE (Millennium Media), starring Megan Fox, as well as THE TWIN starring Teresa Palmer and the genre hit LAKE BODOM, praised by The Hollywood Reporter and Variety. His work also includes the Finnish box office hit REUNION as well as the TV series ICEBREAKER.

## PRODUCTION DESIGNER



**KIRSI TALI** is an Estonian production designer based in Tallinn. She holds a BA and MA in Scenography from the Estonian Academy of Arts and has been working across film, television, and commercials for over a decade. Her recent credits include LIFE AND LOVE (Taska Film), QUIET LIFE by Alexandros Avranas, THE SWEDISH TORPEDO, and the TV series DEADWIND (Netflix/YLE) and A GOOD FAMILY. In 2018, she co-founded Set Set Studio, where she works as a production designer alongside international collaborators. Kirsi is also active as a lecturer and mentor and is a member of several professional film and authors' associations in Estonia and Finland.



A young boy with dark hair and a serious expression is looking out from a makeshift shelter. The shelter is made of branches and fabric, with a white cloth partially covering the entrance. The background is dark and blurry, suggesting an outdoor setting at night or in low light.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE


My two older sisters and I moved around a lot when I was a kid. We spent more of our lives in coastal campgrounds across all our collective holidays than in any of our homes. When you move around like that, you learn to be quick on your feet and adapt fast. In 2014, I met Seita Vuorela, the author of the award-winning children's book "Karikko", on which our story is based. She could see that I'd been cheeky as a kid, just like the children she'd written into her story. That's why we got on straight away, and I fell in love with her book. Although we're pitching our project as a mystery adventure film full of wonder and humour, the central underlying theme is grief and how to deal with it. The characters in "Karikko" and all of Seita's books deal with loss and bullying with ingenious dexterity. When I first read her stories, I was struck by the kids' very matter-of-fact language and dry humour. It reminded me of terminally ill children I'd met one time in the cancer ward at the Royal Melbourne Children's Hospital.

The children that inspired Seita most (apart from her own) were Russian. She worked as a teacher for young and troubled children in depressed communities across the Finnish border. Here, she found that the children were extra resourceful in their fight against the darkness. My body of work to date has focused on themes of transformation and renewal with characters who can find the silver lining in ugly situations, so for me, her stories were the perfect fit. The most significant and rewarding shift we made to the original work was turning the big brother into an older sister. From then on, I identified much better with how the siblings interacted. We've migrated the voices of the children from the book into the screenplay so audiences can enjoy this refreshingly dry, ironic humour that is also blended with a diverse mix of phrasing that reflects a group of children that come not only from all around the world but as well from various times in history.

In some cases, in our version of the story, these kids have 100s of years separating their lived experiences. For example, a child from the 1800s says with one kind of accent, "You should be ashamed of yourself!". In contrast, Mika says with another accent, "You should try a dating app", which generates confusion among the characters and mystery for the audience. Ugly yet somehow beautiful locations such as grand abandoned villas and disused 19th-century industrial ruins will be key to creating a distinctive cinematic signature with THE REEF. We will flip the motif of decaying environments to places of transformation. For example, the derelict Hotel Horizon, a centrepiece of the film, is in a state of decay (real world). However, in Kath's imagination, the audience experiences the hotel as a place of adventure, remembering, restoring, and celebrating.

An intricately constructed clifftop fort made from recycled rubbish hidden at the edge of a forest will look like something straight out of a fairytale. Sailing boats, which are only functional because of the junk that holds them together, manifest Kath's imagination as she works to piece together a logic to her now broken world. The life of the film will be the constellation of quirky and eccentric children who will represent a broad spectrum of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, race and gender. A commonality among the children is that their hair and teeth will be bleached from salt water, and their skin will be freckled and scared from accidents or prolonged sun exposure.

All the team behind this project and I care a great deal about the health and well-being of our young people and aim to present images of strong, resilient characters that children can identify with. THE REEF would have been a film I'd have significantly benefited from watching as a child.

A view through an ornate, dark metal archway. The archway has intricate scrollwork and a central crest. In the background, a large, multi-story building with a red roof and several windows is visible. The building appears to be in a state of decay or abandonment. The scene is set in a grassy area with some trees and bushes in the foreground.

## PRODUCTION COMPANIES

**Eyrie Entertainment** develops and produces arthouse and crossover films for the German and international market. The company was founded by Daniel Ehrenberg in Berlin in 2018 and is now based in Bonn. Alongside Daniel Ehrenberg, Eyrie Entertainment is run by Development Producer Angélique Saad and Head of Production Christine Rau. At Eyrie Entertainment we have a great passion for good stories that are entertaining and have something to say about contemporary society. We seek to establish close collaboration with the most exciting, new screenwriting and directing talent to create outstanding pieces of cinematic art together. Our films are made to attract broad audiences and have the potential to reach far beyond our home territory.

In 2022 Eyrie Entertainment's first production was released by Warner Bros. in German cinemas: *THE PATH* a moving WWII adventure/drama starring Julius Weckauf, Volker Bruch and Nonna Cardoner and directed by Tobias Wiemann. The film opened the Zlín Film Festival, travelled festivals worldwide, and won several awards, among them the City of Malmö Children's Film Award at BUFF Malmö, two Golden Sparrow Awards at German Children's Media Festival "Goldener Spatz" and the German Film Award for Best Children's Film. Eyrie's second feature, Sabin Dorohoi's *CLARA*, a Romanian-German co-production in collaboration with ZDF/ARTE premiered at FilmFestival Cottbus in 2023 and won the Audience Award. Currently in post-production are the dystopian drama *MORGEN WAR KRIEG* as well as the German-Austrian co-production *MAN LEBT, WEIL MAN GEBOREN IST* by award-winning director Maria Speth.



**Split Second Films** is a Film and media production company based in Cork City, Ireland and the Midlands in the UK, and it has produced a catalogue of award-winning short films, live-action and animations. Highlights range from Peter Baynton's short animation *OVER THE HILL*, which qualified for Academy consideration in 2009, and the company's debut feature film Alex Chandon's horror/comedy *INBRED* (2012), which won a raft of technical and audience awards and was sold worldwide by Arclight Films. In 2023 the company produced the BFI-funded short film *TICKER*, which was shot on film and streamed on UK's Channel 4 for twelve months.

**Stellar Film** is one of the leading production companies in Estonia, established in 2015 and run by Evelin Penttilä and Johanna Maria Paulson. Our films have been shown at numerous festivals around the world, such as Cannes, TIFF, Sundance, Hot Docs, Palm Springs IFF, Black Nights IFF, Camerimage IFF, Fantastic Fest and many others. Films for young audiences and families have always been of high importance to us, as they play a crucial role in the development of upcoming generations. Jaak Kilmi's feature film *CHRISTMAS IN THE JUNGLE* (2020) was a box office success in Estonia and *THE SLEEPING BEAST* (2022) won multiple awards (Junior Jury at Schlingel FF, Audience Award at Film' On FF, Best Scriptwriter and Best Editor At EFTA).

**Tack Films** based in Helsinki, Finland, was born with the aim of producing well-scripted films and series of high artistic quality. We enjoy both avant-garde art house and more commercial productions, and we have a particular soft spot for comedy. Our projects include the family film *THE HULLABALOO!* (2022), the tv-series *HALLN* (2025), *DIY DETECTIVES* (2023), *TWIN ENERGY* (2023), *THE HIRED HAND* (2023), *MONDAY* (2019) and *JÖNNELI THE HAPPY TROLL* (2020), as well as over 10 award winning short films including *THE CEILING* (2017), which won a Special mention at the Cannes Film Festival 2017. In 2026, the historical dark comedy *THE KIDNAPPING OF A PRESIDENT* premiered at the International Film Festival Rotterdam.



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