

A MAN CALLED OVE

SWEDEN

HANNES HOLM



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A Man Called Ove tells the familiar story of the curmudgeonly old man whose grumpy life is brightened by forces beyond his control. These forces take the guise of a much younger person who provides a sense of purpose for the old hero. A film like this rises or falls not only with its central performance, but also with its ability to engage the viewer's emotions in a credible, honest fashion. Movies like this tend to get dismissed as "manipulative" because audience sympathy for the protagonist is at least partially elicited by flashbacks to a litany of tragic or unfair past events. But all movies are manipulative by default; the effectiveness of that manipulation is the more valid measurement to inspect. On that scale, *A Man Called Ove* is a morbidly funny and moving success.

Adapting Frederick Backman's Swedish best seller, writer/director Hannes Holm doesn't veer too far from the storytelling structure we've come to expect. Instead, he tweaks expectations with the way he presents the material, and his grip on the film's tricky, tragicomic tone is masterful. For example, several flashbacks are cleverly presented as the "life flashing before one's eyes" moments triggered by the suicide attempts of Ove (Rolf Lassgård). Ove is a widower whose daily visits to his recently deceased wife's gravesite end with his verbal promise to join her in the afterlife. His failures of self-annihilation are due more to bad timing than botched attempts — he is constantly interrupted by neighbors or some distracting event going on in his housing complex.

Priding himself on his reliability, Ove feels compelled to stop killing himself to address each interruption.

Keep in mind that the black humor in this situation doesn't arise from any mockery of Ove's pain over missing his spouse. That is presented as real, understandable pain. Instead, the humor comes from Ove's stubbornness as a creature of habit. Perpetually enforcing neighborhood rules nobody cares about nor adheres to, Ove can't resist the opportunity to scold those who violate them. Yet, for all his crabbiness, there's a level of selflessness inherent in Ove's character, a trait he finds infuriating yet he begrudgingly accepts. His wife, Sonja, played as a young woman in the flashbacks by Ida Engvoll, sees this in the younger version of Ove (Filip Berg), and the much older Ove acknowledges it after much bitching and griping. It's almost as if Sonja is sending him interruptions from beyond the grave just so he can have an excuse to complain to her like he's done every day since her passing. This compulsive adherence to routine will keep Ove distracted.

As Ove, Lassgård gives one of the year's best performances. He's well supported by the other actors (and the aforementioned cat), but this is a rich, complex performance that is both funny and moving. It would have been easy to just let Ove coast by on his amusing grouchiness, but Lassgård lets us see so deeply under that protective exterior. We feel as if we've walked a mile in Ove's shoes and absorbed his catharsis as our own

Odie Henderson, RogerEbert.com

WRITERS: Hannes Holm & Fredrik Backman **CINEMATOGRAPHY:** Göran Hallberg **MUSIC:** Gaute Storaas

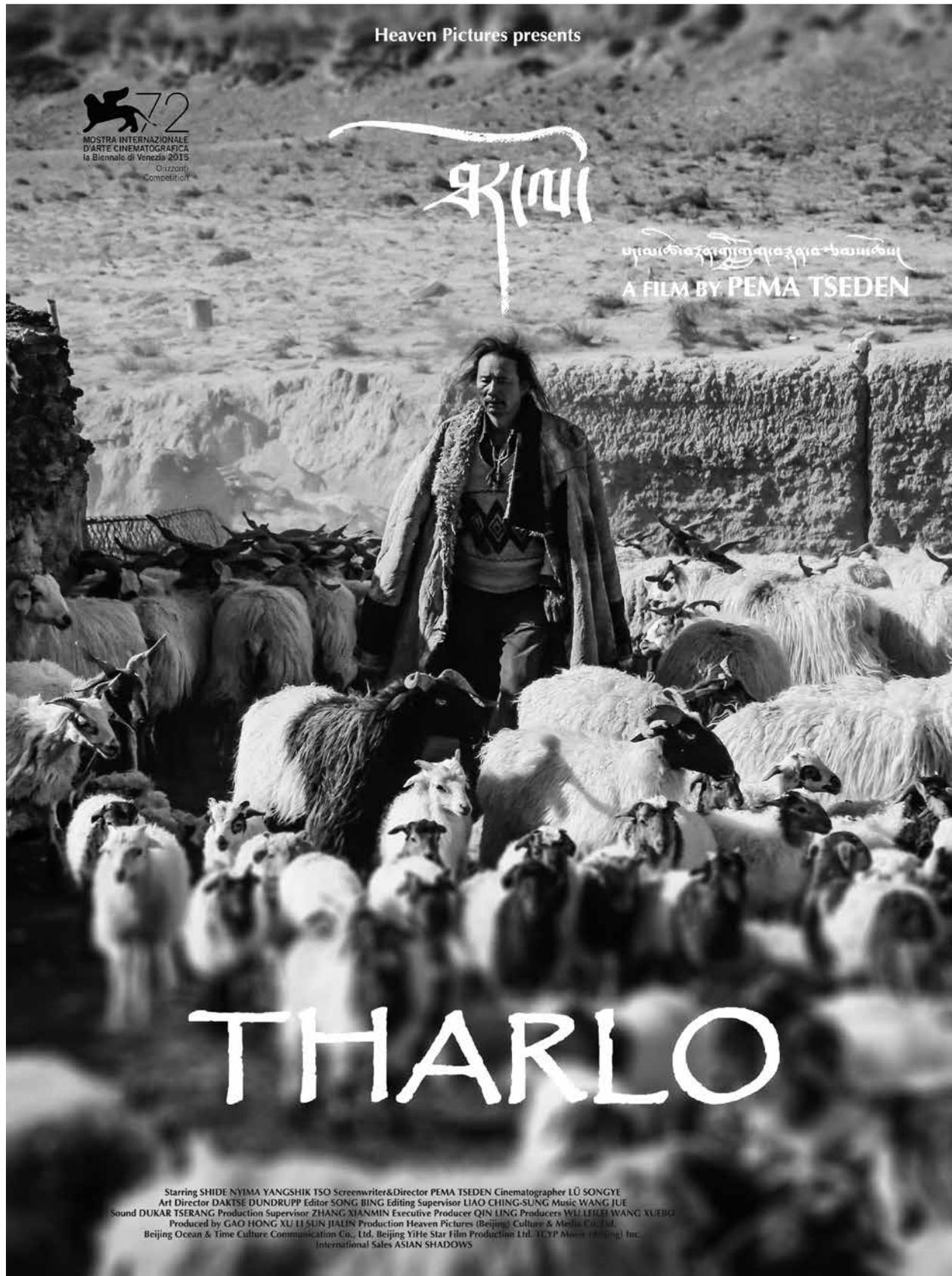
CAST: Ove Rolf Lassgård | Parvaneh Bohar Pars | *Unga Ove (Young Ove)* Filip Berg | *Sonja* Ida Engvoli

VOTING FOR *THE HANDMAIDEN* A39 | B33 | C7 | D5 | E1 | Rating 81% | Attendance 92

Next screening | **Tharlo** | Tuesday 23 January 2018 8.00pm

'... a confrontation of old and new, of solitude and togetherness, of dreams and reality...'

Winchester Film Society Presents:



Tuesday 23 January 2018 8.00pm

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www.winchesterfilmsociety.co.uk