

DIRECTOR'S WORD

ALMOST 18 is a coming-of-age film about five guys from Helsinki as they are turning eighteen.

It's a film about fantasies, dreams, reality, rights and responsibilities and everything that reaching that magical age entails. It's a film about beautiful, sensitive, swearing, boasting young men who sometimes lose control and who believe that they know all there is to know about life. Their loved ones doubt their words, scold them, boss them around and criticize them while all these young men want is to be loved, accepted and treated equally by their families and friends. It's a film about young men whose parents are often no more mature than they are.

The film tells of typical single-parents and nuclear families who live in downtown Helsinki and have normal problems, normal sources of happiness and normal ways of coping. Suffering growing pains, these families come to the conclusion that their loved ones have been given to them for a reason and that they have to learn to live with them. It's a film about a time in life that's difficult for all involved but is also an important step in becoming independent – for the parents as well.

The film is based on my and my son's experiences from a few years ago. We witnessed these situations, and the settings are familiar to us. I used this to my advantage: I've known the boys cast in the main roles since they were little kids. For four of them, this was their first professional acting experience; one of them had played in a short film I'd made earlier. The boys were friends in real life, which was a big plus in making their scenes work. There are also seven professional actors in the film. Throughout the entire process of making this film, I made sure that the events are seen through the eyes of 17-year-old boys. My young actors changed the dialogue and the events so that they look authentic to a young viewer. The target audience for this film is ages 13–25 and parents of teenagers, from 36 years and up.

As the parent of a teenager, I worry about how my child is doing at school and his relationships with his friends. I wonder if he's drinking or doing drugs, where he spends his nights and whether or not I'm doing a good job as a parent... I wonder if he'll turn out to be a sane, decent citizen and happy person. I worry if he'll make it through his adolescence alive.

When you're almost 18, you know more about the world than your parents. You're wiser and better and you can achieve more than your parents; yet you might be afraid of the future and feel that you're not in control of every aspect of your life. For most people, those years are just a phase when you're more or less out of control. It's a phase when parents fear the worst and can barely remember what they were like at that age.

Maarit Lalli

SYNOPSIS

“There were five of us guys. We stuck together through thick and thin – most of the time. I think we all had normal families. Normal problems. Normal feelings. Nothing we couldn't overcome. And then one year, for some reason, everything started going really wrong.”

KARRI, 17. A car, Mom and the last driving lesson during which Mom wants to discuss some serious issues about life. PETE, 17, is worried about his girlfriend's well-being, as she had taken the abortion pill. ANDRÉ, 17, picks up his little brother from daycare once again because their mom is “working overtime.” AKSELI, 17, spends the weekend at his grandparents' and bumps into his alcoholic dad. JONI, 18, has a summer job at an amusement park as a wolf mascot, giving furry hugs to teenage girls. Glimpses into the lives of five young men turning 18 who can soon do anything they want.

CREW

Screenplay	Henrik Mäki-Tanila, Maarit Lalli
Director	Maarit Lalli
Producer	Maarit Lalli
Cinematography	Rauno Ronkainen, Jan Nyman, Harri Rätty
Sound Design	Pasi Peni
Stills	Rauno Ronkainen, Jan Nyman, Harri Rätty, Elina Manninen
Visualization	Maarit Lalli
Costume Design	Ihan Kohta Ensemble
Editor	Jenny Tervakari, Maarit Lalli
Music	Kepa Lehtinen
Production Support	The Finnish Film Foundation
Distributor in Finland	Nordisk Film

CAST

Henrik Mäki-tanila	Karri
Karim Al-Rifai	André
Anton Thompson Coon	Pete
Arttu Lähteenmäki	Akseli
Ben Thompson Coon	Joni
Mari Perankoski	André's mom
Elina Knihtilä	Karri's mom
Hannu-Pekka Björkman	Pete's dad
Tarja Heinula	Pete's mom
Niina Nurminen	Joni's mom
Mats Långbacka	Joni's stepdad
Ilari Johansson	Akseli's dad

