

# Sisu (film)

Sisu is a 2022 Finnish historical action thriller film, with considerable influences from the Spaghetti Westerns of Sergio Leone, which was written and directed by Jalmari Helander. The film stars Jorma Tommila, Aksel Hennie, Jack Doolan, Mimosa Willamo and Onni Tommila. Set during the Lapland War between Finland and Nazi Germany towards the end of World War II, a legendary Finnish Army commando turned gold prospector attempts to defend himself from being robbed and murdered by a Waffen-SS platoon led by an infamously brutal and corrupt officer. [5][6]

Originally, Helander was supposed to work on the science fiction comedy Jerry and Ms. Universe as his next project after Big Game, but the COVID-19 pandemic changed Helander's plan and he moved on to make  $Sisu.^{[7]}$  The film was shot in 2021 near the Nuorgam village in Utsjoki, Lapland [8][9][10][11] with a budget of about €6 million (\$6.5 million). [2] According to Helander, the 1982 film First Blood and the real-life Finnish military sniper Simo Häyhä, who fought against the Red Army, served as inspirations for the film. [12] Sony Pictures Worldwide Acquisitions acquired the film's worldwide distribution rights outside Nordic countries and then decided to team with Lionsgate **Films** release the film North to in America. [5][6][13][14][15]

*Sisu* debuted in the Midnight Madness series at the <u>Toronto International Film Festival</u> on September 9,  $2022.\frac{[14][16]}{[16]}$  The film was premiered in Finland on January 27, 2023. It was released in the United States on April 28, 2023 and received positive reviews from critics.  $\frac{[17][18]}{[18]}$ 

# **Plot**

In late 1944, during the <u>Lapland War</u>, Aatami Korpi lives alone with his horse and faithful <u>Bedlington Terrier</u> while he prospects in the <u>Lapland</u> wilderness. Aatami uncovers a rich gold deposit, where he collects a hefty amount of <u>nuggets</u> and heads towards <u>Rovaniemi</u>. Along the way, Aatami encounters a large <u>Waffen-SS</u> <u>platoon</u> led by <u>Obersturmführer</u> Bruno Helldorf. Helldorf is <u>destroying villages during their retreat</u> towards Norway and has taken several Finnish women captive. Helldorf takes little interest in Aatami, letting him pass. Aatami is soon accosted by a



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Directed by	Jalmari Helander	
Written by	Jalmari Helander	
Produced by	Petri Jokiranta	
Starring	Jorma Tommila	
	Aksel Hennie	
	Jack Doolan	
	Mimosa Willamo	
	Onni Tommila	
Cinematography	Kjell Lagerroos	
Edited by	Juho Virolainen	
Music by	Juri Seppä	
	Tuomas Wäinölä	
Production	Stage 6 Films	
companies	Subzero Film	
	Entertainment	
	Good Chaos	
Distributed by	Nordisk Film	
Release dates	9 September 2022	
	(TIFF)	

second platoon of SS soldiers who discover his saddlebags full of gold. They jeeringly decide to rob and execute him, but he swiftly kills them all. Alerted by the gunfire, Helldorf investigates and discovers the massacre and one of Aatami's gold nuggets.

Helldorf and his <u>tank</u> pursue Aatami to the edge of a <u>minefield</u>, where Aatami's horse is killed by a landmine. Gathering up his gold while Helldorf and his men watch, Aatami intentionally detonates another mine to make his escape. Several soldiers are sent after him, but are quickly blown up by mines. Helldorf

	27 January 2023 (Finland)	
Running time	91 minutes $^{[1]}$	
Country	Finland	
Languages	English	
	Finnish	
Budget	€6 million <sup>[a][2]</sup>	
Box office	\$14.3 million <sup>[3][4]</sup>	

orders two of the captive women ahead to ensure a clear path. After retrieving Aatami's <u>dog</u> tag, Helldorf's second-in-command Wolf learns over the radio of Aatami's past. After losing his family while fighting as a <u>Finnish Army commando</u> during the <u>Winter War</u>, the vengeful Aatami became the legendary "one-man death squad" whom <u>Joseph Stalin</u>'s <u>Red Army nicknamed <u>Koshchei</u> ("the Immortal"). Helldorf defies his orders to continue retreating in order to hunt down Aatami and steal the gold, explaining to Wolf that <u>Nazi</u> Germany has already lost the war, and they will need the gold to escape prosecution for war crimes.</u>

The German soldiers dispatch dogs to follow Aatami's trail. Aatami sends his own dog away before using petrol from one of the German trucks to cover his scent. However, the soldiers soon discover him and Aatami dives into a nearby lake. Helldorf sends three soldiers onto the lake in a boat, but Aatami kills two of them by slitting their throats underwater and breathes in the escaping air from their necks. The remaining German soldier attempts to flee, but is executed by Wolf. Aatami uses the soldier's body as a shield after reaching the riverbank and escapes. On the other side of the river, Aatami's dog is discovered by Helldorf.

Aatami discovers that <u>Rovaniemi</u> has been left in burning ruins and takes shelter in the remains of a petrol station. Helldorf sends Aatami's dog to find him, but with a lit <u>Stielhandgranate</u> attached to his collar. Aatami saves his dog but is knocked down and stunned when the grenade explodes. Helldorf, Wolf, and tank driver Schütze hang Aatami, taking the gold and leaving him for dead, but Aatami hooks his wounds onto protruding <u>rebar</u>, saving his life. Some time later, a pair of German pilots land in search of fuel. Aatami kills the engineer and forces the surviving pilot to fly him ahead of Helldorf's platoon.

Helldorf soon discovers the abandoned plane in their path with the pilot hanged by the same noose Wolf used on Aatami. As the convoy continues, Aatami climbs onto the truck holding the female captives, kills their guards, and arms the women. Aino, the de-facto leader of the women, commandeers one of the trucks, allowing Aatami to leap onto Helldorf's tank while the women gun down the rest of the soldiers. Aatami pulls Wolf out of the tank before leaving him at the mercy of the women. Helldorf reaches a commandeered Soviet plane and kills Schütze before taking off with the pilot. Aatami fires at the plane, mortally wounding the pilot, and uses his pickaxe to get onboard in midair. Helldorf and Aatami engage in hand-to-hand combat. After Helldorf gets the upper hand, Aatami swiftly hooks a static line to a bomb before releasing it, dropping Helldorf to his death. After finding that the pilot is dead, Aatami straps himself in as the plane crashes into a swamp.

Led by Aino, the freed women drive the commandeered German tank, with a beaten Wolf strapped to the turret, to an incredulous Finnish Army unit. Aatami crawls out of the swamp and reunites with his dog, before making his way to war-ravaged <u>Helsinki</u>. Aatami enters a bank, approaches a teller and empties his satchels of gold before speaking for the first time, asking for paper currency in exchange for his gold, "So the load won't be so damn heavy to carry."

### Cast

- Jorma Tommila as Aatami Korpi
- Aksel Hennie as Bruno Helldorf
- Jack Doolan as Wolf
- Mimosa Willamo as Aino
- Onni Tommila as Schütze
- Tatu Sinisalo as SS Soldier
- Wilhelm Enckell as SS Soldier
- Arttu Kapulainen as Rower
- Ilkka Koivula as Fighter Pilot
- Max Ovaska as Engineer
- Pekka Huotari as Pilot
- Severi Saarinen as Troop Leader
- Vincent Willestrand as SS Soldier

# Reception

### **Box office**

*Sisu* grossed \$7.3 million in the United States and Canada, and \$7 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$14.3 million.  $\frac{[3][4]}{}$ 

In the United States and Canada, *Sisu* was released alongside <u>Big George Foreman</u> and <u>Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.</u>, and was projected to gross around \$4 million from 900 theaters in its opening weekend. It made \$1.4 million on its first day, including \$585,000 from Thursday night previews. It went on to debut to \$3.3 million, finishing eighth. [19][20]

# **Critical response**

On the <u>review aggregator</u> website <u>Rotten Tomatoes</u>, 94% of 181 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 7.6/10. The website's consensus reads: "Narratively lean as it is deliriously gory, *Sisu* is an inspired pastiche that gives bloody satisfaction to action aficionados." <u>Metacritic</u>, which uses a <u>weighted average</u>, assigned the film a score of 70 out of 100, based on 25 critics, indicating "generally favorable" reviews. Audiences polled by <u>PostTrak</u> gave the film an 80% positive score, with 60% saying they would definitely recommend it.

Robert Daniels of *RogerEbert.com* gave the film three and half out of four stars, stating that "*Sisu* is outlandishly entertaining, mostly because, contrary to its deeper themes, it isn't afraid to be nonsensical." Ross Bonaime of *Collider* gave the film grade of "B", saying that "*Sisu* is certainly ridiculous, but

sometimes it's just fun to watch an obscene amount of Nazis get what's coming to them." [24] Tom Shone of *The Times* gave the film four out of five stars, saying that it "is violent in the pulpy, maximalist manner of a <u>Tarantino</u> film — bones snap, bodies fly apart, blood leaps across the screen — but there is nothing messy about the storytelling, which is as tight as a Sergio Leone flick." [25]

On 1 August 2023, Japanese video game designer <u>Hideo Kojima</u>, best known for the <u>Metal Gear</u> video game series, posted a message on <u>Twitter</u> in which he highly praised the *Sisu* film, saying: "This is no longer a war movie. It is a MAD grind of a battle between terribly cool men. A lot of fight ideas that surpass <u>Rambo</u>, the immortal old man!" At the end of message, Kojima expresses his interest in making a game about the main character of the film. [26][27][28]

### **Accolades**

#### Award nominations for Sisu

Year	Award	Category	Nominee(s)	Result
2022 55th Sitges Film Festival <sup>[29]</sup>	Best Film	Sisu	Won	
	Best Actor	Jorma Tommila	Won	
	Best Cinematography	Kjell Lagerroos	Won	
	Best Music	Juri Seppä, Tuomas Wäinölä	Won	
2024	51st Saturn Awards <sup>[30]</sup>	Best International Film	Sisu	Won
2024 78th <u>Jussi Awards<sup>[31]</sup></u>	Best Film	Sisu	Nominated	
		Best Director	Jalmari Helander	Nominated
	Audience Award for the Actor of the Year	Jorma Tommila	Nominated	
	Best Cinematography	Kjell Lagerroos	Won	
	78th Jussi Awards <sup>[31]</sup>	Best Editing	Juho Virolainen	Won
		Best Set Design	Otso Linnalaakso	Won
		Best Costume Design	Anna Vilppunen	Nominated
		Best Make-up Design	Salla Yli-Luopa	Won
		Best Music	Juri Seppä, Tuomas Wäinölä	Nominated

# Future

In March 2023, Helander has hinted in an interview with the news agency STT at the idea that if the film is successful at the box office in the United States, he could consider making a possible sequel. In May 2023, Helander said during an interview of  $\underline{GamesRadar+}$  that he might have some kind of idea how to continue the story of Aatami Korpi. Jorma Tommila has also expressed interest in returning to act in a sequel. In December 2023, Helander confirmed that he would return as director for the sequel, and the Finnish Film Foundation has initially granted a financial support of  $\mathfrak{S}50,000.$ 

In March 2024, it was announced that filming of the sequel would begin in late summer. It is tentatively estimated that the film will premiere in less than two years. [37]

## See also

- Cinema of Finland
- List of Finnish films of the 2020s
- List of action films of the 2020s

### Notes

a. \$6.5 million

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# **External links**

- Official website (https://nordiskfilm.fi/sisu/) of Nordisk Film (in Finnish)
- Official website (https://www.lionsgate.com/movies/sisu) of Lionsgate
- Sisu (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt14846026/) at IMDb

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