

COMPARTMENT No. 6

Finland (2022) 107 minutes

Director: Juho Kuosmanen

Cast: Yuriy Borisov (Ljoha)
Seidi Haarla (Laura)



Screening 2nd November 2022 at Swindon Art Centre

Synopsis

A young Finish woman, Laura, takes a train in Moscow for Murmansk in order to study petroglyphs at an archaeological site in the Arctic sea. During this trip she shares a compartment with Ljoha, a Russian fellow-traveller. Despite being opposite characters, the journey will get them closer.

Reviews



Part of what makes *Compartment No. 6* engrossing and effective is how Kuosmanen plays with tone. In Irina's apartment, the naturalistic performances, loose camerawork, casual staging and Laura's visible unease create a sense of intimacy as well as sympathy. All of us have been the awkward guest somewhere.

Once the story shifts to the train (the film was shot on moving railroad cars, not soundstages), its claustrophobic spaces and jerky motions help create a threatening intimacy, one that's compounded by Ljoha's aggression and Laura's guardedness. The two characters are equally defensive and mutually antagonistic; yet pin-pricks of dry humour also make their belligerence seem more than a little absurd.

Manohla Dargis, The New York Times

Juho Kuosmanen's first film was the soulful boxing comedy *The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki* (2016), which strolled off with first prize in the Un Certain Regard sidebar at Cannes. For his follow-up, Kuosmanen and his co-writers Andris Feldmanis and Livia Ulman have freely adapted Rosa Liksom's novel, shifting the action from the 1980s to the 1990s, though as far as train carriages and provincial railway stations go, Russian decades shunt into each other fairly indistinguishably.

The production design by regular collaborator Kari Kankaanpää creates a pre-digital, pre-mobile phones world of thuddy 'thingness' – telephone kiosks, jars of preserves and the train itself, with its wonky samovar and stuffy compartments. When Laura and Lyokha squeeze through the packed third-class carriage – a still lower ring of hell – the smell of the feet almost wafts from the screen. Jani-Petteri Passi's unobtrusive hand-held camera makes the most of the tungsten oranges and drizzle blues coming in through the train windows. What we see of Russia is largely station platforms or weather.

John Beasdale, BFI

Film Facts

- Grand Prix du Jury – Festival de Cannes 2021
- The movie is based on Rosa Liksom's book, *Compartment No. 6*
- *Compartment No. 6* is the second movie directed by Juho Kuosmanen

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