



## **BORDERLINES FILM FESTIVAL**

### **A New Kind of Wilderness (15)**

Director: Silje Evensmo Jacobsen

Starring: Joana Santos, Inês Vaz, Piotr Sikora

Norway, 2024, 1 hour 24 minutes, Norwegian/English + English subtitles

From Norway and director Silje Evensmo Jacobsen comes this award-winning\* documentary about the Paynes family, whose isolated but idyllic life in the wilderness is overturned by sudden tragedy.

First conceived of as a simple study of off-grid family life, the project's initial purpose was upended when Maria, the family matriarch and sole bread-winner, died of cervical cancer. Faced with the prospect of financial ruin and burdened by grief and the responsibility of single-parenthood, father and widower Nick determines that the family home must be sold. We follow the bereaved family as they try to reintegrate with, and adjust to, society while processing their grief for Maria and the lost idyll of their former life.

Jacobsen fastidiously avoids an angle in her presentation of these events, allowing the Paynes to unfurl on their own terms and in their own time. Those looking for a rollercoaster of sensational twists and turns will be disappointed, as will those hungry for clear morals, pat conclusions or an in-lights "message." Instead, Jacobsen remains disciplined in her reluctance to impose herself upon the audience, opting for slow, steady, intimate, patient and unobtrusive observation. Jacobsen's sensitivity to the ethical challenge posed in filming people - especially children - going through grief and her evident scrupulousness complements the broader aesthetic of understatement: to the extent that we, the audience, become intimate with this family, it is by tentative invitation, not exploitation.

*A New Kind of Wilderness* is a gentle, modest and refreshingly unsensational film that tackles the subject of death with integrity and dignity and stands as a poignant study of family life.

\**A New Kind Of Wilderness*, won Jacobsen the Grand Jury Prize in the World Documentary Competition at the Sundance Film Festival in January.

Notes compiled by Thomas Martin

If you like **A NEW KIND OF WILDERNESS**, you may enjoy:

**THE WOLVES ALWAYS COME AT NIGHT** After a devastating storm destroys their livelihood in rural Mongolia, a young couple make the painful decision to uproot their family and move to the city and a new way of life.

**SUJO** This coming of age story from filmmaking offsets the violence we come to expect from films set in contemporary Mexico.