

Smoke Sauna Sisterhood



Estonia | 2023 | 89m | 15

Director: Anna Hints

Plus: **Together** | Savannah Betts | UK | 9m

Smoke Sauna Sisterhood is a musing on mortality and communion with the divine feminine. Director and Writer Anna Hints' directorial debut takes us on a journey of companionship with these women - laying bare their tender conversations that explore the many facets of what it means to experience life as a woman in our complicated, modern world. No topic is off limits in Hints' world without men. The conversations that we're privy to are heart-warming, hallowed, and sometimes harrowing.

As you might have guessed from the name of the film, much of the movie takes place in the womb-like confessional booth of an Estonian sauna. We see first-hand the symbolic and sacred role the sauna has on Estonian culture as these women return to the ceremony of their roots and heritage. The sauna historically used to be the common birthplace of many Estonians – as is the case in a lot of Scandinavian countries as well – and audiences, too, experience a rebirth of sorts alongside the lead, Kadi Kivilo.

The women cleanse and heal both their physical forms as well as exorcise their demons over the course of the documentary. This is a film of powerful intensity in terms of its sensitivity and intimacy, yet still has room for touching moments of clarity and laughter. Egilsson's atmospheric and unique choral score lends itself perfectly to this haunting and uplifting human tale.

The ethereal nature of this documentary provides a memento mori for audiences, as we're left feeling lucky to be reminded of our mortality.

This is a smoking miracle of a film - elemental and pure in its use of fire, wood, water, flesh, body, and spirit. Revel in this journey which is sure to lift you out of the smoke and darkness, and into the light.

'It's an intense watch; at times infectiously hilarious, at others wrenchingly sad. For the film's brief running time, there's an emotional osmosis at play, in both sauna and cinema alike,' *The Observer*.

Excellent

Fair

Poor

What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

Please add any further comments here

Please detach this from your Film Note and drop it into the box or hand it in at the end of the screening. Thank you!

Fun Facts

- UNESCO has inscribed the Võrumaa smoke sauna tradition on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The organisation explains: 'The smoke sauna tradition is an important part of everyday life in the Võro community of Estonia. It comprises a rich set of traditions including the actual bathing customs, the skills of making bath whisks, building and repairing saunas, and smoking meat in the sauna.'
- *Smoke Sauna Sisterhood* won the Directing Award for the World Cinema Documentary Competition at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival.

Tell Us What You Think!

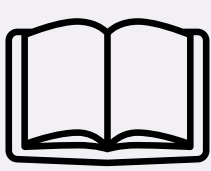


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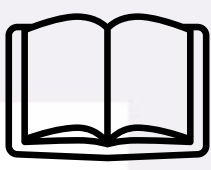
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