



Jóhann Jóhannsson's experimental audio-visual poem **LAST AND FIRST MEN** on this year's Prague IFF – Febiofest's programme

The experimental audio-visual poem *Last and First Men* by Jóhann Jóhannsson was screened at a preview (it is coming to cinemas on 23 September) at Prague IFF – Febiofest.

Last and First Men brings together a sci-fi story by Olaf Stapleton, powerful music by the late composer Jóhann Jóhannsson (*The Theory of Everything*, *Sicario*, *Arrival*), and footage of brutalist memorial sculptures in former Yugoslavia, which look like objects from another planet, shot on 16mm black-and-white film by acclaimed cinematographer Sturla Brandth Grøvlen (*Victoria*, *Rams*).

The film, which is narrated by Tilda Swinton, invites us into a future world full of surreal, fantastical monuments, at a time when humanity is facing extinction and where objects that were once symbols of unity and brotherhood, stand as lonely, desolate lighthouses, sending their message to the surrounding wilderness. As the story of a crumbling civilization unfolds, a spectral presence appears: an unspecified entity, which is trying to communicate with us. A film which is as hopeful and poetic as it is tragic, *Last and First Men* is the last and most personal film Jóhann Jóhannsson ever worked on; an allegory of memory, ideals, and the death of utopia.

The only – and posthumously released – film directed by prominent Icelandic composer Jóhann Jóhannsson is a highly original, hypnotic audio-visual sci-fi poem, in which real brutalist monuments become unsettling objects from the far future. The high-contrast footage from Sturla Brandth Grøvlen's 16mm IMAX camera, together with the majestic minimalism of Jóhannsson's music, create a unique experience outside of familiar space and time.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Jóhann Jóhannsson (1969-2018) was a prolific Icelandic composer who wrote music for a wide array of media including theatre, dance, television, and films. His work is stylised by its blending of traditional orchestration with contemporary electronic elements. His first solo album *Englabörn* (2002, Touch) drew from many different sources of inspiration, from Erik Satie, Bernard Herrmann, Henry Purcell or Moondog to electronic music released on labels such as Mille Plateaux and Mego. His next album, also released by Touch, was followed by two orchestral albums at 4AD: *Fordlandia* and *IBM 1401, A User's Manual*. In 2016, Jóhannsson signed with Deutsche Grammophon, where he released his last solo album *Orphée*.

Much of Jóhannsson's work in the final years of his life was closely linked with film. In 2010, he joined forces with American avant-garde filmmaker Bill Morrison and created



the score to his film *The Miners' Hymns*. A number of films with his music gained international acclaim, among them two films directed by Denis Villeneuve – *Prisoners* (2013) and *Sicario* (2015), whose score was nominated at all major awards, and *Arrival* (2016), which had a Golden Globe and BAFTA nomination for best score, among many others. Another success was his score for the Stephen Hawking biopic *The Theory of Everything* (2014, dir. James Marsh), which won him a Golden Globe for Best Original Score. Jóhannsson wrote film music, but also directed his own films: his short debut *End of Summer* was made in 2015, followed by the multimedia feature *Last and First Men*, which had a live premiere at Manchester International Festival in 2017. The film is narrated by Tilda Swinton, and combines music and image to create a poetic meditation on memory, loss, and utopia. The film premiered at the 2020 Berlinale.

TRAILER: [Last and First Men \(2020\) trailer – YouTube](#)

Directed by: Jóhann Jóhannsson

Country: Iceland

Script: Olaf Stapledon, Jóhann Jóhannsson, José Enrique Macián

Narration: Tilda Swinton

DOP: Sturla Brandth Grøvlen

Further screenings at the 28th Prague IFF – Febiofest:

22 September 2021, 20:30, Kotva cinema in České Budějovice

24 September 2021, 17:30, Varšava cinema in Liberec

30 September 2021, 18:00, Bio Central in Hradec Králové

1 October 2021, 19:30, Metro 70 cinema in Prostějov

MEDIA CONTACT:

Hedvika Petrželková

hedvika.petrzelkova@artcam.cz

+420 776 167 567

www.artcam.cz

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