

Document Citation

Title	Amazon
Author(s)	Piers Handling
Source	<i>Toronto International Film Festival</i>
Date	1990
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	79
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	Kaurismäki, Mika (1955), Orimattila, Finland
Film Subjects	Amazon, Kaurismäki, Mika, 1991



Amazon

Mika Kaurismäki

Finland, 1990, 125 minutes

Colour/35mm

Production Company: Villealfa Filmproductions Oy/Bluebird Films Inc.

Producer: Pentti Kouri, Mika Kaurismäki

Screenplay: Mika Kaurismäki, Richard Reitinger

Cinematography: Timo Salminen

Editor: Michael Chandler

Art Director: Tony de Castro

Music: Nana Vasconcelos

Principal Cast: Kari Vaananen, Robert Davi, Rae Dawn Chong, Minna, Aili Sovio, Chico Dias, Rui Polanah

Print Source: Finnish Film Foundation, K13, Kanavakatu 12, SF-00160 Helsinki, Finland. Tel: 358-0-177727. Telex: 125032. Fax: 177113.

Foreign Sales Agent: Dick Delson & Associates, 2020 Avenue of the Stars, Suite 410, Los Angeles, California, USA 90067. Tel: (213) 557-1188. Fax: (213) 557-1859.

Mika, the other half of the dynamic Kaurismäki duet who were our Spotlight directors in 1988, returns with Finland's largest production, a film shot on location that spans the earth's two hemispheres, starting in the gloomy landscape of Finland and ending in the lush, tropical rainforest of Brazil. Told with great compassion, *Amazon* is the story of two men who, for different reasons, set out in search of gold. When they discover that the land is unwilling to yield its riches without exacting a price, they realise that the real gold is the forest itself. Kari is the branch manager of a bank in Helsinki with a terminally ill wife in hospital. Deciding to take radical action, Kari robs his own bank, ends his wife's suffering and plans to leave for America with his two daughters. Accidentally they end up in Brazil, and Kari's spiritual voyage begins. Robbed on arrival, the threesome end up in the care of a taxi driver whose stories of gold deep in the heart of Brazil seem to offer Kari a way to make some quick money. Linking up with an American airborne cowboy, Kari sets out to mine gold. However, his neat plans are sidetracked when he meets a teacher who is determined to protect the rainforest from voracious speculators and miners. The two fall in love, and Kari realises that there are more important things than making money. Beautifully photographed to capture the timeless riches of the Amazonian rainforest, Mika leads us through a process of de-culturalization, forcing us to confront issues that threaten our existence.

Mika Kaurismäki was born in 1955. He has worked as a film director, producer and managing director. From 1977-81, he worked at Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film, Munich, and from 1981 he worked as a managing director and film director at Villealfa Filmproductions Oy. His first film, *The Liar* (80), earned him the Risto Jarva Prize at the Tampere International Short Film Festival and the Prix Special du Jury at Rencontres Internationales Henri Langlois in Tours, France. His first feature film, *The Worthless*, won the Jussi statuette for the best Finnish film in 1983. In 1986 and 1988 he won the Jussi statuette for *Rosso* and *Helsinki Napoli All Night Long* respectively. Films include: *The Liar* (80), *The Saimaa Gesture* (co-director) (81), *Jackpot 2* (81), *The Worthless* (82), *The Clan — Tale of the Frogs* (84), *Rosso* (85), *Helsinki Napoli All Night Long* (87), *Cha Cha-Cha* (89), *Amazon* (90).

Piers Handling