



The

S U M M E R B O O K



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B O O K

Directed by **CHARLIE MCDOWELL**
Written by **ROBERT JONES**
Based on the novel by **TOVE JANSSON**

OFFICIAL WEBSITE
OFFICIAL STILLS

90 mins. / Drama / Finland, United Kingdom / English / 2024

CONTACT

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LOGLINE

As young Sophia spends the summer on an island in Finland with her father and grandmother (Glenn Close), the three weather storms of grief and find moments of peace together in this picturesque drama based on Tove Jansson's beloved novel.

SUMMARY

On a tranquil island in the Gulf of Finland, a young Sophia (Emily Matthews) begins to come into her own while exploring the coasts and crevices of her summertime home. Quietly reckoning with the recent death of her mother, Sophia is guided through the season by her grandmother (Glenn Close), a similarly headstrong and adventurous spirit, and her father (Anders Danielsen Lie). The pair explores the beauty of the moss, sneak onto neighboring islands, build tree-bark birds, and discuss the merits of sleeping in a tent, all while Sophia compiles her experiences into her hand-bound Summer Book. Through a charming series of vignettes following the launch of one person's life and the denouement of another's, the family trio's bonds are toughened by the rough Finnish tides. Meditative and nostalgic, Charlie McDowell's realization of Tove Jansson's beloved Nordic novel is a deeply affecting ode to the natural world, the cycle of generations, and grief overcome.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I first discovered Tove Jansson's *The Summer Book* when I was in my early twenties. Growing up as an avid fan of the Moomins, I was already familiar with her work but I wasn't familiar with any of her adult novels. While reading *The Summer Book* I was immediately transported back to my childhood where I spent every summer on an island off the coast of Massachusetts. Her words allowed me to relive my own experiences with my family and deeply connect to the familiar feeling of island life in the summer. *The Summer Book* finds a way to tap into all of your senses. For me, I could distinctly remember what a blackberry tasted like on the exact day it was ready to be picked, the smell of the air after a violent storm had just passed through, the sight of my grandmother's hair as it curled in the humid wind when we took our small motorboat to the beach, the sound of the loud creaks in our old wooden floorboards as I tried to get to my bed without waking up my parents and what it felt like to dive into the ocean on that first day of the season. Tove's writing is so unique and special in that way. She has a truly distinct voice and yet she still allows you to relate to her stories through your own experiences.

How I experienced reading Tove's work is how I hope my film adaptation of *The Summer Book* feels. I want it to be a visceral stimulation of all our senses, allowing an audience to have experiences similar to those of the characters on this island, through both their light and dark moments, their joys and pains. I hope it allows them to embrace their sense of adventure and freedom, but also acknowledge the dangers and claustrophobia existing in this place. I believe there's a profound way to connect and explore the emotional state of the characters to what's happening on the actual island, which is a primary character in and of itself. There's a beautiful visual and emotional film to be made with this story, one bathed in meditation on what it means to truly live and one focused on the deeply rooted connection between humans and nature, from life until death. Death is ultimately a part of life and therefore, not something that should be feared but instead, embraced.

—Charlie McDowell



ON THE CHARACTERS OF THE SUMMER BOOK

There are three main characters in this story: Grandmother, Sophia, and Father. The narrative explores their relationships with each other while illuminating their different stages in life. Photographically I want to subtly shoot their points of view to reflect their individual experiences. Grandmother is nearing the end of her life and therefore, in a stage of acceptance and reflection. The way in which I capture Grandmother will feel less exploratory and more grounded. The shots will hold on her longer as we witness her examine her life and pass along her knowledge to Sophia. The camera moves will feel smooth and purposeful, welcoming us into the point of view of a character who knows exactly who she is.

Sophia, on the other hand, is young, vibrant and inquisitive. She's like a sponge soaking in life's experiences and lessons learned from Grandmother. The camera will ebb and flow with Sophia through her discoveries of the summer. In her point of view we will feel exploratory and without rules. Her emotional state will be slightly exaggerated within the actual moments we are witnessing. Much like how a child might be scared by the idea of something more than the actuality of it or how diving off a rock can feel so much higher than it actually is. The audience will feel connected to Sophia on her journey of discovery. We will remember what it feels like to be a child again.

Lastly, Father is stuck in his own head, unable to deal with his grief, and finds himself stagnant and mainly focused on completing tasks. I want to photographically capture Father's tunnel vision, how he's spending the summer on this beautiful island with his family around him and yet, chooses to find focus and connection with his work. But through Grandmother's knowledge and Sophia's sense of adventure, we witness and feel Father reconnect with his surroundings and the people closest to him.

Although the island isn't a typical character portrayed by an actor, it will be a vital part in telling this story. It's what connects and binds our characters together as they experience the summer. The island will serve as a metaphor for the span of someone's life. I may show waves coming in and out on a shoreline to mimic the repetition of a person's heartbeat. The intensity of a storm passing through will feel like an insurmountable obstacle in someone's life.

ON COLLABORATING WITH GLENN CLOSE

Because there are so few characters in this story the casting is even more crucial to bringing it to life. It is my honor and privilege to get the opportunity to work with Glenn Close in the role of Grandmother. I've wanted to work with her for many years and I can't imagine a more perfect actress for this part. I've always been so impressed by how much information and emotion Glenn conveys without even saying a word. An audience must feel they have known her for years and yet, are also just experiencing her stories for the first time as she walks this new phase of her life. Glenn has a stoicism, immense depth and presence about her that I feel is necessary and unique in telling Grandmother's story.

ON THE ADAPTATION PROCESS

I know how beloved The Summer Book is for Finland and I certainly don't take my role in the film's adaptation lightly. It's a huge responsibility and one that I accept whole heartedly. I want to do it justice with every ounce of my being because it has been such a pivotal story in my life and has helped shape me into who I am as a storyteller. After having re-read the book over the years and spending invaluable time the last couple summers in Finland and other Nordic countries, I feel more deeply immersed in the culture and acclimated to the terrain as well as even more closely connected to Tove's words. I am extremely honored and humbled to be the director for this film and I promise to do all I can to celebrate Tove's work and pay tribute to [this] beautiful country.





DIRECTOR'S BIO



CHARLIE MCDOWELL, a British/American filmmaker, most recently directed the feature film adaptation of Tove Jansson's novel **THE SUMMER BOOK**, starring Glenn Close and Anders Danielsen Lie. Case Study produced the film. His previous feature, **WINDFALL**, starring Jason Segal, Lily Collins, and Jesse Plemons, sold preemptively to Netflix in an eight-figure deal and was released on March 18th, 2022. Charlie's film, **THE DISCOVERY**, starring Jason Segal, Rooney Mara, and Robert Redford, premiered at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival before being acquired by Netflix as well. His directorial debut, **THE ONE I LOVE**, had its premiere at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival, was produced by The Duplass Brothers and was released by Radius. It was also nominated for Best First Screenplay at the 2015 Independent Spirit Awards.

CAST

Sophia	Emily Matthews
Grandmother	Glenn Close
Father	Anders Danielsen Lie

CREW

Directed by	Charlie McDowell
Written by	Robert Jones
Based on the novel by	Tove Jansson

Produced by	Kath Mattock, Kevin Loader, Alex Orlovsky, Duncan Montgomery, Aleksi Bardy, Helen Vinogradov, Glenn Close, Charlie McDowell
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Executive Producers	Lily Collins, Jack Selby, Rick Covert, Victoria Castelli, Arthur Farache, Niki Leskinen, Petri Kemppinen, Ari Tolppanen, Magnus Thomassen, Harald Fagerheim Bugge
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Co-Producers	Dyveke Bjørkly Graver, Andrea Berensten Ottmar
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Director of Photography	Sturla Brandth Grøvlen DFF
Production Designer	Lina Nordqvist
Editor	Jussi Rautaniemi F.C.E.
Costume Director	Tiina Kaukanen
Sound Designer	Micke Nyström
Composer	Hania Rani

Make up Designer
Line Producer
Casting

Associate Producers

Riikka Virtanen
Sanna Langinkoski
Minna Sorvoja / Filmona
Maggie Widtstrand
Ronald Santos
Lisa Hannusch
Lisa Richardson



ABOUT **MUSIC BOX FILMS**

Music Box Films is the prestigious North American distributor of acclaimed international, independent, and documentary feature films. Recent releases include the Cannes Directors' Fortnight baseball comedy *Eephus* by Carson Lund, and *Familiar Touch*, Sarah Friedland's poignant coming-of-old-age story that received the Orizzonti Award for Best Director at Venice.

Since its formation in 2007, Music Box Films has distributed award-winning films and art-house favorites that include Academy Award winner *Ida*, *Meru* (from Oscar-winning filmmakers Jimmy Chin and E. Chai Vaserhelyi), Christian Petzold's *Transit*, the popular Swedish comedy *A Man Called Ove*, and the original *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Music Box Films is independently owned and operated by the Southport Music Box Corporation, which also owns and operates the Music Box Theatre, Chicago's premier venue for independent and foreign films. For more information, visit www.musicboxfilms.com.

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THE ISLAND

The Summer Book