

THREE MILES NORTH OF MOLKOM

EEN FILM VAN

CORINNA MCFARLANE & ROBERT CANNAN



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THREE MILES NORTH OF MOLKOM

PROJECT SUMMARY

Een productie van	Third Eye Film Productions Ltd.
Taal	Engels
Lengte	102 minuten
Genre	Documentaire
Land van herkomst	Engeland
Filmmaker	Robert Cannan & Corinna McFarlane
Releasedatum	3 juni 2010
Awards	<i>Göteborg Film Festival 2008</i> <i>-Audience Award Best Feature</i>
Nominatie	<i>British Independent Film Award 2008</i> <i>-Best British Documentary</i>
Kijkwijzer	

SYNOPSIS

Diep in de bossen van Zweden, drie mijl boven Molkom, ligt Ängsbacka; een speelplaats van de 21^{ste} eeuw speciaal voor volwassenen. Eens per jaar gaan de deuren open voor duizend internationale deelnemers, die willekeurig in 'deelgroepen' worden geplaatst.

Een Zweedse bekendheid, een hippie uit Californië, een Finse oma en een backpackende rugbycoach uit Australië zijn een aantal deelnemers van de onvergetelijke emotionele achtbaan die maar liefst twee weken duurt. Vuurlopen, Sjamanisme, Tantrische seks en vele andere fysieke, psychologische en esoterische ervaringen, begeleiden onze onwaarschijnlijke helden naar verlichting, liefde, verachting en zichzelf. Zullen ze ooit nog dezelfde zijn?

SYNOPSIS ENGELS

Deep in the lakeside forests of Sweden, three miles north of Molkom, lies Ängsbacka; a 21st Century playground for adults. Once a year, their gates open to a thousand international participants, placed in 'Sharing Groups' at random. A Swedish celebrity, a Californian hippy, a Finnish grandmother and a back-packing Australian rugby coach, who certainly stumbled on the wrong party, are amongst the group that take us on an unforgettably quirky, two-week emotional roller-coaster. Firewalking, Shamanism, Tantric Sex and myriad other physical, psychological and esoteric experiences, guide our unlikely heroes towards enlightenment, love, loathing and themselves. Will they ever be the same again?

CREW

DIRECTORS, PRODUCERS, EDITORS & ADDITIONAL CAMERA	Robert Cannan & Corinna McFarlane
D.O.P.	Joseph Russell
SOUND	Mike Hill
2 ND CAMERA	Mike Hill

CHARACTERS

SIDDHARTA
MERVI
NICK
LJUS
MARIT
PETER
REGINA

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ÄNGSBACKA AND THE NO MIND FESTIVAL

Ängsbacka is situated three miles north of Molkom in the beautiful Värmland County in Sweden. The town has a population of approximately 2000 inhabitants. Ängsbacka is host to the annual No Mind Festival which will take place this year from the 3rd to the 10th July 2009.

Overseen by Kjell-Jörgen Kolstad and Kåre Landfald, the Ängsbacka Association is now in its twelfth year. The Association are currently looking to moving towards a shared ownership of the Ängsbacka Course Centre.

The No Mind Festival gives one the opportunity to tap into the untouched nature of our being, giving one the opportunity to discover and experience the joy, creativity, playfulness and love of the here and now through a combination of workshops and individual reflection.

WHAT IS ÄNGSBACKA?

"Ängsbacka is one of the foremost meeting places in Scandinavia for people who want to be more aware and live with an open mind. Through the years, thousands of people have been touched by workshops, festivals and stays here at Ängsbacka. To many, this place has become a source of inspiration..."

-From the Ängsbacka website at www.angsbacka.se

Ängsbacka in Värmland is a playground for adults, a place, as its MySpace page claims, "where great things happen". Forged in the crucible of the New Age, Ängsbacka is a personal development centre in west central Sweden, an idyllic rural community that believes in the following things:

1. Open-hearted communication based on honesty and acceptance.
2. Self-knowledge and personal growth.
3. Care for the planet and all forms of life.
4. Creating a life full of presence and creativity.

Every summer, Ängsbacka plays host to The No Mind Festival, a multimedia happening built on the notion that the present moment – the here and the now – is the only true reality. And through a series of workshops and shared experiences, involving music, singing, meditation and dancing, this one-week event shows festival goers how to get into direct contact with their inner selves and make the most of each moment as it arrives. For some, Ängsbacka is a profound and even mystical event. To others, it's just mumbo-jumbo. But to filmmakers Corinna Villari-McFarlane and Robert Cannan, it's something in between both. Filmed exclusively at the 2007 No Mind Festival, their film THREE MILES NORTH OF MOLKOM is the story of what happens to seven very different people who take seven very different journeys to get one step closer to the person they really are.

THE ROAD TO ÄNGSBACKA

Like many directors before them, Corinna and Robert served their apprenticeship on other people's movies before deciding that the time was right to strike out on their own. The two met on an acclaimed low-budget British feature film called THE GREAT ECSTASY OF ROBERT CARMICHAEL, which premiered at the Cannes film festival in 2005. "I was an assistant producer," says Corinna, "and Rob was an assistant director, and we very quickly bonded through, I guess, our reactions to the creative process of making that particular film. All the comments and observations we made were identical, and we soon realized that we understood each other very well."

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Ironically, it was working on a fiction feature film that gave the two the idea of making their own debut in the documentary arena. "We saw how difficult it is to make a fiction film on a limited amount of money," says Robert, "and all the pitfalls involved with that. So that was probably the starting point for this project. All those things made us start thinking about the documentary form as being a form that we not only felt invited more experimentation and pushing of boundaries, it also suggested a way in which we could perhaps express ourselves with fewer resources than we would need for a drama." They felt that under the right circumstances, and with the right chemistry, the right setting would provide the perfect framework for a drama to unfold. Both wanted to let the story tell itself and allow the viewer to get lost in the humanity of the characters' stories without any of the usual intrusions, such as talking heads, voiceover and archive footage.

"Rob and I are both very interested in cinema and storytelling," says Corinna, "and we wanted to find a story that would allow us to experiment, that would allow us to express ourselves and be cinematic, and yet still allow us to get involved in character and story." Several opportunities presented themselves, but nothing really seemed right. And then a chance encounter with a Swedish acquaintance raised the prospect of Ängsbacka. "I had a conversation with him at a dinner party," Corinna recalls, "and he said, 'Have you heard about this place in Sweden?' I said no, and he gave me a bit of background. It stayed in my mind, and I called Rob. He hadn't heard of it either, so we did some research." What they discovered was that Ängsbacka was perfect for their intentions, a place that offered just the right arena for a real-life human drama. "It was ideal," says Corinna. "It provided a contained location, and it involved a group of strangers going through two weeks of intense experiences. It was held in the summer, with lots of sunlight, which meant that everything could be shot in natural light. And when we heard that there were 'sharing circles' – that, every day, the festival goers gather in small groups to discuss their progress – we immediately thought, 'Great!'" Their excitement was justified. Thanks to their background in drama, the two directors knew that not only would the sharing circles help provide a narrative arc to events, it would also be a fantastic help, visually. "The circle evoked in our minds the capacity to shoot coverage," says Corinna, "because if people are sitting in a circle, it's very easy to shoot. You can make it happen so that it's got drama-feature coverage, which documentaries don't have the luxury of achieving." Adds Robert, "It's the same as shooting an ensemble piece in drama, except that you're covering different shot sizes or reactions to the speaker simultaneously on different cameras, without interrupting the real-life action."

CONVINCING THE FESTIVAL ORGANISERS

Once they'd decided that Ängsbacka would provide the right setting, Corinna contacted the organizers five months before the No Mind Festival was due to start and pitched their project to them. She recalls, "I said, 'Hi, I'm a filmmaker, I produced a film that went to Cannes, my partner worked with Nick Broomfield on a film called GHOSTS, and now we've decided that we really want to step out on our own. We're very interested in what you're doing at Ängsbacka. Would it be possible to make a film with you?' And very quickly they came back – and said no!" She laughs. "And they said no because the process was very private and intense – people were going there to go through a journey." So the pair returned to the drawing board. But then, several months later – and a mere six weeks before the festival – the organizers called back. Says Corinna, "They said, 'You know what? We've had a really good think about it and we've decided that we are ready to have a film made about us, because our whole ethos is about being honest, about being who you are, and we want people to know about us. So we're up for it.'"

Although this was encouraging, the directors realized that they would need to gain the organizers' full trust and co-operation before shooting could happen. "Obviously, they wanted to know who we were, to make sure we weren't going to make something exploitative," says Robert. "So they invited

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us over, to get a sense of the kind of film we wanted to make. And that worked for us too, because it gave us the opportunity to see what the place was like, and get a sense of the people that were running it." Says Corinna, "Neither Rob or I are hippies but we're very open-minded. And when we arrived, no shadow of a lie, there was definitely a vibe to the place. It was quite an intrusive energy, in a way, whereby you sort of felt that everyone could see through you." Adds Rob, "We were the newcomers to this environment and suddenly all the attention was turned to us. It was quite a penetrating gaze, in retrospect."

The scene that greeted them was like something from Lukas Moodysson's Swedish commune comedy TOGETHER, with people lying around on the floor, kids running about, and couples entwined. Ready to make a hard sell, the pair had prepared a ten-page pitch, and made a DVD of everything they'd ever worked on, including commercials, music promos and even corporate videos. But after what seemed like an age, nobody came. "They let us in," says Corinna, "and then we just sat in this room, drinking green tea. Everyone just pretty much ignored us. Then the owners arrived. I said, 'Oh hello, I'm Corinna,' and Rob went, 'Hello, I'm Rob,' and they just looked at us and said, 'Who are you???' We were mortified. We said, 'Hasn't it been arranged? We're the filmmakers!'" Instead of receiving a warm welcome, the filmmakers felt the whole room freeze. "Everyone stopped what they were doing," Corinna continues, "and just stared at us. For a long, long time. It was more than I've ever been stared at in my entire life. And then one of the owners simply said, 'It feels good. You can make your movie.'" Says Rob, "We knew in that moment that things were going to happen there. It was obvious that, no matter who the characters were, this would be an environment in which interesting things would happen. People would be going there for something intense."

FINDING THE RIGHT GROUP

Once they'd been given the green light, the two filmmakers knew they had very little time. "We came back and we had about four weeks to work it all out," says Robert. "There wasn't time to raise a conventional budget at that point, but we knew that unless we acted immediately we'd have to wait another year for the next festival." So in the time they had, they pulled together the amount they would need to fly to Ängsbacka, hire the equipment and arrange transport. Since the festival had agreed to house and feed them, the only other big expense would be two cinematographers, but, luckily, their choices – Joseph Russell and Mike Hill – agreed to work for deferred payments.

Arriving at Ängsbacka, Corinna and Robert knew that, although the festival was perfect for their needs, they would still have to 'cast' their human drama, and the window of opportunity would not be great. "The festival opens its doors in the morning," explains Corinna, "a thousand people come flooding in, and then six hours later they all go into a huge barn and play a big game of musical chairs. The way it works is basically this: when the music stops, the people standing next to you are the people in your group. And they have to be strangers. So we had just six hours to walk around and talk to people, because we realized that the probability of going to a group, once it had formed, and having all seven or eight members say, 'Yes, we'd like to be in your film,' was not very high."

Interestingly, the obtaining of permissions was not quite as difficult as it might sound. "All the festival goers have to sign a release form anyway," says Corinna. "Everyone, on arrival, has to sign a form saying that they are responsible for their own wellbeing and mental health." In addition to this, says Rob, "Everybody who arrived had to sign another release form that allowed us to film them, which they seemed happy to do, so everyone had given us permission to film them in a general sense. However, we knew that the group that we followed would have to give us an extra level of permission."

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To find their group – seven strangers who would agree to be filmed for the duration of the festival – the filmmakers decided on a very direct approach. “We were very honest,” says Corinna. “I told them a lot about who we were, and I said, ‘I want you all to know that we’re coming from a good place. We’re not here to exploit you, or take advantage of you, we’re here to find the truth of what’s going on here.’ We really went into everything, because we knew they would respond to the truth. We said, ‘Look, if there’s anybody who’s even slightly interested, please come and talk to us.’”

Having spent so much time discussing their project, Robert and Corinna had thought a lot about the dynamics of a group and knew, albeit roughly, what they were looking for. “The obvious thing was contrast,” says Robert. “We knew we wanted a mix of nationalities and a rough balance of gender and ages, but we only had that little bit of time in which to spot the kind of people we thought seemed interesting. We just had to go on instinct. We’d think, ‘Would that person engage an audience? Would they have an interesting journey?’”

The task was made harder than they’d imagined, ironically, because there were more volunteers than they’d envisaged. “We actually had to turn some people away,” says Corinna, “or rather, we’d subtly discourage them. We’d say, ‘Well, you have to realize that such-and-such could happen, and you might not feel comfortable...’” But pretty soon they realized they had the subjects they were looking for. “It was quite stressful,” admits Robert. “It was the one element we couldn’t completely account for in our planning.” So how did they know who they were going to follow? Says Corinna, “You’ve got to ride on your gut.”

THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

“One of the aspects of the film that we are most proud of is its lack of bias. What endeared us to the subjects of this film is that – regardless of what they do, and how well they do or don’t do it – they are all, in their own way, trying as hard as they can to better themselves. We found this fundamentally admirable, and so wanted to ensure the film reflected our respect of the place and the characters we met there.”

- The Filmmakers

SIDDHARTA

A Swedish Viking and a regular at the festival.

Corinna: Siddharta was the first person we chose. He was there before the thousand others arrived. He was there at 8am, and we saw him walking about with his top off. We asked one of the organisers who he was, and they said, “Oh, that’s Siddharta. He’s one of us.” Siddharta came into the film, I think, with certain ideas of his own standing and his control over his own faculties, but, as you can see quite clearly, he found that those ideas were challenged very quickly. You can see that from his interplay with us: at the beginning, he acts as though he was born to be in front of the camera.

MERVI

A Finnish grandmother, and another regular at the festival.

Corinna: Mervi, by contrast to Siddharta, was a bit more self-conscious about being filmed.

Rob: We knew that Mervi had been to Ångsbacka many times before, so that was interesting, and she was there with two generations of her family – her son and grandson were there too. She had obviously been through a lot more than any of the other characters because of her age.

Corinna: She was born into the suffering experienced by the Finns at the hands of the Russians in World War II – some traumas were certainly experience by her at a young age.

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Rob: In a sense, she seemed to have much more need to have an experience there, to return to something innocent and childlike.

Corinna: One of the first things she said to me was, "I've sold my house and all my possessions. My three children have left home. I am now in the last chapter of my life and I want to live it." And that was her intro. I thought, OK, that's a great story.

Rob: She was so determined to achieve something while she was there. In any film, a character who's going for broke is going to be interesting.

Corinna: I know it's a really odd analogy, but Mervi's story is a bit like *The Wrestler*!

NICK

An Australian, and the cynic at the feast.

Corinna: Nick was the last person to join the group.

Rob: It's a funny story. There's an old saying: you create your own luck. Well, this was ours. We were looking for a certain kind of character, someone slightly sceptical of the process, and it only occurred to us later that an Australian is perfect for that, because, in a clichéd sense, although they can be very bolshy and cynical and outspoken, they also have this sportsmanlike attitude – like, "Well, I'll give it a go anyway."

Corinna: So how Nick got involved was this. You know the Aussies: once they hit 30, if they haven't been anywhere, they take a year off and go on a world trip. And Nick had done this. He'd never been abroad before. He started in South America, and on his travels he met a Norwegian journalist, a beautiful young woman, and made friends with her. She said, "Come visit me in Norway." He was backpacking, of course, and he could only get cheap flights at certain points, so he arrived to see her quite a few weeks later than she was expecting. And when he arrived, she was about to leave on an assignment, which was to go to Ångsbacka to write about this spiritual commune there. Nick turned up the night before she was due to leave, and she said, "Look, I'm off to this festival in Sweden, do you want to come?" Being not so worldly, and even though she tried to explain what it was, he thought it was going to be like Glastonbury. He had this whole idea of a rock festival with babes, just because it was in Sweden. Then he arrived, and he was absolutely traumatised. He's from quite a small town in Australia. He's very kind-hearted and gallant in his own way, but quite naïve. He was freaking out, going, "I've gotta get out of here. I hate it. It's a cult! It's a cult!" So the Norwegian woman brought him over to us, and, once he heard that we were British, he said, "Can I hang out with you guys?" We said, "Of course." Because he was a gold mine: this was the guy we were looking for! And when we said, "Do you want to be in the film?" he said, "I don't give a toss, as long as you guys hang out with me." So from the first two days we had about ten hours of him on film, banging on about the shock of it all. And eventually we said, "Well, tell the group about it." He said, "I can't tell these people what I think." But finally he did. He basically said, "I think you're all a bunch of weirdoes, and this is a cult." And funnily enough, it worked. They were all into radical honesty, and how much more radically honest can you get than that? They couldn't argue with him!

Rob: For Nick, we were the closest thing to normality that he could see around him, so we became his confidantes during the shoot, which was perfect for the film. And not only was he a kind of sounding board, the sceptical voice to bring the audience in, ironically, he still had something to teach the group – even though he has never thought of himself as spiritual in any way – because of his no-worries Australian mentality. He had something to teach the people who'd been doing this stuff for years.

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LJUS

A former goatherd who always dreamed of being a hippie.

Rob: To be honest, we were a bit freaked out by Ljus to begin with. Someone had told him to come and talk to us, and we were like, "Oh my God, he's too much like a stereotypical hippie."

Corinna: We thought that if we ended up with a whole group of people like him ...

Rob: ... Nobody would buy into anything we did! So we avoided him for a bit. But then suddenly something snapped. Because we realised that there is an edge to him. This is a persona that he has created for himself. He had an insecure youth where he wanted to be one of the hippies, and he was on the outside. But now he's totally jumped into that world and abandoned everything else. He is his own creation.

Corinna: And once we'd got a few of the others, we realised that Ljus was priceless.

MARIT

The blonde, beautiful, quiet one.

Rob: Marit was intriguing because she's quite enigmatic...

Corinna: She's beautiful.

Rob: ...And clearly just a really nice, kind person. But there's something deep about her, and, in a way, that's her story, because Marit's fear really is about presenting herself as truthfully as she'd like. So she kind of holds back. And her story in this film is about her coming out of her shell and revealing her inner exhibitionist to the sharing circle.

Corinna: And when she did, you should have seen our faces! We were filming, and suddenly the shyest of the lot stands up, reveals her hidden fantasy of being a queen, and goes, "Kiss my feet."

Rob: It was a profound experience for her, because she's never dared do anything like that before. And that's what she builds towards in the film.

PETER

Father of two.

Corinna: Pete The Dad, in his first meeting with us, said, "Look, I work in this field but I'm not a hippie." He's very rational.

Rob: Pete and Marit, in a way, became sort of secondary characters, because they were not as outspoken as the others, I suppose. It's very intriguing what goes on with them, but we felt that they didn't push themselves forward as much as the other characters.

Corinna: They're perhaps more grounded. They didn't try to impose themselves on anyone else, or steal the show, so they anchored the group and kept it sane. They didn't necessarily provide drama, but they gave us some very interesting talking heads.

Rob: It wasn't clear that Peter was getting divorced, but he was there with his two kids. There was a reason his wife wasn't there, so there was something going on.

Corinna: His wife had sort of said, "I've had the kids for a year while you've been working late every night. You're going away with the kids, I'm going on holiday." And that interested us. It's pretty unusual to see a single dad with two kids on holiday. It's not standard. In that way, the film is also about challenging stereotypes.

REGINA

The Swedish star– escaping the tabloids.

Rob: Regina Lund is an actress, a singer, a poet, she does all kind of things. In Sweden she's huge. Her agents heard that we were making a film, and they thought she might like to be in it. But at the same

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time, she was quite shy, because she was going there to escape the limelight. So we said we'd meet with her, maybe just to do an interview.

Corinna: Then the organisers came back and said, "Her agent's here, and he's thinking that maybe Regina could be in the group you're following." And at that time, we were like, "OK, either she comes to us and has a conversation, just like everybody else, or if she hasn't turned up by the time the group is formed, then she won't be in it."

Rob: We didn't want it to seem manufactured.

Corinna: And we also thought it might be horrendous, putting some celebrity in.

Rob: So on the first day, someone came up and said, "We've just heard that Regina isn't coming."

Corinna: And, to be honest, we thought, "Who cares?"

Rob: So we just got on with making the film.

Corinna: And then on Day Two she just walked into the sharing circle!

Rob: Saying, "I think I'm meant to be in this group."

Corinna: So the first time we met Regina Lund was when she walked in and said, "Hi, I've been at a lesbian wedding. Sorry I'm late!"

Rob: It was quite interesting. She basically invited herself into the film!

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THE SHOOT

Because of the low budget, but also to make things as unobtrusive as possible and allow them to work quickly, the filmmakers chose to use small digital cameras. “But an integral piece of kit,” says Robert, “was the Fig Rig, which was invented by Mike Figgis. It’s basically a steering wheel with the camera mounted inside, and this allows the camera to be moved around with a feel that lies somewhere between hand-held and a Steadicam. This was perfect for us, because we wanted to create a film that lay between a straightforward vérité documentary and something more stylized. The beauty of the Fig Rig is that it can be quickly adapted either to rest, like a low tripod, for close-ups, or move with the characters, at interesting angles. The latter meant that we could plan what we imagined as more dream-like, experiential sequences, (with drifting, continuous camera moves), but it also meant that we could stick to our aim of shooting lots of dialogue on beautiful, filmic close-ups, especially during the scenes in the sharing circle, because one camera could be very quickly reframed for the best close-up angle and natural light whilst the other was covering a wider shot.”

Although they knew they were leaving a lot to chance, the filmmakers were aware that the festival itself would provide a very loose structure for them to work in. “There was always a schedule,” says Robert, “so we always knew we had a framework to fall back on. For example, the sharing circles happen at the same time, all over the festival. But there were also particular workshops that we knew we were going to film. I mean, we always knew we wanted to follow the group into the forest with the shaman.”

Between the four of them – Corinna, Robert and the two cameramen – the crew rarely slept for more than four hours a night. “Every day was on the fly,” recalls Corinna. “Rob and I completely trust each other, so every day we’d make a decision. Sometimes we’d take a cameraman each and shoot two things separately. But we had to be very flexible, in terms of what was most interesting with any particular character. We had two radio mikes, a boom mike, and there were also mikes on each camera, so we were covered, and at any one time we could choose two people to give a radio mike to. Every day at every workshop we had to make a decision as to who was going to be the most important.” Adds Robert, “We had a system of signals and walkie-talkies, so we could make sure we were always on top of everything. That meant we could constantly reframe each situation, and get reaction shots and so on, without disturbing the reality of what was going on.”

Originally, the team planned to be able to take stock of each day before shooting the next, but they soon realised this would not be possible. “We thought we’d be able to watch the rushes in the evening and review what we’d shot,” says Robert, “but there just wasn’t time, because there was always something to shoot. We always felt there were amazing things happening, all the time, so we just had to keep shooting. We shot the hell out of the place, really. And the funny thing is, even though we had 150 hours of material, when we were looking through it afterwards, it was very rare to see anyone looking at the camera. That’s something we’re quite proud of.”

MAKING SENSE OF THE MAYHEM

Once the footage was shot, Corinna and Robert realised that their cinematic adventure had only just begun. To begin to pay for the post-production – a costly process that would transform the digital images they’d captured into something beautiful and powerfully cinematic – they decided to pool their resources and give up their rented homes. “We bought a second-hand car,” says Corinna, “put our editing equipment in the boot, and we travelled around Europe for five months, staying with anybody who was on holiday and was happy to give us their sitting room, where we’d set up our editing equipment.”

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Though they'd tried to envisage an initial edit in their heads as they shot, there was still a lot of work to be done, both in the grading and processing and in the assembly. "When we finished shooting, we plotted each individual character's arc," says Corinna, "and then we worked on creating an overall arc, for our story. This film is very edited. And a lot of the mood was created through the way we cut it, through the way things are offset." To do this, the pair used different editing styles for different characters. "To give you an example," says Robert, "for Nick we used quite a lot of jump-cuts, because that's how it feels to be with him – he talks in bursts – and we thought it would quite funny to reflect that by jumping between his thought processes. It was a similar thing with Siddharta. Sometimes Siddharta just seems to intrude on a scene, because of the way in which he's edited. It reflects his personality, the way he simply seems to burst in on life."

By focusing totally on the seven members of the group and their individual stories, rather than forcing a documentary straitjacket onto them, the filmmakers felt they would be able to close some of the gap between the audience and their subjects. "Essentially," says Robert, "our aim was to make the film as experiential as we possibly could, so that the audience would feel drawn into the movie – into each workshop, each group event, and each sharing circle – almost as if they were the eighth member of the group." Confirms Corinna, "That was crucial to us. We set out to try to communicate, as best we could, our feelings, in as immersive a way as we could." To do this, they decided only to use music that was recorded on the site of the festival. "It was very important to us that the film had to incorporate sound," says Corinna, "and there was so much music there. There was no doubt in our mind that this would be intrinsic to communicating the feeling of the place, because, all the time that these people were going through their two-week adventure, there was always an epic soundscape that could be heard around them. Music was very much used by the teachers of Ångsbacka to aid the process for the participants, and, in much the same way, we use music to aid the cinematic process for the viewer." Both Corinna and Robert agree that the music adds an extra, spiritual dimension. "'Spiritual' is a strange word," says Corinna, "because a lot of people think it means religious, Bible-bashing stuff, but, here, we're talking about shamanic music and tribal sounds. Everywhere you went during the festival there were drum beats, which is a very vital sound, and lots of ethereal, layered vocals."

The result, says Robert, leads to "an abstraction that you'd never normally get in a documentary", creating in a feature that, although it doesn't, at first sight, seem like a film that has at all been shaped and moulded, nevertheless reflects its makers' own thoughts and emotions. "Our personality is all over the film," says Corinna, "but we didn't impose it. We wanted the story to tell itself, and allow the viewer to get lost in the humanity of the characters' arcs, but without any distracting documentary devices." At the same time, they wanted to make a film that reflected their own time in Ångsbacka, a time that, like life itself, was a mixture of darkness and light; fun, warmth, sincerity, disappointment and enlightenment. "We could easily have made a much bleaker movie," says Robert, "or a much more bitterly emotional film, or an out-and-out comedy."

"But we wanted a balance," insists Corinna. "Overall, when we left the place, we knew there had been so much comedy – things that were laugh-out-loud, bend-over-double funny – and that there had been a lot of dark moments too. But when you're actually there for two weeks, when you leave, you don't leave thinking, 'Oh, it was so dark,' or, 'Oh, it was hilarious,' you leave feeling as if something amazing has happened. And in the end, we wanted to leave the audience feeling the same way we felt."

THREE MILES NORTH OF MOLKOM

THE CREW

Corinna Villari-McFarlane & Robert Cannan (Directors)

Corinna Villari-McFarlane and Robert Cannan met on the set of THE GREAT ECSTASY OF ROBERT CARMICHAEL, which premiered at Cannes in 2005. Their production company, Third Eye Film Productions was set up in 2006.

THREE MILES NORTH OF MOLKOM is their directorial feature debut which premiered at The Edinburgh International Film Festival 2008. To date THREE MILES has won an Audience Award at the 2008 Gothenburg Film Festival and picked up several nominations at international festivals as well as being nominated for Best Documentary at the 2008 British Independent Film Awards.

Rob and Corinna are now in development on an ensemble fiction feature film, an existential adventure story with a comedic edge.

Joseph Russell (Director of Photography)

Joseph Russell has worked extensively as a camera operator on broadcast series dramas such as, HUSTLE and DOCTOR WHO. He has also worked on numerous short films. THREE MILES NORTH OF MOLKOM is his first feature as Director of Photography.

Mike Hill (sound & 2nd camera)

Mike Hill's credits have included both cinematography and sound work. He has just completed filming on K, a British thriller starring Tamer Hassan (CITY RATS, EASTERN PROMISES) and Colin Salmon (CLUBBED, THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH).