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## MADE IN LUXEMBOURG: SCHILTZ & SCHILTZ

Since the Luxembourg co-production *Bad Luck Banging or Looney Porn*, from Romanian director Radu Jude, won the Berlinale Golden Bear this week, it might be a good idea to look at a few films in the Made in Luxembourg section, where documentary and fiction also get intimate with each other in fascinating film hybrids. We'll talk specifically about *Hytte* and *An Zero* below but just a quick note to say here that *Bad Luck Banging or Looney Porn* is of course part of our programme too. It will screen on Wednesday, when the film will have its very first screening for an audience anywhere in the world (Berlin was entirely digital this year). Get your tickets for that as soon as possible, as they are likely to sell out very quickly!

The Luxembourg-produced feature *Hytte* (*The Cabin*) started life as a documentary project about tourism around the tourism hub of Svalbard, Norway, close to the polar circle. But as Luxembourg director Jean-Louis Schuller explored the surroundings and thought about what he wanted to tell, a more fictional film started to develop around Luc (played by Luc Schiltz, from Netflix hit *Capitani* and a jury member at our festival last year). Luc finds himself stranded in a Svalbard hotel. Or, not quite stranded but rather convinced he shouldn't go back to his life in Luxembourg, which is complicated (a separation and a preteen daughter who has to deal with the fallout of it await at home).

But then, in the middle of Svalbard's near-frozen landscapes, the likes of which you would never be able to find in the Grand Duchy, he meets the mysterious Mike (Mike Tock). He turns out to be a Luxembourger as well — what are the odds? Whether Mike is real or really just the subconscious of the protagonist in human form is up for debate, which is part of what makes *Hytte* so fascinating. It is certainly easier to recognize and point out the faults in other people rather than in ourselves — just look at any random divorce in the history of mankind for an example — but *Hytte* takes this one step further and asks: what if that other person turns out to be ourselves after all?

Luc's soul-searching is brought about by the polar landscapes that surround him and that feel completely foreign and it is the sense of being far away from his daily life that initially feels soothing. This feeling is reinforced by Schuller's choice to work mainly with non-professional actors who actually live locally, thereby giving the whole film a strong documentary flavour. But you can never outrun yourself and your problems, so slowly but surely, Luxembourg elements

start to creep into the story again and Luc will have to decide how to deal with them. If you stay somewhere long enough, at a certain point that will start to feel like home. This is a problem when that's what you're trying to run away from.

If *Hytte* looks at one Luxembourger's identity crisis, the docu-fiction drama *An Zero*, also with Schiltz, looks at the possible identity crisis of another country. Directed by Myriam T. and Julien Becker, investigates a nightmare scenario: What would happen if a serious accident occurred at the nuclear power plant just across the Luxembourg-French border? It would most likely result in the contamination of the entire Grand Duchy and would thus erase the entire country from the map, at least physically. Luxembourgers would have to be evacuated, thus creating a likely Luxembourg Diaspora across different countries, which in turn would impact and even endanger things such as Luxembourg culture and the national language: Luxembourgish.

The film interviews experts in various fields who look at different worst-case scenarios while short fictional scenes — in which Schiltz again makes an appearance, this time as the father of a small family — make all their theoretical ruminations feel so much more real. Sometimes, fiction can be reassuring or comforting but in the case of *An Zero*, it quite the opposite happens. One wonders what the French would think about potentially wiping their neighbours off the map just because they want cheap electricity, while for Luxembourgers this must serve as a kind of wake-up call. Let's hope the fictional scenes in the movie will remain confined to this levelheaded exploration of the shocking fallout of a potential nuclear disaster, rather than a rehearsal for the real thing. **BOYD VAN HOEIJ**