

D IS FOR DISTANCE

A Film by
Christopher Petit & Emma Matthews



SYNOPSIS

A film essay montage of contemporary footage, archive and cinema history, about the age of post-truth and how one young man's childhood epilepsy became representative of the woes of the world and how he triumphed against adversity.

DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

In an age of acceleration and instant transfer, an attempt to slow down, to stop and look, to tell a harrowing story in a way that is not depressing, that, among other things, celebrates the history of the moving image from its silent days and music (Holger Czukay, The Everly Brothers, Ennio Morricone). No more road movie, no more flights, a five-day voyage by rail and sea into the realm of post-cinema, in search of a tabula rasa to contrast with the locust swarm of the internet, in search of something, hope perhaps. The film travels to the Arctic Circle to look for a location for a film that will never get made, in pursuit of the secrets of an old spymaster and the dark arts of CIA mind-control experiments that used drugs not so different from those prescribed in 2016 to a twelve year-old boy after he was stricken with epilepsy. For four years these drugs completely messed with his head and none stopped his seizures. His mother's quest to find a cure ends up in a Kafkaesque fight against medical bureaucracy, piecing together the complex case history in a way she has learned as a film editor, obsessively searching and shaping raw material to find new meaning, discovering that whatever else was wrong with the world, this was truly the pharmaceutical age. A film about the conflict between the manufactured and the natural, bad economics, control and being, institutional lies and time running out.

D is for Distance is a film about: Drugs Departure Discord Dialectic Durance Distance Distrust Death Drama Dream Dishonesty Doctors Drive Dallas Detonation Devastation Decline Deception Delight Disruption Despair Delirium Disaster Dread Desperation Deterrent Destination Discovery Disorder Danger Depth Delusion Desolation Drowning Drawing Divinity Deferral Deviancy DVD Dependence Doorways Diazepam Disability Diagnosis Depakine Damage Dragons Doom Division Damnation Dancing Discharges Devils Dopamine Desert Discontent Disinformation Darkness Detritus Digital Demons Deftness Dog Days Deer Dirt Desperados { Distance } = $\sqrt{(x_2 - x_1)^2 + (y_2 - y_1)^2}$

ABOUT THE DIRECTORS

Christopher Petit is a filmmaker whose work has received international retrospectives (Locarno, Sundance, Buenos Aires). His feature films include *Radio On* and *Chinese Boxes*. Other feature-length works include *The Falconer*, *Asylum*, *London Orbital*, *Unrequited Love* and *Content*. He is the author of eleven novels, including *Robinson* and *The Psalm Killer*, reissued in 2016 as a Picador Modern Classic. He has been described by *Le Monde* as the Robespierre of English cinema.

Filmography (selection)

Content (2010)
Unrequited Love (2006)
London Orbital (with Iain Sinclair) (2002)
Asylum (with Iain Sinclair) (2000)
Negative Space (1999)
The Falconer (with Iain Sinclair) (1997)
The Cardinal and the Corpse (with Iain Sinclair) (1992)
Miss Marple: A Caribbean Mystery (1989)
Chinese Boxes (1984)
Flight to Berlin (1983)
An Unsuitable Job for a Woman (1982)
Radio On (1979)

Emma Matthews is co-director with Anthony Wall of *Arena - Night and Day* (BBC, 2016-20, fourteen 24-hour films, drawn from BBC Arena's unique archive of over 600 films, from dawn to dawn, with each version seasonally adjusted according to location and time of year). Her editing work includes many prize-winning arts documentaries whose subjects include James Ellroy, Phil Spector, Bob Marley, Brian Eno, Guy Bourdin, The Sex Pistols, Loretta Lynn, Bob Dylan and Moby Dick. She has cut Chris Petit's films since 1998, including his collaborations with Iain Sinclair — *The Falconer* (1998), *Asylum* (2000), *London Labyrinth*, 2002 — as well as *Unrequited Love* (2006) and *Content* (2010). Her most recent collaboration with Petit and Sinclair was *Pariah Genius* (2024), based on Sinclair's book on London photographer John Deakin.

Elokuvayhtiö Testifilmi is a Finnish artist-run production company focusing on cinematic art. Their previous films include *Failed Emptiness* by Mika Taanila (IFFR 2024), feature doc *Monica in the South Seas* by Sami van Ingen and Mika Taanila (IFFR 2023), short films *Blue Honda Civic* and *Grasshopper* by Jussi Eerola (IFFR 2020 and 2023), *Realms* by Patrik Söderlund (IFFR 2019), *Flame* by Sami van Ingen (IFFR 2018), mid-length pencil animation *Abendland* by IC-98 (Sundance 2016) and the camera-less lettrist feature *Tectonic Plate* by Mika Taanila (Berlinale 2016).

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Directed by
Christopher Petit & Emma Matthews

With
Louis Petit

Narrator
Jodhi May

Script
Christopher Petit

Editor
Emma Matthews

Paintings, drawings and etchings
Louis Petit

Cinematographer
Jussi Eerola

Sound designer
Olli Huhtanen

Graphic designer
Patrik Söderlund

Music from the recordings of
Holger Czukay, The Everly Brothers,
Ennio Morricone, Adrienne Lenker
and others

Additional music
Rio Harada-Parr

Producers
Mika Taanila & Jussi Eerola

Production company
Elokuvayhtiö Testifilmi Oy

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2025 | Finland | colour & b/w | DCP |
88 min | 1:1,85 | dialogue in English
testifilmi #13