



DEFIANT (UHMA) is a portrayal of Vilma, a troubled but strong-minded teenager who ends up in a child welfare institution, where she starts rebelling against the authoritarian staff and a system that fails to address her underlying emotional needs.

[Link to the Trailer](#)

DEFIANT is a gritty and intensive drama about Vilma, who is struggling in her new blended family and ends up in a group home for teenagers. The institution is run by an ambivalent director (Kati Outinen), whose arbitrary treatment Vilma refuses to accept. - *Is there any other solution than to submit or run away, and who is ultimately worthy of trust?*

DEFIANT depicts the conflict of rage and need of love in a young person's inner world - and how to maintain one's own self-esteem in an oppressive and authoritarian environment. Despite its rough subject matter, DEFIANT is also a warm-hearted portrayal of young friendship and coming into terms with one's own feelings.'

## **Director's word - Visa Koiso-Kanttila**

DEFIANT is based on real stories and court cases of young adults who spent their youth in child care institutions in Finland. Despite the intensity of the subject, I wanted Vilma's story to also include hope, warmth, and love. At its core, Vilma's story is about a child's and young person's need to be seen and heard, as well as to be loved and accepted as they are. A key theme is also the relationship between mother and daughter and the effort to reconnect after a broken bond. I hope that DEFIANT also sparks reflection and discussion about parenting, as well as the well-being of children and youth.

## **Director Visa Koiso-Kanttila**

DEFIANT is Visa Koiso-Kanttila's (*Star Boys*, 2017) second feature-length fiction film. Koiso-Kanttila is an award-winning documentary filmmaker and director of feature films, whose documentaries such as *The Banished* (1998), *Father to Son* (2004), and *Portrait of a Man* (2010) have gained international recognition. In his films, Koiso-Kanttila has boldly addressed themes such as the upbringing of boys, relationships between family members and generations, as well as socially excluded youth. In addition to his own directing work, Koiso-Kanttila has worked as a dramaturge, cinematographer and producer in all of the award-winning documentaries by his co-partner Iiris Härmä, including *Leaving Africa* (2015), *Shepherds of the Earth* (2022), and *Mother of Snow Cranes* (2024)."

## **Screenwriter Reeta Ruotsalainen**

Screenwriter of the year 2023 (Finland) Reeta Ruotsalainen has received wide recognition for her previous screenplays, including Aleksis Salmenperä's film *Bubble* (2022) and Taito Kawata's drama series *Dance Brothers* (2023), both of which compellingly portray the world of young people on the threshold of adulthood.

## **Cast**

**Ona Huczkowski** (born 2002) plays the lead role of the strong-willed Vilma. Currently studying at the Theatre Academy, Huczkowski made her debut in Ulla Heikkilä's film *Eden* (2020). In recent years, she has appeared in the drama series *Savela* (2022) as well as in the film *The Grump: Love Story* (2024).

**Kati Outinen** (born 1961) appears in the film as the head of the child welfare institution.

Outinen made her debut in the most-watched Finnish youth film of its time, *Right On, Man!* (1980). An actress, screenwriter, and director, Outinen is best known as a frequent collaborator as an actor for Aki Kaurismäki. She has received recognition both in Finland and internationally, including the Best Actress award at Cannes and the Pro Finlandia award. In 2024, Outinen was honored for her lifetime achievements with both a Betoni-Jussi and an award at the Lübeck Nordic Film Days.

## **Production Company Rabbit Films**

DEFIANT is produced by the award-winning production company Rabbit Films, known for its drama productions, with Tiina Pesonen as producer and Minna Haapkylä and Olli Suominen as executive producers. Rabbit Films, one of Finland's leading production companies, has received numerous awards for its drama and entertainment content as well as films, including the Golden Venla, Jussi award, and Format Finlandia awards. Recent successes for Rabbit include the drama series *Summer of Sorrow* and *Mobile 101*, the feature films *Raptures*, *Bubble* and *MC Helper BeKings*, and the early-year hit series *Queen of Fucking Everything*.

**Technical information**

Finland, 2025

93 min, 2:39:1, 25 fps

Original title: UHMA

International title: DEFIANT

Swedish title: MOTSTÅND

Spoken languages: suomi

Subtitles available: English, Swedish and Finnish SDH (subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing)

Audio description available in Finnish, possibility for translation

**Main crew**

Director and original story by Visa Koiso-Kanttila

Written by Reeta Ruotsalainen

Director of photography Kerttu Hakkarainen F.S.C.

Production designer Saara Joro

Costume designer Maria Sirén

Make-up and hair designer Minna Pilvinen

Editor Matti Näränen F.C.E.

Sound designer Janne Laine

Music by Lau Nau

Production Minna Haapkylä, Olli Suominen, Tiina Pesonen / Rabbit Films

**Key cast**

Vilma - Ona Huczowski

Anneli - Kati Outinen

Matti - Tuomas Nilsson

Krisu - Emmi Parviainen

Niklas - Samuli Niittymäki

Jarno - Jarkko Pajunen

Ilona - Sonja Kuittinen

Yasmine - Tinka Andersson

Ismael - Sami Sowe

Risto - Joonatan Pekola

Pokka - Arttu Lager

Obe - Arvand Rasul

*Defiant (Uhma) is a masterpiece of the young leading actress Ona Huczowski.*

- Salon seudun sanomat, Tommi Aitio

*One of the best Finnish films of all time.*

- Leffahullu, Niklas Willandt

*\*\*\*\* Defiant is full of energy, which comes from both the visual solutions and the young people themselves, and especially from Ona Huczowski's strong performance in the role of Vilma. She makes her breakthrough in this role.*

- Helsingin Sanomat, Leena Virtanen

*\*\*\*\* Vilma's character has a credible intensity. It is an achievement to interpret so credibly a character who has built a hard shell around herself, but whose inner sensitivity shines through at the same time.* - Lapin Kansa, Tenka Issakainen

*\*\*\*\* Visa Koiso-Kanttila's second feature-length film is a realistic and compelling portrayal of the world of young people. Young Ona Huczowski gives a credible performance in the lead role of Uhma, a character who is both unbearable and irresistible.*

- Kaleva, Anssi Juntto

*With Huczowski's rap verses, the film is a thoughtful and skillful drama, a kind of classic film due to its subject matter and location.* - Kaltio, Matti A. Kemi

*Ona Huczowski portrays Vilma as both strong and fragile, and the experienced Visa Koiso-Kanttila directs with a firm hand.* - Episodi, Jouni Vikman

*Drawing on social issues, the film director highlights young people who are misunderstood by adults in Uhma.* - Turun sanomat, Päivi Laajalahti

*Visa Koiso-Kanttila has tackled the painful issues of human life and society in his films. His second fiction film, Uhma, is a shocking film about the arbitrariness of youth homes and the pain of young people.* - Mun Oulu, Pete Huttunen

*Defiant is horrifying and shocking, but it also offers hope. From the script to the cinematography, the drama is a resounding success.* - Oulun Ylioppilaslehti, Pete Huttunen