PRESS KIT JANUARI 2020

HOW TO LIVE IN A WORLD THAT CONFLICTS WITH YOUR IDEALS

SHEEP HERO

SHEEPHERO.NL

a film by TON VAN ZANTVOORT
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‘Openness, peace, space...
A simple life...
Or so I thought.’

Trailers 2 minutes
Movie 81 minutes | password on request
INFORMATION

FILM TITLE
SHEEP HERO

LENGTH
81 min for cinema or tv / 58 min for tv only

THEATRICAL RELEASE DATE NL/ BE/ FR
February 21st 2019/ May 15th 2019 / late 2020

WEBSITE
sheephero.nl

EMAIL
info@sheephero.nl

FACEBOOK
facebook.com/sheephero

IMDB
www.imdb.com/title/tt8486464/

ISAN
ISAN 0000-0004-D799-0000-O-0000-0000-2

SCREENER (FULL MOVIE 81 MIN)
vimeo.com/newtonfilm/sheephero

SCREENER (TV VERSION 58 MIN)
vimeo.com/newtonfilm/sheephero58

TRAILER (2 MIN)
vimeo.com/newtonfilm/sheepherotrailer

SHOOTING FORMAT
RED 3840 x 2160 (4K UHD), color

EXHIBITION FORMAT
DCP 2K flat (1998x1080), XYZ colorspace encoded in JPEG2000

FRAME RATE
25 fps

ASPECT RATIO
1:85 (1998 x 1080)

AUDIO
5.1

OTHER AVAILABLE FORMATS
UHD (3840X2160) / HD h264 mp4 1.78 (16:9) audio LtRt / 25 fps

ORIGINAL TITLE
SCHAPENHELD

GERMAN/ FRENCH/ SPANISH TITLE:
SCHAHELD/ NO WAY / EL HEROE DE LAS OVEJAS

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE
Dutch

SUBTITLES
English / French / Spanish / Greek / Czech

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
The Netherlands

COUNTRIES OF FILMING
The Netherlands / Romania

CATEGORIES
Human interest, intimate portrait, nature, environment, drama, culture, neoliberalism, cultural heritage

DIRECTOR / PRODUCER
Ton van Zantvoort -NEWTON film

DIRECTOR’S FIRST FEATURE LENGTH FILM
yes

CO-PRODUCER
seriousFilm - Marc Thelosen | Koert Davidse

THEATRICAL DISTRIBUTION NL/ BEL/ FR
Windmill Film Distribution (NL) / Bedazzle (BE) / Justedoc (FR)

WORLD SALES
Films Transit International - Jan Rofekamp

DUTCH BROADCASTERS
Omroep Brabant | KRO-NCRV

‘Every two months a shepherd
is taken over by the cartel.’
LOGLINE (11 words, 45 characters)
How to live in a world that conflicts with your ideals?

LOGLINE (17 words, 93 characters)
A traditional shepherd is forced to innovate in a neo-liberal world that conflicts with his idealistic views.

SYNOPSIS (61 words, 274 characters)
Shepherd Stijn has a romantic world view, but his idealism clashes with the harsh reality of having to be a modern entrepreneur. In this poignant and cinematic documentary we come close to Stijn and his family in their quest to keep the tradition of sheep herding alive. Will his struggle pay off or is he forced to go with the flock?

SYNOPSIS (187 words, 915 characters)
SHEEP HERO tells the story of Shepherd Stijn, an outspoken idealist who may have been born in the wrong place and era. He feels at home on the quiet heathlands tending his sheep, far away from today’s hectic Western society. Stijn and his family fight to maintain their quiet and simple life, but this is proving to be increasingly difficult in a densely populated, modern world where the power of money and mass production outweighs good intentions and slow traditions. The family is heading towards a turning point: they can either continue their downward spiral or throw in the towel.

The documentary starts from the romantic idea of living a mindful life as a sheep herder, but then clearly reveals the frustration of a non-conformist who is only trying to live his own life. The beautiful images and storyline of the documentary clearly depict the constant physical and mental struggle of the protagonist as he tries to strike a balance between his ancient profession and being a modern-day entrepreneur. Stijn has to make a choice, does he keep on fighting the system or is there another option?
SYNOPSIS (103 words, 542 characters)
Ten years ago, director Ton van Zantvoort became friends with one of the last traditional Dutch shepherds. Throughout the years he noticed how the relaxed and cheerful shepherd was becoming bitter and short-tempered. A traditional shepherd losing his hair overnight, because of extreme stress: what a paradox. Was herding sheep not supposed to be the most relaxed and romantic profession in the world?

“SHEEP HERO” is a 81-minute, poignant, cinematic documentary about a traditional shepherd who is forced to innovate in a neoliberal world that conflicts with his idealistic views. Will his struggle pay off or is he forced to go with the flock?

SYNOPSIS (294 words)
Ten years ago, director Ton van Zantvoort became friends with one of the last traditional shepherds in the Netherlands. He had a perfect life: a loving wife, a flock of sheep, and was living in nature as we all once did and often still long for. Throughout the years the filmmaker noticed how the relaxed, cheerful and passionate shepherd was becoming bitter and increasingly short-tempered. A traditional shepherd losing his hair overnight, because of extreme stress: what a paradox. Was herding sheep not supposed to be the most relaxed and romantic profession in the world? ‘The silent heath is no longer quiet. There is a war going on in the heathlands’ and so the story began.

Stijn’s environment is closing in on him. In an overregulated society his quest for freedom is a struggle almost too hard to bear. His resentment is palpable, but there is also his stubbornness and determination to see it through to the end. He wants to keep his herd and the heathlands healthy and faces many obstacles along the way. Who looks out for the cultural heritage that is sheep herding? And are we able to salvage beauty amongst all our freeways and advancing industrial zones and suburbs. Life will be irrevocably different if the herd goes, as with it the craft will also vanish. Is it too late to save Stijn’s dream?

With no voice-over and very little interviews, this 81-minute cinematic story is told in an observational cinema vérité style. Where Stijn goes, the camera follows and, as in direct cinema, we become unaware of the camera’s presence.

The feature-length documentary shows the hardships of herding sheep in today’s neoliberal world and the harsh reality of a contemporary entrepreneur trying to keep his business going. Anything but a dream job. Will his struggle pay off or is he forced to go with the flock?
MAIN CHARACTER (57 words)
Shepherd Stijn has chosen to live as a free man, supporting his family in an honest and sustainable way. Or so he thought. But modern neoliberal life has its demands and grinds him down bit by bit. What is left of his freedom, when he’s constantly fighting to protect it? Is there a solution?

(alternative 163 words)
What is interesting about Stijn is that he is not your typical easy-to-like protagonist. He is a true idealist at heart. He believes in people looking out for one another, living in close connection with nature and being self-sufficient. However, he finds his pure, uncompromising way of life more and more at odds with the world around him. A world that is driven by money, technology and mass consumption.

A world that favours those who ‘go with the flock’ and makes it impossible for Stijn to realize his dream. Sure, Stijn is not a born businessman, but it is mainly this contrast between how the world should be and reality that has made him quite bitter. We see a man who is grumpy and jagged, but a loving father and husband at the same time. Stijn keeps at it, looking for new ways to survive and support his family. Trying to get by without losing yourself, isn’t that what we are all doing?

(alternative 105 words)
We all have visions of a happy and free life. Shepherd Stijn is no exception. But unlike many others, Stijn followed that vision. He wanted to live off the land, honest and free, supporting himself and his family in a sustainable way, herding his flock of sheep on the empty heathlands. But in our neoliberal times all space for freedom seems to be eaten up both by European food regulations and by the free market. Stijn feels the fences of life closing in. The only space left is his inner freedom. But he never learned how to handle his anger and bitterness. Is there yet another, final escape?
DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT (522 words)

Ten years ago I became friends with Stijn, one of the last traditional shepherds in the Netherlands. He had a perfect life, a loving wife, was living in nature as we all once did and often still long for. Throughout the years however, I noticed how the relaxed, cheerful and passionate shepherd became bitter and increasingly short-tempered. A traditional shepherd losing his hair overnight, because of extreme stress. How paradoxical. Was herding sheep not supposed to be the most relaxed and romantic profession in the world? ‘The silent heath is no longer quiet. There is a war going on,’ Stijn said to me and so the story began.

We live in a world that is defined by economic laws and this has penetrated deeply into one of the most romantic professions in the world. How does Stijn deal with the frustration of losing control over his existence?

In many ways I am like Stijn. We both live in a world that is at odds with our ideals. I too chose an insecure, creative existence because of my ideals. I am passionate, emotional and also feel outrage against the injustice in the world. In my own way I try to contribute to a better world by making films about these topics. I too experience the tension, pressure and stress that Stijn has, having a family to take care of. I too am a small entrepreneur who cannot escape innovation. Wouldn’t we all like to go back to nature, to real life, to what it’s all about? But how far should you go to try and realise your ideals? And isn’t it easier to just follow the herd?

I see the world around me as a visual, narrative source. Looking at, wondering about and consciously experiencing what is happening around me is a feeling I am trying to instil in the audience. As a filmmaker I look for themes that may seem to only represent small and everyday issues, but I use them to discuss bigger, universal themes. Not in order to make a didactic statement but to encourage viewers to think about themselves, about the world we live in and about what binds us as people.

My films are about people I meet; about the world we live in and how small it has become. Looking back at my films, many protagonists share the same motivation. They are all trying to live and realise their dreams. People who hold up a confronting mirror to us in our relatively carefree existence. These people who suffer the consequences of our capitalist economy, which can only be maintained if there is sufficient growth and profit. That’s why we have to always consume more and produce quicker. It is a paradigm of infinite growth on a finite planet. The unabated global economic growth with its large-scale destruction of global ecosystems, which brings financial gain to only few and high social costs to many, is no longer tenable. Although a growing number of people realise this, there are only few who actually do something about it. People who go against the current, or strive for their ideals, regardless of the cost. This is what appealed to me when I met Stijn. He made a conscious choice for a different, more sustainable lifestyle. But is such a lifestyle still an option in our current society?
‘Large-scale food producers are cutting down on the environment and animal welfare. Men are replaced by machines. They win with cheap production.’

CREW

TON VAN ZANTVOORT | SCRIPT | DIRECTOR | CINEMATOGRAPHER | EDITOR IMDB
Dutch director and cinematographer whose works have screened at numerous prestigious film festivals. His work has been broadcast all over the world and he has won dozens of awards.
newtonfilm.nl | tonvanzantvoort.nl

JOOST SEELEN | SCRIPT & EDITING COACH | IMDB
He focuses on documentaries that challenge and surprise and clearly bear the director’s signature: form and content reinforcing each other. Films that bring the viewer close to the perception of the main characters and in which the special and tense relationship between the individual and the surrounding world plays an important role.
zuidenwind.nl

RALF VERBEEK | CO-EDITOR | IMDB
“You can use as many tricks and manipulations as you want, but the truth and honesty touches the heart of your audience the most. I like to play with that. Film must continue to surprise.”
ralffilm.nl/

GYS ZEVENBERGEN | CO-EDITOR | IMDB
To write is human, to edit is divine. With more than 50 films to his name and even more awards, he is one of the best editors in the Netherlands. Editing makes the movie and Zevenbergen has been editing since 1985; his films have been screened at prominent film festivals around the world ever since.

JEROEN GOEIJERS | SOUND DESIGNER | IMDB
For the past 25 years he has composed music and designed sound for over 200 films for the international industry which have been shown and awarded on many International film festivals (a.o. Toronto, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Berlin, Utah, New York).
jeroengoeijers.nl
CREW

ROY BEMELMANS | MUSIC COMPOSER | IMDB
“Subtlety and impact don’t have to be mutually exclusive.” In this one phrase, composer Roy Bemelmans summarizes the unique musical signature that has established him at the forefront of today’s new generation of orchestral composers. His work draws parallels to peers and heroes such as James Horner, Max Richter and Mychael Danna.
roy-bemelmans.com

OLIVIER NIJS | SOUND | IMDB
To truly find the sound, that’s what I listen for. A matter of craft, trial and error, and being in the right place at the right time. And then when I manage to catch that moment, it just makes my day.
oliviernijs.nl

ANNEROSE LANGEVELD | LINE PRODUCER | SOUND | IMDB
Annerose has been working with the director for more than ten years and they complement each other perfectly. With great precision and diligence Annerose creates work that touches people and makes them think of the role humans play in this world.

MARC THELOSEN | CO-PRODUCER | IMDB
Marc is creative producer at the Rotterdam-based production company seriousFilm. He produced many award-winning art films, animations, film essays, and documentaries, reaching a variety of audiences around the world.
seriousfilm.nl

KOERT DAVIDSE | CO-PRODUCER | IMDB
Koert started his career as a script writer. In 2002 he directed his first long documentary *The Flood*. His second long documentary *Sybold van Ravesteyn: architect for eternity* was seriousFilm’s first production in 2005, since then he delivered over 8 short and long documentaries, and has many more to come.
seriousfilm.nl
DIRECTOR

BIOGRAPHY (139 words)
Ton van Zantvoort (Heesch, 1979) graduated with credits at the Academy for Visual Arts in Breda in 2003. In 2006, his debut film GRITO de PIEDRA premiered at IDFA and was broadcast by ARTE/ZDF and other stations. His second feature a BLOOMING BUSINESS, a co-production with the Dutch VPRO, was screened at major film festivals, broadcast worldwide and won a dozen awards, such as at DOK Leipzig. In addition to producing his own documentary films, van Zantvoort has also produced documentaries for other directors: DAY is DONE* by acclaimed director Guido Hendrikkx (premiered at IDFA), FALLING by Jef Monté and recently a feature length film about the enigmatic artist Dick Verdult. Besides longer films van Zantvoort has made dozens of short (art) films, gives master classes at (art) academies in Europe and Canada and was a jury member for several international film festivals and for organisations such as Panasonic International.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR (122 words)
Ton van Zantvoort observes with great attention and takes us into the worlds of people on the edge, people who try to survive but are confronted by external forces such as tourism, international commerce and mass consumption. With great humanity, van Zantvoort shows us a different world in which all human life is valuable. His films are characterized by a language of intimate images, a poetic structure and enormous involvement. In his lyrical documentaries with socio-economic overtones he usually resists the temptation of doing interviews. His work is original and testifies to a great effort of will by the maker. The vision of a Western civilized person who holds up a mirror to us. A confronting mirror, but one that invites you to take a long good look.

AWARDS AS DIRECTOR (selection)
Green Warsaw Award, Millenium Docs Against Gravity, Poland, 2019
Best European Cinematography award, European Cinematography Awards/ ECA, 2019
La Trois Distribution award, Millenium Film Festival, Brussels, 2019
Best film and best director, NVIFF, New Vision International Film Festival NL, 2019
Top 10 Best of IDFA Audience favourites, IDFA, NL, 2019
Golden NL-Award for best regional broadcasting production of 2015, the Netherlands, 2016
NL Award for best documentary for a regional broadcaster in 2015, the Netherlands, 2016
Trevignano FilmFest Award, Italy, 2013
Honourable mention, best international short film, Planet in Focus, Toronto, Canada, 2011
Audience award & special jury mention, The Art of the Document, Warsaw, Poland, 2010
Golden Olive awards, best documentary & best cinematography, International Festival Montenegro, 2010
Audience award, Millennium Film Festival, Brussels, Belgium, 2010
Press award, best film of the FICA festival, Goiás, Brazil, 2010
Best Treatment jury award, Cinema Planeta, Cuernavaca, Mexico, 2010
Healthy Workplaces Film Award, DOK Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany, 2009
Special mention Open Eyes Award, Med Film festival, Rome, Italy, 2009
Audience award Mixed Greens, Planet in Focus, Toronto, Canada, 2009
Honourable mention, Media city 13, Visual Art Festival, 2007
DIRECTOR

FILMOGRAPHY AS DIRECTOR (selection)

**ALL OF US**, 85 minutes, in production

**SHEEP HERO**, 81 minutes, in co-production with seriousFilm, 2018

**THE BENNO TAPES**, 54 minutes, in collaboration with Van Osch Films, 2015

**Kees en Mien**, 30 min, in co-production with Zuidenwind film, 2011

**a BLOOMING BUSINESS**, 52 min, co-production VPRO, 2009

**GRITO de PIEDRA**, 55 min, 2006, World Premiere IDFA


FILMOGRAPHY AS PRODUCER (selection)

**Dick Verdult** - It Is True But Not Here, 70 min, directed by Luuk Bouwman, 2017

**FALLING**, 25 min, Teledoc Campus, directed by Jef Monté, 2014

The Loving Heart, 71 min, co-producer, camera, editing consultant, directed by Wouter Verhoeven, 2013

**Day is Done***, 30 min, directed by Guido Hendrikx, 2010

FESTIVAL SCREENINGS (small selection)

**National**

**IDFA** International Documentary Film Festival, Amsterdam (2018, 2010, 2006, 2005);

NFF Dutch Film Festival, Utrecht (2014, 2009, 2007, 2005);

**Europe**

DOK Leipzig, Germany; Visions du Réel, Switzerland, Thessaloniki Documentary Film Festival, Greece (2009, 2019);

DOK.fest, München, Festival dei Popoli, Italy; Documenta Madrid, Spain; Millennium Docs Against Gravity, Poland; Docpoint Helsinki, Edinburgh International Film Festival, UK; Art of the Document Multimedia Festival, Poland; Split International Festival of New film, Croatia; International Millennium Film Festival, Belgium;

International Film Festival for Human Rights, various locations in France; International Audiovisual Festival of Biodiversity, Italy; Kinookus FFF, Croatia; Sunchild Film Festival, Armenia; This Human World, Austria; Jihlava IDFF, Czech Republic

**World**

Vancouver International Film Festival, Canada; Planet in Focus, Toronto; Montreal Human Rights Film Festival; Margaret Mead Film Festival & travelling selection, New York, Chicago, Florida, Vermont, Indiana;

BAFICI Buenos Aires; DOCSMX Festival Internacional de Cine Documental, Mexico; Animal & Nature Film Festival, Beijing, China; Film Festival Arlington, Virginia, USA; Duke City DocFest, Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA; Criterio Ambiental, Costa Rica; Short Film Festival, Moscow; International Documentary Festival, Agadir, Morocco
STILLS

click to download high resolution stills
SHEEP HERO a film by Ton van Zantvoort | 81 minutes | presskit | Januari 2020

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ART WORK

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‘It’s a vulnerable, beautiful ecosystem that we should be proud of.
As I see it, the market is raping that system.’

CREDITS (SHORT)

DIRECTOR & CINEMATOGRAPHER TON VAN ZANTVOORT

SOUND ANNEROSE LANGEVELD
IRIS VAN DE RIJT
OLIVIER NIJS

EDITING TON VAN ZANTVOORT
EDITING ADVICE JOOST SEELEN
RALF VERBEEK
GYS ZEVENBERGEN
BARBARA HIN

MUSIC ROY BEMELMANS

SOUND DESIGN JEROEN GOEIJERS

VISUAL EFFECTS AND GRADING NEWTON FILM
GRADING ADVICE RAMON DE JONG
DELIVERIES ROB MAAS

PRODUCTION INTERN IRIS VAN DE RIJT

ENGLISH SUBTITLES JOZEF BRIENEN

CO-PRODUCERS SERIOUSFILM MARC THELOSEN
KOERT DAVIDSE

CO-PRODUCER NEWTON FILM TON VAN ZANTVOORT
LINE PRODUCER NEWTON FILM ANNEROSE LANGEVELD

COMMISSIONING EDITOR OMROEP BRABANT
COMMISSIONING EDITOR DOCUMENTARIES KRO-NCRV
PRODUCER DOCUMENTARIES KRO-NCRV

LOUT DONDERS
JELLE PETER DE RUITER
YOLANDE VAN DER BLIJ

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<td>Nominee</td>
<td>Best International Feature documentary</td>
<td>Red Rock Film Festival (13th)</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<td>Nominee</td>
<td>Best International Feature documentary</td>
<td>Festival Tutti Nello Stesso Piatto</td>
<td>Italy</td>
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<td>Leeds International Film Festival</td>
<td>UK</td>
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<td>Nominee</td>
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<td>Strasburg Film Festival</td>
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<td>International Anthropological Film Festival (8th)</td>
<td>Israel</td>
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<td>Nominee</td>
<td>Best International Feature documentary</td>
<td>LIDF London International Documentary Festival</td>
<td>UK</td>
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Dutch Theatrical release (More than 1000 screenings in 70 theaters) February 21st
Belgium Theatrical release (May 15th) French Theatrical release (coming soon)

Many more festivals coming, see the website: www.sheephero.nl
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‘Our lives are very different.
- We can’t all be the same.’
1. How long did the project take?
10 years ago I became friends with Stijn. From start to finish it took more than 8 years. We shot over the course of two years. Editing took two years, spanning 80 different versions and 2 picture locks. We did many test screenings with different audiences.

2. Why did you choose this way of storytelling?
I wanted to tell the story in an observational cinema vérité style, without a voice-over and with very little interviews that would explicitly emphasize the point I am making. We are very close to Stijn and as in direct cinema we become unaware of the camera's presence. I didn't want to tell the story too obviously, but rather give the audience the sense that they are discovering the story themselves and with it the heart of the film.

3. What point do you want to make?
Is it possible in our neoliberal world not to follow the flock and to what extent? And if we choose to live differently, is it worth the fight? In the film Stijn discovers that shepherds are being recognized as intangible cultural heritage. But what good is that if they are 30K short each year? Towards the end of the film our seemingly traditional shepherd is being ‘exhibited’ on a TV show called ‘Weirdos’, in an episode about bygone times. What do we really think is important in our society?

4. Did you make conscious artistic choices?
Everything is by choice. I wanted the audience to feel Stijn’s stress and get close to him. I explicitly shot with a wide lens, an 1.7 aperture with lots of DOF and handheld to capture the constant movement and tension of the situation. To emphasize this tension, the film is recorded in twilight whenever possible. The sun is only shining in the beginning, but in the rest of the film there is rain, snow, fog, wind and darkness. Most weather effects such as rain and snow were added in post. During writing I already knew I wanted to color grade everything in a ‘sky on fire / blue and orange’ complementary color contrast which underscores the tension and oppression.

5. What was your luckiest shot?
I feel quite lucky with many scenes, as most of the film unfolded as I had anticipated in the years before. For example in the script I wrote “Besides Anna’s husband and father of Midas and Artuur, Stijn in a way is still a child living with his parents. His parents have to clean up his mess.” In the film Stijn is fined because a few sheep droppings were left on the pavement in front of an ice cream parlor. As mom is sweeping up the droppings with a hand brush, the police are writing a report. I do think it has a lot to do with having the nose for being at the right place at the right time. I can’t tell anything about the ending, but I am also satisfied with that.

6. Any challenges during the making?
To show that herding sheep isn’t as romantic as we think, I deliberately focused on Stijn’s moments of stress during shooting. The result however was, when people saw the first rough cut (with Stijn yelling and stressing most of the time), they were taken aback by that side of Stijn. I love Stijn and understand his behavior but the viewers didn’t feel for him the way I wanted them to feel. A struggle during the editing was to create the exact right balance in Stijn’s character: loving and passionate shepherd on one hand, burned out and angry entrepreneur on the other.
For all recent publications visit: www.sheephero.nl

'Bring on those millions.
Step right up, folks.'

Never follow the flock

In Ton van Zantvoort’s Sheep Hero a traditional shepherd tries to survive within a neo-liberal, highly-automated farming industry, under Nik Constantinou.

Nikos is young and idealistic. His livestock trade-in, based on sheep and goat wool, is offered by a large-scale employer who had now taken over their farm, cutting off the back support among the shepherds. He is married to Nicos’s sister and is a farmer himself in the same region where his father had grown up. What’s more, he has a child, a son that is already a constant figure in his own and his brother’s way.

Strangely enough, Nikos is also a very independent farmer, and the lessons that he has learned in his family’s business seem to be the inspiration for his current business. He believes that by keeping his livestock, he can maintain a sustainable and healthy business that is based on the land and the people who work it. Sheep Hero is a rural story of a man who finds his way and, with the support of his family and friends, begins to establish a living for himself.

The cinematography in Sheep Hero is not too ostentatious, but it does build up a strong visual landscape. The director has used a wide-angle lens and a steady camera to create a sense of openness and intimacy throughout the film. The music is composed by Rick van Zantvoort and is a powerful addition to the storytelling.

The message is clear: no matter how difficult life may be, it is possible to find happiness and meaning in it. Sheep Hero is a film that celebrates the power of community and the importance of supporting each other. It also highlights the beauty of rural life and the importance of preserving it for future generations. The film is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the ability to find hope even in the most challenging circumstances.