

## TITLE INFORMATION

**English title:** 1944  
**Original title:** 1944

**Genre:** War drama  
**Run time:** 100 min  
**Release date:** 20.02.2015  
**International premiere (event and year):** National Estonian theatrical premiere 2015 (date as above)  
**Market release date:** European Film Market, Berlin 2015

**Country of origin:** Estonia/Finland  
**Original language:** Estonian/German/Russian  
**Subtitled version(s):** English/Russian  
**Dubbed version(s):** TBA

**Directed by:** Elmo Nüganen

**Written by:** Leo Kunnas

**Produced by:** Kristian Taska and Maria Avdjushko

**Co-producer:** Ilkka Y.L. Matila

**Executive Producer:** Kristjan Rahu

**Director of photography:** Rein Kotov, Mart Taniel

**Production Company:** Taska Film, MRP Matila Röhr Productions

**Edited by:** Tambet Tasuja

**Special effects by:** Frost, Postworks

### Cast:

Kaspar Velberg,  
Maiken Schmidt,  
Kristjan Üksküla

**Sound Editing/Design by:** Jyrkki Rahkonen  
**Sound Mixer by:** Sami Sarhamaa

**Color:** Ivar Taim  
**Screen Ratio:** 2,39:1  
**Frames per Second:** 24  
**Format:** Digital  
**Shooting format:** Digital  
**Sound Format (Dolby, 5.1. etc):** Dolby Digital  
**HD spec:** DCP, HD available

**Any marketable elements such as based on novel etc:** Based on a screenplay written by former military who has participated in three war conflicts personally

## FESTIVAL CONTACT

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# 1944 BROTHERS ENEMIES



## “1944” TELLS THE STORY OF ESTONIA DURING WORLD WAR II

In September 1939 the Soviet Union demands the establishment of Red Army military bases on the Estonian territory. A refusal would mean a war. Estonia surrenders without a fight and is occupied. The Republic of Estonia ceases to exist.

A hope that surrendering is a way to save Estonia from war turns out to be an illusion. In World War II around 55,000 Estonians are mobilised into the Red Army and at least 72,000 into the German armed forces. Estonians are forced to fight brother against brother in a war of others – in a deadly battle between the Soviet Union and the Greater German Reich – where they have nothing to win.

The director Elmo Nüganen has created a feature film about the events of war in Estonia in 1944. The action of “1944” spans from the Battle of Tannenberg Line in July to the occupation of the Sõrve peninsula by the Red Army at the end of November. The war is depicted through the eyes of Estonians fighting on either side, in the German army and in the Red Army.

Waffen-SS\* volunteer Karl Tammik is seventeen years old, when his parents and younger sister are deported to Siberia in 1941. He has a lucky escape – he’s simply not at home on the day of the deportation.

Repressions organised by the Soviet power in the years 1940 and 1941 – arrests of innocent people, deportations and executions – motivate many Estonians to join the German, their all- time historic enemy. Karl is one of them. By the summer of 1944 he is an experienced front-line soldier of the Estonian 20th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS.

Jüri Jõgi, senior sergeant of the Red Army, is summoned to the Estonian Defence Forces in 1939 to perform his military service. In June 1940 his unit watches the Red Army march in.

“Without much warning, we ourselves were part of the Red Army only a couple of months later,” he says. When the war breaks out, their unit retreats towards Leningrad. In late autumn 1941 all the Estonians mobilised into the Red Army are gathered up and sent to labour battalions, where around 12,000 Estonian citizens die of hunger, disease and exhaustion, as their living conditions are worse than in prison camps.

When an Estonian body of troops – the 8th Estonian Rifle Corps – is formed in the Red Army at the beginning of 1942, it means a narrow escape for Jüri and the rest of the survivors. By the summer of 1944 Jüri has become an experienced non-commissioned officer who knows that he serves in an army where only those survive who can keep their mouth shut.

The fate of the Estonian people in World War II is conveyed through the stories of these two main characters, their comrades in arms and those close to them. It’s a different story than the one of the winners or losers of the big war.

In World War II Estonia loses around 300,000 people, one in four inhabitants. Nevertheless, the story has a happy ending: on August 20th 1991 the independence of the Republic of Estonia is restored without a single victim.

\* Estonians ended up in the Waffen-SS, because only the German citizens were allowed to serve in the German defence force, Wehrmacht. Most of the combatants had been mobilised, they were not volunteers.

