



Seniors' Matinee

Blue Heron

Blue Heron

Directed by: Sophy Romvari

©: Nine Behind Productions Ltd.,
Boddah Riotfilm Kft

A Nine Behind, Boddah production

Produced with the participation of:

Téléfilm Canada, The Talent Fund,

The National Film Institute Hungary

In association with: Memory, Tinygiant, Ursa Major

Produced with the participation of:

The Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit

Executive Producers: Riel Roch-Decter,

Neil Champagne, Veronica Diaferia, Sara Eolin,

Jasmin Karibzhanova, Lauren Melinda,

Sam Sutcliffe, Leah CL

Producers: Ryan Bobkin, Sara Wylie,

Sophy Romvari, Gábor Osváth

Associate Producers: Maya Bankovic, Helena

Sardinha, Rafael Thomaseto, Jessica Wadsworth

Production Manager: Jessica Wadsworth

Post-production Supervisor: Éva Haraszin

1st Assistant Director: Kane Stewart

2nd Assistant Director: Boldizsár Romvári

Script Supervisor: Kane Stewart

Hungarian Casting by: Metanoia Casting

Casting Director [Hungary]: Hermina Fátyol

Vancouver Casting by: Angela Quinn Casting

Casting Director [Vancouver]: Angela Quinn

Written by: Sophy Romvari

Director of Photography: Maya Bankovic

Additional Photography: Laurel K. Brown,

Jessica Johnson

B Camera Operator: Jessica Johnson

1st Assistant Camera: Chris Merrell

B-camera 1st Assistant Camera: Ryan Ermacorá

2nd Assistant Camera: Shakila Keyani

Gaffer: Laurel K. Brown

Key Grip: Andriy Lyskov

Vancouver Stills Photographer: Felix Rapp

Vancouver Island Still Photographer:

Robb McCaghren

Visual Effects: Dániel Berger

Edited by: Kurt Walker

Production Designer: Victoria Furuya

Art Director: Jae-Woo Kang

Costume Designer: Maria Katarina

Hair and Make-up Designer: Brooke Sovdi

Title Design: Brandon Winters

Colourist: Máté TERNYIK

Music Supervisor: Jody Colero

Additional Music Supervisor: Alec Hanham

Music Supervisor: Amanda Clemens

Production Sound Mixer: Colin Williscroft

Re-recording Mixer: Péter Benjámín Lukács

Supervising Sound Editor: Péter Benjámín Lukács

Sound Editor: Bálint Zándoki

Foley: Balázs Györi

Stunt Co-ordinator: Jennifer Clarke

Cast:

Eylül Guven (Sasha)

Iringó Réti (mother)

Ádám Tompa (father)

Edik Beddoes (Jeremy)

Liam Serg (Henry)

Preston Drabble (Felix)

Amy Zimmer (adult Sasha)

Lucy Turnbull (Emma)

Jecca Beauchamp (Becky)

Georgia Blake (Ashley)

Matthew Rankin (child psychologist)

Kalvin Olafson (Paul)

Kelly Fennig (police officer)

Allie Shapiro (90s family support worker)

In one of her early short films, *Grandma's House* (2018), Sophy Romvari documented her late grandmother's flat in Budapest. Each shot showed a different room, all of them eerily quiet, in grainy digital lo-fi, followed by Romvari holding up a photograph taken in the same place decades before: the spot where her grandmother once watered flowers was now an empty balcony; where once a lively dinner party, now a nondescript corner. The beauty of these photographs is what will eventually make them so painful – they have fixed in time a happiness that the director can never return to, and which she might not even recognise. The physical image stays the same, even as her memory of the scene it depicts fades and falters, even after everyone in the photo has died.

Across her filmography – a string of fiction and documentary shorts leading up to *Blue Heron*, her semi-autobiographical debut feature – Romvari has returned to the motif of the family photograph. In *Still Processing* (2020), she filmed herself reacting to a box of childhood photographs seen for the first time, years after the deaths of her two older brothers. In tears, she calls her surviving brother: 'I don't remember that part of my life.'

At first glance, one might read the early scenes of *Blue Heron*, which restage Romvari's childhood through the character of Sasha (Eylül Guven), as an attempt to recreate childhood moments with the same clarity as those photographs. One scene is set in a darkroom, where Sasha's father makes black-and-white prints much like the ones seen in *Still Processing*.

But look closely, and you'll see these sequences – shot in sun-kissed, saturated colour, as if projected from a Kodachrome slide – are just as fallible as the memories they seek to reconstruct. The central tension of the film, Sasha's parents' strained relationship with her recalcitrant, self-destructive brother Jeremy, is only ever viewed obliquely, often from young Sasha's point of view. The camera regularly presents a shallow-focus child's-eye view, zooming in to magnify certain details in the frame only to obscure others. You feel constantly that there is some deeper reality you cannot quite make out. Though Sasha overhears snatches of conversations – a distressed telephone call, a meeting with a social worker – she never fully understands what's happening around her. Perhaps she never will.

In a metatextual turn in the film's second half, we jump ahead in time to follow the adult Sasha (Amy Zimmer), now a filmmaker working on a project about her childhood with Jeremy. But this manifests less as a process of cathartic healing than as a pattern of unconscious, Freudian repetition, revisiting the site of trauma over and over without being able to move on. Sasha pores over Jeremy's old case file; she replicates a past phone conversation between her mother and a friend; she imagines herself as the social worker she saw as a child. None of it seems to bring her any closer to the truth. 'My image of him now,' she confesses, 'falls flat compared to reality.' This is another painful paradox of memories: the harder you chase them, the more you overwrite, until there is nothing of the original moments left.

Romvari's repetitions recall the concentrated, rigorous style of Chantal Akerman, whom she has cited as an influence (in one scene, Sasha's mother can be seen peeling potatoes à la Jeanne Dielman). Akerman too was

Beverly Anderson, Lisa LaFlamme, Brett Maletic,
Desiree Symons, Samraj Singh, Daniel Teak,
Sara Wylie (*social workers*)
Bonnie Murrell (*present-day family support worker*)
Boldizsár Romvári (*neighbour*)
Frank Pluta (*man at gas station*)
Hector (*Hecky*)
Canada-Hungary-USA 2025
90 mins
Digital

A Conic Films release

Become a BFI Member

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

Sight and Sound

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**, the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine. Subscribe from just £25*
* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK only). More info:
sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk/subscribe



BFI Player

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk

Join the BFI mailing list for regular programme updates. Not yet registered? Create a new account at www.bfi.org.uk/signup

preoccupied with her own family throughout her career; the distilled, cyclical monotony of a film like *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975) was meant to honour her mother's experiences, showing scenes in real time rather than 'cutting the woman into a hundred pieces.'

We might think of *Blue Heron's* ouroboros-like structure in similar terms: as a way of faithfully depicting the ruthlessly circular pattern of grief experienced by her family. But unlike *Jeanne Dielman*, which eventually builds to a fever pitch of violence, in *Blue Heron* there is no such climax. The film's bifurcated structure quietly omits its central tragedy, creating a lacuna at the film's heart. So much is missing in this film, so much of the story has not been – cannot be – reconstituted. Only scraps are left: drawings, psychiatrists' reports. The film's self-referential approach to trauma has drawn comparisons to Charlotte Wells's *Aftersun* (2022), but it reminded me more of the frame narrative in *The Secret Agent* (2025), people in the present left with only tape recordings and newspaper reports to piece together a half-complete picture of the past.

Towards the end the gap between past and present is, briefly, bridged by a Rivettian magic trick. Sasha travels back in time to her childhood, to be reunited with Jeremy and speak to her parents. There, we finally learn what happened to Jeremy later in life, but everything is stated in the future tense – not that this happened, but that this will happen and, crucially, that you will not be able to stop it.

When I first watched *Blue Heron*, part of me balked at this gesture. It felt cold, wrong somehow to accept the inevitability of the situation, to surrender so easily to teleology. It is a film: why not break the rules? Why not bend time and space a little more? Why not give Jeremy, who has scarcely three lines of dialogue in the film, a chance to speak his piece?

But the answer to these questions is, again, precisely what makes Romvari's story so moving: that in the real world, time and space did not bend for her family, that the real Jeremy is not here today, and so cannot speak for himself. Sasha does not kid herself that the past can be rewritten, or that art might redeem suffering, as if grief were a problem to be solved.

In *Blue Heron* there are no solutions, nothing that can make up for what has been lost. Instead, the film offers quiet, bittersweet acknowledgement: that you might never make sense of your grief; that no amount of remembering will help you understand it; that you nonetheless want to go on remembering.

Ian Wang, *Sight and Sound*, Summer 2026