VAHTERUS

9.11.2026
For immediate release

An Industrial Symphony

Award-winning director and screenwriter Juha Lehtola has directed a film about Vahterus.

Juha Lehtola's film Vahterus will premiere on Monday, 16 November 2026. The film tells the story of Vahterus and its journey from a small local heat-exchanger manufacturer to a major international enterprise. Success stories often have modest beginnings, and this one is no exception.

"I was made redundant and had to come up with something else," says **Mauri Kontu** regarding the founding of the company in 1990. "We built our first production facilities in my parents' empty cowshed."

The founding members also include Kontu's wife, **Sinikka Kontu**, and his brother, **Aappo Kontu**. The film covers the company's stages, ups and downs, over a period of 35 years. Touching personal storytelling blends together with engineering workshop aesthetics, Finnish rural landscapes, and National Romantic music. "We came up with our own genre for this: an industrial symphony," says Juha Lehtola.

When Lehtola was first asked to direct the film, he hesitated because he could not find an engaging angle. A couple of years later, after reading about the extreme surveillance of employees at an international company, an idea suddenly struck him: human-centred leadership.

"The corporate culture at Vahterus is people-oriented and distinctive. It felt meaningful to highlight that a successful business can also be led this way," Lehtola explains.

Lehtola says the film has promotional elements, but he was not interested in directing a typical corporate video focused on executive management. Those tend to remain distant from what happens in the company's day-to-day operations.

"We decided to focus on concrete things – for example, what welding actually is. It is a genuine art form in its own right," Lehtola says. Welding is also a key element in Mauri Kontu's original innovation that has been crucial to the company's success: the concept of a plate heat exchanger that, thanks to its fully welded structure, operates safely without gaskets.

Created using observational documentary techniques, the film was three years in the making, with footage gathered over two and a half years. The project was long, which brought its share of unexpected turns. Midway through filming, Mauri Kontu joined the Parliament of Finland as a Member for the Centre Party.

"You can only plan the making of a film like this to a certain extent," says Lehtola. "I am very pleased with how the final piece turned out, twists and all."

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Alongside strong visuals, music plays a central role in creating the film's atmosphere. The score was composed by **Eeva Kontu**, Chief Conductor of the Helsinki City Theatre, together with **Tony Sikström**, and features performances by a string ensemble, among others. "I was invited to join the project because of the family connection, and the task felt natural as I grew up in the world of Vahterus," Eeva Kontu says.

"The secret of Vahterus lies in Sinikka and Mauri's values – the way they care for their employees and respect everyone's contribution. A slightly grand, Sibelian, Finnish National Romantic score feels like a fitting match for the story," says Eeva Kontu.

Mauri Kontu hopes the film conveys that the company was built together with its customers and employees. "Through Vahterus's products, we have played our part in fostering energy conservation and sustainable development for future generations. It is important for me to make clear that this wasn't achieved alone, nor is it just a single family's affair," he says.

Juha Lehtola considers the film's greatest success to be how naturally and openly the people featured spoke about their lives. In the end, the story of Vahterus is a story about the people who built it. And the work continues.

The film will be available for streaming in December.

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