



**BORDERLINES  
FILM FESTIVAL**

**THE NETTLE DRESS (12A)**

Director: Dylan Howitt

UK, 2023, 1 hour 7 minutes, English

A modern-day fairy-tale and hymn to the healing power of nature and slow craft. Textile artist Allan Brown spends seven years making a dress from scratch, using only fibre of locally foraged stinging nettles. This is 'hedgerow couture', the greenest of slow fashion. It is also the medicine that helps Allan survive the death of his wife, Alex, which leaves him and their four children bereft.

'Grasping the Nettle' is at the heart of this story. The challenge of making zero carbon clothing means relearning ancient crafts: foraging, spinning, weaving, cutting and sewing. For Allan, making a dress this way becomes devotional and healing. "While making the dress over all these years, I felt like I was being transformed by the nettles rather than the other way around", Says Allan. "When Alex was ill and going through chemotherapy, as so as I began spinning yarn, I felt calmer. It became much more than just a piece of cloth; it's been woven with the stories of people who know and love you."

The dress took seven years to complete and is made using 14,400 feet of thread, with each one representing hours of loving attention. Finally, the dress is worn in the woods where the nettles were picked, by Oonagh, one of Allan's daughters. Director Dylan Howitt says: "There's a rich history of textiles across the UK and today so many people are involved in the revival of foraging, traditional crafts and looking at how to make things is a more sustainable way. The Nettle Dress is part of that conversation."

Dylan Howitt has been directing, filming, and editing compelling stories from all around the world for more than twenty years. Twice BAFTA nominated, his work is both intimate and political. From Mozambican artists creating sculptures out of decommissioned guns, to running video and story-telling workshops with young people in Guatemala City, or a portrait of a death row survivor in Ohio. His first feature documentary *Out of Thin Air* for BBC Storyville and Netflix told the story of Iceland's most notorious crime case and won rave reviews. *The Nettle Dress* is his second feature length film made for cinematic release. He says: 'I'm interested in finding new ways to tell stories about nature. I see our film as a love story about nettles, about connecting with the natural spaces where we live and the solace to be found there. It's a kind of fable about finding a slower, simpler, more connected way to do things that is more in tune with the natural world.

Ahead of the national release, *The Nettle Dress* received the Audience Award at its first outing at the Cinecity Festival last November. The documentary has been something of a word-of-mouth phenomenon since, previewing to packed houses in more than 50 cinemas throughout the UK.

*"Tender, meditative and magical"* Sight & Sound

*"Gorgeous...each frame of film is like a beautiful painting."* Jackie Morris, artist

Preview courtesy of Dartmouth Films

Notes compiled by Leah Johnson