

The Last Journey [PG]

2024 Sweden 95 mins

UK released **20 June 2025**

Director **Filip Hammar; Fredrik Wikingsson**

Cinematography **Erik Persson; Erik Vallsten; Robin Trollin**

Music **Christian Olsson**

Cast **Filip Hammar; Fredrik Wikingsson; Lars Hammar**

Unfolding as a humorous and heartbreaking road movie, the highly relatable “The Last Journey” is a tender portrait of the love that filmmaker Filip Hammar bears for his ailing 80-year-old father Lars. Hoping to rekindle the older man’s zest for life, Filip and his best friend and co-director Fredrik Wikingsson drive him to the French coastal town where they used to spend their holidays, but in the end, it’s the in-denial Filip who must come to grips with the indignities that aging brings and what time makes inevitable. On another level, the film serves as a tribute to teachers and an affirmation of how inspirational and memorable the good ones can be.

It’s the first feature for Hammar and Wikingsson, who both started their careers as journalists but are now well-known in their native Sweden for their decades-long collaborations as unconventional television personalities, podcast hosts and authors. They bring some of their trademark spontaneity and chaos to the mix in “The Last Journey,” which also blends in home movies and tape recordings made by the Hammar family.

In 2008, when the still-vital Lars retired from teaching high school French in his hometown of Köping at the age of 66, he was looking forward to a productive “troisième âge.” But by 2022, he’s afflicted by mysterious pains and barely wants to get up from his comfortable armchair.

Filip seizes on the deluded notion that he can somehow restore Lars to his former health and frame of mind if he brings him back to his beloved France. After tracking down an orange Renault 4, the one-time family automobile, he packs up his reluctant father. With Wikingsson, who

becomes the voice of reason, in the rear seat, they set out for Beaulieu-sur-Mer.

Naturally, the long trip does not go as expected, and the Renault, which has a maximum speed of 40 miles per hour, becomes the most overtaken car in Europe. But during the journey, the cinematography gets a chance to shine, capturing the autumnal beauty of the local vegetation, roads, bridges and skies. And a buoyant score by Christian Olsson and the incorporation of French language songs by Lars's favourites Jacques Brel and Georges Brassens suits the material and makes for pleasant listening.

Even if Lars will never again be the lively and energetic father that Filip idealizes, he still comes off as a wise and pragmatic soul. He's a modest man with a good sense of humour whose sincere love for France and some of that country's craziest foibles shines through.

Some of the funniest moments come as Filip and Fredrik seek to recreate situations that Lars once encountered and enjoyed. Given that French traffic practices used to provide him a source of fascination, they stage a typical scene with actors. But a pissed-off parrot that dips its beak into a beer glass isn't as easy to find.

The most touching scene comes near the end, with a final surprise that Filip and Fredrik stage along the stretch of beach where Lars has requested his ashes to be scattered after his death. If it doesn't bring viewers to tears, it will certainly have them phoning their parents.

Alissa Simon, *Variety*, 12 October 2024 (abridged)

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