

SEACHD

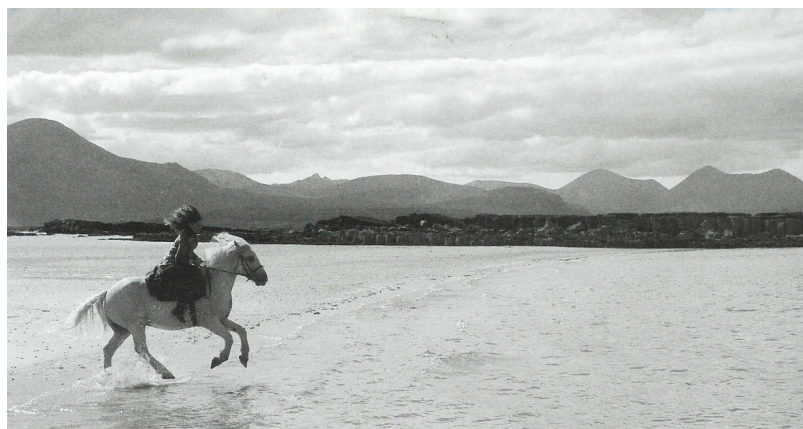
Scotland, UK 2007 90 min

Credits

Director	Simon Miller
Writers	Joanne Cockwell Iain Finlay MacLeod Aonghas Macneacail Simon Miller Iseabail NicDhomhnaill
Music	Jim Sutherland
Cinematography	Ian Dodds
Editing	Angus Mackay
Seanair	Aonghas Pàdraig Caimbeul
Aonhgas - aged 7	Pàdruig Moireasdan
Donnchadh - aged 9	Crisdean Domhnallach
Mairi - age 11	Winnie Brook Young
Grandmother	Dolina MacLennan
Aonghas - age 20	Coll Dòmhnallach
Eardsaidh	Daibhidh Walker
Am Mac Bu Shine	Aonghas MacDhomhnaill
Ciara Gunnach	Annie NicLeoid
Athair Ciara	Martainn Mac an t-Saoir
An Diuc	Toby Robertson
Patrick Loch	Scott Handy
Spainnteach	Vidal Sancho

Synopsis

Làn fhirinn na sgeòil. The truth is in the story. When a young man, Angus, visits his dying Grandfather in hospital he cannot hold back his boyhood quest for the truth - the truth behind the death of his parents and the truth behind his Grandfather's ancient, incredible, fearful stories. Stories from the whole swathe of Gaelic history of poisoned lovers, bloody revenge, water-horses and Spanish gold. His Grandfather hijacks Angus' life for one last time leading him to one of Scotland's most treacherous mountains, The Inaccessible Pinnacle, and an ancient truth he never expected to find.



"No one can tell the truth - just stories." So concludes Aonghas' enigmatic grandfather (played by renowned poet and storyteller Aonghas Pàdraig Caimbeul) as he approaches the end of his life in this Scottish Gaelic tale about a childhood on the Islands. It's a film specifically about storytelling, and about the firm location of old stories in particular landscapes. A fitting theme for the first ever feature film in Scottish Gaelic.

The "Inaccessible Pinnacle" of the title is the name of a particularly unclimbable peak on the Black Cuillins of Skye - the most rugged and spectacular mountain ridge in Britain. The pinnacle is also the mythical location where a hero finally finds the Crimson Snowdrop, with which he must save the life of his comatose lady-love, in the Gaelic folk tale of the same name. And in *Seachd*, it's also the place where the parents of our young hero Aonghas met their untimely death in a climbing accident. This is the film's central preoccupation: the way in which geography takes on meaning, through references in personal and mythical history, in stories. It's impossible, the film argues, to understand this landscape without also knowing its stories; in turn, it's impossible to understand the stories without knowing the landscape from which they flow.

And Miller's film is surely rich in stories. *Seachd* includes fully developed cinematic renderings of a number of period yarns, from several eras in the history of the Gaeltachd - one tale from the time of MacBeth; one from the Clearances; another set in the 1920s. In each case, the storyteller is Aonghas' grandfather, the imposing figure whose imminent death, years later, frames the story of young Aonghas' childhood. What's interesting here is the careful way in which Miller relates Aonghas' memories of his childhood to his memories of imagined stories in childhood - and uses images of specific landscapes to do this. By using visual echoes in this way, the film explores the way in which people's imagination and memory are formed by the landscape in which they grow up, and conversely about the way in which people invest landscape with particular meanings from the stories they hear. Stories and physical artefacts become inextricably tied together, at least in Aonghas' memory. Filmed on location on the Isle of Skye, and boasting some phenomenal landscape cinematography by Ian Dodds, *Seachd* is a literate, captivating success. Just the thing for anyone who loves a good story...

Edinburgh International Film Festival, James Rice