

## DENMARK AT WAR

Winning the Blue Angel in 2002, the director-writer duo Annette K. Olesen and Kim Fupz Aakeson are back in Berlin for the fourth time with the drama *Little Soldier*, running in Competition.

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## SOLIDARITY AND OTHER EMBARRASMENTS

Max' mom is the mother of all embarrassing mothers. Lotte Svendsen's family comedy *Max Embarrassing* and the two shorts *The Mouse* and *Cathrine* are selected for the Generation programme.

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## SHOOTING STAR 2009

He has a face that was made for the camera: a burst of red hair over gorgeous eyes and the jaw-line of a classic screen hero. Cyron Melville is Danish Shooting Star 2009.

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# #65

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COMPETITION **LITTLE SOLDIER**  
THE MOUSE, MAX EMBARRASSING GENERATION KPLUS  
CATHRINE GENERATION 14PLUS  
CYRON MELVILLE SHOOTING STAR

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Director Lotte Svendsen and actress Mette Horn. Photo: Gitte Sofie Hansen



*Aching Hearts*. Photo: Martin Dam Kristensen



*When Heaven Falls*. Framegrab



Tine Fischer, Jacob Neiiendam and Füsün Eriksen. Photo: Per Morten Abrahamsen



Mads Mikkelsen in *Valhalla Rising*. Photo: Dean Rogers

## REAL LIFE IS ALWAYS ANOTHER STORY / COMPETITION

Nothing is more inconvenient than realities you would rather forget. Not so for Annette K. Olesen, whose drama *Little Soldier* brings the war in Afghanistan and human trafficking to light. **PAGE 3**

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"The embarrassment we describe has to do with certain values that have been hidden away for some time." Actress Mette Horn and director Lotte Svendsen on their family comedy *Max Embarrassing* about Max and his nerdy mom. **PAGE 6**

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# REAL LIFE IS ALWAYS ANOTHER STORY



Strong performances by Finn Nielsen and Trine Dyrholm as father and daughter in *Little Soldier* Photo: Mike Kollöffel

**Denmark is at war. As a nation, we'd rather not think about it. Not so for Annette K. Olesen, whose *Little Soldier*, written by Kim Fupz Aakeson, tells the dramatic story of a woman soldier who returns from Afghanistan, traumatised and rootless. Their fourth time in Berlin, the director-writer duo won the Blue Angel in 2002 for *Minor Mishaps*.**

BY KIM SKOTTE

Denmark, this tiny peace-loving nation, has stood among the staunchest supporters of America's War on Terror. Denmark sent troops to Iraq and is currently on the ground in Afghanistan, as casualties steadily mount.

Denmark is at war. It's hard to believe, judging from the way the returning troops are received. The whole thing looks like nothing so much as

denial. People prefer not to learn too much about the soldiers and their bloody realities: killing and being killed. The veterans aren't hailed in Copenhagen's Town Hall Square or showered in flags and flowers, the reception bestowed upon sports champions returning from arenas of peaceful competition.

Danish veterans are more likely to be scolded by their fellow countrymen, who do not generally back the government's uncompromising support for America's wars. Mostly, though, the returning veterans are all but invisible.

#### SCREAMING SILENCE

"If someone is a victim in a bank robbery or traffic accident, we are very concerned with what happens to them afterwards. But when it comes to the soldiers, we forget that they have been through events that are probably much worse," director Annette K. Olesen says.

A majority of parliament routinely sweeps aside any debate about Denmark's participation in the war with reference to national unity. Still, resignation alone is not enough to explain the screaming silence that prevails. Maybe it's simply more convenient not to think about Denmark's distant war and the bloody chaos that easily becomes an abstraction at such a remove.

"We aren't crazy about conflict. And if we must deal with it, we prefer to add a clever twist to let people know everything is going to be all right. That's fine in some cases, but it's not always useful," the 43-year-old director says.

*Little Soldier* was conceived in close collaboration with screenwriter Kim Fupz Aakeson. For the past decade, Aakeson has been one of the two most influential Danish screenwriters. Fupz, as he is known, has worked with Olesen on all of her four features. The first, *Minor Mishaps*, won the Blue Angel award in Berlin, 2002. It's the only one of her

films that can reasonably be said to contain elements of comedy. Otherwise, her films are dead serious.

Her second film, the prison drama *In Your Hands*, also competed in Berlin, in 2004, and was followed by *One to One*, a drama set in a Danish ghetto, in 2006. Now, in 2009, she is bringing us *Little Soldier*. Her films all share a desire to explore reality through the prism of her characters' – especially her female characters' – development.

#### INCONVENIENT REALITIES

*Little Soldier*'s Lotte (Trine Dyrholm) is back from Afghanistan, her contract prematurely terminated. Something has happened. Something violent. Clearly traumatised and rootless, she is sloshing around at the bottom of a vodka bottle in a small provincial town. She finds a path of sorts in life when she gets back in touch with her father, a trucking company operator and a pimp (Finn Nielsen). He's not a good father by any measure, but he's all she's got. He gives Lotte a job as a driver and bodyguard for an African prostitute, Lily (Lorna Brown), who is also his mistress. An intense triangle drama ensues between father, daughter and prostitute, revealing many surprising facets.

Now, the film is suddenly about two issues that have something in common: no one in Denmark likes to think or talk too much about them. One is the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the other is human trafficking and prostitution. Let it be said, though, that *Little Soldier* is not a typical "issue film" with cut-and-dry conclusions or bombastic, boilerplate messages. More accurately, it's a non-didactic examination of certain inconvenient realities in today's Danish society, shining a light into some dark corners.

#### THE CHAOS OF WAR VS. PROVINCIAL LIFE

Olesen and Aakeson did their homework. They interviewed returning veterans and prostitutes in the Danish provinces and called on experts from police and social authorities. The story is drawn from real-life experiences – what real people have experienced, thought and felt, what their experiences tell them. That's the duo's method.

"The soldiers told us what it was like to come home," Olesen says. "They told us about such a basic thing as sound. The sounds are different when you come home. Living in a place where you have to be on guard around the clock makes you much more sensitive to sound. Sound is a sign of danger. We tried to build that into Lotte's character, along with the lack of an ability to communicate. She can't communicate what she's been through. It's like that with very difficult things. Facing death, it's as if we have no language. People die in our society, of course, but usually in a very discreet and orderly fashion. In Iraq, people were amidst chaos. There's nothing orderly about death over there."

The contrast between the chaos of war and a slumbering Danish provincial town is striking. Coming home and having to deal with things as trite as the price of a carton of milk or a blouse on sale, small everyday things, idle gossip, is utterly impossible for some veterans. It can even arouse a kind of aggression in them, Olesen says.

Again, this can be hard for veterans to talk about – that the things everyone else is consumed with all seem blatantly meaningless. Who do you turn to, then? A lot of veterans shut themselves up in their apartments and lose touch with the outside world. This happens to Lotte in *Little Soldier*, until events

conspire to lure her back outside. When she meets voluptuous Lily struggling through life, the film's two themes come together.

#### PROSTITUTION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

"Prostitution is another problem we prefer not to confront," Olesen says. "It was hard for me, too, to know what to think. I'm a woman and I wouldn't dream of prostituting myself. I couldn't imagine anything more degrading and awful. So the knee-jerk reaction is to condemn it. Still, this is a good example of how productive it can be to work the way Fupz and I did. Real life, researching real life, always tells other stories than we could make up.

"We came in touch with an environment that had whole other problems than we thought it would. I was sure we'd come face to face with thousands of women chained to radiators in dark provincial cellars! But it's not like that. Most of these women arrive here with their eyes open. Some are refugees from poverty.

"I think we have to keep things separate and treat human trafficking and prostitution as two different things." Working on *Little Soldier* gave her a much more nuanced view of prostitution – an area that growing numbers of people are in favour of prohibiting.

"I find it scary that we assume to tell grown adults that the way they are living their lives is wrong, when what they're doing doesn't actually hurt anyone," the director says. "We can't help condemning them. But the result is that we let our feelings about prostitution cloud the issue of human trafficking, the fact that some people are here against their will."

#### UNPREDICTABLE, REAL-LIFE FEEL

A debate about real-life issues is qualified by adding nuances to your descriptions of the people involved. Examining real life in a film – and, in turn, changing both the filmmakers' and the audience's perspectives – is fundamental to Olesen and Aakeson's way of working.

"It wasn't particularly premeditated, taking up the topics of Iraq and human trafficking," Olesen says. "Our process is more chaotic. We mainly do our research to be able to create believable characters, not so much for the story itself. What fascinated me more about juxtaposing a female soldier and a prostitute was the contrast between them sexually. They are, so to speak, in separate camps in terms of their femininity and emotions. Lotte has essentially shut down her femininity, while Lily, both physically and mentally, loudly expresses hers."

Though it's been a while now since she wrapped the film, there's no question that the characters Lotte and Lily have taken on a life of sorts for the director. They are people who act, think and feel, not just pieces in a well-designed plot, following established dramaturgical rules of narrative, thematics and genre.

There is, in fact, an unpredictable real-life feel to Lotte and Lily that rings unmistakably true ■



*Little Soldier* Photo: Mike Kollöffel

For further information on *Little Soldier*, see reverse section.

# GUTS AND CURIOSITY

“She can’t stand a false note  
– she won’t tolerate it.”

Annette K. Olesen about Trine Dyrholm



Director Annette K. Olesen Photo: Morten Holtum

## ANNETTE K. OLESEN

Born 1965, Denmark. Graduated in direction at the National Film School of Denmark, 1991. Lectures at the National Film School and at international workshops. With all her features selected for Berlin, including *Little Soldier*, Olesen has become a Berlin-regular. Her short film *45 cm* (2007), co-directed with Charlotte Sieling, won the Audience Award at Clermont-Ferrand, while her feature film debut, *Minor Mishaps* (2002), won the Blue Angel Award in Berlin. Her next two films screened at festivals worldwide: *In Your Hands* (2004), selected for the Berlin Competition, was recipient of numerous awards, among these honours from festivals in Bordeaux, Paris, Seattle and Troia; and *One to One* (2006), screened in the Berlin Panorama, was awarded at Hamptons, Ljubljana and Lübeck. *Little Soldier* (2008) is selected for Berlin's Competition programme.

## ZENTROPA

Founded 1992 by director Lars von Trier and producer Peter Aalbæk Jensen. From 2008 co-owned with Nordisk Film. Zentropa is one of the largest production companies in Scandinavia, having established a platform for young filmmakers and veteran directors alike. Covers feature film production as well as a range of services within DVD manufacture and digital communications. Zentropa is greatly acknowledged for having reinvigorated the industry with Dogme 95. International breakthrough came with Lars von Trier's *Breaking the Waves* (1996) and continued with Lone Scherfig's Berlin winner *Italian for Beginners* (2000), one of Zentropa's greatest successes with a record-breaking number of admissions. Has launched several films by Oscar nominee Susanne Bier, Per Fly and Annette K. Olesen, and is co-producer of Thomas Vinterberg's English-language features. Took home the Crystal Bear in 2006 for *We Shall Overcome* by Niels Arden Oplev. Awaiting release in 2009: Lars von Trier's *Antichrist*, Manyar I. Parwani's *When Heaven Falls* and Morten Giese's *Daniel* (working title).



A soldier back from the battlefields: Trine Dyrholm as hard-nosed Lotte in *Little Soldier* Photo: Mike Kollöffel

## Trine Dyrholm is hands-down Denmark's biggest female film star.

BY KIM SKOTTE

Guts, curiosity and unwavering dedication are key to Trine Dyrholm's unrivalled position in Danish cinema. The 36-year-old actress consistently takes on challenging roles, the kind it takes personal courage to solve. Continually expanding the range of her talent, she has been rewarded for her efforts with several Bodil statuettes, the highest Danish film award.

“I never worked with an actor or actress as generous as Trine,” Annette K. Olesen, director of *Little Soldier*, says.

“When she agrees to something, she agrees unconditionally. She has the courage to open the floodgates. She always strives to remove any obstacles within herself. She can't stand a false note – she won't tolerate it,” Olesen says. She previously directed Dyrholm in *In Your Hands* and is repeating that successful collaboration in *Little Soldier*.

Dyrholm's broad-shouldered, long-limbed physique makes her utterly believable as a hard-nosed soldier returning from war with a baggage of posttraumatic stress disorder.

Dyrholm has been keeping busy ever since she, at age 14, took third place in the Danish qualifier for the Eurovision Song Contest. In 1991, she had a dramatic

breakthrough in a TV drama, *Cecilie*, and won her first Bodil that year for her leading role in *Spring Tide*. Over the course of the 1990s, she kept landing bigger roles. She had parts in Thomas Vinterberg's first two films, *The Greatest Heroes* (1996) and *The Celebration* (1998), the latter a worldwide hit for the Danish Dogme film movement. When she wasn't busy with the popular Danish TV series *Taxi*, she tended to pick big parts in small, difficult films, as she continually honed her gift.

Since 2000, Dyrholm has shined in a new standout role almost yearly, picking up the pace a notch or two in the last few years. In 2004, she had her big dramatic breakthrough in Annette K. Olesen's prison drama *In Your Hands*. Two years later, she starred in Pernille Fischer Christensen's *A Soap*, which won a Silver Bear and for Best First Feature in Berlin. In 2008, she starred in three distinctive films – Pernille Fischer Christensen's *Dancers*, Annette K. Olesen's *Little Soldier* and *The Unseen* by Norwegian director Erik Poppe.

So, it was hardly a surprise when Copenhagen's internationally recognised NatFilm festival last year picked Trine Dyrholm as its first Danish cover star ever. She has movie star looks but never lets that get in the way of her obvious dramatic talent.

“She is supremely intent on crafting a truthful expression,” Olesen says. “Anyone can imitate emotions, but reproducing them is another story” ■



All too well-meaning, Max' mother played by Mette Horn is a severe strain on her son's fragile teenage mind. Photo: Christian Geisnæs

# EMBARRASSING THINGS LIKE SOLIDARITY AND COMPASSION

**Bridget Jones' embarrassing ways don't mean much. They just scuff up the ego a bit. Laying yourself bare, daring to show solidarity and empathy – now *that's* embarrassing. When something greater than yourself is at stake, it's much worse, say Mette Horn and Lotte Svendsen, respectively the main character and director of *Max Embarrassing*, a film about teenaged Max and his nerdy mom that's guaranteed to make you cringe.**

BY METTE-LINE THORUP

Embarrassing yourself is all the rage these days. It shows you have self-image to spare. Say, if you don't mind having spinach between your teeth on a first date. Female characters in movies and pop music have made even the most style-conscious, contemporary woman confess that she, too, can be oh so hapless, sometimes.

Max' mom is the mother of all embarrassing mothers in director Lotte Svendsen's aptly titled *Max Embarrassing*. Try as he might to be normal

and with it, Max is always being tripped up by his ultrahovering, geeky mom, played by Mette Horn. Of course, she means well and yes, she's a severe strain on his fragile teenage mind.

"The embarrassment we describe has to do with certain values and with letting yourself be open – with embarrassing things like solidarity, compassion and empathy, the kind of progressive values that have been hidden away for some time now," says Mette Horn, who plays Max' mom.

## SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS STINKS

As Svendsen explains, the creators devised Max' mom as a heroine, while the kids in the film find her "max" embarrassing. She is a nerdy historian and academic, her intellectual engagement and maternal vigilance always more powerful than such mundane things as cleaning the house and taking out the trash. But in fact, Max' mom turns out to be the one to find the solutions to Max' conflicts with his schoolmates and to help him get the girl, Ophelia, he has a crush on. As the director puts it, the mother is a caricature, but she's a woman with rock-solid, old-school values.

*A mother from the creative classes with correct progressive values, why is she a bad mother?*

"All self-righteousness stinks. To kids that age, you can't do anything right. It's a law of nature. I might have a really good talk with my 12-year-old son, and then he'll twist it around, so we end up having a fight. That's what we have each other for now. I can be there for him and keep my foot out of my mouth, but that's about all I'm good for," Horn says, then adds, "On the other hand, that's still a pretty important task, to be around for him to dress me down."

Of course, there's a double standard: Max' mom doesn't want him to wear brand-name clothes, while *she* dresses up for a meeting with her publisher. And, she can't resolve a conflict with *her* friend but tries to resolve all of Max' conflicts with *his* friends. Svendsen says, "I have a really hard time telling my children not to lie, when in fact *I* lie in certain situations, when I think it's the best thing to do. Whether to fib or not is a big dilemma for Max."

Horn says, "The age around ten to twelve is an exciting place, where children really start questioning their identity and the world at large – questions you can't answer, even as a grown up.

**“I’m much more interested in alternative families. It was always a point of our stories to show problems being solved in cooperation, a cooperation that does not necessarily involve a father, mother and children.”** *Director Lotte Svendsen*

Still, you have to have the courage to be an adult, because kids that age don’t need to be friends with their mother. You have to say, ‘That’s how I see it, at this moment.’ You may not be right. But later, when we have reached the other shore, when children and parents begin to want to have something to do with each other again, you can confess that you were every bit as unsure as they were.”

**A PROPITIUS PLACE**

“I had the world’s sweetest dad. He never punished me or yelled at me. He set no boundaries, and in puberty, I still made him out to be an asshole,” Svendsen says.

As she sees it, the film is also an attempt to recreate a state and a place that meant a lot to her when she was a child and that she, as an adult, has learned was a propitious place to be.

“I found myself constantly lost in an irrational world,” Svendsen says. “I grew up with a single parent, a nerdy high-school teacher dad with lots of books and dust, never enough money and plenty of ‘just stay home from school today and we’ll read to each other some more’. Doing anything on my terms was completely out of the question, like shopping for clothes for me or making sure I got badminton lessons, if that’s what I wanted to do. Our adult-child relationship was never defined.”

**DIVORCES**

The film is full of break-ups and divorces. Ophelia’s father, who’s in prison, is not in touch with his daughter. Max’ mom and dad are divorced.

Svendsen and Horn are both divorced, they tell me. It was Horn who insisted on including a particular dialogue exchange in the film. When the kids in Max’ class talk about how they are going to spend Christmas, they expose the bleak reality for joint-custody kids: “If Christmas falls on an odd week, I’ll be with my mother” and “We’re still waiting for a Superior Court ruling”.

“My parents were divorced, and I always thought Christmas was one long insult, because it meant celebrating an institution that didn’t really exist anymore,” Horn says. “It hurt. The grown ups were manically trying to cover everything up, and everyone was in thrall to some sort of Disney image no one could live up to. I was always sitting there with eyes like tiny slits when other kids talked about what they did for Christmas: ‘Okay, so you went for a walk in the woods, and then uncle Freddy showed up like he always does, and after 2 p.m. the fun really begins and you play games ... hmmm, good for you ...’”

Svendsen leans forward in her chair: “I’m much more interested in alternative families. It was always a point of our stories to show problems being solved in cooperation, a cooperation that does not necessarily involve a father, mother and children. One of the best things I do with my kids

is spend time with our alternative family. There’s a spontaneity in breaking the daily routine. I’ve been getting back in touch with some of my old squatter friends, who are also divorced, and we’ve been returning to some of the old communal values, like taking turns cooking big dinners for everybody.”

Still, Horn doesn’t buy the alternative family as a substitute: “There’s no escaping it that the constellation children most profoundly want to be in is the one with the two people who love them more than anything else in the world. It’s as simple as that. You can’t intellectualise that away or cover it up with jokes or romanticism.”

Svendsen disagrees. “I didn’t grow up in a nuclear foursome of mother, father and two children. Happiness for me was when the doorbell rang and you got to see who was coming to share the evening with us. I’ve passed that on to my two boys, who are three and five. When a bike messenger stops by with flowers for me, they clamour to know if he’s going to stay for dinner.”

*Max Embarrassing* is about some values being better than others and how, as an adult, you have to ask yourself what values you want to impart to your kids – even if you’re torn by doubt. As Svendsen puts it, “People have asked me if I wasn’t sick of the media branding me as a left-wing feminist. But I’m proud of it!” ■

*This article is an edited version of an interview published in the Danish daily Information.*

*For further information on Max Embarrassing, see reverse section.*



Director Lotte Svendsen

**LOTTE SVENDSEN**

Born 1968, Denmark. Prior to graduating in direction from the National Film School of Denmark, 1995, Svendsen wrote and directed for television. Writer-director of the stage success *Emma’s Dilemma* (1995) and several short fiction films. Received the Carl Th. Dreyer Award in 2000 for her work. Her short film *Royal Blues* (1997) won at Odense, a Nordic Film Award and a Danish Film Academy Award. Her feature film debut was the social-political satire *Gone With the Fish* (1999). Svendsen’s third feature film, *Max Embarrassing* (2008), is selected for Berlin’s Generation Kplus.

**ASTA FILM**

Founded by producer Per Holst, whose credits include films by Lars von Trier, Nils Malmros and Bille August. Holst is especially known for his production of Bille August’s *Palme d’Or*, Oscar and Golden Globe winner *Pelle the Conqueror* (1987). In 2007, Per Holst was nominated for CARTOON’s Producer of the Year in connection with Asta Film’s production of the animated *Amazon Jack 3 – Jungo Goes Bananas*. Also to his credit are two Oscar nominated Swedish films, *Evil* (Mikael Håfström, 2003) and *All Things Fair* (Bo Widerberg, 1995), the latter also receiving the Silver Bear in Berlin. Holst’s company Per Holst Film produced the UNICEF Berlin awardwinner *The Hideaway* (Nils Gråbøl, 1991), and *Sirup* (Helle Ryslinge, 1990), which received the Silver Lion in Venice. Holst is back in Berlin with *Max Embarrassing* (2008), competing in Generation Kplus.



Max has a serious crush on his classmate Ophelia. Not an easy spot to be in when you have a geeky mom. Photo: Christian Geisnæs

# A GIRL A BOY A CAT A MOUSE



*The Mouse* Photo: Adam Philip

**That ought to be very simple: a girl, a boy, a cat, a mouse. Pil Maria Gunnarsson's short film *The Mouse* is a deeply touching story about the hesitant beginnings of love, powerful jealousy and loss of innocence, based on an experience from the director's childhood. The film has been in the pipelines for a long time, and the result is a tight and powerful children's drama with a carefully crafted visual concept.**



The story of 10-year-old Liv speaks of powerful emotions in a child's world. Photo: Adam Philip

10-year-old Liv starts dating her classmate Mike. Mike gives Liv a little white mouse as a present. This mouse is very important to Mike, and he tamed it all by himself.

Back at school, Mike is talking to Liv's friend, the popular girl in class, and Liv finds herself getting jealous. In her powerlessness towards this strange emotion, Liv takes out her frustration on the mouse. She leaves it with her cat and closes the door behind her. The mouse gets badly injured.

When Liv discovers that Mike is still only interested in her, it's too late to save the mouse. The mouse dies, and Liv gets embarrassed about what happened. In order to avoid telling Mike the truth about how the mouse died, Liv ends up breaking up with him.

## **DARING TO STAND BY ONE'S EMOTIONS**

"My idea for the film originates in a personal experience from my childhood," says director Pil Maria Gunnarsson, who wrote the story in collaboration with screenwriter Rum Malmros.

"I was eleven years old, and I had got my first boyfriend. He gave me a little white mouse in a matchbox and told me that it could do a whole bunch of tricks. I remember getting that mouse as a major event. It wasn't merely a present but also a living thing that I had to take care of.

"The film is about the first, early encounter with love and about daring to stand by one's emotions. In the girl's universe, it's ok to break up with her boyfriend, whereas it is *not* ok to be responsible for the death of an animal. I believe that, at a time in life when one is learning to relate to others, the fact that there are some things one needs to hide - that's a tough experience to make. Sometimes, the simple act of telling the truth seems completely unmanageable. The girl in the film thinks it's easier to break up with the boy than to tell him what happened to the mouse.

"It's a simple story that shows how difficult it can be to stand by oneself and one's actions. The film is about fundamental human experiences that one needs to make in order to be present in the world as oneself" ■

*The film is produced with support from New Danish Screen. For further information on the talent development fund, see page 21.*



Director Pil Maria Gunnarsson  
Photo: Sara Frøelund

## **PIL MARIA GUNNARSSON**

Born 1974, Denmark. Graduated as a film director from the School of Film Directing at Göteborg University, 2002. Made her first children's film in 2004, the short *Always on a Tuesday*. Has written and directed several other short fiction films and documentaries.

## **COSMO FILM**

Founded 1992. Until 2004, when Cosmo Doc was founded, activities had encompassed both fiction and documentary. Releases in 2009: *Curse of the Seeress* (Mogens Hagedorn).





Fragile, insecure characters populate Mads Matthiesen's film – like Cathrine, who is kicked around by life. Photo: Linn Sandholm

# NO FUN BEING LONELY

**Mads Matthiesen's short fiction *Cathrine* carries the directors distinctive style: a strong social involvement and a desire for realism. Although a recent film school graduate, Matthiesen is not without festival experience. *Mum* (2006) competed at the Venice Film Festival, and *Dennis* (2007) was selected for Sundance.**

BY ANDERS BUDTZ-JØRGENSEN

*Cathrine* is about an overweight teenage girl's struggle to break free of her domineering and non-comprehending parents. She is in a relationship with a man in his thirties, but when her parents find out, they forbid her to see him.

Matthiesen made his three recent films *Mum*, *Dennis* and *Cathrine* while at Copenhagen's alternative Super16 film school. Super16 is an association of young filmmakers that is run by the filmmakers themselves. There is no president, no administration, and Super16 receives no regular government funding.

*Cathrine* is Matthiesen's graduation film. Though he has had some success with his films before, he was still surprised to be selected for Berlin.

## ORDINARY PEOPLE

"I've only made films that I really feel for. I prefer to focus on the story and the characters – letting technique be secondary. So, you never know what

other people will get out of them, or whether they will like what they see," Matthiesen says.

"Super16 has done a lot for me. It's one thing that my films have done well. Another thing is that I have found a way to tell stories that works for me." Matthiesen has been a filmmaker for more than ten years now, but he truly found his style at Super16. In his three recent films, you sense a strong social involvement and a desire for realism. The characters are fragile, and the action is set in common locations like suburbs and malls.

"Cathrine does not have an easy time socially. Although we never see her in school, we clearly sense that she has a hard time there. That makes it even harder for her to break with her parents. They are the only security she's got.

"Why should we only see people who are on top of things? The film is an attempt to show a group of people who are often overlooked in our society – ordinary people who are *not* on top. I wanted to do a film about the kind of people you meet in the everyday. People who aren't well educated or well off, all those you don't see on TV, the other half who sit there watching the game shows and talk shows. Our society is more than just a circle of artistic and creative young people," Matthiesen says."

## FRAGILITY IS A CONDITION

"Life kicks you around, especially when you're a teenager," Matthiesen says. Cathrine has been

kicked around, which doesn't make it any easier for her to take a chance on love. "Cathrine and her boyfriend are super fragile. They may not have found happiness together, but they *have* found each other. They do as well as they can, considering their background and the opportunities they have, but in fact they are very much alone with their problems."

Although Cathrine's mother is wholly incapable of raising her daughter, Matthiesen does not wish to be judgemental. Rather, he wants to show what the world can be like for people who aren't resourceful. "Everyone in the film is trying to do the best they can. Only, the mother can't see how her own low self-esteem is hurting her daughter."

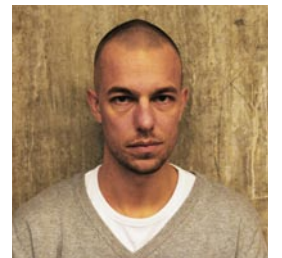
As Matthiesen sees it, we're all fragile. "At least everyone I know. Especially when it comes to love. However, daring to be fragile around another person is also an expression of love. That's what love is or ought to be – daring to stand by your own fragility."

## NEW FILM IN THAILAND

At the time of this writing, Matthiesen is in Bangkok researching his next film, his first feature film project. He is developing the screenplay with support from the Danish Film Institute. Once again, his film is about people who have a hard time getting by socially and meeting society's expectations.

"I'm in Thailand to develop a film about the 'sex trade' and all the unpleasant things that go with it. But when you look around, you clearly see that they (the sex tourists, *ed.*) are people who don't have it easy. They are nerds, overweight and lonely, who really have a hard time talking to other people back home where they come from," Matthiesen says. "It's no fun being lonely" ■

For further information on *Cathrine*, see reverse section.



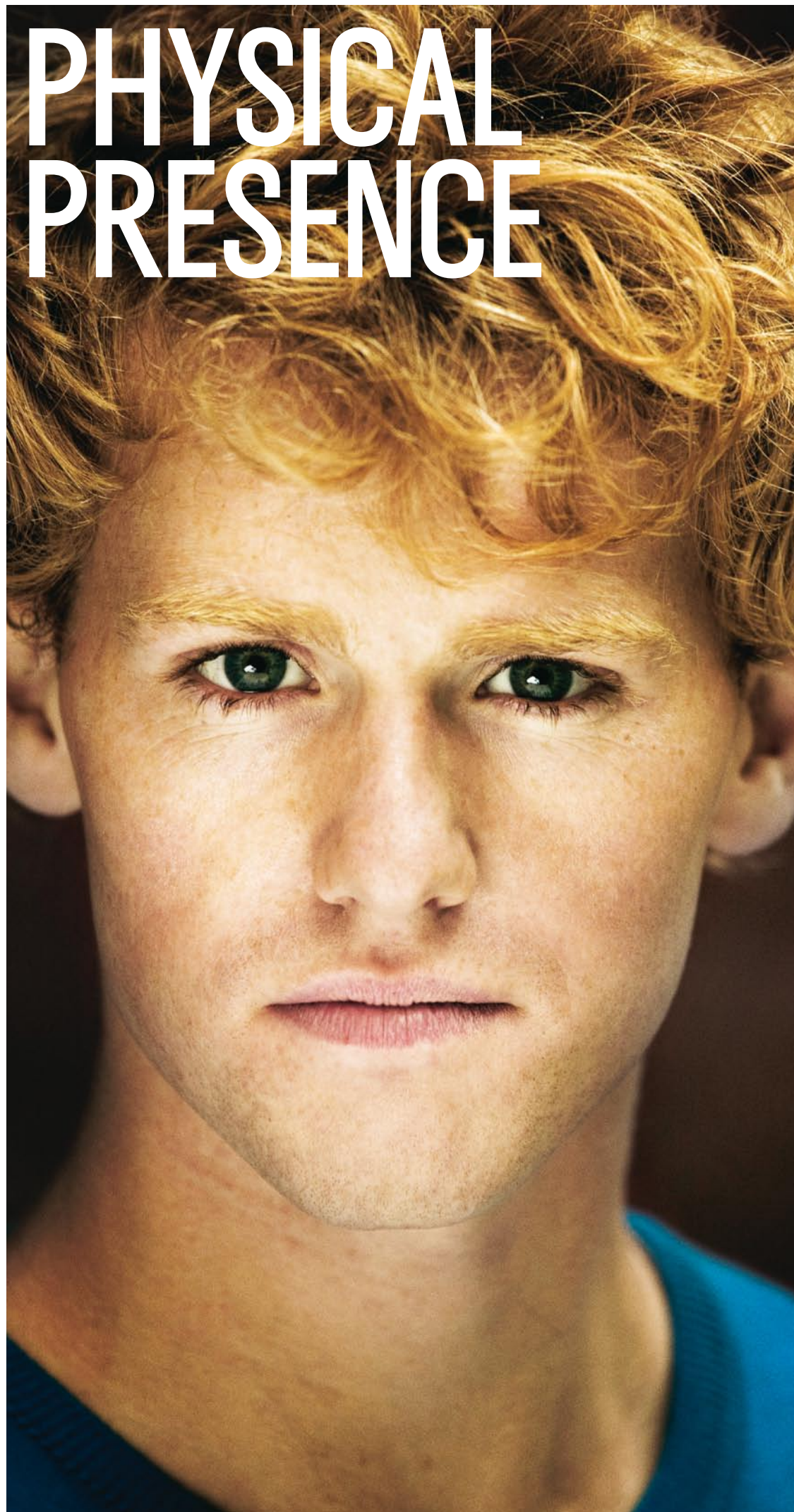
Director Mads Matthiesen  
Photo: Hanni Gahr Jørgensen

## MADS MATTHIESEN

Born 1976, Denmark. BA in Comparative Literature and Rhetoric from Copenhagen University, 2005. Graduated as director from the film talent program Super16, 2008. Master's degree in Modern Cultural Studies from Copenhagen University, 2009. His short films include: *Mum* (2006), selected for the Venice Film Festival in the official competition programme Corto Cortissimo; *Dennis* (2007), an official selection at Sundance; and *Cathrine* (2008), selected for Generation 14plus in Berlin.

## SUPER16 / NORDISK FILM

Founded 1999. Super16 has many aliases: the alternative film school, a talent program and a creative film community. Mads Matthiesen and his producer Jonas Bagger are Super16 graduates of 2008. Other graduates include directors Christina Rosendahl, Morten Hartz Kaplers, Martin Barnewitz and many more. Super16 is sponsored by Nordisk Film.



# PHYSICAL PRESENCE

**One of the best faces in Danish children's and youth film, Shooting Star Cyron Melville is gearing up for a whole new stage in his career.**

BY FLEMMING KASPERSEN

Danish films for children and teens have many fine qualities, but rarely do they hatch adult actors with obvious star quality. Cyron Melville, 24, is the exception. Debuting at the tender age of ten, he went on to act in a number of the top recent Danish teen films. This year, he can be seen in his first starring role, in Morten Giese's intense *Daniel*.

Cyron Bjørn Melville has a face that was made for the camera. Maybe it's the contrasts: a burst of red hair over gorgeous eyes and the jaw-line of a classic screen hero. Moreover, he has a physical presence on screen that few people his age can muster. When he's in the frame you notice him, even when he's not front and centre.

Melville, who is half Danish, half Scottish – his father, Johnny Melville, is a comic and actor – made his debut in 1995, in Carsten Rudolf's award-winning *The Beast Within*. His portrayal of an emotionally traumatised boy trapped between an unfaithful mother and a cowed father ranks among the most extreme child performances in Danish cinema. Melville, at ten, plays the difficult leading part with conviction and strength, veering from joyful to sullen with an unschooled immediacy and presence that is the hallmark of the best child actors.

Later that year, he acted in a 24-part Christmas TV series, the last of his parts as a child actor. When next we see him on-screen, he is a teenager. His supporting role in Aage Rais-Nordentoft's *Kick'n Rush* (2003) coincides with a new flowering in Danish teen films. Over the next few years, he stands out in a string of important new films in the genre. Christina Rosendahl casts him in her short film *Fucking 14* and her first feature, *Triple Dare* (2006). Christian E. Christiansen's *Life Hits* (2006) has Melville playing the female lead's love interest, who ends up the blameless victim of a drug overdose.

Most recently, Natasha Arthy's teenage-melodrama *Fighter* (2008) allows Melville to shine in his most prominent supporting role to date. His performance as Emil – a Danish teenager who falls in love with a girl from a Muslim home – makes it clear we're watching a young actor with all the makings of a star. Acing both the physically demanding fight scenes and the subtlest shadings of his character's personality, the performance landed Melville a nomination for a Bodil, the top Danish film award.

Premiering in 2009, Morten Giese's first feature *Daniel* has Melville breaking new ground in his first leading role playing a young conservatory student, Daniel, who has inherited not only his father's great talent but also, it seems, his fragile mind. Unblinkingly peering into the darkest recesses of his character's mind, Melville crafts his portrayal of Daniel with disturbing, heart-breaking intensity. His appearance is toned down – his red mop cut and tamed – in a role that's brutally demanding, both physically and mentally, and has all the appearances of a huge breakthrough for the young Danish actor ■

# YOU'RE NOT REALLY IN LOVE UNTIL YOU'RE UNHAPPILY IN LOVE

27 years after his masterwork *The Tree of Knowledge*, Danish cinema's purest auteur Nils Malmros is bringing out a sequel. Shot over nearly three years, *Aching Hearts* brings the serious-minded high-school youth of the early 1960s to life with vigour and wit.

BY LISELOTTE MICHELSEN AND MORTEN PIIL

In *The Tree of Knowledge* (1981), Nils Malmros recreated with insight and humour his own middle-school class, a group of kids in raging puberty, spinning a web of fatal intrigue around the female protagonist Elin.

The characters in Malmros' new film, *Aching Hearts*, having gone through their first experiences with the mystery of sexuality, are now struggling to get a grip on their chaotic emotional lives. At the heart of the story, we still find a young girl, Agnete, and her complicated relationships and family life.

Agnete is not Elin from *The Tree of Knowledge*, but her experience of painful love is familiar.

## YOUTHFUL EMOTIONAL CONFUSION

Why did it take you so long to get back to the same kind of memoir material as in *The Tree of Knowledge*?

"In the early '80s, Per Holst, who produced *The Tree of Knowledge*, urged me to do a sequel. But I immediately said no. I thought it would be undignified to follow up a successful movie like that, and I wanted to allow *The Tree of Knowledge* to stand for what it was," Malmros says.

"I did admit that there was a continuation to the story, but I wasn't sure that it could carry a feature. Also, every time I finish a film, I have the mantra that 'this is to be my last film.'

"I more or less forgot about the material for *Aching Hearts*. Then, when I'd finished *Facing the Truth* (2002), Per Holst brought the subject back up, asking me if I didn't have a sequel to *The Tree of Knowledge*. I sat down with John Mogensen, whom I've used as a critical spirit and sparring partner since we wrote *Pain of Love* (1992) together, and told him what I remembered from my high-school years.

"Eventually, we saw that we did have enough material for a story. Only, unlike *The Tree of Knowledge*, it wouldn't be about repressed sexuality as much as about emotional confusion: that weird



Sweethearts Jonas and Agnete are the main characters in Nils Malmros' tale about youthful love and despair. Photo: Martin Dam Kristensen

period in the early 1960s when going out with someone was such serious business, implying a lifetime commitment – when we discovered that you weren't really in love until you'd been dumped and were unhappily in love."

Are these characters the same as in *The Tree of Knowledge*?

"A few of them are, albeit with new names. But this film isn't as deep as *The Tree of Knowledge*, nor was it meant to be. The characters have acknowledged their sexuality and, accordingly, it's not as ambivalent and horrifying, in a Freudian sense, as it is in *The Tree of Knowledge*.

"*Aching Hearts* is a completely autonomous film. It can be seen independently of *The Tree of Knowledge*. As always, the story is partly authentic. To make up the characters, all I had to do was think

about my old schoolmates – they're in my head, so they're always around. Working on the script mainly means structuring my memoir material. I started doing that a year before we started shooting, that is, at the end of 2003."

## SHOT OVER THREE YEARS

On the surface, *Aching Hearts* is fairly normal looking, but it was shot in a very non-normal way, over a period of almost three years. Why?

"The cast had to mature to match the story, both physically and mentally. We started shooting in November 2005 – a good time because it gives a lot of autumn to the film. That's how I remember it: hearts were always broken when leaves were falling.

"We shot in four long periods and three short periods, mainly during school holidays. We had to wait



**“We started shooting in November 2005 – a good time because it gives a lot of autumn to the film. That’s how I remember it: hearts were always broken when leaves were falling.”**

*Aching Hearts* Photo: Martin Dam Kristensen

until school was out in June 2008 to shoot the ending – with the kids’ last day of school and final exams.

“The whole film is shot in sequence. It’s the same concept as in *The Tree of Knowledge*, which was shot over nearly two years. It really mattered to the story that the kids age before our eyes. At the time, I dreamt of shooting over four years, but that turned out to be financially impossible.

“I don’t know of any other feature that was shot over such a long period, almost three years, as *Aching Hearts*. It’s costly. At one point, we were short two million kroner (268,000 euros, *ed.*) for the production, and someone suggested shooting the film all at one go. However, I insisted and said in that case, I wouldn’t do the film. Production actually shut down for six months. Then the last money was found, thank goodness, and I had my way.”

#### A GAMBLE

*How did you find your teenage actors?*

“We had 1600 kids at a casting call for young actors. It was crucial to find the right girl for the leading role of Agnete. Simone Tang was fourteen when we screen-tested her. She has an extremely good ear for phrasing dialogue and also happens to be a very talented singer. When we started, she was a short, ungainly girl, but I was convinced she would grow into a beauty before the film was done. It was a gamble, and I won.”

*She makes Agnete’s extreme seriousness both compelling and touching.*

“Well, that was the intention. Agnete is a quite odd and serious girl. She barely smiles throughout the whole film.”

#### THE DUPED LOVER

*You often construct your stories around male protagonists who are led astray, not to say duped, by women that they can’t figure out. That’s also the case in Aching Hearts.*

“That was simply my experience, and so the stories get that twist. I was fooled – and it was my impression that many others were too.

“In *Aching Hearts*, however, the male lead Jonas is partly to blame for being duped. It ties in to his fickleness, which in turn is a reflection of the whole spirit of the early 1960s. The problem, as I said, was that every time you got involved in a relationship, you felt that it was for the rest of your life. You saw it as terribly serious and tried to cram some mighty emotions into it. But exactly because the commitment seemed so huge, you also got scared of being trapped, and you always tried to leave a kitty door open, so you could get out of the relationship again – well, instead of saying, ‘You’re so beautiful, it’s me and you, here and now, for as long as it lasts, okay?’ Young people handle it much better that way now, it seems to me.”

*Still, the attitude to the male protagonist is far from sentimental or pathetic. It even feels a bit ironic. And your heroine, despite her erotic deceit, is far from a conventional femme fatale?*

“No, that’s right. In a way, the story really comes down to her. The character is closely modelled on a girl I used to know. But still there are things in the film that I don’t really understand myself.”

*Do you see more differences than basic similarities between the young people you depict and young people today?*

“I’m mainly struck by the differences. The pill changed so much. What would the world look like without birth-control pills? Earlier, parents could wield the fear of pregnancy to keep their daughters chaste a lot longer than now. And as far as boys are concerned, the contact I had with the young actors in my film convinced me that, although the erotic competition with its winners and losers still exists, of course, it’s much more laid-back and humorous now. Guys still compete for the prettiest girls, but if you don’t win, it’s not the end of the world.

“The most visible difference in social interaction from my day to now is that young people, as a matter of course and with their parents’ blessing, sleep over at each other’s houses as early as in high school. That would have been unthinkable in my day” ■

*For further information on Aching Hearts, see reverse section. For further reading on Nils Malmros, producer Thomas Heinesen and production company Nordisk Film, see the following pages.*

#### NILS MALMROS

Born 1944, Denmark. Graduate of medicine, 1988. One of Danish cinema’s major auteurs, inspired early on by French New Wave. As both screenwriter and director, Malmros maintains a strong autobiographical element in his works, in which nuances of his childhood and youth in Aarhus can be discerned. Malmros’ breakthrough *Lars Ole 5c* (1973) is the first part of a trilogy on childhood and adolescence, followed by *Boys* (1977) and his masterwork *The Tree of Knowledge* (1981). Both *Pain of Love* (1992) and *Barbara* (1997) were selected for competition in Berlin. Malmros received several honours for *Facing the Truth* (2002), including awards at the Sochi and Mar del Plata festivals. *Aching Hearts* (2009) is shot over a period of three years, taking into account the development of the young actors, some of whom are amateurs from the actual milieu Malmros is depicting.

Distinguishing his approach is a unique ability to see everything from a child's perspective without ever superimposing adult hindsight.



The protagonist Elin is caught up in a web of intrigue in *The Tree of Knowledge* from 1981, a pivotal work in Malmros' production. Photo: Torben Stroyer

# PAINTING THE LANDSCAPE OF MEMORY



Director Nils Malmros Photo: Martin Dam Kristensen

**Nils Malmros holds a unique position in Danish film as cinematic storyteller, memoirist and auteur.**

BY MORTEN PIIL

Unaffected by fashion trends, Nils Malmros has consistently told stories of his life growing up in Denmark's second city Aarhus. He has brought his childhood and teen years to the screen with sensitivity, humour and insight, every detail steeped in the authenticity of lived experience.

His films comprise a continuing story of the loss of innocence in secure, bourgeois surroundings that still are no guard against traumas and profound heartache.

## THE AWKWARDNESS OF PUBERTY

For years, Nils Malmros, a self-taught filmmaker, was the only Danish director capable of drawing crowds to cinemas solely on the strength of his name.

His chief work, *The Tree of Knowledge* (1981), was shot over two years, as he followed a group of school kids through the awkward phases of puberty. Distinguishing his approach is a unique ability to see everything from a child's perspective without ever, it seems, superimposing adult hindsight and patterns of interpretation.

Chronicling the kids' first infatuations and mutual intrigues, clique reshufflings and power games, Malmros presents a razor-sharp rendition of the jargon and social forms of the restrictive 1950s. His exacting use of colloquial dialogue, which is never without a subtext, makes the film a singular, often

uncanny, experience for Danish audiences who appreciate the subtleties and nuances.

## ARROGANCE?

Malmros has stayed in his hometown of Aarhus, where he taught himself the filmmaking craft, and where most of his films are set.

Never letting himself be swallowed up by the pulsating Danish filmmaking scene, he has exclusively made films *con amore*, initiating the projects and always writing every single word himself.

Alongside his film career, he found the time to go to medical school and has practiced medicine in between his films for a combined seven years now.

Still, his calling is cinema. He is one of very few Danish filmmakers for whom his internationally better known colleague Lars von Trier has publicly voiced his great respect, even awe, labelling Malmros "the most arrogant person I have ever met, and it's not an affectation".

In particular, Malmros' artistic ability to elevate the commonplace - his confidence that small, everyday dramas can be made interesting to the rest of the world - earned him von Trier's "arrogant" label. Malmros, who is affable and accommodating in person, is not one to make big statements in his films. Seeing greatness in infinitely small things, he illuminates the landscape of memory with an acuteness of detail, *savoir-faire* and unsentimental poetry that has made him the most beloved living filmmaker in Denmark.

Completing the memoir cycle about his childhood and youth, *Aching Hearts* is another milestone in an exquisite, uncompromising body of work ■

# I'M NOT LOOKING TO PUSH THROUGH MY OWN PERSONALITY

**Thomas Heinesen is a key producer at Denmark's oldest and biggest production company, Nordisk Film. Standing out in the press is not for him. Each new film is challenge enough. *Aching Hearts* is Heinesen's second collaboration with Nils Malmros, a director who usually ends up getting it his way.**

BY MORTEN PIIL

Thomas Heinesen is not the kind of producer who tries hard to draw attention to himself. Contacted about an interview, he's accommodating, but he also points out how annoying it is to him when producers are singled out as though they were the most important people behind a film.

"Of course the producer is important," Heinesen says, "but mainly as an intermediary between the real creative forces. *They* are the ones that matter."

## A STRING OF STANDOUT PICTURES

You don't have to look far to see that Heinesen was a central figure in the flowering of Danish cinema in the late 1990s.

He produced the most seen Danish film in the last ten years, Susanne Bier's romantic comedy *The One and Only* from 1999. His success with that film catapulted him into a central position at Denmark's oldest and biggest production company, Nordisk Film.

At Nordisk, he has produced a string of diverse films that have artistic merit as well as popular appeal. Apart from Bier, who has since moved on to an international career, he has worked with such prominent Danish directors as Nils Malmros (*Facing the Truth*, *Aching Hearts*), Niels Arden Oplev (*Worlds Apart*), Åke Sandgren (*Flies on the Wall*) and Morten Arnfred (*The Big Day*).

Several other highly talented directors have debuted under his wings, including Jacob Thuesen (*Accused*) and Paprika Steen (*Aftermath*).

## WORKING WITH NILS MALMROS

*Nils Malmros, the director of Aching Hearts and probably the foremost auteur in Danish cinema, is known as a stubborn, perfectionist cultivator of detail. Is he difficult to work with?*

"I don't think so, mainly because he's such a veteran and knows himself incredibly well. He knows exactly what he wants. Certainly, he's demanding, but once you agree to the framework of the production, with very few exceptions he sticks to it," Heinesen says.

"Artistically, he never compromises. He may end up spending more time than planned, but never without being extremely aware of the possible impact on the production. And he's never lax about financial aspects. That way he's responsible.

"Other directors sometimes have a bad habit of agreeing to everything *before* they start shooting, because they know they can't be stopped once the train is rolling – then deals slide and big budget overruns occur."

*Do the two of you discuss a lot of things during pre-production?*

"Yes, for sure, we have a lot of discussions. Though I'd like to add that Nils usually ends up getting it his way.

"That's how it went when we discussed whether it was possible to shoot *Aching Hearts* over three years, like he wanted to. I insisted on shooting over ten weeks in one go, but Nils wanted to see his characters age over three years. I figured that would be easier to do with makeup and other effects *and* save us three million kroner (402,000 euros, *ed.*) – money we sorely needed.

"Nils went back to Aarhus to think things over, but he called me back the very same day and said he felt his motivation for making the film would disappear if we shot in one go. So we came up with the last three million."

## A TASTE FOR GENRE FILMS

*What is your background?*

"Since I graduated high school, I've never done anything but filmmaking. I started out in the early 1980s as a kind of jack-of-all-trades. But I felt my strong suit was production planning, and in 1985, I was admitted into the new producing programme at the National Film School of Denmark.

"I had extensive experience in the business *and* a film school degree before becoming a producer at Metronome in 1999, where I helped launch two projects: Susanne Bier's *The One and Only* and Ole Christian Madsen's TV crime series *The Spider*."

*The One and Only was Bier's first commercial success. How did it get off the ground? Romantic comedies were never much of a genre in Denmark before.*

"No, exactly. But I was always fond of the genre, especially in its American and British forms, and Susanne Bier and I discussed the possibility of doing that kind of a comedy here in Denmark.

"We both agreed that Danish cinema needed to become a bit more genre oriented, and Susanne Bier loved romantic comedies, too. So I hooked her up with the writer Kim Fupz Aakeson, who at that point had only written a few things for the screen but since then has become one of the most influential screenwriters in Denmark.

"The project raised a few eyebrows before it premiered. It had several intrinsic risk elements, but fortunately everything worked out fine. As I see it, with a project like that it's not enough simply to make a good picture – you also need a big audience, because the genre inherently has broad appeal."

*You like genre films?*

"Certainly. *Room 205* (2007) by first-time director Martin Barnewitz was another stab in that direction. In that case, the concept was to make a crazier horror film than we are used to in Denmark. Otherwise, there's no particular thread in the things I produce. I'm not interested in pushing through my own personality, and I easily relate to all film genres."

## ON THE SET

*A producer's job is multifaceted. What are your top priorities?*

"That depends on the project. Generally, it's important to get to comment on the screenplay development all the way through, from the first outline to the finished script.

"During a shoot, I try to drop by the set for an hour or two every day to see how things are going. I need to be able to come up with solutions if crises occur, and I can only do that if I'm in touch with the production. It's hugely important to stop by almost daily. If you only drop in on a production once every four days or so, everyone looks at you with fear in their eyes, and that's not very constructive, of course.

"The financing itself actually concerns me less. I rarely see any great advantage in trying to raise capital outside Scandinavia. It seldom generates any significant amounts, say, if you need some extra



Producer Thomas Heinesen and Nordisk Film's well-known trademark, the polar bear. Photo: Per Morten Abrahamson

“During a shoot, I try to drop by the set for an hour or two every day to see how things are going. I need to be able to come up with solutions if crises occur, and I can only do that if I’m in touch with the production.”

money for an average Danish production of 2.5 million euros or so. If we’re talking 5 million euros, naturally we need to expand our circle of investors.”

*Zentropa, Nordisk Film’s new partner, and Nimbus Film both have actual in-house directors who do several films in a row for their company. What’s your take on that?*

“It’s definitely an advantage. A partnership usually runs more smoothly on the second or third film, when everybody knows each other better.

“When I started at Nordisk Film almost ten years ago, it was a pretty conservative place, with very few young directors and producers. That’s changed now, fortunately. Sure, I’d like to see even more of our young first-time directors stay with us. But we don’t do contracts for more than one film at a time” ■

#### THOMAS HEINESEN

Born 1961, Denmark. Graduated as producer from the National Film School of Denmark, 1989. Producer credits include films by Susanne Bier, Nils Malmros, Paprika Steen and Jacob Thuesen. Heinesen also produced *Worlds Apart* (Niels Arden Oplev, 2008), selected for Generation 14plus at Berlin. This year will see the release of two films: *Aching Hearts* by Nils Malmros and *Karla and Katrine* by Charlotte Sachs Bostrup.

#### NORDISK FILM

Founded 1906, defining it as one of the world’s oldest production companies. Nordisk produced high-quality films for a worldwide market during the silent era. Today, the company is part of the Egmont media group and a market leader within the development, production, post production and distribution of electronic media in the Nordic region. The company owns cinemas in Denmark and Norway as well as production facilities throughout Scandinavia. Produces animation through its subsidiary A. Film. From 2008 co-owner of Zentropa with a sharehold of 50 percent. Legendary films include Carl Th. Dreyer’s first silent features, Oscar winner *Babette’s Feast* (Gabriel Axel, 1987), Oscar contender *Waltzing Regitze* (Kaspar Rostrup, 1989) and, together with Obel Film, the Cannes winner *Europa* (Lars von Trier, 1991). The catalogue from 2000 onwards embraces veteran filmmakers such as Nils Malmros, Kasper Rostrup and Morten Arnfred, alongside first-timers Paprika Steen, Christina Rosendahl, Ulrik Wivel and others. Documentaries include Tómas Gíslason’s Tour de France epic *Overcoming* (2005), one of the most ambitious Danish documentaries to date, and Asger Leth’s exceptional debut *Ghosts of Cité Soleil* (2006). Niels Arden Oplev’s *Worlds Apart* (2008) was selected for Berlin’s Generation 14plus. Awaiting release in 2009 are Rumle Hammerich’s *Headhunter*, Birger Larsen’s *Super Brother* and Nils Malmros’ *Aching Hearts*.





# DECLARATION OF WAR!

*Warriors of Love* is my campaign against those who reject love. A campaign against the sceptics of the heart and the ultraconservatives of romance. Against the cowards who cool things down when they meet love. Against the killjoys who prefer their love served at room temperature and in small portions. Against the rationalists who want *reasonable* love. *Sensible* love. Disciplined love that behaves properly.

The film is a tribute to excessive love. To obsessive love. To love that calls for sacrifices, scars and gunshot wounds. To love that hurts and heals, that is responsible for miracles and tragedies. Love that makes blood boil, that pushes the lover over the edge of a cliff. Love that leads to unrest, damage and trouble where there was once dead silence and neatly trimmed hedges. Love that runs amok and causes riots in the streets. Hopelessly impossible love that gives life and costs lives.

Love that doesn't just go to the limit, but far beyond the limit. Love that runs confused in drunken madness, that lies in the gutter with a knife in its heart. Love that refuses to take no for an answer, that doesn't give a damn about cautionary words and only speaks the language of love:

"I want to - no - I *will* - no - I **MUST** love!"

Simon Staho

For further information on *Warriors of Love*, see reverse section.



Director Simon Staho Photo: Bjorn Bertheussen

#### SIMON STAHO

Born 1972, Denmark. Staho has worked with a number of renowned Swedish actors, including Noomi Rapace, Lena Endre, Mikael Persbrandt, Lena Olin, Pernilla August and Maria Bonnevie. Received the Ingmar Bergman Travel Grant in 2008. His feature film debut was with *Wildside* (1998), starring Mads Mikkelsen. With a cast of Swedish actors and Mikael Persbrandt in the leading role, he directed both *Day and Night* (2004), winner of the Silver Hugo Award in Chicago, and *Bang Bang Orangutang* (2005), selected for San Sebastian. In *Daisy Diamond* (2007), also selected for San Sebastian, Staho returns to a mostly Danish cast. Succeeding these films are the Swedish-Danish co-productions *Heaven's Heart* (2008), selected for last year's Berlinale Special Section, and *Warriors of Love* (2009).

#### XX FILM

Founded 2005 by producer Jonas Frederiksen and director Simon Staho. Three films, all written and directed by Staho, have been signed by the company: *Daisy Diamond* (2007), *Heaven's Heart* (2008) and *Warriors of Love* (2009).



# POLITICS AND EMOTIONS

**It was a long road to a first feature for director Kathrine Windfeld. Struggling to get a foot in the door, she is ready to put big emotions into Danish cinema. *The Escape* is the story of a Danish journalist who is kidnapped by Taliban militants in Afghanistan. Rather than dictate a moral, the director wants to grab people's hearts.**

BY SOPHIE ENGBERG SONNE

Kathrine Windfeld takes a while to answer. "No, I can't explain it," she says. The 42-year-old director's first feature, *The Escape*, is one of three Danish features dealing with the war in Afghanistan, that Denmark has been embroiled in for seven years now. The other two films are Susanne Bier's *Brothers* (2004) and Annette K. Olesen's *Little Soldier* (2008, see page 3). So I felt compelled to ask her why women directors, not men, are attacking this subject, even though the majority of Danish film directors are men. On the question of why she chose to do a film about the war, there's no hesitation: "I want to relate to the times I live in."

Her film, *The Escape*, is a high-tension drama about a female journalist, Rikke Lyngvig (Iben Hjejle), who is kidnapped in Afghanistan by a group of Taliban militants who threaten to chop off one of her fingers for each day Danish troops remain in the country. Her youthful jailor Nazir (Faigh Zamani) helps her escape, but she has to promise not to say he helped her, or he risks being executed.

Returning to Denmark, Rikke is hailed as a hero. Then, Nazir suddenly calls her from a Danish asylum centre and asks for her help, putting Rikke in a quandary that will cost her either her personal or her professional integrity.

#### THE EMOTIONS DEPARTMENT

*The Escape* was shot over ten weeks in Copenhagen and Turkey. The production couldn't get insurance to film in Afghanistan because of the war, so they had to find another place to shoot the scenes of Rikke's captivity. For the director, it was difficult to relocate to a country where she had never been.

"My research method would have been to go straight to Kabul, but of course that was impossible. We had to find another location. And we did, in southeast Turkey, where the mountains and earth resemble Afghanistan. Of course, it was hard to say how accurate our portrayal was, since we'd never been there. So I was really happy when our Afghan translator saw our footage and actually believed we had been filming in Afghanistan," Windfeld enthuses.

"There's a research period, of course, where you try to get all the facts straight. But my main focus was the drama. I want people to be carried away emotionally. I'm in the emotions department," she laughs.

*The Escape* is an adaptation of *The Refugee*, a socio-critical novel by the Danish journalist Olav Hergel.

"A critique of the war is important as an underlying moral in the film, but it's not the main storyline. I want to grab people's hearts, not dictate to them what to think," Windfeld says. "If you want to tell a political story, you need some emotions to make the politics go down. You know you've succeeded when the audience is entertained in the

**"I like to watch big films, and I'm quite concerned with making a broad statement. I want as many people to see my film as possible. There's nothing underground about me."**

cinema and then think about the film when they leave. Otherwise, everything gets too heavy and TV-news-like, and that's not the intention."

#### AIMING FOR AN INTERNATIONAL LOOK

Though Windfeld is Danish, she has long been an outsider in Danish film. She didn't attend the National Film School of Denmark but graduated from the Film School in Lodz, Poland, that has produced such world-famous directors as Andrzej Wajda, Krzysztof Kieslowski and Roman Polanski.

"When you go to film school in another country, you don't get the same kind of network you do when you go to film school in your own country. I didn't think about that when I decided to go there, but I've certainly felt it since," she says.

In fact, *The Escape* doesn't feel like a typical Danish film. Mixing action with a political plot and a love affair, it's a far cry from Danish Dogme films or folk comedies.

"I deliberately aimed for an international look. Bear in mind also that I went to film school in Poland and have done a lot of work in Sweden. My identity as a director is European and international," Windfeld says. Personally, she prefers big films with big emotions – and, ideally, big audiences.

"I like to watch big films, and I'm quite concerned with making a broad statement. I want as many people to see my film as possible. There's nothing underground about me," she laughs. "In terms of craftsmanship, I think it's fun to make a film for three million euros that looks like it cost five. Making things look big is a sport for me."

Same with the emotions, which are bigger here than in the average Danish film. "I don't think you can tell a story that touches people unless it's painful, too," she says. "Laughs are fine, naturally, but you shouldn't just laugh. I'm really much more interested in painful emotions."

#### GENDER DID MATTER

According to Windfeld, her position as an outsider is the main reason why it took her so long to direct her first feature. But there's another reason as well, as the director sees it. "It's because I'm a woman. No two ways about it." It's an issue she knows inside and out. In one case, though, her gender did work to her advantage.

"When Hanne-Vibeke Holst's bestsellers *The Crown Princess* and *His Wife* were being adapted for TV, Swedish producer Anna Croneman insisted on hiring a woman director because these were feminist novels. There, the success of my women colleagues Susanne Bier and Lone Scherfig helped me," Windfeld says. "Because they and their films were doing so well, the assumption was that I'd probably do well, too – an amazing declaration of trust, since the longest project I had ever directed ran 28 minutes. And now, I suddenly had to do four hours of TV costing three and a half million euros. I got a shot because the producer was conscious of feminism."

Windfeld proved that she was ready to pick up the mantle of her female predecessors. The TV films of *The Crown Princess* and *His Wife* were seen by half a million viewers in every country they were shown – Denmark, Sweden and Norway. It was a massive breakthrough for Windfeld, who next got the offer to adapt Hergel's novel *The Refugee*.

"It was incredibly liberating to get to that point. I've done shorts, documentaries, TV series – and now, finally, I get the chance to debut as a feature film director" ■

For further information on *The Escape*, see reverse section.



Director Kathrine Windfeld Photo: Jan Buus

#### KATHRINE WINDFELD

Born 1966, Denmark. Graduated 1995 in direction from the National Polish Film School in Lodz, and holds an MA in film production at the Northern School of Film & TV in the UK (1996). As assistant director, Windfeld has participated on the TV series *The Spider* (1999), *Unit 1* (2000-03) and *The Eagle* (2004-06). Has directed several short films and documentaries, among these *You Can't Eat Fishing* (1999), *My Son, My Husband, My Father* (2002) and the awardwinner at Chicago's International Children's Film Festival, *Little Man* (2002). Her professional breakthrough as a director came with the Swedish TV series *The Crown Princess* (2006), nominated for an Emmy, and *His Wife* (2008), both based on Hanne-Vibeke Holst's bestselling novels. *The Escape* (2009) is Windfeld's feature film debut.

#### NIMBUS FILM

Founded 1993 by producers Birgitte Hald and Bo Ehrhardt. They were later joined by director Thomas Vinterberg. Has been considered a major player in Danish cinema, having attained success in seeking out new talents and emphasizing innovation. Values long-term relationships with individual filmmakers and gives precedence to the creative collaboration between director, scriptwriter and producer. Celebrated for several dogme films, e.g. *The Celebration* (Thomas Vinterberg, 1998) and *Mifune* (Søren Kragh-Jacobsen, 1999). Pernille Fischer Christensen's drama *A Soap* (2006) was a double winner in Berlin, and selected for last year's Berlinale were Natasha Arthy's *Fighter* (2007) and Søren Kragh-Jacobsen's *What No One Knows* (2008). The WW2 drama *Flame & Citron* (Ole Christian Madsen, 2008) proved to be one of the greatest boxoffice successes in recent years. Nimbus will release four films in 2009, three feature film debuts and Nicolas Winding Refn's *Valhalla Rising*.

# MOTHERS & DAUGHTERS

**Dependence on another person can be a disease, Heidi Maria Faisst says. The Danish director's feature film debut *The Blessing* is a drama about a young mother who has a hard time breaking away from her own mother. The film had a headstart in 2009, being selected for the festivals in both Göteborg and Rotterdam.**

BY CHRISTIAN MONGGAARD

Heidi Maria Faisst once described her films as "closed little bastards." She laughs loudly when I ask her to explain what she meant. "It wasn't actually intended as self-criticism," she says. "What I mean is, I know my films can be hard to watch. Maybe *I'm* the closed little bastard. Though I don't look it.

"My films are very thematic and not particularly plot-driven," she adds. "There's no facile story you can just jump onto and then find a tough theme underneath. Every scene is about the theme, not the

plot. That's what I'm trying for, anyway. It's all I'm interested in. I'm not really good at making up plots."

## THE FEAR OF HAVING A CHILD

Faisst is making her feature film debut this year with *The Blessing*, a drama about the young woman Katrine (Lærke Winther), who falls into postpartum depression after giving birth to her first child. When her boyfriend has to go away for a few days, Katrine turns to her mother, even though their relationship is clearly strained.

"I usually start with something I'm working through myself, if not in my physical life, then somewhere in my mind or my gut," Faisst says.

"Around the time I was conceiving *The Blessing*, I was thinking a lot about why I hadn't had any children. I'm 36, but it was never anything I wanted to do. I figured it was really all about me being scared shitless about having a child come out of me and feeling no love for it. Thematically, that's where it all began," she says. "What's that all about,

fearing an inability to love? I started digging further into that. It's about the fear of being wrong, not being like everybody else, not being able to live up to all the expectations of you as a mother. Out of that came the idea to do a film about the fear of having a child."

## WRITE FIRST, RESEARCH LATER

Writing the film, Faisst discovered that a lot of women experience postpartum depression. "It may be only for the first two weeks, but these women were thinking, 'Get me out of here!' I was really surprised. More than half the women I spoke with told me that's how *they* felt. It was pretty wild."

Still, Faisst prefers to do her research after she has written her story. "Then I go out and check how much of what I've written is true. I'm not into researching first and then writing a story. That feels constricting. It's super nice to think I know a thing or two about emotions and then go out and check them. What's not true, I change."



Motherhood is no bed of roses for Katrine (Lærke Winther) who fails to connect emotionally with her newborn daughter. Framegrab

**“I figured it was really all about me being scared shitless about having a child come out of me and feeling no love for it. Thematically, that’s where it all began.”**

Once she has found a theme she wants to explore, she has to do a few things she enjoys less: creating a framework and writing a story to put her theme into.

“In the beginning, Katrine’s mother wasn’t even in the film,” Faisst says. “I had a woman and a girl, who helps Katrine with the baby. Katrine gets insanely jealous that the girl is connecting with the baby more than she is. The problem was I couldn’t write it. Then, when I replaced the girl with Katrine’s mother, the script practically wrote itself. I have a thing with mothers and daughters. I get a lot of material there. A lot of those scenes come to me, and if I try to avoid them, I go a bit flat.”

#### DEPENDENCY IS A DISEASE

Several of Faisst’s shorts, notably *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* (2006) and *Frederikke* (2007), also deal with difficult relationships between mothers and daughters.

“They are stories about holding on to something that isn’t good for you anymore,” she says. “That interests me. One day maybe, I’ll figure out how to do a regular love story about a man and a woman, but right now, that just isn’t very productive for me. Dependent relationships between parents and children are more fatal. Whether you like it or not – even if you’ve done everything to drive your parents away and you hate them – if you’re angry with your parents, you’re just as dependent on them as if you had them nearby.

“That’s become my view of the world. I see all our problems as coming from our background

and our family relationships. Sometimes it’s sibling relationships,” the director says.

Faisst generally considers dependency an interesting subject. “Anything about alcoholism and drugs. It’s a disease. Being dependent on another person can become a disease, too. Why do we sometimes lose ourselves completely because we want love or attention or recognition? It’s enormously human, exciting and sad. I wish that everyone could be free of those dependencies. So much is bound up in them,” she says.

#### LIFE CAN BE PRETTY TRAGICOMIC

Just don’t confuse the personal with the autobiographical, Faisst stresses. “It gets awful sometimes. I have to tell my mother, ‘No, it’s not you.’ And she’s all like, ‘Oh no, your next film’s about that too? I can’t stand it!’ She, too, has given a lot of thought to why I make the films I do. I’m sure she recognises things in them. My characters are a big mix of all kinds of families, and I’m the only one who knows where the details come from.”

At times, it can be hard to navigate the dark, dramatic worlds of her films, the director says. Because she writes her own scripts, it’s important to have good people around to read them and make suggestions.

“It’s hard, but I also have a lot of fun. Meta (Louise Foldager, Faisst’s regular producer, *ed.*) and I laugh a lot when we make these films, because we both think our own lives are pretty tragicomic, when we mess

everything up and can’t figure out a thing. If you ask me, *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* is pretty funny. *The Blessing* is probably less funny,” Faisst says.

*The Blessing*, like *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, is produced with support from the New Danish Screen talent development fund. Though the budget was fairly low, Faisst never felt squeezed. “I don’t think I ever came up with an idea for something so big that it would need a lot of locations and equipment,” she says. “I always come up with intimate, psychological stories. My ideas tend to be small, closed worlds. That way I’m a good fit for New Danish Screen. If I have a limited budget, I prefer to write a story that fits. Why get stressed about what I can’t get to film? That’s just a waste of time” ■

For further information on *The Blessing*, see reverse section.



Director Heidi Maria Faisst Photo: Jan Buis



Two mothers struggling to reach out and reconnect – the strained relationship between mother and daughter is a recurring theme in director Heidi Maria Faisst’s films. Framegrab

#### HEIDI MARIA FAISST

Born 1972, Denmark. Graduate in direction at the National Film School of Denmark, 2003. *The Pact*, her graduation film, was selected for Cinéfondation, Cannes. Wrote and directed the short films *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* (2006), winner of Best Short Fiction at the Danish Robert Awards, and *Frederikke* (2008). Faisst also wrote the screenplay for her feature film debut *The Blessing* (2008), produced by Zentropa.

#### ZENTROPA

For further information, see page 5.

#### NEW DANISH SCREEN

A subsidy scheme for promoting and inspiring the development of film language and storytelling in Danish cinema, securing its dynamics and diversity. Offering artistic free space for innovation and experimentation, New Danish Screen aims to ensure that new generations of filmmakers do not revert to conventional, handed-down expressions, but constantly strive to push the limits and create new experiences for audiences. New Danish Screen is an opportunity both for emerging talent on the professional level and more experienced filmmakers to develop, try out new ideas or switch tracks in relation to past productions. Support is directed at fiction films and documentaries, and, from 2008, the development of computer games. Jointly operated by the Danish Film Institute and the national broadcasters DR and TV 2. Several films supported by New Danish Screen have reached international acclaim, among these *A Soap* (Pernille Fischer Christensen, 2006), which won the Silver Bear and Best First Feature Award in Berlin; *Go With Peace Jamil* (Omar Shargawi, 2008), winner of the VPRO Tiger Award in Rotterdam; and the Oscar nominated short fictions *At Night* (Christian E. Christiansen, 2007) and *The Pig* (Dorte W. Høgh, 2008).



When Heaven Falls. Framegrab

# FILMS SHOULD MAKE YOU FEEL

**Manyar I. Parwani has no intention of sneaking out a polite debut feature. He wants to make a splash and shake up the audience with a movie about an important issue. Inspired by true events, *When Heaven Falls* is about a young woman's dramatic showdown with her brutal past.**

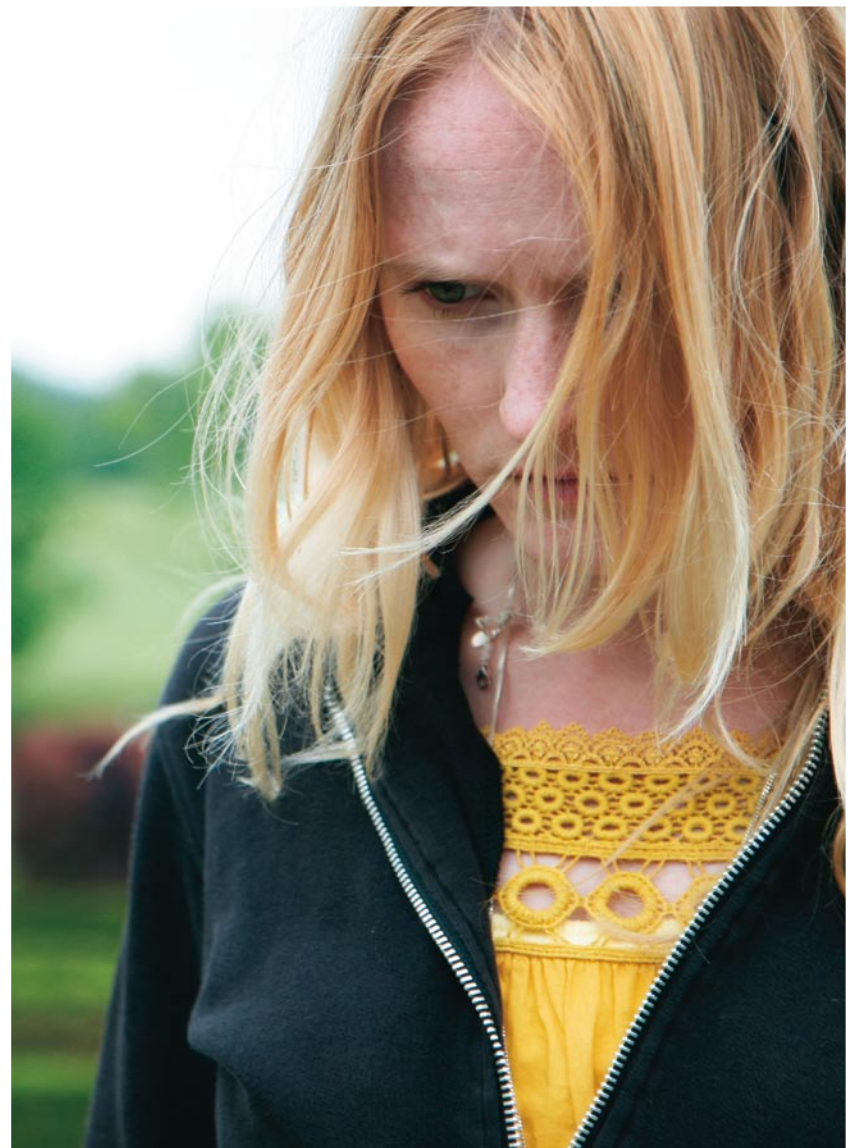
BY EVA NOVRUP REDVALL

Brave is she who is afraid, but still enters the field of battle.

This is how Manyar I. Parwani introduces the female protagonist of his first feature, *When Heaven Falls*. She is a warrior battling her own past. Not because she's a typical heroine or feels no fear, but because you sometimes have to take action, no matter the cost. Certain situations require a violent response, even for someone who is insecure and has a hard time taking responsibility for her own life.

As Parwani tells me - on a chilly December day in one of Zentropa's small director's cabins on the outskirts of Copenhagen - it was important for him to tell a necessary and distinctive story, when he entered the battlefield of Danish features on the heels of his acclaimed shorts *In My World* (2006) and *Ibrahim* (2007). He wanted to debut with a splash. People should *feel* his film, and he wanted it to advance Danish cinema.

"It was important for me to ask myself the question: What can I do for Danish cinema? How can I add something new?" Parwani says. "If you're too afraid of doing something stupid, your film gets boring. You shouldn't just play it safe. Instead, be challenging! In that sense, Thomas Vinterberg really shook up Danish audiences with his dogme



Numbed and traumatised by her brutal past, Sara (Mille Hoffmeyer Lehfeldt) still takes up the fight to prevent history from repeating itself. Photo: Lars Reinholdt

**“I sometimes sent thank-you notes after getting rejection letters. Resistance is good. It toughens you up.”**

film *The Celebration*. In Denmark, we make films for government funds, and I think it's important to make films that people want to see, but they should also deal with important things. I didn't want to sneak out a polite debut film and be, like, 'Thanks for having me.' I wanted to make a film that makes a difference to those who see it.”

#### REAL-LIFE INSPIRATION

The screenplay for *When Heaven Falls* began as a multi-plot story titled *DK-Land* in the vein of films like *21 Grams* and *Syriana*, but along the way, another story kept elbowing in. It was a story inspired by an ongoing Danish criminal case, the so-called Tønder case, involving the sexual abuse of two sisters in a small provincial town and scores of people.

The protagonist in *When Heaven Falls* is a young woman, Sara (Mille Hoffmeyer Lehfeldt), who was taken from her biological parents at age eleven and placed with a foster mother in Copenhagen. She has never come to terms with her past. When her biological mother dies, she makes a first trip back to her hometown to attend the funeral. Neither her father (Dick Kaysø) nor her older brother (Marcus Nicolas Christensen) recognises her, and she decides not to reveal her identity. When Sara discovers that she has two young sisters, she finds it hard to tear herself away, because she suspects they may be suffering the same abuse she once did. The question is: Can she save them? And is anyone in the small town even interested in getting involved?

Parwani wrote the script over two years based on extensive research into the criminal case and on studies of neo-Nazi milieus, which also play a prominent part in the film - both of which he knew nothing about at the time. A major challenge was getting close to people he had no immediate understanding of, plus finding the right way to tell a very tough story in a film.

“The story, as I see it, springs from pain,” Parwani says. “Perhaps the rest of us can, in time, forget about the case, but the victims in the Tønder case will never forget. These are things that permanently ruin lives. I wanted to show that by telling the kind of story that's usually never told.”

#### COMPLEX EMOTIONS

The story in *When Heaven Falls* springs from tragic events, but Parwani adamantly did not want the film to be tragic-looking. The story should have visual

power and energy, centring on a female protagonist who decides to take action.

“I gradually discovered that I wanted to tell the story of a woman who can take care of herself,” Parwani says. “Even though her soul is scarred. Even when things get dangerous. She's a warrior, precisely because she overcomes her fear and walks alone into the heat of battle. Even then, her innocence remains the driving force. The film might very easily have degenerated into an unambiguous tale of vengeance, and I was always struggling to include the many complex emotions. As when she asks her father, 'Did you ever love me?' She is looking for answers, not just vengeance. She needs to understand certain things.”

#### GO FOR THE UNFAMILIAR

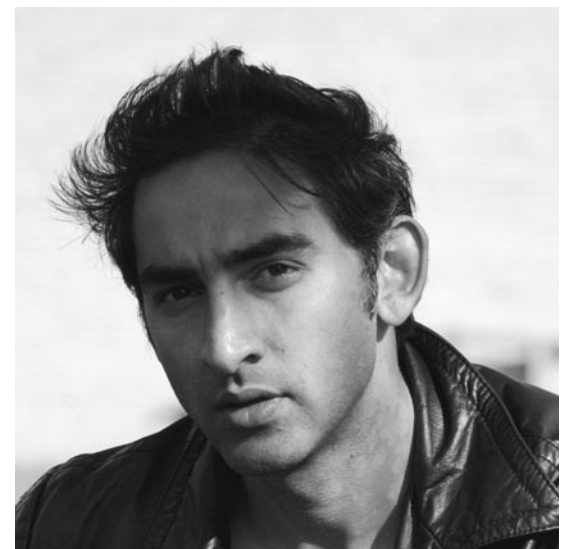
“It took a long time to find a suitable form for the story and the right visual style,” Parwani says. “In the process, I ran into a lot of opinions about what you can and cannot do. Eventually, that almost became a kind of guideline. When someone told me, 'You can't do that,' I knew I was on the right track. If you have very fixed formulas in your head, I think that's limiting. The way I see it, variety makes art stronger. We don't all need to think and work the same way,” Parwani says.

The leading role of Sara is played by Mille Hoffmeyer Lehfeldt, who previously had minor parts in Jacob Thuesen's *The Early Years - Erik Nietzsche Part 1* and Ole Christian Madsen's *Flame & Citron*. Parwani deliberately picked actors who weren't already familiar from a lot of other films.

“I wanted to put people in my film who were really hungry to tell a story. They really had to want to do the film. I was fortunate to get some incredibly committed actors, and I'm deeply grateful to them. Especially the two small girls, whose parts were incredibly demanding.”

#### YES I CAN!

Manyar I. Parwani, who was born in Afghanistan and has lived in Denmark for 23 years, feels neither Afghan nor Danish. He just wants to be Manyar and tell stories that touch people across cultures. He has wanted to be a filmmaker ever since he worked as an usher in a Copenhagen cinema and dreamed about seeing his own name on a poster over the ticket counter. He didn't take the well-travelled path through the National Film School of Denmark. Instead, he simply made a lot of movies and never stopped to ask himself, if he could.



Director Manyar I. Parwani Photo: Søren Ulkjær

#### MANYAR I. PARWANI

Born 1976, Afghanistan. Self-taught director. Has made short films produced at the Danish Video Workshop, Haderslev. Parwani directed the documentary *Avation* (2003), and the short fiction films *In My World* (2006) and *Ibrahim* (2007). *When Heaven Falls* (2009) is his feature film debut.

#### ZENTROPA

For further information, see page 5.

“Only very late in the game did I ask myself, 'Can I do this?' I think that has been very important in getting me where I am today. I made films without knowing the business, powered by tremendous desire. I got many rejections in the process, and the people who rejected me were usually right. I sometimes sent thank-you notes after getting rejection letters. Resistance is good. It toughens you up. I always wanted to learn from other people, and my attitude always was that if people didn't want to support my films, I just had to get even better and do something they simply could not refuse,” he says.

*When Heaven Falls* is supported by the New Danish Screen talent fund. Parwani hopes he has made a film that audiences can't refuse. He's proud of his film and eager to put it out there, ready to fight for the audience's favour in the cinema arena ■

For further information on *When Heaven Falls*, see reverse section. For further information on *New Danish Screen*, see page 21.

# JOINED FORCES

Thanks to a new fund, Copenhagen Film Festivals, the Danish capital can present a new, stronger festival line-up. Copenhagen Film Festivals embraces the CPH:DOX documentary film festival, the BUSTER children & youth film festival, and CPH:PIX, a brand new feature film festival opening on 16 April 2009. "It's essential that we maintain our separate identities in the new partnership," the three festival directors all agree. FILM spoke with Tine Fischer (DOX), Füsun Eriksen (BUSTER) and Jacob Neiiendam (PIX).

BY LOUISE KIDDE SAUNTVED

Kicking off ten days of exciting new features in April, CPH:PIX is the first new festival to come out of Copenhagen Film Festivals, since the partnership was established in fall 2008.

The other two festivals, BUSTER and CPH:DOX - running in September and November, respectively

Photo: Per Morten Abrahamsen



Tine Fischer, Jacob Neiiendam and Füsun Eriksen photographed in Copenhagen's new up-and-coming neighbourhood for creative forces, a former meatpacking district called Den hvide Kødby.



– were largely planned out before their inclusion under the new umbrella. One thing the three festival directors, Jacob Neiiendam, Tine Fischer and Füsun Eriksen, had agreed on all along was maintaining the festivals' separate identities and clearly defined profiles.

#### GIVING NEW TALENTS A LEG UP

Focusing on children's films and documentaries, respectively, BUSTER and CPH:DOX have already established their names internationally. The new festival, CPH:PIX, will have an equally distinct profile, centring on debut films from around the world, new talents, new forms of expression and new technology. The main competition, featuring a first prize of 50,000 euros, is for feature film debuts only.

"When we were defining our concept, we asked, 'What relevance does a festival have in 2009? What should a festival do to make a difference?'" Neiiendam says. "Fairly quickly, we decided to centre our festival on first-time filmmakers, since one of the most satisfying things about running a festival is giving new talents a leg up. That way, our festival becomes relevant. And we'll be relevant to the audience by presenting a selection of works that would not otherwise be in distribution."

Even before its first festival, CPH:PIX has attracted international attention because of its debut film policy

**"It was important for me to step into an organisation that doesn't go for a 'corporate identity' and a 'corporate culture', but holds on to the culture it grew out of."**

*Tine Fischer, CPH:DOX*

and substantial cash prize. The festival is hoping its other efforts, including a film and computer game theme, will attract attention as well. But otherwise, the festival is keeping its focus on providing good experiences for local audiences. CPH:PIX is conceived as an audience festival with a number of events capable of attracting international attention. For strategic reasons, the festival's industry platform, Copenhagen Film Market, is scheduled for September, right after the BUSTER festival.

#### TEND THE ROOTS

BUSTER, too, is planning to take up the relationship between film and computer games at its next festival, considering how much time computer games take up in kids' lives. Neiiendam and Eriksen do not consider it a problem that both festivals will be touching on the same theme, because their demographics are so different. But all three festival directors are intent on getting to know the other festivals so well that they can cooperate without intruding on each other's niches.

"It was important for me to step into an organisation that doesn't go for a 'corporate identity' and a 'corporate culture', but holds on to the culture it grew out of," Fischer says. "We come

out of a grassroots culture and have grown into a professional organisation. The documentary festival has grown up with a lot of authenticity, and it's essential for DOX not to lose that."

#### FILMS WITH A FOCUS

For BUSTER, a major challenge is to persuade kids, and not least their parents and teachers who take them to the cinema, that movies are worth spending their limited time on, considering all the other enticing options out there.

"With that in mind, BUSTER's concept is to use the medium of cinema to introduce kids to new things," Eriksen says. "Teach them about different art forms, dance and music, literature and world history – things that also come in useful in the classroom."

"In our cross-media project, which we hope to find funding for in 2009, there will be workshops where the kids can try their talent on filmmaking, animation, computer games, films for mobile phones, or even write a film review. The idea is to show them how to use the film media on many different platforms, and at the same time how to maintain a critical distance."

BUSTER has also attracted a lot of attention with another new effort, OREGON, a film competition inviting kids from all over the country to submit their own films.

"Our audience is used to experiences beyond the ordinary, so we have to create interest by doing different kinds of activities that aren't film screenings hundred percent, but have something else added," Eriksen says.

#### NEW PARTNERSHIPS

"Still, we should be careful not just to do more and more events," Fischer warns. "What is important is organising events that take the idea of cinema even further. Since documentaries reflect and deal with reality, at DOX we have chosen to locate a lot of events out there, in the real world – in the world of real politics. Over the last years, we have also had a very successful partnership going on with the visual art and music scenes, because we strongly believe in the artistic potential in the crossover between film, art and music. But we shouldn't turn into an event culture. The events should tie into the general theme of our programme."

In fact, CPH:DOX has been hugely successful mixing film and focused events. 33,093 tickets were sold to DOX 08. Nonetheless, creative thinking is still essential, as documentaries struggle to find distribution through the traditional channels of cinemas and television.

A focal point for CPH:DOX is creating new distribution partnerships to bring more quality films to audiences. At the last festival in November, this was manifested in a partnership with the Danish Broadcasting Corporation DR, while the Berlin Film Festival will see the launch of a new international VOD (video-on-demand) platform created in partnership between five film festivals. This internet platform called DOCALLIANCEFILMS.COM is unique in the sense that it is a curated platform for downloading high-quality documentaries. The project is supported by MEDIA.

#### A FESTIVAL SHOULD BE AN OASIS

Reaching audiences may also turn out to be a challenge for CPH:PIX. Showcasing new, unknown films and filmmakers, the festival can't boast the familiar, dependable drawing cards that get seats filled at commercially oriented festivals.

"It's a challenge," Neiiendam concedes. "But, while our competition slate is dedicated to first-time filmmakers, other parts of the line-up will be more mainstream-friendly. Still, the whole idea of a feature film festival is that it should be an oasis, an alternative to the commercial distribution. We shouldn't just be a preview festival. That's not interesting for us, when there are so many other good films out there that never get a chance to be distributed. This is what we need to focus on."

"There's a whole new generation now that grew up without any real exposure to anything but the mainstream on TV and other platforms. And that's our main challenge: screening a quality selection of all the features that are coming out of the woodwork around the world. We should be an oasis for an audience looking for quality, for the offbeat and different – even if it's just an action film that doesn't star Steven Seagal."

"If you really want attention, you should insist on doing things differently, in your own way. Hopefully, these three festivals will know how to do that. No doubt, festivals *are* the alternative distribution. There simply aren't any other ways to put these films out there. They keep showing the same things on TV, the theatrical distribution window is narrowing, and we need festivals like never before," Neiiendam says ■

## COPENHAGEN FILM FESTIVALS/

#### COPENHAGEN FILM FESTIVALS

Mikkel Harder / Managing Director  
Andreas Steinmann / Producer  
Per Hedegaard / Head of Marketing

#### CPH:PIX / 16-26 APRIL 2009

Jacob Neiiendam / Festival Director  
Niels Lind Larsen / Head of Programming  
CPH:PIX draws on the experienced teams from the city's long-running film festivals, the NatFilm Festival and the Copenhagen International Film Festival, which are now merged into one. CPH:PIX will focus on new talents and new technology.

#### BUSTER / 18-27 SEPTEMBER 2009

Füsun Eriksen / Festival Director  
Lars Knudsen / Head of Programming  
BUSTER – Copenhagen International Film Festival for Children and Youth, founded in 2000. Holds competitions for features, shorts and documentaries. The festival organises animation workshops, debates and events aimed at a young audience.

#### CPH:DOX / 6-15 NOVEMBER 2009

Tine Fischer / Festival Director  
Niklas Engström and Thure Munkholm / Programme & Events  
Tine Mosegaard and Synnøve Kjærland / DOX:FORUM & DOX:MARKET  
CPH:DOX – Copenhagen International Documentary Film Festival, founded in 2003. Presents 180 films, an international distribution platform FORUM & MARKET, and a five day professional seminar.

# THINKTANK ON EUROPEAN FILM AND FILM POLICY

## THE CINEMA OF TOMORROW: THINKTANK SHIFTS UP A GEAR

**Multiple initiatives have been launched over the last 20 years to strengthen the European film industry. One of the new kids on the block in terms of addressing the sector's key policy issues is the Copenhagen-based European Film ThinkTank. The fledgling body has already established enviable momentum, and its conclusions and recommendations are now pondered carefully by industry players.**

BY MARTIN DALE /  
FILM CONSULTANT AND CORRESPONDENT TO VARIETY

So how has the ThinkTank been able to make a difference?

First, unlike most European structures - that easily slide into cumbersome and bureaucratic *modus operandi* due to their 20+ members - the ThinkTank has a small core group of members that includes Europe's leading film agencies (from France, the UK, Spain, Germany, Denmark and Poland). The ThinkTank has thereby forged a privileged information bridge between key bodies responsible for overseeing the sector's fortunes.

Second, the ThinkTank is not responsible for disbursing financial assistance or acting as a lobbying group. Instead it aims to forge a new public policy process based on informal meetings where participants can speak openly, thereby creating a new standard for dialogue and common action.

Third, the ThinkTank has forged links with some of the sector's leading experts and stakeholders who have participated in events organised to date. By drawing on the best minds in the sector, the ThinkTank can tap into latest thinking and draw up concepts of value.

Finally, the management team can boast a strong track record in terms of conjuring up policy measures that can turn around a film industry.

### A FRESH START

ThinkTank Director Henning Camre is widely hailed as the godfather of new Danish cinema after his pathbreaking tenure at the National Film School of Denmark (1975-92), where he groomed new talent, and his record as CEO of the relaunched Danish Film Institute (1998-2007), overseeing a fourfold jump in public funding and a doubling of admissions for national films.

Camre also has extensive international experience, including a six-year tenure as director of the UK's National Film and Television School (1992-98).

One of Camre's key principles in terms of devising public policy recommendations is that people make a difference. Responsible for a masterplan that led to a complete overhaul of the Danish film industry, he never lost sight of the need to allow talent to flourish and to minimise bureaucratic red tape.

He also has no fear in speaking his mind on thorny issues and recently provocatively declared that "instead of treating European cinema like a crippled child we have to make a fresh start".

### A TARGETED APPROACH

The ThinkTank doesn't aim to deliver a uniform blueprint that will apply to all countries and regions, but instead aims to learn from best practices and encourage their discussion and dissemination throughout Europe.

Key issues include scale, policy harmonisation, coherent strategies, simpler co-production rules and a far bigger emphasis on marketing and distribution. One of the key weaknesses identified in Europe is fragmentation - with 921 films a year and over 1100 distributors. The recent Zentropa-Nordisk merger has been cited as an example of how it's possible to build scale, even in small countries.

### COPENHAGEN THINKTANK

Events organised by the ThinkTank to date have attempted to identify the key issues facing the sector and chart core trajectories for the future.

The kick-off event in Copenhagen in June 2006, attended by 170 people, attempted to profile Europe's unique film ecology and identify organic solutions. The main topic analysed in Copenhagen was how to connect with audiences.

The keynote speaker at Copenhagen was Lord Puttnam who declared the need for a "big-bang" of European film and film policy and reminded participants that European cinema must rekindle its vision and "moral purpose". In the wake of the 2006 Copenhagen ThinkTank, the organisation was formally incorporated, and foundations were laid for an ambitious series of events in 2008.

### VIENNA THINKTANK

In April 2008, a meeting was held in Vienna, co-organised by the Austrian Film Institute (OFI), focusing on how to improve the performance of the Austrian film industry, which has one of the lowest shares of the national boxoffice in Europe.

The meeting commenced with a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats, *ed.*) of the local sector. Key strengths identified included stable public support, strong local talent and significant international prestige, and weaknesses

included low audience engagement, little broadcaster involvement and lack of overall film policy.

Lines of suggested future development included more comprehensive film education, new talent mechanisms, higher investment in development and promotion, building critical mass, new links with broadcasters and creation of a consultant system at the OFI to ensure Austrian films reach an audience. One of the ThinkTank's key concerns is to analyse how to increase the market share for local films and ensure that films from one country can build an audience in other countries. At present, even in regions with a strong local film tradition such as Scandinavia, there is very little interchange of films between countries. Overall, only ten percent of European film producers' revenues derive from sales outside their own country.

### THE KRAKOW FILM POLICY FORUM

The question of how to foster cross-border distribution and thereby guarantee cultural diversity was a key theme underlying the three-day Forum organised by the ThinkTank in September 2008 in Krakow, attended by 150 participants from 35 countries, entitled "Shaping Policies for the Cinema of Tomorrow". Co-organised by the Council of Europe and the Polish Film Institute, the Forum aimed to delineate strategies for the European film industry that will enable diversity to flourish amidst the challenges of the new digital universe.

The Krakow Forum delivered many thought-provoking conclusions, including the primordial need for public film agencies to adapt their strategies to cater to the digital value chain.

### COMMON PLATFORMS

Brainstorming, analysis of best practices and definition of new policies are all essential at this critical moment, and the need for a common platform was mentioned in the Forum, e.g. a European Motion Pictures Association, comparable to the MPAA, responsible for promoting European films in local and global markets.

Greater collaboration should be fostered between national support systems, including a radical overhaul of the European Convention on Co-production and bilateral co-production treaties, whose points systems often lose sight of in the essential question of making films for an audience. A common European system of tax breaks for investment in film was also defended. The vital role of international directives was noted, including the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity and the EU's recently adopted Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMS) that can be used to guarantee greater airtime for European films.

Uniform standards of transparency and accountability amongst Europe's film agencies was advocated, and a recommendation was issued to the European Film Agencies Research Network (EFARN) to prepare a proposal setting out policy indicators to be implemented at national, regional and European levels.

### ALTERNATIVE DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

Distribution was a key area of focus at the Krakow Forum, given that many sales agents and distributors are being forced to revolutionise their activities or go out of business. Many participants stated that US blockbusters are crowding out European films in traditional cinemas, in particular non-national films.

Theatrical cinemas dedicated to showing European films are facing increasing difficulties, and film festivals now play a growing role in compensating this gap, including year-round activities that establish a vital link between filmmakers and communities.

Participants emphasised the need to develop new exhibition windows, including Internet, video-on-demand and digital exhibition. Brazil's Rain Network constituted by 240 digital screens was cited as an example of how new technologies can be used to provide alternative channels.

Cross-border distribution of national films was identified as a key issue, requiring new mechanisms within national public support systems alongside existing incentives from the MEDIA programme.

### NEW FUNDING PRIORITIES

The classic funding model for European films is changing, and the Forum's participants cited the need for more emphasis on development, promotion and slate funding. Above all, stronger production and distribution companies are required in Europe in order to be able to compete in the global market.

Several growth areas were identified – such as the resurgence of national films in countries such as Brazil and Turkey, and the growing penetration of Latin films in the US market.

Participants from America, Latin America and the Middle East urged European filmmakers to "wake up" and start producing films that have stronger things to say about European culture and can reach out to a wider audience.

Finally, a key area of importance cited in the Forum was to promote the production and circulation of programming targeted at children and young people. The US Majors are masters in grooming audiences from toddler age up, whereas

in Europe the creative community is increasingly losing touch with the audience, and this divide begins in childhood. In this regard, plans were made to establish a European film education network, to be presented to the media literacy conference in March 2009.

### THE SEVILLE CORE GROUP MEETING

In November 2008, the ThinkTank launched a new type of initiative – a core group meeting attended by 15 stakeholders, dedicated to a key topic.

The Seville core group meeting, "Film Distribution – Strategies for the New Value Chain", focused on how the industry-audience relationship has changed in the digital world, thereby requiring new community-building strategies that will enable European films to build a stronger market.

Key drivers of change identified include fragmentation of audiences, segmentation of content and concentration of rights distribution. Europe's distinctive communities, untapped stories, creative talent and agile production structures were seen as significant advantages in adapting to the new environment.

Participants emphasised the need for a new mindset amongst funding agencies and producers. Whereas film agencies have traditionally focused on guaranteeing production and producers on earning their production fee, the new value chain makes it even more important to connect with audiences and draw maximum benefit from intellectual property rights.

Education will play a vital role in enabling the European sector to adapt to the digital universe, and the meeting emphasised the need for an overhaul of Europe's film schools and organisation of extensive digital media training initiatives.

Finally, participants at Seville suggested that the ThinkTank can act as a bridge between film agencies and industry stakeholders, identifying best practices and launching eye-opening initiatives in this field.

Several areas of further research were identified, such as digital rights management, branding and a SWOT analysis of the European film industry in the new media world.

Building on the momentum of the 2008 events, the ThinkTank plans to organise a mixture of informal core group meetings and large-scale events that seek to continue focusing on bridging the analogue/digital gap and concentrate on establishing greater interoperability between national film policies in Europe ■

# FROM BALLOON PILOT TO GRAVE GENTLEMAN

## EXAMPLES FROM THE COLLECTION:



On-set stills include this magnificent image of a shoot for *Vredens Dag/Day of Wrath*: the scene on Mølleåen of the idyllic, but strictly forbidden and ultimately disastrous intimacy between Bishop Absalon's young wife and his son. The still

shows this intimacy beset by the director and his sound- and cameramen bobbing in small boats. The 17th century idyll is broken, but another replaces it, the idyll of a film shoot from another time, with other equipment and other possibilities.

**It's fascinating that, while the general image of Danish director Carl Th. Dreyer is that of a grave, elderly gentleman, his youthful years tell an entirely different story. His life raises many questions, but above all it has produced a handful of films that still command attention and remain in demand the world over. In February 2010, the Danish Film Institute launches a new website on the legendary filmmaker.**

BY DAN NISSEN / HEAD OF ARCHIVE & CINEMATHEQUE

Over ten years, from his debut in 1918 to his masterwork *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* in 1928, Carl Th. Dreyer directed nine films for eight different production companies in five countries. This productive, itinerant first decade stands in stark contrast to the remainder of his film career. From 1928 to his death in 1968, Dreyer made just one feature film per decade (not including his Swedish film, *Två människor*, which he didn't much care for

himself). On the other hand, each of those films is a masterpiece, not just in his own career but in all of film history.

Dreyer appears to have been living out of a suitcase for much of that early decade, finding work where he would be allowed the greatest creative freedom. And before his film career started, he was at first a clerk - bolting when he realised, to his horror, that he might spend a lifetime as one - then plunged into journalism, writing scathing, scandalous portrait pieces for the tabloids.

He even became a balloon pilot around 1910, and he also reported on his first airplane flights, once risking life and limb perched between the wheels under the plane on a voyage across the Sound to Sweden. Again, this contrasts sharply with the rest of his life, which he spent in a modest apartment in Frederiksberg, Copenhagen, with his wife and grown daughter, who kept the apartment after his death.

**DREYER'S PERSONAL ARCHIVES**

The Danish Film Institute holds all of Dreyer's films. They are continually restored, and fresh prints

are made. Apart from the films, the Film Institute holds a unique collection of materials by and about Dreyer. The collection comprises Dreyer's own files, which were donated to the Danish Film Museum after his death in 1968, as well as comprehensive donations from his estate and more. Highlights in the collection include the director's working papers and original screenplays, plus research materials, including for several unrealised film projects, such as *Jesus af Nazaret* and *Mary Stuart*. In addition are personal letters, photographs, film awards and parts of his book collection.

In 2008, the Danish Film Institute received a generous grant from the Velux Fund to catalogue the Dreyer collection and to develop a website to disseminate the collection, making the materials available to researchers and the general public alike. And because of the worldwide interest in Dreyer, the website, which is going online on his birthday 3 February 2010, will be in both Danish and English ■

Follow the project: [www.dfi.dk/carlthdreyer](http://www.dfi.dk/carlthdreyer)

All photos © DFI

Transcription of the 46 postcards by Lisbeth Richter Larsen



The more personal sections of the collection include postcards, like this one, dated 1908 and addressed to a young Ebba Larsen, the future Mrs Dreyer:

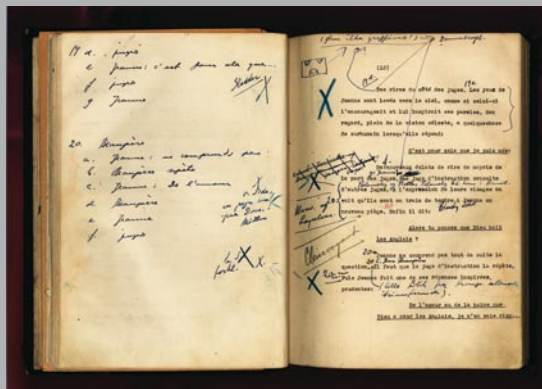
"Dearest! I'm in Innsbruck, in a very cosy restaurant most admirably furnished like a real old beer pub. I would love to see you sitting here next to me, taking it all in with wide-eyed wonder. As I sit here thinking of you and your last letter, I recall a verse by Chr. Winther: *All, all the sorrow in the world is struck from the heart when love so desires*. Regards Carl Th."

In 1910, he wrote Ebba two cards from Kristiania (the future Oslo), which he calls a dead-boring town. The second card simply reads:

"You are so sweet. I want you to have another card." The card is signed, "Your balloon man." The two cards are from 18 October 1910. Two days previous, Dreyer boarded a balloon piloted by one engineer Krebs to compete in a race to Kristiania. There they land, 540 kilometres and 25 hours later, winning the race, while their opponent went down in North Jutland in Denmark. The newspapers hail the feat and Dreyer, too, files a story on it illustrated with his own photos.



Here is a young Dreyer in his Paris flat, after having finished *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*. Private photo, probably around 1929. There is every probability that the photographer is Rudolf Maté.



The collection holds a large number of Dreyer film scripts, typically his own version, or versions with handwritten notes, additions, modifications, changes to the scene sequence, etc. The example here is from *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*. The collection also includes large drawing plans from *Jeanne d'Arc* signed by the film's architect, Hermann Warm.



This is an example of Dreyer's typically conscientious and thorough research, fastidiously filed into envelopes by the director himself. The picture shown here of Miss Charlotte Noland, who founded the Foxcroft School for Girls in Virginia, is not from Dreyer's collection. It was provided by John Hilbard, a production assistant on *Gertrud*. The resemblance between stately Miss Noland and the older Gertrud, embodied by Nina Pens Rode, is impossible to overlook. The picture is meticulously marked "Ladies' hairstyles and hats" in Dreyer's unmistakable hand.

# DANISH BAD GUYS

The golden age of Dogme opened a door to the world for Danish actors. Nikolaj Lie Kaas, Zlatko Buric, Jakob Cedergren and their Danish agents sketch their own part in the current trend – a trend that also has Ulrich Thomsen featuring in Berlin's opening film *The International*.

BY MADS MARIEGAARD

A Russian mobster, a corrupt tycoon, a PR guy named Otto – a growing number of Danish actors are showing up in the credits for international features.

Often, international producers are casting Danish actors as villains. Nikolaj Lie Kaas had his international debut in 2006 playing a Russian mobster in *Pu-239*, directed by Scott Z. Burns, and currently, he can be seen as Mr. Gray in Ron Howard's *Angels & Demons*. Curiously, in Denmark, Kaas has often played the role of insecure,



Jakob Cedergren in *Dark Horse*. Photo: Henrik O. Rasmussen

sensitive men, as seen in the Dogme films *The Idiots* and *Truly Human*.

"People used to ask me if I wasn't afraid of being typecast, but I knew that would change eventually," Kaas says. "I'm happy playing villains, and I'm sure a lot of other Danish actors would be, too, because we never get to do that in Denmark. We hardly have any villains in Danish films."

## CORRUPT TYCOON

One of the few true villains Danish cinema has produced is Zlatko Buric's drug kingpin Milo in Nicolas Winding Refn's *Pusher*. The Croatian-born actor's international career picked up steam after that role, and he may currently be seen as a corrupt Russian tycoon in Roland Emmerich's action film *2012*.

"The Danish films I have been in all put a heavy emphasis on the character's psychology. Not so in *2012*, where my expression is a lot stronger. They are two different things, of course, and both are interesting, but I'm thrilled to be in a production of this scale," Buric says.

## SCANDINAVIAN ACCENT

On the other hand, Jakob Cedergren, an actor known for playing tough guys in Danish films, was not slotted as a villain in his English-language debut, *Rage*, directed by Sally Potter.

Cedergren first attracted international attention for his leading role



Nikolaj Lie Kaas in *Murk*. Photo: Liam Daniel

## SELECTED DANISH ACTORS IN INTL. PRODUCTIONS / THREE FILMS IN BERLIN

**Kim Bodnia**  
**Zlatko Buric**  
**Jakob Cedergren**  
**Jesper Christensen**

**Nikolaj Coster-Waldau**  
**Trine Dyrholm**  
**Thure Lindhardt**  
**Nikolaj Lie Kaas**  
**Mads Mikkelsen**

**Ulrich Thomsen**

*Delhi Belly* (Abhinay Deo)  
*2012* (Roland Emmerich)  
*Rage* (Sally Potter) **MAIN COMPETITION**  
*Quantum of Solace* (Marc Forster)  
*Storm* (Hans-Christian Schmid) **MAIN COMPETITION**  
*New Amsterdam* (Fox TV)  
*The Unseen* (Erik Poppe)  
*Angels & Demons* (Ron Howard)  
*Angels & Demons* (Ron Howard)  
*Die Tür* (Anno Saul)  
*Coco Chanel and Igor Stravinsky* (Jan Kounen)  
*The International* (Tom Tykwer) **OPENING FILM**

in Dagur Kári's *Dark Horse*, which won Un Certain Regard at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival. That same year, Cedergren was elected Shooting Star in Berlin and is now returning to the festival with *Rage*, which is running in competition. Cedergren plays Otto, a PR guy for a big fashion house, in a film exclusively consisting of monologues.

"When I saw that my character's name was Otto, I asked Sally Potter if the part was intended for a German. It was. So I asked her if I should work on my German accent. Don't bother, she said, just use the accent you've got. So, in the film, I have a Scandinavian accent," Swedish-born Cedergren says.

## GOOD REPUTATION ABROAD

Several other Danish actors can currently be seen in international productions. Jesper Christensen is playing a Bond villain in *Quantum of Solace*. Thure Lindhardt, like Nikolaj Lie Kaas, has a part in *Angels & Demons*. Nikolaj Coster-Waldau is starring in the American TV series *New Amsterdam*. And Ulrich Thomsen is featured in Tom Tykwer's *The International*, which opens the Berlin Film Festival.

Beyond the obvious reason – the international success of Danish films – wider distribution has been crucial

to the increase in international roles for Danish actors, the Danish agent Anne Lindberg suggests.

"These days, Danish producers and distributors are much better at getting their films out in the world. Danish actors are picked more frequently, because Danish films have more exposure abroad, but also because of the massive work that agents do," Lindberg says. Her clients include Nikolaj Lie Kaas and Jakob Cedergren.

Ulrich Møller-Jørgensen, director of the Danish Art Management agency, agrees: "The advice given to Danish actors has undergone a professional upgrade. Ten years ago, when I started my agency, there were hardly any other managers out there. Now there's a lot, and more actors are getting better advice," Møller-Jørgensen says. His clients include Mads Mikkelsen and Zlatko Buric.

Also, the generally high quality of Danish actors plays a part, says Sten Hassing, a partner in the Danish management agency Team Players.

"A lot of Danish actors speak fluent English. They're highly educated, with a good, four-year degree, and are getting a lot of work in Denmark – in film, on TV and the stage. For those reasons, they have a good reputation abroad," Hassing says ■



Ulrich Thomsen in Tom Tykwer's action thriller *The International*, opening the Berlinale 2009. Photo: Jay Maidment



Zlatko Buric in Nicolas Winding Refn's third installment in the *Pusher* trilogy, *I'm the Angel of Death*. Photo: Jens Juncker-Jensen

# MIKKELSEN'S EUROPEAN YEAR



The role as Bond villain Le Chiffre in *Casino Royale* earned Mads Mikkelsen widespread international acclaim. Photo: Jay Maidment

Following his international breakthrough as a villain crying tears of blood in *Casino Royale*, Danish actor Mads Mikkelsen is starring in three European films opening this year: Anno Saul's *Die Tür* (Germany), Jan Kounen's *Coco Chanel and Igor Stravinsky* (France) and Danish director Nicolas Winding Refn's English-language *Valhalla Rising*.

BY MADRS MARIEGAARD

*What attracts you to working internationally?*

It was never anything I aimed for, actually. My goal was always to make good films in Denmark. Now that Danish films have been successful, the offers have been coming in. What attracts me about international projects are the exact same things that attract me about Danish films: a good story and an interesting director. The odds of getting interesting offers are

better internationally because the volume of films is bigger. We make good films in Denmark, but we don't make 22 good films a year.

*What are the differences between working in Denmark and working abroad?*

In Denmark, I'm used to going home with directors and writers and discussing how to solve the next day's problems over a couple of beers. That's not generally how it's done abroad – though, it turns out, a few people actually do work that way. There was much closer collaboration on *Coco Chanel and Igor Stravinsky*, which I just finished, than on *King Arthur*, the first international film I was in, where all you did was show up, put on your knight costume and go home again afterwards.

*You had your international breakthrough as a villain in the Bond movie Casino Royale. Were you concerned about being typecast?*

I was aware of it, but I didn't think twice when they offered me the role – the Bond films are legendary. When Ulrich Thomsen played a Bond villain (*The World Is Not Enough*), there was a lot of talk that it might turn into a liability for him – not about how cool it was that he got the role. I thought that was absurd. If you go on to play four villains in a row afterwards, then it's a problem. Otherwise not.

I'd gladly play another villain, if it's a good part.

*In 2008, you played roles in English, German, French and Russian. How was that?*

None of those languages is my mother tongue, and you simply don't speak another language like you speak your own. So that's always a problem. In *Coco Chanel and Igor Stravinsky*, I play a Russian who speaks French with a Russian accent. The French loved it, but I don't know what the Russians think. Beforehand, I spoke very little French and no Russian. I also had to play a lot of piano in the movie, so I had some gruelling practice to do. I spent some long nights studying French, Russian, phonetics and the piano.

*What does having an agent mean for your international work?*

A lot. It helps that I don't have to spend time negotiating my salary, for instance, which would also be unthinkable abroad. Denmark must be one of the last countries in the world to get theatrical agents. We've been happy just to be a part of things, and we haven't wanted to ask for a lot of money or perks like meals during breaks. It's taken us a while to get agents in Denmark, but now they're here, and I'm sure everyone will be happy about it, once they get used to it ■



*Coco Chanel and Igor Stravinsky*, with Anna Mouglalis as the legendary fashion designer

“The odds of getting interesting offers are better internationally because the volume of films is bigger. We make good films in Denmark, but we don't make 22 good films a year.”



Nicolas Winding Refn's English-language action-adventure *Valhalla Rising* features Mads Mikkelsen as a mute warrior of supernatural strength by the name of One-Eye. Photo: Dean Rogers

# THE WORLD IS CALLING

**Directors Lone Scherfig, Nicolas Winding Refn and Jonas Elmer plus screenwriter Rasmus Heisterberg – all used their Danish hits as launch pads to international work. Scherfig's *An Education* took home two awards at this year's Sundance Film Festival.**

BY MADRS MARIEGAARD

"I'm always attracted to places I don't know, and I always found it very rewarding to work in new surroundings," Lone Scherfig says.

The Danish director's 2000 Dogme film *Italian for Beginners*, the most seen Scandinavian-language film ever, opened up the possibility of an international career for Scherfig. She hooked up with an agency abroad, and two years later, she had her international debut with a Scottish

film, *Wilbur Wants to Kill Himself* (2002).

Scherfig has a new film out now, *An Education*, which was a winner at this year's Sundance. A coming-of-age story scripted by Nick Hornby and set in 1960s London, the film is about a teenage girl who, like the city, is all but exploding with pent-up energy.

"I'm very drawn to working in England. British actors are technically proficient, disciplined and funny. They are very good at hitting a note of grandeur without getting pretentious, and I like that a lot," she says.

Scherfig's British agency, Casarotto Ramsay & Associates, regularly sends her scripts, which she reads with a view to what she could contribute to them.

"It's a brave decision, asking a Dane to direct an English-language film. Often, there's an expectation that you'll bring something to the film that it wouldn't otherwise get.

For that reason, if you want to work internationally, I think it's important to develop your own voice as a director, and in Denmark we have a fine tradition for doing just that," Scherfig says.

## THE BEST CARD YOU CAN HOLD

Another Danish director with a strong voice, Nicolas Winding Refn, currently has two new films out: a British production, *Bronson*, which also competed at Sundance, and the Danish-produced, English-language *Valhalla Rising*. Refn made his international debut back in 2003 with *Fear X*, which he produced in the US.

"I grew up in America, which makes it natural for me to work internationally. Also, my films are very genre based, and they're much easier to distribute when they're in English. But I still like to work in Danish, too," he says.

merits of a domestic hit movie. His romantic comedy *Nynne* landed him with Creative Artists Agency, the American talent agency that represents Steven Spielberg.

It took Elmer a year or so to find the right script. *New in Town*, starring Renée Zellweger, is another romantic comedy.

"I'm deeply fascinated by the American ability to make films that do equally well all over the world, and I wanted to be a part of that. At the same time, I felt that I had something to contribute from the Scandinavian tradition. For example, a lot of the actors told me they were feeling a lot more interest from me than from other directors, which they barely see, because they're always sitting behind a monitor," Elmer says.

## STIEG LARSSON OPENING DOORS

Danish filmmakers are also finding work in the rest of Scandinavia. The big Swedish production of mystery writer Stieg Larsson's *Millennium* trilogy has several Danes on board. One is Niels Arden Oplev, who directed the first film in the trilogy – another is screenwriter Rasmus Heisterberg, who co-wrote the first two films with Nikolaj Arcel.

With the prospect of the films attracting major attention, based on the quality and runaway popularity of the books, his contribution could lead to more international opportunities, Heisterberg hopes.

"Getting the chance to take your ideas out in the world is always an amazing opportunity for a screenwriter," says Heisterberg, who a few years ago co-wrote the huge Danish hit film *King's Game*. "If the screenplay is good, its chances of being made into a film are that much better, no matter whether you're in Hollywood or Copenhagen" ■



*An Education* set in '60s London met with a warm reception at the Sundance Film Festival. Above right: Screenwriter Nick Hornby and Lone Scherfig on the set of the film. Photo: Kerry Brown



Refn broke through in 1996 with *Pusher*, a powerful Danish drama that later grew into a trilogy.

"International competition is tougher than you can imagine. But a local hit, which is easier to finance thanks to Danish government subsidies, can be a ticket to the rest of the world. It's the best card you can hold," Refn says.

## THE SCANDINAVIAN TRADITION

A third Danish director, Jonas Elmer, is also going international on the



Michael Nyqvist plays the journalist Blomkvist in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, the first Stieg Larsson adaptation, directed by Niels Arden Oplev and written by Rasmus Heisterberg and Nikolaj Arcel. Photo: Knut Koivisto

## SELECTED DANISH FILMMAKERS IN INTL. PRODUCTIONS / TWO FILMS IN BERLIN

### DIRECTORS

Niels Arden Oplev  
Bille August  
Susanne Bier  
Jonas Elmer  
Jesper W. Nielsen  
Rie Rasmussen  
Nicolas Winding Refn  
Lone Scherfig

*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*  
*The Diary* **CO-PRODUCTION MARKET**  
*Lost in Words*  
*New in Town*  
*Through a Glass, Darkly*  
*Human Zoo* **PANORAMA**  
*Bronson* and *Valhalla Rising*  
*An Education*

### SCREENWRITERS

Rasmus Heisterberg and Nikolaj Arcel

*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*  
*The Girl Who Played with Fire*



On the Los Angeles set of *Love at First Hiccup* Photo: Michael Roberts

“The Danish screenplay, which already had an American tinge, is largely unchanged, but the cast and crew are all American.”

#### CHEAPER THAN COPENHAGEN

The decision to make the film in the States with an American crew also makes good business sense, the Danish producer says.

“Actually, it’s fifty percent cheaper to film in Los Angeles than in Copenhagen. Everything moves so fast because of the high quality of the cast and crew. But you can’t do it without having contacts here,” Grasten says.

Grasten made the necessary connections via the remake’s director and screenwriter, Barbara Topsøe-Rothenborg, a 30-year-old Dane familiar to many in her homeland from her years as a successful child actor in the ‘80s and ‘90s.

In her adult life, Topsøe-Rothenborg has established herself as an assistant director in Los Angeles and amassed a wide network, including Robert Engelman (*Blade*, *The Mask*), who is a producer on the remake of *Love at First Hiccup* ■

*The Danish company TrustNordisk, which holds the international rights to Love at First Hiccup, is screening a demo version of the film at the Berlin Film Festival.*

## 100% HOLLYWOOD

**Producer Regner Grasten has remade his decade-old Danish blockbuster *Love at First Hiccup* in Los Angeles. Rule number one, he says: Do it hundred percent the American way.**

BY MADS MARIEGAARD

Ten years ago, nearly one in every ten Danes went to see the Danish teen comedy *Love at First Hiccup*. Regner Grasten, the film’s producer, had long been aware of the story’s international potential. In the writing phase, he

hired an American consultant, Linda Seger, to give the screenplay an international flavour.

“We knew we didn’t have a particularly Danish story, but a very universal, boy-meets-girl story about the ‘first time’ and the kind of problems that are familiar to young people all over the world,” Regner Grasten says today.

#### THE AMERICAN LOOK

Ten years and four Danish sequels later, Regner Grasten has set up a production company in Los Angeles, where he recently wrapped

shooting on the American remake of the 1999 Danish hit film.

The Danish screenplay, which already had an American tinge, is largely unchanged, but the cast and crew are all American – and that’s crucial for the film’s possibilities in the global market, Grasten says.

“American movies have a special look, and if you get that you increase your chances of international success. So we did it hundred percent the American way. Bringing over a few of your Danish friends would increase your risk of failure,” he says over the phone from Los Angeles.

## NEW DANISH RELEASES

#### 2009 FIRST HALF-YEAR RELEASES

09 January	<b><i>The Escape</i> / thriller-drama / Nimbus film</b> A feature film debut, directed by Kathrine Windfeld
30 January	<b><i>When Heaven Falls</i> / family drama / Zentropa</b> A feature film debut supported by New Danish Screen, directed by Manyar I. Parwani
06 February	<b><i>Karla and Katrine</i> / family entertainment / Nordisk Film</b> The second film in the Karla-series, directed by Charlotte Sachs Bostrup
27 February	<b><i>The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo</i> / adaptation of Stieg Larsson’s novel</b> Swedish-Danish co-production, directed by Niels Arden Oplev
13 March	<b><i>Aching Hearts</i> / drama / Nordisk Film</b> Directed by Danish cinema’s purest auteur Nils Malmros
20 March	<b><i>The Blekingegade Gang</i> (working title) / documentary / Bastard Film</b> Documentary about a group of Danish political activists, directed by Anders Riis-Hansen
27 March	<b><i>Deliver Us from Evil</i> / thriller / Thura Film</b> Directed by Ole Bornedal
03 April	<b><i>Curse of the Seeress</i> (working title) / family adventure / M&amp;M Productions</b> A feature film debut, directed by Mogens Hagedorn
12 June	<b><i>Sorte kugler</i> (English title to be announced) / comedy / Nimbus Film</b> A feature film debut, directed by Anders Matthesen

For further information about Danish releases in 2009 refer to the catalogue in the reverse section.

**Judging by the line-up of Danish films to be released in the first half of 2009, the repertoire spreads wide in variety and genre.**



Ole Bornedal’s thriller *Deliver Us from Evil*, featuring Lene Nystrøm Rasted and Lasse Rimmer, is among the new releases in 2009. Photo: Per Anders Jørgensen



The biggest Danish boxoffice hit since 2000: Mads Mikkelsen and Thure Lindhardt as the two resistance fighters in Ole Christian Madsen's *Flame & Citron*, the title indicating the men's aliases – one for his red hair, the other for his job at a local Citroën car repair shop. Photo: Britta Krehl

## FLAME & CITRON POUND BOND, INDY AND BATMAN

**2008 was the best year at the boxoffice for all theatrical films since 1983, and the best for national films since 1978. Also in 2008, eight Danish films reached the Top-20 chart, standing tall in competition with the strong American brands.**

Ole Christian Madsen and Nimbus' *Flame & Citron*, the year's most popular film, sold an impressive 667,601 tickets. Even though Bond, Indy and Batman were there – no one could touch Ole Christian Madsen's Danish World War II resistance fighters. Admissions to all Danish films were up 9 percent over 2007, an increase owing largely

to the strong interest in Danish films, which accounted for roughly a third of the year's admissions.

Winning favour with cinema audiences is a tough challenge: the 20 bestselling films this year (foreign and domestic) accounted for 54 percent of admissions, though they number less than 9 percent

of the total volume of films. It takes a strong brand to make the Top-20 list.

No less than eight Danish films were found among the top 20, alongside such familiar brands as Bond, Indy, Batman, Sex and the City, Abba, Disney and DreamWorks, who have a headstart when it comes to marketing.

The year's number 1 film, *Flame & Citron*, has now been seen by more than one in every seven Danes over the age of 15, and is the best selling Danish film since Lone Scherfig's *Italian for Beginners* in 2000.

In second, third and fourth place we find Bond, Indy and Mamma Mia, with admissions of around 500,000 tickets each. The Danish feature film debut, the comedy *Take the Trash*, selling 448,855 tickets, comes in fifth, ahead of Batman and Sex and the City. Between eighth place, with the hilarious sci-fi animation *Journey to Saturn*, and fourteenth place, Danish films reign, broken only by *Kung Fu Panda* in tenth place. Moreover, the non-Danish films include Danish director Susanne Bier's US-produced *Things We Lost in the Fire*, igniting interest among Danes and coming in at 19th place.

A considerable spread in ticket sales is seen among this year's 28 Danish films with theatrical releases, which range widely among all genres, from blockbuster-type films with broad appeal over to documentary and more experimental titles, notably from the Danish Film Institute's talent scheme New Danish Screen.

### Top 20 Denmark for 2008

	Film title	Admissions	Market share
1	Flame & Citron (DK)	667.601	5%
2	James Bond – Quantum of Solace	552.787	4%
3	Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull	545.903	4%
4	Mamma Mia – The Movie	454.706	3%
5	Take the Trash (DK)	448.855	3%
6	The Dark Knight	442.312	3%
7	Sex and the City – The Movie	410.012	3%
8	Journey to Saturn (DK)	401.015	3%
9	Father of Four – Back Home (DK)	392.472	3%
10	Kung Fu Panda	369.212	3%
11	Worlds Apart (DK)	314.545	2%
12	Terrribly Happy (DK)	257.653	2%
13	Anja & Viktor – In Sickness and in Health (DK)	246.249	2%
14	Hancock	242.863	2%
15	Madagascar 2	241.439	2%
16	Wall-E	224.600	2%
17	Alvin and the Chipmunks	229.464	2%
18	Frode and All the Other Rascals (DK)	223.209	2%
19	Things we Lost in the Fire	221.173	2%
20	The Kite Runner	217.808	2%
<b>Total Top 20</b>		<b>7.103.878</b>	<b>54%</b>

## BEST YEAR FOR DOMESTIC FILMS AT DANISH BOXOFFICE SINCE 1978

**Despite increasing competition from home entertainment, 2008 turned out to be a record year for domestic films at the boxoffice, when Danish films took 33 percent of the market.**

We have to go back 30 years to find a year when more Danes went to the cinema to see Danish films. That was in 1978, when a total of 5.4 million

tickets were sold. Keeping in mind that the media landscape at that time was markedly different, makes this year's ticket sales for Danish films even more striking.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, Danish cinemas didn't face the competition they have today. Danes back then had to get by with a single Danish TV channel - TV 2 wouldn't appear until 1988, and the TV3 satellite channel first started transmitting in

1987. Video was still new in the early 1980s, and very few had invested in VCRs at a time when VHS and Betamax were still fighting the format war.

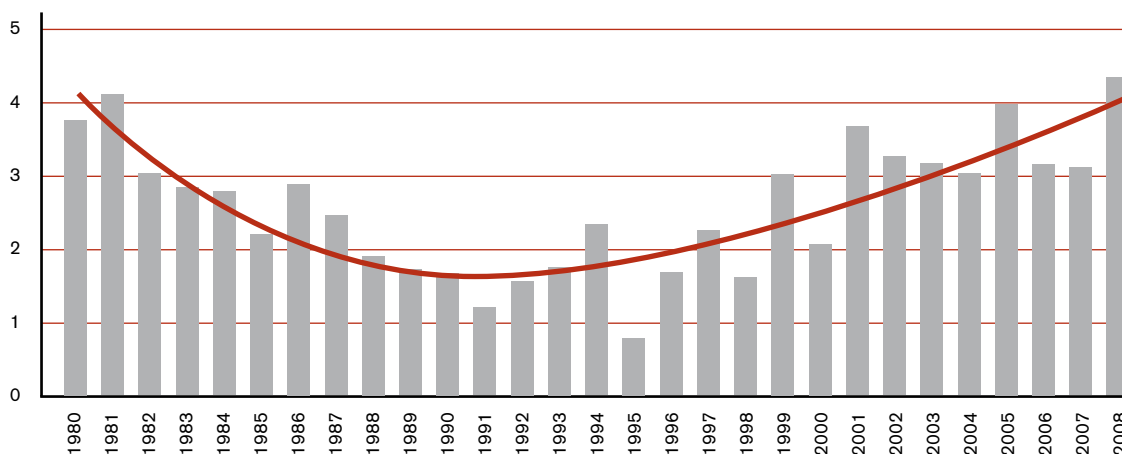
Today, the broader range of TV channels, DVD players and bigger screens, along with computers and game consoles, provide new and technically improved opportunities, not only for watching movies at home, but also for many other forms of home entertainment.

Admissions to all theatrical films declined in the 1980s and early 1990s to approximately 9 million in 1995 with 780,000 tickets for Danish films, climbing to 13.2 million in 2008 with 4.3 million for Danish films.

Recent years have seen a lot more films being released theatrically. The total of new theatrical releases, both domestic and international, has risen almost 50 percent since the 1990s, giving films shorter theatrical runs. For the last nine years, government film policy agreements have boosted the number of Danish feature films. Now, 20-25 new productions every year compete with foreign releases, providing a varied selection in cinemas the year round and ensuring a vibrant Danish film culture.

The Danish film policy of producing significantly more features appears to be working as intended. For the period since 2001, the national market share has been around 27 percent.

Admissions to national films in Danish cinemas 1980-2008



Number of tickets sold to Danish films (in millions). Source 1980-2007: Statistics Denmark. 2008: DFI. The red line is a weighted curve, and describes the tendency of the variations.



Rikke Ennis, CEO of TrustNordisk

## FILMS, FESTIVALS AND SALES DEVELOPMENT

**The positive performance at festivals in 2008 has rubbed off on sales. Also, the merger of Zentropa and Nordisk into TrustNordisk have given sales activity a boost.**

Danish films had a headstart in 2008. Ole Bornedal's *Just Another Love Story* competed at Sundance. Omar Shargawi's *Go with Peace Jamil*, a New Danish Screen production, won the VPRO Tiger Award in Rotterdam and took home the FIPRESCI award in Göteborg. Four features were picked for Berlin International Film Festival. And in late summer, Danish films were selected for all the top festivals, including Shanghai, Moscow and Karlovy Vary, where *Terribly Happy* took home the Crystal Globe.

Christian Levring's *Fear Me Not*, Ole Christian Madsen's *Flame & Citron* and Jan Troell's *Everlasting Moments* attracted attention in Toronto, and all three films were picked up for American distribution. *Fear Me Not* also went on to compete in San Sebastian. Toward the end of the year, several features travelled to major festivals, in Pusan, Tokyo, Buenos Aires and Cairo. Recently, the Danish-Swedish *Everlasting Moments* was nominated for a Golden Globe Award and shortlisted for an Oscar nomination. Over the year, Danish features were also invited to the increasingly important US festivals in Tribeca (New York) and Telluride.

### FLOURISHING SALES

Early in 2008, festival exposure at Göteborg, Rotterdam and Berlin secured the international sales for *Go with Peace Jamil*, Natasha Arthy's *Fighter*, Niels Arden Oplev's *Worlds Apart*, and *A Tale of Two Mozzies*, directed by Flemming Quist Møller and Jannik Hastrup. Over the summer and autumn, the festivals at Karlovy Vary, San Sebastian and Toronto bore fruit, with *Terribly Happy*, *Fear Me Not*, *Flame & Citron*, and *Everlasting Moments* sold for North American distribution, as well as for other territories.

Danish family entertainment, long known to carry a stamp of quality, has again achieved sales in a large number of countries. Thomas Borch Nielsen's 3-D computer animation *Sunshine Barry and the Disco Worms*, also selected for Toronto, was sold to some fifty countries. M&M's awardwinning *The Lost Treasure-series* and *Frode and All the Other Rascals* also secured worldwide sales, as well as producer Per Holst's third Amazon Jack film: *Amazon Jack 3*:

*Jungo goes Bananas*, directed by Flemming Quist Møller and Jørgen Lerdam.

### THE TRUSTNORDISK MERGER

A fruitful development within international sales is the merger of Nordisk Film International Sales and the Zentropa-owned Trust Film Sales into TrustNordisk, a company that handles the sales for a greater part of Danish films, and a growing number of films from Sweden, Norway and Finland. At this year's Berlinale, three of the company's films have been selected for Competition: Annette K. Olesen's *Little Soldier*, Lukas Moodysson's *Mammoth*, and Hans-Christian Schmid's *Storm*.

After ten successful months, the company is looking on the bright side in 2009. Rikke Ennis, CEO of TrustNordisk, comments:

"Merging the two companies has given an enormous boost to productivity in different ways: First, while Trust Film Sales were strong in art cinema fare, Nordisk was the expert in connection with sales to television and family entertainment. Amalgamating meant that distributors could effectively deal with one company only, and moreover be given a wider choice of genre. Thus the more commercial distributor could be enticed by an art cinema film, and vice versa.

"Second, we have become more visible on the buyer's map by relinquishing a competitor, and now our competition lies solely outside Denmark. Our staff is well known, our stand at the big festivals has a prominence in league with other top world sales companies, and we now have a great product assortment," Ennis says ■