

Berlin issue 2011

SKYSCRAPER REBOUNCE THE GREAT BEAR

You don't have to love kids and teens to make great movies for them! Three Danish films are selected for the Generation competitions in Berlin. Read interviews with the directors and reflections on why it's so challenging to make films for young audiences.



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Cover *The Great Bear*

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Issued prior to the three major festivals in Berlin, Cannes and Amsterdam, the magazine brings articles, essays and interviews presenting the films in competition, Danish films in progress, young talents and news stories.

Catalogue in the reverse section gives a view of current Danish feature films, documentaries and short films.

The Danish Film Institute is the national agency responsible for supporting and encouraging Danish film and cinema culture.

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LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

/ EDITORIAL

As a good friend of mine never fails to point out when I enthusiastically announce a light at the end of the tunnel, from a distance you can never tell whether it's actually an oncoming train. Sceptics always find a way to dampen your expectations.

In fact, who can blame them? Sceptics have had a lot to go on recently in the European film family, considering the financial crisis, cuts in arts funding and dwindling audiences.

Nonetheless, judging from the Danish films that made their way to the theatres in 2010, there really are better days ahead. Even if the earnings of the industry are still far from acceptable, last year proved that there is much to be excited about in Danish cinema.

*Susanne Bier's Golden Globe winner and Oscar nominee *In a Better World* drew big crowds at home and abroad, and Janus Metz' *Armadillo* raised the bar for war reporting. The duo of Lindholm & Noer made a strong showing with their uncompromising first feature *R*, and toward the end of the year *Clown* proved that a comedy, when served up with a dollop of acute satire, can easily match the boxoffice records of bygone years.*

With titles ranging from popular blockbusters to powerful artistic statements, 2010 was indeed a tribute to diversity.

In terms of policy, the ideal of a broad film culture was recently enshrined in the new Danish Film Agreement for the next four years, which guarantees a framework for artistic experimentation and mainstream films alike, and emphasises talent development and innovation in both categories.

It's satisfying to note that policy-makers in the film and media area have been ready to meet the critique voiced by the Danish Film Institute and the industry in ensuring more flexibility and dynamism in the funding system. That it was possible, moreover, to maintain an unchanged level of public funding despite the financial crisis must be considered a truly satisfactory outcome.

Looking ahead, a refreshingly diverse line-up of Danish films in 2011 shows every indication of a promising year.

We kick off in Berlin with emerging filmmakers and no less than three features competing in the Generation programmes. Danish children and youth films have traditionally made a strong showing, thanks to the National Film Act earmarking one quarter of public film funding to productions for young audiences.

Later in the year, we can look forward to first and second films by fresh talents, uncompromising art house works, dramas and comedies by veteran filmmakers, several animated features – and, no doubt, a fascinatingly chilling experience brought on by the enfant terrible of Danish cinema Lars von Trier.

I, for one, expect the best.

Henrik Bo Nielsen, CEO



Susanne Bier at the Golden Globe Awards Photo: Reuters/Scanpix

Bier in the best of worlds

Success has been soaring for Susanne Bier and Zentropa's *In a Better World*, culminating in January's Golden Globe award and Academy Award nomination. The Danish director is no Hollywood novice. Her drama *After*

the Wedding starring Mads Mikkelsen received an Oscar nomination in 2007, and the American film capital also remembers Bier for the US remake of *Brothers* and her direction of DreamWorks' *Things We Lost in the Fire* with Halle Berry and Benicio Del Toro. Whether Bier will manage to bring home the world's most prestigious film award is revealed on 27 February.

The enfant terrible of Danish cinema Lars von Trier and Zentropa will release their new feature film *Melancholia* in spring 2011 only two years after *Antichrist*.



Lars von Trier Photo: Christian Geisnæs

July 15 revisited

NEW FILM David Nicholls' novel *One Day* spells Lone Scherfig all over. For a director with an acute sense of time, place and characters like Scherfig, Nicholls' nostalgic love story spanning two decades of London history offers plenty. The Danish director's adaptation of the bestselling book is out this summer.

Lone Scherfig's ability for making films about people was already noticed in her breakthrough film, the Dogme classic *Italian for Beginners*. Scherfig's UK feature *An Education* brought on further international fame to her special brand of full-bodied, likable characters in the shape of Carey Mulligan's by now familiar 60s school girl in times of transition.

London over two decades

The Danish director returns with her trademark direction in *One Day*, an adaptation of David Nicholls' book of



Lone Scherfig Photo: Jan Buus

the same name and with Nicholls' on the script about two people leading their separate lives but staying strangely attuned to each other over the years.

We meet Dexter (Jim Sturgess) and Emma (Anne Hathaway) for the first time on the night of their college graduation in 1988 and follow them through two decades, revisiting them on the same date every year, July 15, to catch up on their lives and the ups and downs of their friendship.

"I love the fact that One Day is a summer film. It only takes place on that one special day every summer."

Summer film

"I love the fact that *One Day* is a summer film," says Lone Scherfig to FILM. "It only takes place on that one special day every summer."

"In that sense, the film is more colourful than *An Education*, even though Emma and Dexter's love story has a heavier, more fatal ring to it. It's a complex film that has a greater span in both time and place. *An Education* is more straightforward and has a much more simple structure."

Strong producer team

"It's been a great experience working with an actress like Anne Hathaway. Even though her character Emma is English to the bone and Anne is American, I can't imagine how anybody else could have played her better. It seems as if Anne, rather effortlessly, can tap into the rich gamut of emotions and expressions that she has built up over the years from all the different films and genres she's managed to try out."

"I feel privileged to have had the chance to work with a very strong producer team and I've enjoyed having all the possibilities and resources that come with a large production," says Lone Scherfig.

One Day is co-produced by Random House Films and Focus Features. US theatrical release is set for July 8.

From Hollywood to Thailand

NEW FILM Nicolas Winding Refn forges ahead with three feature films this year, one of which is the neo-noir thriller *Drive*, a US feature that may be his guiding star not only into the American commercial market but also for the coming Cannes line-up.

Often described as one of Europe's most innovative filmmakers following his prison opus *Bronson* and his dark tale of the mute warrior in *Valhalla Rising*, Winding Refn now returns to the urban underworld of gangsters and crime in his new film *Drive* which echoes the intensity and drama of his *Pusher*-trilogy.

The seamy side of life

Set in the seamy underbelly of Southern California and Arizona, *Drive* revolves around a stunt driver (Ryan Gosling) who moonlights as

a wheelman during robberies and discovers that a contract has been put on him after a heist gone wrong. He ends up on the run with an ex-con's girlfriend (Carey Mulligan). *Drive* also stars Christina Hendricks from the TV-series *Mad Men*.

Later in the year Winding Refn plans to shoot the Danish film *Only God Forgives*. Set in Bangkok, the story follows a police officer who thinks he's God and a gangster who is looking for something to believe in.

Only God Forgives is being developed side by side with Winding Refn's *I Walk With the Dead*, about a woman prostitute who has worked her way up through the system and is now an influential pimp. But her conscience is tried, when faced with a moral dilemma.

Both films have Wild Bunch and Gaumont as financial backers.

Lene Børglum is producing both *Only God Forgives* and *I Walk With the Dead* for Space Rocket Nation, a company founded and owned by herself and Winding Refn.



Nicolas Winding Refn Photo: Jan Buus

IN THE DARK GREEN PINE FOREST





The Great Bear. Framegrab

Unleashing primordial Nordic forces, Esben Toft Jacobsen's first feature *The Great Bear* is an animated fantasy inspired by Scandinavian nature and indigenous storytelling. Selected for Generation Kplus, the film is a tale about two siblings who discover the force of their conflicting emotions – a theme close to the director's heart.

BY LISELOTTE MICHELSEN

The forest floor quakes and the mountains quiver as a supernaturally giant bear rises up from the underground. The pine trees growing on his back toss as he shakes his grey-brown coat. Then the bear strolls through the Scandinavian landscape among majestic mountains.

Primordial forces are unleashed in Esben Toft Jacobsen's new animated feature, *The Great Bear*. Forces springing from an animistic natural world, as well as from the relationship between the story's two sibling protagonists, Jonathan, 11, and Sophie, 6. The film takes the two kids through a gamut of powerful and conflicted sibling emotions – jealousy, tenderness, admiration, hatred and love.

Jonathan and Sophie are spending the summer with their kindly grandfather in his house deep in the woods when odd and wonderful things start happening all around, reflecting as well the wilderness of their own emotions. There are both

challenges and help to be found in this enchanted natural world inhabited by fantastical creatures as well as a menacing, vengeful hunter.

NO GREEN GLITTER

Nordic landscapes and storytelling traditions are wellsprings of inspiration for Jacobsen who spent many childhood vacations in Sweden.

"The magic and mythology of Nordic tales is generally linked to nature. You won't find any fake green glitter here. What you do get is a rock that moves, a giant wolf and trees that come alive in a dark, mysterious pine forest. I think it all comes down to how much there is to marvel at in nature," the Danish director says.

"Animistic, fantastical natural worlds are also found in Tove Jansson's *Moomins* or Astrid Lindgren stories like *The Brothers Lionheart* and *Ronia the Robber's Daughter*. I was deeply fascinated by those stories as a child. There's a duality to them – they are forbidding and alluring, comforting and scary, all at once. When the adaptations were shown on TV, I used to hide behind the chair, but at the same time I *had* to watch. I thought being a film director was pure magic. I couldn't imagine how I would ever get to become one," the 33-year-old director smiles.

INTENSE SIBLING BOND

Yet he did. Graduating in animation directing from the National Film School of Denmark in 2006, he went on to make a string of short animated films,

among them the funny and dramatic *Having a Brother* (2006), which earned him a Special Mention in Berlin. Running just eight minutes, the film is a paradigm of tight, precise storytelling and, like *The Great Bear*, it deals with sibling rivalry. In fact, several of his films take up that theme.

"It's interesting to do films about kids, because kids experience everything so intensely. A single day can stretch out endlessly and be crammed with impressions. Sibling relationships are exciting to explore, because they involve such powerful and unruly emotions. And they are so conflicted. It's confusing to love and hate at the same time. When I was a kid, my older brother and I could really fight sometimes. I remember the day when I realized that we actually had a use for each other. That was a real epiphany."

PINE TREES ON ITS BACK

The Great Bear in several ways extends a classic Nordic storytelling tradition. It has mythical beasts and animistic nature – and a story with teeth that children can relate to.

"There has to be something at stake in the story and it's okay if things gets scary. As long as everything is tied up at the end, the story is welcome to take us to the edge of the abyss," Jacobsen says.

"There is no clear distinction between good and evil in *The Great Bear*. As there isn't in real life. My ambition is to tell a story that entertains but has no



“There is something raw and unpolished about Nordic nature and the Nordic drawing tradition. We have tried to translate that into the film.”

“Sibling relationships are exciting to explore, because they involve such powerful and unruly emotions. It’s confusing to love and hate at the same time.”



The Great Bear (above and left). Framgrab

obvious outcome and you sense there are many more layers behind what you see and hear.”

A central vision is the enormous bear that gives the film its title. It plays a pivotal role in the story when Sophie befriends it despite its fearsome size.

“A bear is exciting because it’s a dual creature. It’s both cute and terrifying, cuddly teddy bear and savage predator. And, it’s the epitome of a Nordic animal,” he says.

“In the film, the bear is neither good nor bad. It’s simply a force of nature. It was part of the premise for me and my co-scripter Jannik Tai Mosholt that we wanted to do a film in the Nordic tradition. One of the first things that happened when I thought ‘Nordic tale’ was that I pictured this bear lumbering out of the woods. Huge, with pine trees growing on its back. And we’ve held on to that image throughout the production. It’s part of the landscape, a real mythical beast.”

SCRATCHY AND PAINTERLY

Miyazaki springs to mind when you watch *The Great Bear*. The film’s imaginative universe and unexpected goings-on put the audience on shaky ground. It’s miles apart from the conventional American meta-narrative. Indeed, Jacobsen counts Miyazaki among his idols. In general, these days he gets more cinematic inspiration from looking to Russia and Asia.

“Above all, it’s important to be faithful to the storytelling tradition we’re coming from that feels

‘real’ to us. Visually, we made an effort to get away from the slick look of most animated films. There is something raw and unpolished about Nordic nature and the Nordic drawing tradition. We have tried to translate that into the film by avoiding slick surfaces. It should be scratchy and painterly. There has to be visual traction.”

To achieve the film’s unique look, Jacobsen and his team employed a lot of different animation techniques – cutout, paint and CGI. Combining them

all was a complex process for the director and his team, working closely together.

“There was no outsourcing. We were sitting within a few metres of each other most of the time we were working on the film. It was important to me that everyone on the team had a clear sense of my vision for the film and that we were always able to communicate about it” ■

See reverse section for more on The Great Bear.



Photo: Mia Elisabeth

ESBEN TOFT JACOBSEN

Born 1977, Denmark. Former student of visual communication at the Danish Design School, Toft Jacobsen graduated from the National Film School of Denmark in animation direction in 2006. Freelance artist and animator on a number of computer games. Since graduating from film school Toft Jacobsen developed and directed productions at Copenhagen Bombay, among these, the short film *Kiwi & Strit*, which was part of the feature-length *Carsten & Gitte’s Movie Madness*. (Anders Morgenthaler et al., 2008). *The Great Bear* is Toft Jacobsen’s feature film debut, selected for Generation Kplus in Berlin.

COPENHAGEN BOMBAY

Founded in 2006 by producer Sarita Christensen and director Anders Morgenthaler. Partly owned by Nordisk Film. With a specific focus on films for children and young people, the company aims at nurturing the offbeat rather than more conventional family entertainment. Produced two documentaries by Michael Noer, *Vesterbro* (2008) and *The Wild Hearts* (2008). The company’s first two feature films are the animated productions *The Apple & The Worm* (2009), and Berlin contender *The Great Bear* (2011). www.copenhagenbombay.com

SON OF A CASTRATED ALPHA MALE



An insecure young man, his bizarre, embittered father and a randy blind girl inhabit the weird small town of *Skyscraper*, the directorial debut of screenwriter Rune Schjøtt. In a unique blend of the naïve and surreal the film embodies a story about performance anxiety and the fear of standing up for who you are. Selected for Generation 14plus.

BY KIM SKOTTE

There's a hint of surrealism but definitely no skyscrapers in the small-town setting of Rune Schjøtt's first film as a director. The distant skyscrapers of exotic New York and their promise of a less confined life are all in the mind of a boy struggling to grow up as an even remotely well-adapted individual.

Basically a good-natured kid, Jon is under pressure from all sides. He's indirectly to blame for his father's castration by liquor bottle. The debilitating accident occurred after his father, in a gesture of macho overconfidence, stuck a bottle down the front of his pants when he got behind the wheel of his car. Before that fateful day, he was the village king and alpha male. After his emasculation, he settles for hamming it up as media mogul behind the mike of his own local radio station. To compensate for his humiliating dethronement, the autocratic father keeps his son in a state of pre-sexual paralysis.

Tugging at Jon from the other end is the blind daughter of the village grocer. She can't wait to lose her virginity and has picked Jon as the man to do it. But it's hard to be a man when it was always pounded into you that you are just a worthless little kid. Nor does it aid the consummation of his desire that Jon suffers from a constricted foreskin, a pretty common but painfully secret ailment in countries where circumcision is not routine.

The princess is blind and horny, the prince has a constricted foreskin and the king has no penis at all. Plainly, Rune Schjøtt, 39, has cooked up a rather unconventional coming-of-age tale!

The princess is blind and horny, the prince has a constricted foreskin and the king has no penis at all.

SYMBOL AND REALITY

"I wanted to do a story about how I used to be scared of girls," Schjøtt says. "There's a weird power imbalance for teenagers. As a boy, you have a lesser hand. You fear rejection. You have to show what you can do, while the girl can take more of a waiting position. If you're not able to take care of business, there has to be a pretty good reason why. Constriction of the foreskin would seem to qualify," Schjøtt says, describing the small autobiographical

defect that can be such a big hurdle at a very delicate time in a boy's life.

"In the film, of course, it's a metaphor for something preventing him from unfolding," Schjøtt says. A graduate of the screenwriting programme at the National Film School of Denmark, Schjøtt co-wrote *Dark Horse* with the film's Icelandic director Dagur Kári (*Noi Albinoi*, *The Good Heart*). Now, after some hesitation and a few false starts, he is finally coming out as a director. He wrote the screenplay, too, of course.

Skyscraper's style is a kind of naïve realism and the story is populated with characters that have mythical and symbolic undertones – the castrated father, the blind woman who "sees" clearly. For Schjøtt, though, the film is more real than symbolic. There is a blind girl in the story because he once met a blind girl when he was young. For a long time, he was casting around for a real blind girl for the part. Because the film's universe is a bit surreal, it seemed important to get the details right. Eventually, he abandoned the search, but it wasn't a waste. The casting process doubled as the research that enabled him to make the blind girl seem real instead of merely symbolic.

"I think I have been going around with my own little bank ledger, filling it with anecdotes and observations."



Framegrab



Photo: Kristian Ridder-Nielsen



Photo: Kristian Ridder-Nielsen



Framegrab



Skyscraper Photo: Kristian Ridder-Nielsen

"Of course, I see the archetypal elements, but I was interested in real things first. I simply take things I find interesting and mix them up. All the weird things that happen are really just the story of a teenager who wants to try new and exciting things, which are weird because they are new," the director says. *Skyscraper* is a fantastical fable detailing the rites-of-passage mysteries of sexual maturation in a claustrophobic small town.

ONE DAY YOU GET ON THE BUS ...

"I initially set the story in a suburb. I grew up in a suburb of Denmark's second city, Århus, so that was the natural thing for me to do. A bus left for the city every 15 minutes. Getting there was easy. But the more I wrote, the more I realised that the place I was writing about was more like a tiny, remote island in a vast ocean. Or, like a puppet film with the figures moving around individually on a black ground."

One day, you get on the bus to the city and you never look back. The director got on that bus when he was 15. On his first night on his own in the city, he ran into ghetto types, thieves and sexually advanced urban teens. He ended up playing a game of truth and dare with a girl three years older than he who brazenly announced that, if she was ever going to try

"Ever since I was 15 and started writing, all my stories have basically been about 17- to 18-year-old kids. That came naturally to me. Probably because that's where my own story lies."

anal sex, it had to be that night and it had to be with Rune. At the time, he hadn't even seen a girl naked!

From that point on, the suburb lost both its innocence and its attraction. He had set his course for a bigger world and by the time he was 17, Schjøtt was in Copenhagen doing shows for kids on DR, Danish public radio.

He stayed on at DR until the late 1990s. In 1999, he was admitted to the National Film School. But his years growing up in the suburbs still itched and irked him.

And so it was that Schjøtt returned to his roots in a way, conjuring up an almost cartoony small town as the setting for his drama about escaping the suburbs. A town without cars, where a single bus is



Photo: Kristian Ridder-Nielsen

RUNE SCHJØTT

Born 1971, Denmark. Graduate of the scriptwriting programme at the National Film School of Denmark. Has worked as a music producer, radio host and writer-director of radio drama for the national broadcaster DR. Cowriter on the award-winning feature *Dark Horse* (2005) with director Dagur Kári. Also writer on Martin de Thurah's short film *Young Man Falling* (2008). Made his directorial debut with the short film *The Panda Syndrome* (2006). His first feature film, *Skyscraper* (2011), is selected for Berlin's Generation 14plus.

FINE & MELLOW

Founded 2002 by producer Thomas Gammeltoft. The company's first feature film was the drama-comedy *Stealing Rembrandt* (Jannik Johansen, 2003). Hella Joof's *Oh Happy Day* (2004) sold to Disney for a US remake. *Chinaman* (2005), starring US-Chinese diva Vivian Wu, was award-winning director Henrik Ruben Genz' second feature film. Another Jannik Johansen feature is *Murk* (2005), a thriller co-written with Oscar winner Anders Thomas Jensen. *Terrribly Happy* (Henrik Ruben Genz, 2008), which is up for a US remake, won the Grand Prix in Karlovy Vary and was last year's Danish Oscar contender. Three feature film debuts in 2010-11: *Rosa Morena* (Carlos Oliveira), *Skyscraper* (Rune Schjøtt) and *Volcano* (Rúnar Rúnarsson). www.finemellow.dk

the only means of escape. A place where every story begins, "Fields, nothing but fields, as far as the eye can see." A place where a father can still sit heavily on his son and where a girl's erotic longing is an absolute mystery to a boy.

LIFE WITHOUT AN OWNER'S MANUAL

"Ever since I was 15 and started writing, all my stories have basically been about 17- to 18-year-old kids. That came naturally to me. Probably because that's where my own story lies. A story about performance anxiety and the fear of standing up for who you are. It's a story that's more organic when you're 18 than when you're 40," the director acknowledges.

"Those were the worst years! Everything was so intense. What seemed like a lifetime probably lasted just one summer. I think I have been going around with my own little bank ledger, filling it with anecdotes and observations. Now stories come gushing out about a time in life when you think life comes with an owner's manual and everyone has one but you" ■

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



WHEN MOM IS A DANGEROUS ROLE MODEL

Rebounce Photo: Christian Geisnæs

Director Heidi Maria Faisst remembers clearly what it was like changing almost overnight from a horse-loving girl to an unruly teenager. The chaos of the first titillating steps into adult life is the theme of *Rebounce*, a story about Louise and her sexy and rebellious mother, who becomes a dangerously alluring figure of identification. *Rebounce* is the second Danish teen film running in Berlin's Generation 14plus.

BY KIM SKOTTE

"Party moms" is a term for young mothers who can't see why their partying days should be over just because they have a child or two at home. We're living in an age when young mothers would rather be their daughter's friend than her parent. But kids need grownups to look up to and a party mom can be a dangerous role model.

The mother in Heidi Maria Faisst's *Rebounce* is a big-time party mom. When the film opens, she is

just out of jail, having served a long stretch for drugs, and heads straight for the nearest club in downtown Copenhagen. Following her from a distance is her teenage daughter Louise who has never really known her mother and was raised by her grandparents. That was fine when Louise was little, but now she is 14 and can't grow up fast enough. When her mother turns out to be a good-looking blonde with hot ex-boyfriends and a turbo-charged nightlife, the mother-and-daughter reunion becomes a volatile cocktail dumped into the generation gap.

“That was a really tough age. One moment you were up for anything, partying and drinking yourself silly, and the next moment you were crying to mommy.”



Rebounce Photo: Christian Geisnæs

“I remember what it was like changing almost from one day to the next,” the 38-year-old director says. “I had some really good friends who matched me maturity-wise, but I just woke up one day and was into totally different things.

“I was a real horse freak, but all of a sudden I didn’t think horses were that interesting anymore. All that mattered now was boys, preferably older boys. I wasn’t really ready and took some hard knocks. I was 12 and they were, like, 18. But I was irresistibly drawn in that direction,” says the Austrian-born director, who had no problem getting into the head of her young protagonist Louise.

“That was a really tough age,” she recalls. “One moment you were up for anything, partying and drinking yourself silly, and the next moment you were crying to mommy, wanting to be comforted like a little girl. Like Louise in *Rebounce* – one moment she is a young lady dancing provocatively in a club, the next day she is walking around with her roller skates dangling around her neck like an innocent child.”

MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS

“We’re so imprinted by our parents, even if they’re not a presence in our lives,” Faisst says.

As a lot of girls and women know, the process of identification between a mother and daughter can be really complicated. Life’s requirement for social skills can become a role-playing game that’s not always so easy to see through for the parties involved. But more than anything else, what fascinated Faisst about the story was Louise’s uncommonly strong attraction to her mother. Louise is at the age where most girls want to distance themselves from their mothers, but to Louise, the mother she doesn’t know becomes an alluring figure of identification and emancipation.

“Generally, no one wants anything to do with their parents at that age. Kids think their parents are lame, ugly, boring and dorky. I thought it was interesting to drop a mother into Louise’s life, so that everything that’s bubbling up inside her suddenly appears in the figure of a mother who is incredibly attractive and fun! She’s passionate and sexy, and you can smoke and drink with her!

“Everything you don’t get to do with your ‘regular’ parents. In the long run, though, I think you’d miss the security of having parents who say, ‘No, you shouldn’t dye your hair green.’ There’s comfort in having someone pushing back. If parents are just ready to party down with their teenage kids, I think that takes something deeper away from their relationship.”

The mother snorts coke and has a risky side job for a drug dealer. Including the element of crime in the film without developing an actual crime subplot was a tough line to walk, Faisst says.

“A lot of people have told me they would like to see drugs play a bigger role in the film. But I wanted to do a film without so much finger-wagging over drugs, more subtly pointing out that drugs simply happen to be a part of this mother’s life. If you go to a club, there’s something for the nose everywhere. I simply preferred to include it in the picture. You have to make your own experiences, and most of the time fortunately things turn out okay. Of course, they don’t. I just don’t think your parents are really in a position to stop you.”

A TEEN FILM WITHOUT CLICHÉS

Realistic teen films that aren't issue-based are a pretty rare breed. Generally, teen films are about something: bullying, drugs, peer pressure or the "first time," and they tend to be focused on groups more than individuals. It's rare to see a teen film that simply tries to dramatise a chapter in a young person's life.

Which seems odd in a way, because the formative years are such attractive material in so many ways, since the protagonist almost by definition is going through a crucial transition from one stage in life to the next. *Rebounce* is not a group portrait. Louise and her mother do not "represent" two different groups or environments. They are two people in the story of a young girl taking her first tentative steps into the titillating chaos of adult life.

"I always thought it was great to try and write about stages in life that were tough for me and that I have thought about a lot. Often, I think, the films that mean the most to us are the ones we saw when we were

young. In a way, I think all filmmakers should make a teen or children's film or two. For me, anyway, it feels more non-judgemental and pleasurable to describe adults through the eyes of a young person."

As the film was gestating, heartfelt voices did not fail to remind Heidi Maria Faisst about the rules of the game. Don't forget it's a teen film, the refrain went. But is it really necessary to tell a story in a certain way or employ a special "youthful" aesthetic just because you are doing a teen film?

"My DP, Manuel Claro, and I talked a lot about how to get away from a stauncher brand of social realism. This isn't a film about social classes. Not at all. And we certainly didn't want to set it in the typical concrete tower blocks that signify a certain social group," Faisst says.

Instead, she set her film in Ørestaden, a futuristic new district on the edge of Copenhagen. It's an impressive and distinctive-looking place - and it's not overused as a location. Same with the film's language:

it should be refreshing but not fresh as in "young with the young."

Because young people are passionate texters, Faisst decided to use text messages in the film's graphics, but in a form resembling handwriting, not the familiar digital characters.

"I don't think there's a certain way to talk to young people. I think they are pretty smart and prefer not to be condescended to. If you overthink things, maybe you automatically start talking down to them. Anyway, we'll see what they think about my film. After all, it's not very 'action-packed,'" Faisst concedes.

Her last film was also about a mother and daughter. In the ironically titled *The Blessing*, the mother-and-daughter conflict was more bitterly inflamed, traumatically centred on a fatal post-natal depression.

"So compared with what I've been doing, *Rebounce* is pretty action-packed," she laughs ■

For further information on Rebounce, see reverse section.



Photo: Manuel Alberto Claro

"I thought it was interesting to drop a mother into Louise's life, so that everything that's bubbling up inside her suddenly appears in the figure of a mother who is incredibly attractive and fun!"

HEIDI MARIA FAISST

Born 1972, Denmark. Graduated in direction at the National Film School of Denmark, 2003. *The Pact*, her graduation film, was selected for Cinéfondation, Cannes. Writer-director on two short films, *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* (2006) and *Frederikke* (2008). Wrote and directed *The Blessing* (2008), Faisst's feature film debut and winner of two awards at Göteborg Film Festival, as well as *Rebounce*, selected for Generation 14plus in Berlin.

ZENTROPA

Founded 1992 by director Lars von Trier and producer Peter Aalbæk Jensen. Acknowledged for having reinvigorated the industry with Dogme 95. International breakthrough came with Lars von Trier's *Breaking the Waves* (1996). Renown continued with Lone Scherfig's Berlin winner *Italian for Beginners* (2000). Von Trier's *Dancer in the Dark* (2000) received the Palme d'Or, and also selected for Cannes were *Dogville* (2003), *Manderlay* (2005), and *Antichrist* (2009). Recent achievements in Berlin include Niels Arden Oplev's Crystal Bear winner *We Shall Overcome* (2006) and last year's contender *A Family* by Pernille Fischer Christensen. Launched several films by Per Fly, Annette K. Olesen and Susanne Bier. Recent titles include Mikkel Munch-Fals' *Nothing's All Bad*, Jørgen Leth's *The Erotic Human*, and Heidi Maria Faisst's *Rebounce*. Expected to release in 2011 are Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* and Simon Staho's *Love Is In The Air*. www.zentropa.dk

The Berlin Film Festival has a tradition of celebrating films for children and teens and taking them seriously. That three Danish films this year have been selected for the Generation competitions can be seen as a tip of the hat to the Danish film-subsidy system and the attention it lavishes on films for children and teens.

FILM has asked three authorities on children and youth films to comment on the state of affairs in films for young audiences: Kim Skotte, Danish film critic, Maryanne Redpath, director of the Generation programmes in Berlin and Rasmus Horskjær, DFI film commissioner.

MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL

Perhaps teens would rather watch films where the hero looks dumb with a glob of come in his eye, while the heroine runs away screaming from a homicidal maniac. But at unguarded moments there in the dark, they also need to see something they recognise on a deeper level.

BY KIM SKOTTE

Cinema holds up a mirror to the audience, and there's no time in life when you have more of a need to scrutinise your reflection in the mirror than when you are a teenager!

On this point, however, teen films run into a paradox. When young adults, especially boys, get to decide for themselves what film to see, they prefer films where the protagonists resemble themselves as little as possible. Rather than the pimply-faced, insecure kids they know from the mirror at home, they want to see fast-talking, ripped gangstas behind the wheels of pimped-up muscle cars with dolled-up chiquitas on the hood. Getting through to the girls is a bit easier, since girls are generally more attuned to discussing emotions and problems. But in their case, as well, films about the daily lives of realistic teens are no competition for the *Twilight* saga.

Although excellent teen films are made every year, especially in Europe, Asia and North America, it's hard to compete with the massive dominance of American teen films, not only because of their enormous marketing budgets, but also because their shameless excess of tried-and-true clichés make them such well-oiled entertainment. No wonder, they are popular. All over the world, young people feel "at home" in the American film universe. *Twilight* and *American Pie* are global hits for good reasons. The steady stream of predictable American high-school comedies about intrigue, nerds and "the first time" feels more like a deluge. For a while, Japanese teen horror flicks had the makings of a promising new trend, but the streamlined security of their American remakes quickly won out over their original quirkiness.

Scanning for offbeat titles, good films certainly are coming out of Hollywood and environs.

Superbad is super good, and if films like the earnest *Juno*, the imaginative *Scott Pilgrim* and the wonderfully wacky *Napoleon Dynamite* have a problem, it's that, like *Donnie Darko*, they are mainly hailed by an audience that's much older than the films' protagonists. Then, you are back to square one in a way, to a world where teens' favourite films aren't *Juno* or *Donnie Darko* but *SAW* in 3D.

What's absent from almost all American teen films is a sense of real life, something for kids to mirror themselves in that's more complex and real than the proverbial ensemble comedies with their cookie-cutter nerds, bimbos, jocks and fat kids. It's hard to compete with *American Pie*, but if alternatives like the British *Boy A*, the Swedish *Let the Right One In* or, for that matter, Denmark's own *Rebound*, aren't made, it means we are letting kids down.

Supporting teen films and finding ways to distribute them so kids get a chance to see them is a cultural-policy task. Serious teen films often have a tough time in the open cinema market.

It's important to follow up ambitious teen films with plans for getting the films to their often rather resistant target group. Perhaps teens would rather watch films where the hero looks dumb with a glob of come in his eye, while the heroine runs away screaming from a homicidal maniac twirling a chainsaw and a piranha. But at unguarded moments

"Rather than the pimply-faced, insecure kids they know from the mirror at home, they want to see fast-talking, ripped gangstas behind the wheels of pimped-up muscle cars with dolled-up chiquitas on the hood."

there in the dark, they also need to see something they recognise on a deeper level.

As grownups, it really is our responsibility to make sure that teens do more than just satisfy their already well-developed need for entertainment. We should make sure that they get a chance to hold up a mirror that shows them true pictures, too. Real things. Something that looks like them. Plus, of course, glimpses into lives that are way different from their own but could have been their own. They need to encounter characters that are more complex than the comedy or action stereotypes making up most of the visual fare in today's entertainment ghetto.

Kim Skotte is a film critic at the Politiken daily.

LEAVING ROOM FOR ASSUMPTIONS

"Looking from the outside Danish filmmakers seem to be prepared and able to take more risks concerning the development of films for children and teenagers," says Maryanne Redpath to FILM.

"We are thrilled to have three Danish films in competition at Generation and sure, each of them displays some very special qualities which we have come to expect of Danish cinema: fresh, challenging, good production values, respect for young audiences of all ages, packing a punch when necessary, entertaining and avoiding kitsch and sentimentality in big doses.

"Both *Skyscraper* and *Rebound* could not be described as typical youth films. Rather they extend the boundaries with challenging films with young protagonists for a wide range audience. I am impressed by the two directors who leave much room for the audiences to make their own assumptions and judgments, which is very important when addressing young people.

"The dominance of American films on the market is in my opinion due to the marketing, not to the quality of European films. Europe has a lot to learn from America in this sense, not only in terms of 'teen films'. Generation does indeed have three American independent films in the 14plus competition this year which is perhaps indicative of the strength of this sector. However in my opinion the Danish and European films are definitely not inferior in terms of quality, neither in form nor in content.

"So it boils down to market strategies and making a good theatrical release, even for 'smaller' films and the arthouse sector."

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LOVE KIDS

... to make great movies for them. Maybe the opposite is true. Maybe you have to be totally self-obsessed and egomaniacal to push your vision through, Rasmus Horskjær says. The new DFI commissioner for children and youth films bluntly calls for more madness, good cheer and adventurousness in Danish – and European – films for children's and teens. What's more, he contends, *A Clockwork Orange* is the best teen film ever made.

BY SUSANNA NEIMANN

As soon as he started his job at the Danish Film Institute in fall 2010, Rasmus Horskjær, who comes from a background in TV satire, knew he was sticking his hand in a hornet's nest.

"On the one hand, you have an inarticulate, snot-nosed, pimply, candy-chomping, mobile-yakking, indifferent audience who very rarely pay for their own movie tickets. On the other hand, we have their parents who, in a frenzy of guilt and unfulfilled self-realisation, hair-triggered from sex deprivation and random train delays, just want the best for their kids," he said at the time, identifying a third challenge apart from the lovable, but ungrateful, kids and their guilt-ridden parents: the "great Danish tradition of humanist children's films" that casts such a long shadow over the poor new filmmakers who want to give the genre a shot.

CLOWNFISH, YES PLEASE

Nonetheless, Horskjær is optimistic about children's films. As the American animation studios DreamWorks and Pixar prove time and again, it is, in fact, possible to make perceptive and imaginative stories that speak to children and adults alike.

"It's a pleasure to take your kids to see *Finding Nemo* or *Up*. Those films deal with fundamental, recognisable themes like loss and love, but they are set in fantastical worlds, among clownfish or talking dogs, and they are told with such an abundance of humour and high spirits. They are mainstream entertainment of very high quality!

"We should learn from the clever Americans," Horskjær says. "I think they are in this segment of the industry because that's where things are happening and they want to do cool stuff! They are not in it because they love kids more than anyone else. You don't have to be a child's best friend to



Photo: Kenneth Nguyen

make brilliant children's films. Holding on to your vision, that's what counts.

"In Denmark, I think, we suffer from the scourge of so wanting to be on the children's side. We need to remember that they are living in a world of divorce, where children are removed from their parents and some have a dad who is serving in Afghanistan. We have this image of children as defenceless creatures exposed to constant abuse. There is this huge yoke weighing them down – and it's all our fault! There's a lot of indulgence and guilt in Danish children's films, which makes them a bit unoptimistic.

"Good children and teen films, I believe, are made out of egotism and a joy of storytelling. Plus, we have to learn to be smarter than the kids.

They get bored if they can figure it all out. There's no reason to spell it out in ten-foot letters."

RADICAL FILMS FOR A RADICAL AUDIENCE

If American animated films are guiding stars for children and family films, Horskjær considers Stanley Kubrick's ultra-violent classic *A Clockwork Orange* to be an exemplar of how far you can, and should, go in terms of young people.

"*A Clockwork Orange* was not made as a teen film, of course. It was made by an original filmmaker with a clear vision. But you can view it as a rabid coming-of-age-story set in an absurd sci-fi universe. It magnifies a lot of the target group's emotions. When you are young, you are in opposition to the existing society. I associate being young with being in radical opposition, with a wish to experiment and provoke. Movies should be allied with those feelings. They should be radical, experimental, amoral, offensive. Teens can take it!

"Young people are supremely capable of receiving new impulses. So, I think you should make films that challenge them!"

"I associate being young with being in radical opposition, with a wish to experiment and provoke. Movies should be allied with those feelings. They should be radical, experimental, amoral, offensive. Teens can take it!"

That's easier said than done, of course, Horskjær grants, with some humility. But as DFI commissioner, he still believes he has a really good deal for filmmakers.

"Children's and teen films should be an attractive place to go for Danish directors. There is more room there than anywhere else. It's the right place to take your wildest ideas, because the audience is superlatively open and receptive" ■

RASMUS HORSKJÆR

Rasmus Horskjær, who has a degree in journalism, used to work in youth programming for DR, Danish public radio, writing and directing several classic Danish satires with great appeal to young people.



“This profession is a rollercoaster. You buy a ticket for Candyland and giddily wait to see where it takes you.”

AGED 11, GOING ON 29

Pilou Asbæk has made the trip from drama school graduate to leading man in record time. In Berlin for the third year running, he's Danish Shooting Star 2011. Still, radio host Per Juul Carlsen is convinced that Asbæk will never lose the enthusiasm of an 11-year-old kid going on a great adventure.

BY PER JUUL CARLSEN

The first time I met Pilou Asbæk he was 26, but he looked like an 11-year-old on his first trip to Disneyland. He was at the Berlinale to present himself in his first starring role, in Niels Arden Oplev's *Worlds Apart*, as a carefree young man who falls in love with a girl from the Jehovah's Witnesses sect. Asbæk lapped up the hoopla. "Come on, this is so cool!" he cheered on his 17-year-old co-star who was acting like a world-weary veteran who had seen it all before. His trademark heavy brows nearly covered his eyes and he was hard put to conceal a touch of irritation.

The next time I met Asbæk, he was 27 and looked like a young man who had adapted to his new life. He was back in Berlin, this time as a cast member of Pernille Fischer Christensen's *A Family*, in which he again played an easy-going, sensible young man across from a young woman facing major life decisions. I saw him meet the Danish media with a big smile but also a certain casual professionalism. He had, after all, seen it all before.

The last time I met Asbæk, he was 28 and I almost didn't get to meet him at all. It took more than a week to set up an appointment for a short interview. In the year that had passed, he had delivered his singular unaffected, boyish intensity in one of the year's most acclaimed Danish films, Michael Noer and Tobias Lindholm's prison drama *R*, and he had become a household name from his part in the TV series *The Government* that enthralled a full third of Danish television viewers every Sunday night for several months. In two short years, he had gone from greenhorn graduate of the National School of Theatre in Copenhagen to being recognized every ten yards, and it only seems fitting that he is this year's Shooting Star in Berlin.

"It's all gone extremely fast for me," says Asbæk, who was born as Johan Philip Pilou Asbæk to a well-known family of Copenhagen gallery owners.

"This profession is a rollercoaster. You buy a ticket for Candyland and giddily wait to see where it takes you. With some luck, you won't end up as an old workhorse. With some luck, you can keep on being a happy little kid," he says with a big, disarming smile.

All in all, this 28-year-old Shooting Star seems profoundly conscious not to appear spoiled, or even changed, by his rocket to stardom. He looks

genuinely guilty and profusely apologises for being hard to get to talk to. Then again, he seems outright proud when he mentions that he once worked as a clown in an amusement park, where the audience pelted him with popcorn and beer cans, an experience that gave him a lasting helping of humility. Eyebrows curling up with concern, he asks me to understand the harsh words he had for a TV crew that insisted on sticking a big camera in his face and asking stupid questions at a recent gala premiere, and he looks frankly nervous at the thought that success could be going to his head.

"My first year in Berlin was such a great experience. So was the second year, and I'm hoping this year will be, too. But obviously you lose your innocence after a while and it becomes more of a job. I was watching an interview with Robert Downey Jr, where he pulls all these answers out of left field and suddenly completely loses it. Not that I want to compare myself to him, that would be ludicrous, but all I could think was, 'Poor guy'. He's been answering the same questions 46,000 times. So I certainly understand why he would lose his temper. There's only so much you can take."

Despite it all, Asbæk isn't worried about ever completely losing touch with the excitable little kid inside.

"It's part of my nature. My first job in films was as a runner ten years ago, when I was just out of high school, and I met Bill Pullman who was working on Thomas Vinterberg's *Dear Wendy*. He was the biggest star there and he was also the most humble and the most understanding and polite person I met. It made me think that talent, diligence and humility walk hand in hand. I would rather be not so talented and a good person than super talented and a real bastard."

The 11-year-old kid lets out another big laugh, "No, wait a minute. Can't someone be talented and nice at the same time? And a bit of a bastard maybe once in a while?"

When I meet Asbæk again he'll be 29. But there will definitely still be an 11-year-old kid inside of him demanding to be heard ■

Per Juul Carlsen is a film critic on Danish public radio.



R Photo: Magnus Nordenhof Jønck



Worlds Apart Photo: Jens Juncker-Jensen

PILOU ASBÆK ON SCREEN

Feature films: *The Whistleblower* (2011), *A Family* (2010), *R* (2010), *Monster Busters* (2009), *Crying for Love* (2008), *Worlds Apart* (2008). For TV: *The Government* (2010-11), *Blekingegade* (2009), *The Killing II* (2009), *Deroute* (2008).



Heavy Heads. Framegrab

KITCHEN SINK ABSURDITY

Helena Frank's short film *Heavy Heads* merges social issues with distorted animation reality.

BY KATRINE SOMMER BOYSEN

In the drab kitchen of a tiny apartment sits a lonely middle-aged woman, Monika, whose tired physique and drooping lips testify to a joyless life in loneliness. Her only company is a hungry fly, which, by strategically placing bits of meatballs up her inner thigh, she can trick into servicing her sexually. In her misery, Monika actually has more or less everything she needs. She has learned to accommodate. Though she isn't happy, she is afraid of change. So it is that she immediately turns away the wayward neighbour who stumbles into her apartment instead of his own.

The film takes its title from the abnormally large heads of Monika and her male guest. The director is Helena Frank, who graduated last summer from the animation programme at the National Film School of Denmark. *Heavy Heads* is her graduation film. After four and a half years of creative training, Frank is basking in the warm glow of having her film selected for Berlinale Shorts, where it will be competing for the prestigious Golden Bear.

To nurture the artistic development of its students, the National Film School has a general policy barring student films from participating at festivals. Participating at Berlin is Frank's first big step into the world. She is no stranger to recognition, though: *Heavy Heads* took home the animation talent prize at the Odense Film Festival last August.

"Of course, I hope the screening in Berlin will open up



Helena Frank Photo: Nadim Carlsen

“I was trying to find a way to visualise the concept of being trapped inside yourself and pretty quickly came up with the idea of the heads. I think it encapsulates a kinds of introversion, of having no one to share your thoughts with, and so it felt natural to let the heads grow.”

to other festivals, so it will have legs on the festival scene. Otherwise, the options for shorts are obviously pretty limited,” the director says.

A TALE OF LONELINESS

Frank’s reasons for making animation her medium of expression have nothing to do with a childhood spent idolising Disney or Miyazaki. In fact, she is not even particularly interested in animation as such.

“What interests me about the animation format is how it can be explored and used in a million different ways. It can be really extreme. But then again, mastering the extreme is what I like. *Heavy Heads* is a story about loneliness, a universal condition we can all relate to, in various ways. But over-sizing the heads gives the film an edge I couldn’t have achieved in any other format, and that’s what I love about animation.”

What exactly was the concept behind the big heads?

“I was trying to find a way to visualise the concept of being trapped inside yourself and pretty quickly came up with the idea of the heads. I think it encapsulates a kinds of introversion, of having no one to share your thoughts with, and so it felt natural to let the heads grow.”

Using caricature to describe serious issues?

“Exactly. It’s not interesting for me to do characters that can

do all sorts of crazy things, unless it’s anchored in some sort of realism. Otherwise, it doesn’t mean anything.”

STILL A LONG WAY TO GO

Plainly, there’s not a lot of children’s channel histrionics about *Heavy Heads*. In general, though adult animation has evolved over the last half decade, it seems to have a long way to go.

“When I started at the Film School five years ago, I figured so much would have happened by the time I graduated that it would be a normal thing for adults to watch feature-length animated films. But with a few exceptions, things have barely moved at all,” Frank says.

“Which is pretty strange, actually, considering how much animation people watch in commercials and computer games, where no one has any problem accepting the drawn image. But in feature films there is a barrier.”

In fact, Frank is not by definition navigating for the promised land of feature-film directing.

“I have spent the last nine years being educated. Before the National Film School, I took the animation degree at Konstfack in Sweden and with all the training I have, I just want to go out there and try all kinds of things. I’m psyched!” ■

For further information on Heavy Heads, see reverse section.

HELENA FRANK

Born 1981, Sweden. Studied Fine Arts for two years before getting into animation. Graduated in 2005 as character animator from Konstfack University College of Arts Crafts and Design, Sweden. Moved to Denmark and graduated in 2010 as animation director from The National Film School of Denmark with *Heavy Heads*, selected for Berlinale’s short film competition.

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES IN GRIM AND GREEN



Though he won't be graduating from the National Film School's editing programme until summer, Thor Ochsner's directorial debut, *1989 (When I Was 5 Years Old)*, has already been selected for two major film festivals this winter, Sundance and Rotterdam. A "reconstruction," the 26-year-old filmmaker calls his intensely personal first short film.

BY LARS FIIL-JENSEN

Five-year-old Thor is driving with his dad to the airport one evening to pick up his mother, when an accident happens.

This car accident is the premise of the story Thor Ochsner has elected to tell now, 21 years after the fact, in a short film mixing animation, documentary and fiction. The filmmaker handled his research in a rather unusual way, modelling the film's structure over YouTube clips.

I HAD TO TELL IT

One evening, 18 months ago, Ochsner is editing a film when a message pops up on his screen. "Do you know Ole Duus Hansen?" it reads, stopping him dead in his tracks. That's his father's name. Why would anyone ask him that? Catching his breath, he returns the message and two seconds later the answer comes back, "I'm your half-sister, Signe."

Ochsner grew up a single child with just his mother, so finding out he had a sister was quite an adjustment. When he met her two days later, he found out he has three other siblings as well.

"I was really over everything about my dad. I was doing fine. But when my half-siblings found me, I had to tell them what happened to our dad and do it right," he says. "The best way was doing this, reanimating it, so they can fill in their own thoughts and images."

Soon after, when Ochsner and his fellow students at the Film School got an assignment to tell a personal story, he decided to pop open the whole can of worms. The result is a 10-minute film that mixes his own children's drawings with new drawings and video from an iPhone.

"I started digging into my childhood, and I found my drawings. I based the new drawings on them. I spent perhaps 30 seconds on each frame, finishing them in one go. That was my concept from the get-go, not to spend more than 30 seconds to a minute on each drawing. And I didn't allow myself to correct them later, either," he says.

"First, we see three drawings I did when I was five. My dad, me and my mother. The next shot is of a car driving. That's from an iPhone. Rain is hitting the windows, so everything is blurry."

The colours are kept in green tones, since the story is that they were riding in a green Nissan. The iPhone

footage he was experimenting with matched the colour scheme, so he didn't have to add any effects.

STORYBOARDED WITH YOUTUBE CLIPS

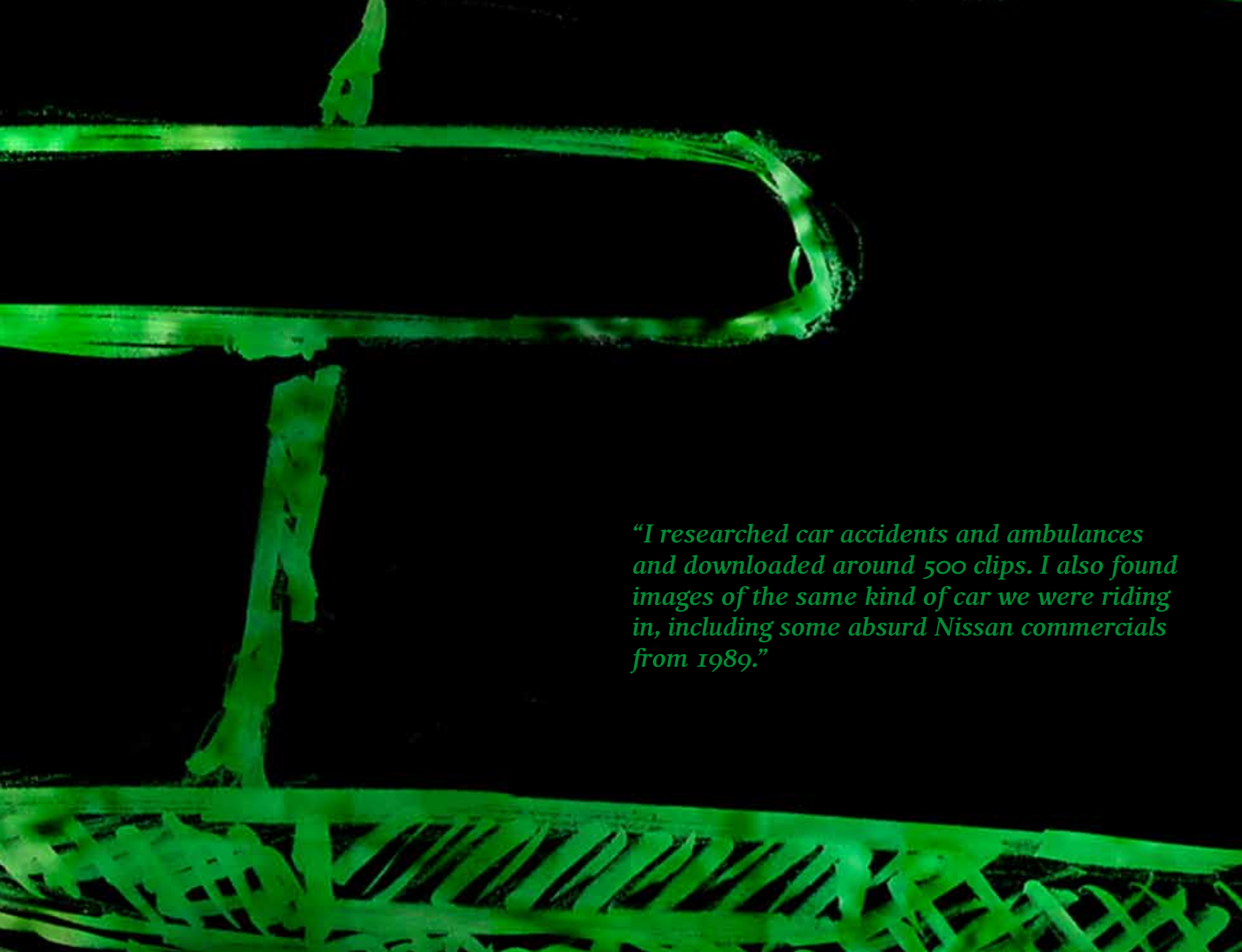
"I did a basic template first, since I knew the story inside and out. Using YouTube clips, I worked out a film of 10 minutes and 19 seconds, which is also the final running time. That gave me an idea of what the framework could hold. I researched car accidents and ambulances and downloaded around 500 clips. I also found images of the same kind of car we were riding in, including some absurd Nissan commercials from 1989. Then I did all the drawings and put them in, and I drew on top of some of the YouTube videos, so I could use my own material and my own idea," the director says.

The YouTube clips were simply used as sketches and are no longer visible in the film.

"The film developed slowly. I wasn't 100 percent sure of how I wanted it to be. Then I started doing the voiceover, at a fairly late point. I believe all films should work first without voices added. Everything else should come after."

The film's soundtrack transports the viewer back to riding in the back seat of cars as a child: the muted sound of a purring engine, shifting gears, rain on the windows, the beat of the windshield wipers. On top of that, the director relives the events as seen through the eyes of five-year-old Thor.

"The voiceover was almost the hardest thing for me to do. On the first take I broke down crying.



“I researched car accidents and ambulances and downloaded around 500 clips. I also found images of the same kind of car we were riding in, including some absurd Nissan commercials from 1989.”

1989 (*When I Was 5 Years Old*). Framegrab

That was the most powerful version and it made the film even tougher to watch. The version we ended up with steers a good middle course. We recorded it once the visuals were done.”

EDITING IS GOOD AND WELL, BUT ...

To Ochsner, it's important to try his hand at many of the technical skills of filmmaking. For *1989*, he wrote the script and did the animation, camerawork, voiceover and editing. He also devised the sound concept and added sounds, before Martin Juel Dirkov started writing the score and the sound designer Oskar Skriver took over and gave the soundtrack a boost.

Having lived most of his life abroad, Ochsner got his start in 2003 at the European Film College in Ebeltøft, where he took classes in editing. But even then he knew he wanted to work in a broader field. “I think it's a shame, really, if an art school doesn't give you the chance to try out different sides of yourself,” he says. Later, he got a chance to do just that.

For a while after Ebeltøft, photography was his great passion and he spent hours in the darkroom. During a stay in Luxembourg, he was offered a position as lighting assistant at the national theatre, where he had the opportunity to do the lighting for the respected ballet choreographer Maurice Béjart. Crazy lighting, he says. The production was one of the greatest art experiences of his life.

Next, Ochsner worked as an assistant editor on TV productions for a few years before applying to

the editing programme at the National Film School of Denmark. There he got a chance to work on both narrative and documentary films, but he still had a desire to try other things. The short project that produced *1989* has whetted his appetite for directing.

GETTING THE FILM OUT TO PEOPLE

Ochsner appreciates the free space he found at the Film School and the opportunities to test himself, though he still thinks it's important that students get a few films screened outside of the school. “It's a reality check, because you can easily get hyped in school when someone tells you you're doing fantastic work. Then you get out in the real world, and maybe you find out what you're doing doesn't work at all.”

Ochsner got his chance when Jacob Jarek, a producing student at the Film School, was attached to the project. “I really didn't have any expectations other than getting my film shown at a Danish festival, but Jacob saw it and said, ‘We can do better than that,’ and he really pushed it to the max.” The film has already outdone his early expectations. After screening at Nordic Panorama in Bergen and the Uppsala International Short Film Festival, it has moved on to the major festivals in Sundance and Rotterdam.

“Films should be seen. It's a good thing that the school gives us a free space to find things inside ourselves that we can use, making films from

emotions. But a film needs something else, too, that can get it out to people,” he says ■

For further information on 1989, see reverse section.



Photo: Sturla Brandth Grøvlen

THOR OCHSNER

Born 1984, Denmark. Graduated from the European School in Luxembourg, 2003. Attended the European Film College in Denmark 2003-04. Worked then as an editor at TjuBang Film, Zentropa, Freeport Film, Mastiff, DDB, Strix Television, Super16. Currently an editing student at the National Film School of Denmark, graduating in 2011. *1989 (When I Was 5 Years Old)*, selected for Sundance and Rotterdam, is his first short.

OUT OF LIMBO

Commercially, times may be as hard as ever. But creatively, the Danish game industry is riding a wave of success and inspiring new enthusiasm among policy-makers, embodied by a recently negotiated subsidy scheme earmarking 2.7 million euros for game developers over the next four years.

BY JONAS HEIDE SMITH

Fresh on the triumphs of the monochrome Xbox darling *Limbo*, the taglines just keep on coming: “Danish games get an afterlife”, “The end of purgatory” - insert your own doctrinal metaphor here ...

Just a few years ago, the sound bites were ominously clustered around “Game over” and “Out of energy”. And for good reason. The Danish game industry had been dancing on the edge of meltdown for years.

Only two studios were working on prestigious, large-scale console titles, so-called AAA games. IO Interactive, of *Hitman* and *Kane & Lynch* fame, had long been a flagship and a fount of dreams for aspiring young developers. But it had also been foreign owned since 2004 and had recently been downsizing at a discouraging rate. Meanwhile, Deadline Games, maker of the over-the-top desperado shooter *Total Overdose*, stumbled and came apart in 2008, further feeding sentiments of impending doom.

WINDS SHIFT ... FINALLY

But of course, crisis can sometimes lead to rebirth. Around the time of Deadline’s collapse, Danish politicians, after years of debate, finally came out for video games as a legitimate cultural product and a business worth stimulating.

This enthusiasm took two forms. First, a three-year, 1.6 million euro cultural subsidy scheme running under the auspices of the Danish Film Institute was set up in 2007 to provide early funding for game projects for children. Second,

funding was provided for the Computer Game Zone, an organized effort “to support Danish game developers in their growth, through business development, education, export initiatives, knowledge sharing, etc.”

The subsidy scheme was renewed in the recently negotiated 2011-2014 Film Agreement, embodying the political consensus that video games have become an “important medium of cultural transmission for children and youth.” Accordingly, 2.7 million euros will be distributed to game developers over the next four years.

Game makers would have preferred a larger sum, but most agree that the scheme has been successful in identifying promising projects and may well have kept small companies afloat.

HUGE OR SMALL

“Though the amounts are still modest, the money has been all-important. Without the game scheme many small companies would have had great trouble finding initial funding,” says Simon Egenfeldt-Nielsen, video game PhD and CEO of Copenhagen-based Serious Games Interactive.

This sentiment is echoed by Rune Dittmer, CEO of Press Play of awardwinner *Max and the Magic Marker* fame. Dittmer, too, considers the funding level insufficient.

“The game support scheme is not ambitious enough. As a society we have an obligation to care about the cultural products that citizens spend time on, a public service obligation, as it were. And Scandinavian games are recognisable. A game like *Kane & Lynch*, for instance, is quite complex compared to mainstream AAA fare,” Dittmer says.

Jan Neiiendam, who heads the Computer Game Zone, applauds the scheme for encouraging small teams to experiment with diverse platforms and business models. “We’ve managed to escape the shadow of AAA games and focus on much more realistic forms of production,” Neiiendam says. “But the scheme also builds on the virtues of the AAA world by forcing small developers to be crystal clear about their ideas. And with diversity

and clarity of vision comes a much stronger foundation.”

Both Egenfeldt-Nielsen and Dittmer share Neiiendam’s optimism. But while they represent the non-AAA approach, they also express concern at the demise of the large studios. To Egenfeldt-Nielsen, larger companies “provide stability and constitute all-important training grounds for young talent.”

“While small game studios may well be dynamic and embody all the charms of youthful enthusiasm, they are also fundamentally vulnerable. If one or two gifted people move on, large studios will quickly adapt. But for small companies such a situation can spell disaster,” he says.

Dittmer adds, “Large studios are important, but they tend to struggle in Denmark. The reason being, that, in a global perspective, they are really only medium-sized. And the market for medium-sized productions may be evaporating. These days you may be better off being huge, small or closely affiliated with a platform provider.”

THE NEAR FUTURE

Will Danish games be able to cash in on the current wave of creative success?

“Failing is easy,” Neiiendam says. “You just need to maintain the Chinese wall between culture and commerce and keep thinking of creative fields such as film and games as separate domains. In other words, we need collaboration across ministries and media, and we need more companies with a proven track record that can attract investors.”

Egenfeldt-Nielsen agrees that thoughtful cross-media partnerships are key, adding, “Game developers also need to diversify, to cultivate niches within areas like ‘serious games,’ mobile and apps in general.”

Both politicians and an increasingly cohesive and vocal industry seem determined to prevent Danish games from sliding back into near-obscurity. But a lot is hinging on the fate of IO Interactive and the ability of small companies to grow into larger, more stable entities.

The ubiquitous religious metaphors of rebirth and redemption need to be replaced. Hopefully, pundits in the near future will have reason to reach for uplifting tropes like “New levels,” “Power-ups” and “Extra lives.” Even if that last one is still a bit Biblical.

THE DANISH GAME INDUSTRY

Number of studios: 72
 Total number of employees: 552
 In small companies (1-9 employees): 20%
 In medium-sized companies (10-49 employees): 24%
 In large companies (50+ employees): 55%
 Revenue (2009): 51 million euros

Source: Computer Game Zone

Report made by Jan Vang from Aalborg University in collaboration with Copenhagen Entertainment, Danish Producers’ Association, the Computer Game Zone and with support from the European Regional Development Fund

Two recent game titles showcase the ambitions of Danish indie development. Travel through a hostile underworld or visit medieval Florence for a dive into European history ...



“Far too many games spoil the atmosphere by explaining everything to death,” *Limbo* game director Arnt Jensen said in 2008. “By letting *Limbo* play on uncertainty, we keep the player’s mind active, which makes it easier to become immersed in the game.”

Selected by Microsoft for its Xbox 360 Summer of Arcade promotion, *Limbo* launched as a paid-for download and sold 300,000 copies within the first month.

Deviating from the standard model at an early stage of production may have caused some observers to worry. Was that the self-important voice of inexperience speaking?

Even before publication, however, all such worries were laid to rest. The game, a stylish black-and-white 2D platformer, in which a young boy navigates a mysterious, hostile forest environment in search of ... something, won hearts early on. A YouTube trailer drew a million views, creating massive expectations. As the launch date neared, the game began to attract awards and accolades like there was no tomorrow.

Prizewinner at Independent Games Festival and seven-time nominee for the Game Developers Choice Awards, this uncompromising indie-title has come to epitomize the hopes of many Danish

developers while once again bringing a home-grown game into focus.

“Large studios are important, but they tend to struggle in Denmark. The reason being, that, in a global perspective, they are really only medium-sized.” Rune Dittmer, *Press Play*

LEARNING FROM THE BLACK DEATH



Do dry textbook descriptions of medieval pandemics leave your students unmoved? Don’t despair. Expose them directly to the Black Death!

In Serious Games Interactive’s point-and-click adventure *Playing History: The Plague*, the player must learn to navigate the streets of medieval Florence to save a young boy’s family from the plague infecting every aspect of life in the city.

You play through a series of challenges, while learning about complex issues of social life in a specific historical setting undergoing a major crisis.

Mikkel Lucas Overby, commercial director at Serious Games, explains: “Denmark has a strong tradition of developing product niches focusing on play, learning and storytelling – just consider LEGO and Hans Christian Andersen.”

Building on years of research into the potential of video games as learning tools, the company aims to quietly revolutionise the education system. “As we grow older and start school and work, we seem to disconnect play from learning. This is entirely irrational and flies in the face of everything the research tells us,” he says.

Even before its launch in fall 2010, the browser-based game was awarded first prize at the European Best Learning Game Competition in July.



*“You can’t
be a decent
citizen if
you take art
seriously”*



HOW ARE YOU

They have knitted an art work in pink acrylic yarn, put a mirror in front of the Danish national symbol The Little Mermaid and named the work *When a Nation Falls in Love With Itself* – and they have invited visitors to attend a guided tour by a real estate agent in a private collector's home with the corpse of one of the owners floating in the pool ...

For the Danish-Norwegian duo Elmgreen & Dragset art has to ask questions – about history, society, power, gender. At the 2009 Venice Biennale the two artists transformed the Danish and Nordic pavilions into fictional homes – one into a flamboyant bachelor's pad – complete with pricy art collections, bedroom, fireplace and a string of uncanny narratives unfolding throughout the homely setting, asking questions about the psychology behind the desire to express oneself through physical objects.

Michael Elmgreen (born 1961) and Ingar Dragset (born 1961) have worked together since 1995 and have drawn attention worldwide with happenings, installations and other activist art practices. Jannik Splidsboel's documentary *How Are You*, a title reflecting the duo's incessant need to ask questions, follows them over the years, as we listen to their thoughts on being artist and gay. The film offers a comprehensive view of their projects, from the literally homemade knitted *Instant Baby* to the ambitious Venice exhibition *The Collectors*.



JANNIK SPLIDSBØEL

Born 1964, Denmark. Studied art and film in Copenhagen and Rome. Assistant director and head of productions on a number of international projects. Has directed a variety of documentaries, among these *Homies* and *Louise & Papaya*, both of which have screened at international film festivals, including Nordic Panorama and IDFA. With his direction of *The Monster* his work has come to include fiction films. *How Are You* is invited to Berlin's Panorama section.

Photo: Per Daumiller

New Film Agreement 2011-2014

An enhanced flexibility within the support system is one of the main achievements in the new Film Agreement for 2011-2014 which was reached in October between parties in the Danish parliament.

The new film agreement meets the concerns about a creeping uniformity in Danish film that for some time have been voiced by the Danish Film Institute, the agency responsible for implementing government film policy, and a majority of industry stakeholders.

"I am obviously extremely satisfied that the Minister and those on the working team of the new agreement have clearly signaled a break with 'thinking inside the box' and 'management in detail'," Henrik Bo Nielsen, CEO of the Danish Film Institute, said in October. "We are immensely pleased that, with this new flexibility, we can establish a focus on the fruits of the support allocations, instead of the process of allocating. It has been a long process, and I am quite satisfied that we have been able to have such an enriching and constructive dialogue with the film sector."

FIVE KEY POINTS

Over 268 million euros to Danish film over the next four years

The economic framework for film support remains the same. There will be a transfer of a further 13 million

euros to the Danish Film Institute from the TV and radio license pool. This will give a total of 281 million euros to film support during the agreement period.

A greater flexibility in the support system

At the request of a unanimous film sector, a new flexibility between the support systems will be introduced, making it possible for the Danish Film Institute to support new initiatives in line with developments within digitization and the market.

Greater accessibility of documentary films

The Danish Film Institute will work towards greater accessibility of documentary films and will support the development and production of documentary film for a broader and younger audience.

Support to digitization of all Danish cinemas

The smaller cinemas and the art cinemas will be able to receive a single support in the amount of 27,000 euros per cinema or receive a digital distribution support by screening Danish films, which all other cinemas will be able to receive.

More capital for the development of video games

The Ministry of Culture's support to the development of video games for children and youth will be increased from 1.6 million euros to 2.68 million euros. The Ministry of Culture, in cooperation with the Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will examine possibilities of attracting capital to and optimizing the market potential for video games.

Film hit of the year

***Clown*, a film version of a highly popular TV comedy series, was the Danish title to attract, by far, the largest audience in 2010.**

Released in Danish cinemas only a fortnight before curtains closed on 2010, Zentropa and Mikkel Nørgaard's *Clown* still managed to climb to the top of the charts and secure its position as last year's biggest Danish film hit. January ending, 781,000 tickets were sold, which makes *Clown* the most-seen Danish film over the last ten years, with Ole Christian Madsen's WW2 drama from 2008, *Flame & Citron*, coming in second (674,000 admissions).

The odds of a large turnout were high from the outset. *Clown* is based on a long-running and highly popular TV series tailored around stand-up comedians Frank Hvam and Casper Christensen. The two appear as fictionalized, immature versions of themselves in a toe-curling satire on relationships, sex, vanity and celebrity cult.

Following *Clown* on the list of Danish hits in 2010 are Claus Bjerre's family comedy *Father of Four – in Japanese Mode* (430,000 admissions) and Susanne Bier's *In a Better World* (413,000 admissions).



Clown Photo: Per Arnesen

A provisional status issued by the film distributors' organisation FAFID shows that 12.9 million tickets were sold in domestic theatres last year, of which 2.9 million went to a Danish film, landing the national market share at 22%.

TOP 5 DENMARK / RELEASES IN 2010

Release	Title	Director	Admissions
16.12.10	<i>Clown</i>	Mikkel Nørgaard	780.843
04.02.10	<i>Father of Four – in Japanese mode</i>	Claus Bjerre	430.417
26.08.10	<i>In a Better World</i>	Susanne Bier	413.317
14.10.10	<i>Olsen Gang Gets Polished</i>	Jørgen Lerdam	335.407
16.12.10	<i>My Sister's Kids in Jutland</i>	Martin Miehe-Renard	229.699

Danish Film Institute estimate 31 January 2011

IDENTIFYING THE HIGH PERFORMERS

For Kim Leona and Steen Bille, both veteran screenwriters, the dramaturgical craft by now is second nature. But the Danish Film Institute's two feature film commissioners agree that attention to structure and plotting is not enough to make cinematic art that moves people.



Steen Bille and Kim Leona **Photo:** Henrik Ohsten

BY SUSANNA NEIMANN

One, petite, speaks insistently in a dialect worthy of a Copenhagen longshoreman. The other is laid back, contemplative, with a radio announcer's modulated baritone. Kim Leona has scripted some of the most outstanding features in recent Danish cinema, notably teaming up with director Per Fly on his Denmark trilogy, *The Bench*, *Inheritance* and *Manslaughter*. Steen Bille recently co-wrote Niels Arden Oplev's internationally awardwinning *We Shall Overcome*. Now they are applying their dramaturgical experience in the search for original Danish fiction films.

CAN A WRITER BE TOO SKILLED?

An opening question about what films have most impressed Leona and Bille over the years leads straight to the topic of what matters to them in their work as film commissioners.

"I sometimes long for the films from the seventies," Leona says. "They were more daring, perhaps because they weren't made with the same acute awareness of plot, structure and turning points that we see today. You might feel like cutting the old movie down by 32 minutes, but efficiency and momentum aren't everything. What matters is going deep into the material and the story and painting more nuanced portraits. There is sometimes a tendency today to think that, as long as we have the structure in place, we also have a good story. But the story also has to be singular and original. There has to be something more there, the intangibles."

"I use my dramaturgical experience as a toolbox that I get out and put on the table when I feel that something isn't working," Bille says. "Then we ask where the story is broken and what we can do to fix it? But that's not the first step. There are films

whose structure is beyond reproach, but they are completely boring, exactly because they are too constructed. It's like reading a mystery novel where you know who did it on page one."

ARE DANISH FILMS COASTING?

Having read roughly 150 concepts and script treatments in his eight months as film commissioner, Bille is impressed by the talent mass as well as the filmmakers' engagement.

"I'm blown away every time – both when I read scripts and when I meet the filmmakers – at the resolve and enthusiasm with which they present their projects. I really respect their fighting spirit. I see no one doing routine work. Theirs has to be the toughest job in the world."

Leona agrees. "As a director or screenwriter, there's no way you should be able *not* to do what you do. You not only have to be a good writer, you also need persistence through the inevitable ups and downs over the long haul, and even then you still might see your dream project sink.

"There is so much talent and so much resolve in the Danish film industry, but there's also a tendency of tunnel vision. Danish films have been hugely successful for a few years now, and when you're riding a wave of success, there is a risk that you start coasting a bit. That's an unfair thing to say because people are working so hard. But because we have become so skilled at putting stories together, we sometimes forget the underlying imperative. Exactly because we have become so accustomed to high quality, we have to aim for the best. Our job as commissioners is to identify the high performers," she says.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 'WANT' AND 'NEED'

The Danish Film Institute has two schemes for

supporting feature films. One is the Market Scheme that funds mainstream films with a big audience potential, the other is the Film Commissioner Scheme that funds artistically ambitious films. As commissioners, Leona and Bille have the privilege that the films they support don't necessarily have to rack up big sales. How do they account for the audience when considering film projects?

"Of course, we think about the audience. Film is a mass medium, after all. Same as the filmmakers, we passionately want the films to reach as large an audience as possible," Bille says. "But we're also administrating an art subsidy scheme. Personally, I'm not worried about Danish cinema. Even though the market share of Danish films has been falling, it's still very high compared to most other countries."

"That may sound a bit arrogant, but it's not for them to decide what cinematic art is."

"Sure, we look at the admissions figures and reflect on what's going on" Leona says, noting there is no point in reflecting too deeply on the box office.

"In the world of dramaturgy, we work with concepts like 'want' and 'need,' that what a person wants isn't always what that person needs. I don't think the audience knows what it wants. That may sound a bit arrogant, but it's not for them to decide what cinematic art is. It's food for thought that so many went to see *Armadillo*, which is hardly a feel-good story," she says.

"And if someone had presented *Dogme* in advance, I'm sure the audience would have said, 'Good grief, spare us!' The audience doesn't know what they want!" ■

THINK TANK...

Nordic thoughts on the digital future

BY MICHAEL GUBBINS

Even though Scandinavians speak the same kind of strange languages that no one else understand and share ideals about public support systems, we're terrible at buying tickets to each other's films. The new Scandinavian Think Tank convened in December to discuss the reality behind a disappointingly meagre Nordic market and to discover new ways ahead. Report by moderator Michael Gubbins from the meeting in Copenhagen.

In Scandinavia, business and policy-makers have been trying to deal with longstanding problems in supporting sustainable film businesses, capable of making and distributing the kind of films that can reach audiences across national boundaries.

The Scandinavian Think Tank is in part a response to a sense of crisis that needs a resolute and joint response.

Concerns ... and some optimism

Taking part in the event in December in Copenhagen was a 150-person strong range of filmmakers, industry players and policy-makers from across the region, and the task was threefold: to examine the state of today's industry, to identify the challenges in a demand-driven digital economy, and to pinpoint a set of practical ideas on which to build a future strategy.

A theme often repeated during the two-day Think Tank as fundamental to any discussion about future strategies was that of the *audience* – not least emphasised by one keynote speaker, pioneering US indie producer

Ted Hope, who stressed the fact that the relationship between producer, product and consumer is changing in a digital environment. The value of film will come more and more from engagement with audiences directly. In other words, the top-down traditional analogue system with its elongated value chain of specialist, small and medium-sized businesses needs a change of mindset, Hope reminded the audience.

Research studies on the Scandinavian market were presented, and these studies helped the delegates focus on the questions that are central to the debates – questions about the industry's sustainability in a digital world, about the value of public policies and the quality of the films themselves.

The studies, focusing on films produced between 2002 and 2010, confirmed known areas of concern, particularly in reaching younger audiences and the films' struggle to travel between territories. The most striking conclusions, though, were the worrying lack of business sustainability:

In Sweden 163 production companies were involved in 229 films, 118 companies only made one film. In Norway 140 directors made films, 100 of them only made one. In Denmark 115 screenwriters were engaged in writing, but 81 only wrote one script.

But there were reasons for optimism about some short-term opportunities. One area of research that was particularly promising came from a survey that suggested that consumers in Norway, Sweden and Denmark were prepared to pay a premium price (up to 25 euro) to watch a day-and-date release of a movie through a VOD channel in

Consensus was reached around four main issues:

- *more cross-border cooperation*
- *the creation of a regional innovation fund*
- *collaboration with experts in other fields*
- *the need to create sustainable businesses*

their own homes. And better still, the survey suggests that this interest would *not* be at the expense of theatrical release.

The same study showed that a strong majority of people in all three countries prefer to watch a film in the cinema and for the same basic reason that there the "experience" of the big-screen format remains a draw.

A look at tomorrow

At the end of the Copenhagen Think Tank, consensus was reached around four main issues.

- First of all, the debates revealed clear synergies between the Scandinavian countries. Delegates identified a number of areas where formal and informal **cross-border cooperation** made far more sense than competition, for instance in shared initiatives between film schools and Film Institutes.
- Secondly, **innovation** was seen as a distinct problem for Scandinavia. Small countries with industries comprising mostly small and medium-sized businesses struggle to keep up with digital change, where scale does count. The Think Tank suggested work on creating a regional innovation fund.
- Thirdly, the challenges of a digital era call for **collaboration with experts** in other fields, including technologists and digital marketing experts. Digital change in film does

not exist in a vacuum and there is much to learn from the rest of the media, technology and business worlds.

- And finally, the need to create **sustainable businesses** is one of the biggest challenges for public policy. There are no simple solutions and a divided industry has a variety of different interests. Nonetheless, current policies need reviewing.

The acid test, now, will be how the ideas turn into the foundations of a Scandinavian – and European – strategy for a digital future.

Michael Gubbins is an editor, journalist and consultant specialising in film and digital media.

The Scandinavian Think Tank (7-8 December 2010) was organised by the European Think Tank on Film and Film Policy and headed by director Henning Camre and is the first "cluster" Think Tank addressing the specific issues of countries that have more in common than what divides them. The Think Tank was financed by the Film Institutes of Denmark, Norway and Sweden and the Nordic Film and Television Foundation. Film and Media Departments of Copenhagen, Oslo and Lund Universities provided substantial qualitative and quantitative research. www.filmthinktank.org

Meta Louise Foldager **Photo:** Christian Geisnæs

Meta Film goes international

Going to the table with greater flexibility and creativity lies at the core of the recently established Meta Film, founded by producer Meta Louise Foldager, a close collaborator of Lars von Trier, for whom she produced *Antichrist* and now *Melancholia*.

With her own company Meta Louise Foldager promises greater freedom for her creative partners. For Foldager,

who is far from half-hearted, what intrigues her most about starting Meta Film is that she is creating the necessary framework to enable her to engage in different ways, thereby catering to the exact needs of each project.

"With my new company, I can develop the type of collaboration that lends more flexibility and creates a sounder basis for the projects and all those involved", says Foldager.

"The basic idea is that I provide a complete package, which includes the development, the construction of a creative team and the core funding. First, when this is in place I'll approach the larger company and negotiate on behalf of my team. In

addition, the producers at Meta Films can be commissioned to perform all or some of a producer's tasks on external established projects. For example, I am still working, together with producer Louise Vesth, on Lars von Trier's films at Zentropa."

Meta Louise Foldager's focus will be on international productions with established artists, while the company's other producer Sara Namer will primarily work on the development of new Danish talent with inherent international potential.

Meta Louise Foldager has produced films of Lars von Trier, Nikolaj Arcel, Heidi Maria Faisst, Pernille Fischer Christensen, Ole Christian Madsen and

"A light romantic comedy ...

... but with undertones of evil, madness and brutality!" Henrik Ruben Genz hastens to add when asked to sum up his new feature.

Of course there will be evil, madness and brutality in a film by Henrik Ruben Genz, the Danish director whose laid-back style and warped humour have prompted comparisons to Jim Jarmusch and the Coen brothers.

Genz' third feature *Terribly Happy* (2008) won the Grand Prix at Karlovy Vary and cleaned up at that year's Danish Robert and Bodil awards ceremonies. This quirky story of a big city cop who is assigned to the remotest, flattest Danish backwater, where people play their cards close to the vest and like to handle their own business, was written with the director's childhood friend Erling Jepsen.

Genz' new film is about a girl who is looking for her father but realises that she is really looking for something else entirely and maybe ends up finding it. The story is only loosely based on Jepsen's novel *Biroller*, but the director knows exactly what Jepsen's speciality is:

"Erling Jepsen writes without filters. It's so out there and absurd that, if it was me doing it, I'd tell myself, 'No, there's no way anyone would buy it.' Erling Jepsen trusts his instincts and he stays connected to his characters and his material in a

Henrik Ruben Genz and actor Nicolas Bro **Photo:** Thomas Marott

way that brings it home and makes it credible. He puts words to some of the things I would like to take up but don't, because I don't trust myself as much."

Evil and humanity in Hollywood

While Genz is editing his new film in Denmark, he and his producer Thomas Gammeltoft of Fine & Mellow, are working on several projects in America, including an American remake of *Terribly Happy*.

"I never go anywhere without Thomas," Genz says. That's how he plans to stay true to his artistic identity in Tinseltown.

"It's so out there and absurd that, if it was me doing it, I'd tell myself, 'No, there's no way anyone would buy it.'"

Genz is also involved in two American horror-film projects where people contacted him after watching *Terribly Happy*. "They figure I can add some humanity to all the dead bodies and blood," Genz says, promising he'll try.

Henrik Ruben Genz' upcoming film with the working title In Heat will premiere in Denmark in 2011. For further information on In Heat (Befri mig vel), see reverse section.

Henning Carlsen adapts Márquez novel

What happens when a person near the end of his life finds a reason to live? Veteran filmmaker Henning Carlsen embarks in his new film to find some answers. *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* is based on Gabriel Garcia Márquez' novel of the same name.

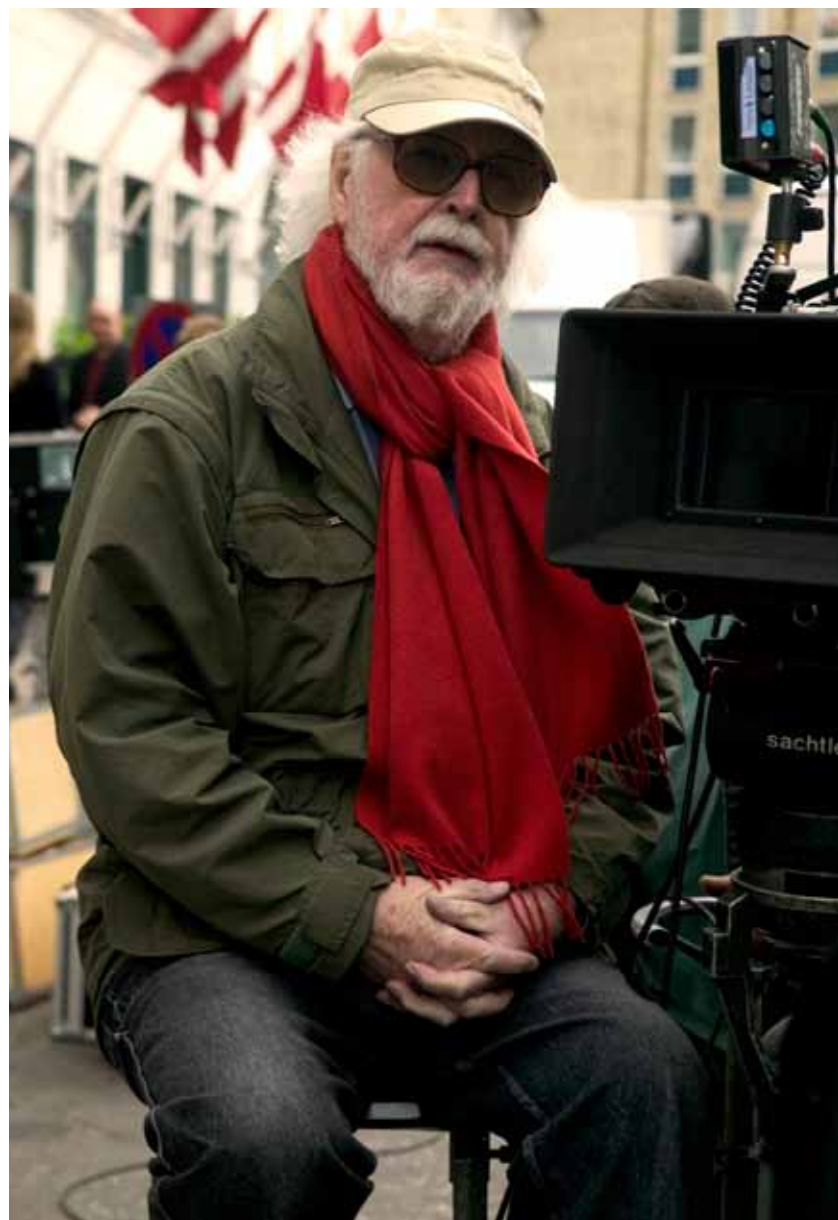
Reflection, the joy of being in love and the misfortunes of growing old are threads running through the Mexican-Danish coproduction *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* (*Memoria de mis putas tristes*).

A lone-wolf journalist has never experienced a love relationship despite his routine visits to brothels

throughout his life. He is turning ninety and decides to celebrate his birthday by spending a night with a young virgin.

Carlsen and Nina Crone of Crone Film together with the Mexican producer Raquel Guajardo and Spanish Zip Film acquired the film rights to Nobel laureate Márquez' novel some years back. The film's script is by awardwinning French screenwriter Jean-Claude Carrière and Danish director Henning Carlsen. TrustNordisk are handling world sales.

Henning Carlsen's international breakthrough came with *Sult* (1966). His feature film *A Happy Divorce* was the opening film at the Cannes Film Festival in 1975.



Henning Carlsen Photo: Rolf Konow



The Celebration Photo: Lars Høgsted

From Dreyer to Dogme

Are you curious about Dreyer, Dogme and Danish filmmakers? Then begin with the historic overview of 10 decades of Danish cinema, now available on dfi.dk. The work guides you through the silent era to the first decade of the new millennium – from escapism to social realism, from family comedies to the Dogme film, from mainstream to avant-garde, from action flicks to Danish docs.

This web publication of a history of Danish cinema embraces the dawn of filmmaking and exhibition in Denmark, taking us up to the new millennium. It elaborates on the films of each decade, the tendencies and genres that predominate, the

creative originators and the film political conditions and organizational structures under which these films were made.

Organized chronologically decade for decade, Danish Film History is embellished with images and film posters. For the silent era, Denmark's Golden Age, you can see clips from various films, including some works by the great Danish master Carl Theodor Dreyer.

The film titles and names in Danish Film History will soon link to a wealth of information contained in the upcoming English version of Denmark's National Filmography.

The National Filmography on dfi.dk, with its information on some 10,000 films and 80,000 names, enjoys nearly 2,000 visitors daily.

The author of Danish Film History, Peter Schepelern, is Associate Professor at Film & Media Studies, Copenhagen University.

DFI.DK/ BERLIN

Cinema for Peace

Two highly topical Danish documentaries have been invited to participate at the annual Cinema for Peace Gala on 14 February in Berlin, while the German capital is still immersed in hectic festival activity.

Armadillo and *Blood in the Mobile* join the selection of cinematic works highlighted by the Cinema for Peace Foundation, whose goal is to promote peace and international understanding through the medium of film.

Both films have raised heated debates and caused controversy since their release. Janus Metz' war document from Afghanistan made more headlines in Denmark than any other title, and Frank Piasecki Poulsen's images from the horrific conditions in Congolese mineral mines and his insistent pressure on Nokia actually have caused the phone manufacturing giant to react.

The Cinema for Peace Awards will be presented during the charity-gala, and the audience will have the opportunity to see clips from the selected films.



Anders W. Berthelsen, Paprika Steen and Sebastian Estevanez in *Superclásico* Photo: Shazia Khan

Football and Paprika

Paprika Steen's performance in Martin Pieter Zandvliet's feature debut *Applause* brought on heaps of praise

by American critics at the film's recent US release. The Danish actress, who may be best known to international audiences for her Dogme roles in Vinterberg's *The Celebration* and Bier's *Open Hearts*, is back on screen in *Superclásico*, a new comedy by Ole Christian Madsen. Steen plays Anna

who has left husband and son to live out her dream of being a sports agent in Buenos Aires. Now, as she is about to remarry, Anna's ex-husband flies out to settle the last formalities of the divorce, while harboring a secret desire to win Anna back. *Superclásico* is out in Danish theatres 17 March.

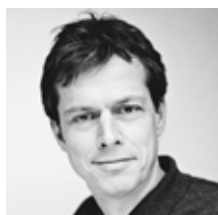
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