

PICS FOR KIDS

Danish quality films that entertain kids have a stronger presence than ever before. This year four films have been selected for KINDERFILMFEST in Berlin. Meet the directors and read about other new Danish children & youth features.

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IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE

Thomas Vinterberg is back five years after his success *The Celebration*. His latest film was selected for the prestigious Premieres Program at the Sundance Film Festival. *It's All About Love* is officially selected for Special Screening at the Berlinale.

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WILBUR WANTS TO KILL HIMSELF

Lone Scherfig's breakthrough came with *Italian for Beginners*. *Wilbur Wants to Kill Himself* is her fourth feature film. Jamie Sives, Adrian Rawlings and Shirley Henderson play the leads. It is a comedy, but more serious than *Italian for Beginners*.

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./FILM./

#27

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EDITORIAL TEAM Agnete Dorph Sjernfeldt
 Susanna Neimann
 Lars Fil-Jensen
 Vicki Synnott

EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS Kim Foss
 Rumle Hammerich
 Loke Havn
 Tue Steen Müller
 Jonathan Sydenham

TRANSLATIONS Stuart Goodale

SUBSCRIPTIONS Nina Caroc

ART DIRECTORS Anne Hemp
 Pernille Volder Lund

DESIGN Koch & Täckman

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DANISH FILM INSTITUTE
 Gothersgade 55
 DK-1123 Copenhagen K, Denmark
 t +45 3374 3400
 susannan@dfi.dk / agnetes@dfi.dk

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FILM#27 er et engelsk særnummer i anledning af den internationale filmfestival i Berlin.

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DANISH FILM INSTITUTE (DFI) FESTIVAL STAFF



Photos: Kirsten Bille



TINE MOSEGAARD
 International Relations - Feature Films
 DFI +45 3374 3464
 Fax +45 3374 3445
 Mobile +45 2482 3758
 tinem@dfi.dk

SANNE PEDERSEN
 International Relations - Feature Films
 DFI +45 3374 3437
 Fax +45 3374 3445
 Mobile +45 2482 3759
 sannep@dfi.dk

ANNETTE LØNVANG
 International Relations - Shorts & Documentaries
 DFI +45 3374 3556
 Fax +45 3374 3445
 Mobile +45 2148 8522
 annettel@dfi.dk

ANNE MARIE KÜRSTEIN
 International Relations - Shorts & Documentaries
 DFI +45 3374 3609
 Fax +45 3374 3445
 Mobile +45 4041 4697
 kurstein@dfi.dk



Director Henrik Ruben Genz (Photo: Jan Buus)

**SOMEONE LIKE HODDER /
KINDERFILMFEST / OPENING SCREENING**

ESCAPING THROUGH FANTASY

"Although a rich inner world is a positive asset, it's important to make sure your imagination doesn't get the upper hand," says director Henrik Ruben Genz, commenting on his first feature, the humorous *Someone Like Hodder*.

BY LISELOTTE MICHELSEN

He is nine years old, a talented maker of rum balls, and he is imaginative – very imaginative. His name is Hodder, and he is the main character in a new feature film for children and their parents. The film was directed by Henrik Ruben Genz, whose accomplishments include the Oscar-nominated short film *Teis and Nico*.

"The interesting thing about Hodder's character is that he's a dreamer who has energy and drive," says Henrik Ruben Genz. "Hodder makes things happen. And even though he is ragged at school and gets the worst marks in his class, he is dauntless. On the face of things, at least. Because his dreams are his escape from his loneliness and the abandonment he feels. He needs to be saved, he needs a friend. And it is important that he learns how to tell the difference between reality and fantasy, before his imagination gets the best of him."

SAVE THE WORLD

Henrik Ruben Genz's enthusiasm for the story of *Someone Like Hodder* (also his feature film debut) was primarily motivated by the main character. The screenplay was written by playwright and author Bo hr. Hansen and is based on a book by Bjarne Reuter. The story is about Hodder (Frederik Christian Johansen), who lives with his father (Lars Brygmann). Hodder's mother died when he was three years old. He misses his mother and hopes that his father will meet someone new. Yet despite Hodder's encouraging remarks to his father about his sweet-smelling teacher (Birthe Neumann) and red-mouthed Lola (Trine Appel) from a neighbouring flat, his father is uninterested: he still lives with the dream of Hodder's deceased mother.

"Hodder makes things happen. Even if he gets the worst marks in the class, he is dauntless."

At school, Hodder is teased by the strong boys in the class, Filip (Anders L. Kjeldsen), who can give Hodder a beating, and Alex (Maurice Blinkenberg) who is quick with clever remarks and an expensive bicycle. Hodder resigns himself to being the class oddball, till he is roused from his sleep one night by a fairy who tells him that he is the chosen one and that he must save the world. This challenge is difficult to ignore. Yet since Hodder thinks the whole world may be a little more than he can handle, he decides to start with the smallest island on earth, Guambilua. Hodder starts organising an expedition comprising beautiful Lola, tough boxer Big Mac (whom he read about on an oatmeal package) and then Flip and Alex. But how does the class nobody get the two strongest boys interested in such a venture?

As Bjarne Reuter's book is written in an episodic, associative form, which is not directly transferable to the screen, it took some adjustments, additions, and omissions to turn it into a film. The screenplay had nine rewrites in all, and Henrik Ruben Genz and Bo hr. Hansen worked hand in glove. They discussed aspects like the film's composition and themes.

"The story comprises three essential themes or problems: first of all, Hodder is friendless, secondly, he is motherless and thirdly a fairy visits him and tells him he has to save the world. We decided to make the friendship theme the main story and put a



Photo: Erik Aavatsmark

lot of effort into writing the beginning in order to give the three themes the proper slant and present them in the right order. The ending was also re-written several times. At one point, we talked about ending the film with a grandiose imaginary journey, but we felt that we would be more true to the story – and actually give it a happier ending – if Hodder ultimately chose reality instead of the dream,” says Henrik Ruben Genz.

DAINGEROUS IMAGINATION

At the start of the film, Hodder’s daily life is rather bleak, especially owing to his relationship with his father. Hodder’s father is a nice, starry-eyed man who shuns conflicts and has his own ghosts to struggle with. And despite the best intentions, he is incapable of meeting his son’s needs as a father. His personal development has stagnated. The same is true of several other adults in the film, including the bakery clerk who sits in the shop daydreaming about love, and the teacher whose only happiness is inhaling her favourite perfume, *Harem Dreams*, in solitude. Surrounded by grown-up dreamers, someone like Hodder becomes a lonely Hodder.

“In my opinion, the difference between reality and imagination is more vague to children than adults.”

“The adults in his world are languishing. They live pseudo-lives and don’t know how to move on, to grow. They are people who have yet to discover the proper balance between reality and dreams. In my opinion, the difference between reality and imagination is more vague to children than to adults. The process of maturing as a person includes learning to differentiate between dream and reality and becoming aware of what’s what. But if someone is very lonely and suffers from abandonment or other pain, his or her development can be disrupted, which can result in a distorted perception of reality and fantasy. It can also become what we adults call phobias and neuroses.”

“Even though a vibrant, varied inner life is a positive personality trait, imaginary universes – like reality – are comprised of both lightness and darkness. Much demonic power and horror can be lurking in an imaginary universe, and it can be dangerous to give one’s imagination so much free rein that it gets out of

control. If, like Hodder, you toy with the idea that you can walk on water, logically you’ll end up drowning at one point. The father wants to guide Hodder, but as the dreamer he is, he ends up misleading his son more than anything.”

Hodder needs someone to help him learn the difference between reality and fantasy.

“Hodder’s down-to-earth friend Filip is important to Hodder’s growth. In return, Filip has something to learn from Hodder: Filip’s parents get a divorce during the course of the film, and Filip needs to find a way through the crisis. Hodder shows him the inherent potential of imagination and friendship.”

POETIC REALISM

Henrik Ruben Genz says that during the filming, it was very important for him to ferret out the nine-year-old boy hidden at the back of his own mind. Genz had to try to recall how the world looked through Hodder’s eyes. The photography underpins the storytelling from Hodder’s perspective. In many shots, the camera is actually positioned at Hodder’s eye level, making the older boys *seem* older, even if they are ‘only’ nine years old. This helps to make many scenes feel like déjà vu to adult viewers, suddenly evoking a clear – sometimes painful – memory of what it was like to be a third former.

Someone Like Hodder was photographed by Bo Tengberg, with whom Henrik Ruben Genz also collaborated on the comical, metropolitan *Crossroads* (1995), their examination film from the National Film School of Denmark. In *Someone Like Hodder*, they discover a visual style that Henrik Ruben Genz describes as ‘poetic realism’. The mood is melancholic, and although most of the film takes place in everyday locations, like a public school and Hodder’s flat in inner city Copenhagen, the imagery still has an air of unreality. The pictures are devoid of superficial and characteristic details denoting a specific time period. Graffiti and backwards baseball caps do not exist here.

“Hopefully, the film can be watched ten years from now without seeming out of date or old-fashioned.”

“We tell a universal story about becoming a self-dependent human being, and we try to emphasise the eternal truth of the story by using a classic, time-

less visual style. Hopefully, the film can be watched ten years from now without seeming out of date or old-fashioned.”

FOCUS GROUP SHORTCUT

During the filming, Henrik Ruben Genz concentrated on the acting and imagery and kept his mind as clear as possible of marketing, target groups and pleasing the audience.

“I listened to my intuition and made what I felt were good choices. So I hope my enthusiasm shines through and helps to strengthen the film. Of course it’s important to do well at the box office. And you need aggressive marketing to avoid getting lost in the crowd. But I am not interested in making films that satisfy the lowest common denominator, filled with slapstick and gore. When I make a film, I want to give it more substance than cotton candy.”

For the same reasons, *Someone Like Hodder* stands out from many Danish children’s and family films currently being produced. *Someone Like Hodder* takes childhood and audiences seriously in a manner somewhat reminiscent of films like Jesper W. Nielsen’s *Little Big Sister* (1998) and Bille August’s *World of Buster* (1984).

Considering the artistically oriented approach formerly taken by Henrik Ruben Genz, his use of such a market-oriented device as focus groups during the editing phase may seem contradictory. Even so, in this case groups of school children were invited to see the partly finished film and give their opinion of it.

“When I make a film, I want to give it more substance than cotton candy.”

“From a practical angle, the focus groups saved us a lot of work. They gave us a short cut to changes we would have ended up making anyway. It’s a good way to catch the little things that can lead to misunderstandings. For example, the first focus group perceived Hodder’s father as a very unpleasant character who didn’t care about Hodder, which wasn’t what we had intended, of course. So we removed some scenes of him sleeping and added some where he and Hodder are spending time together. Another focus group was uncertain as to whether Hodder gossips about the divorce of Filip’s parents. After the discussion, we modified a few details to make it clearer that Hodder isn’t gossiping. That’s how we used the focus groups, i.e., not to make a happier ending or that sort of thing!”

The film premiered in 53 cinemas throughout Denmark on 31 January 2003 ■

This article was first published in Danish in the magazine EKKO#16 (2002).

Further information in the reverse section.

HENRIK RUBEN GENZ Born 1959 in South Jutland, Denmark. Graduated as an illustrator and graphic artist from the Kolding Design School in 1987, after which he was admitted to the National Film School of Denmark. After film school, he worked in television and elsewhere. Over the past fifteen years, he has directed a number of documentaries, short features, and television series, including: *Crossroads* (graduation film from the National Film School, 1995), *Fra Vesterbro til verdens ende* (documentary series, 1997-98), *Teis and Nico* (short film, 1998), *Dødssjov* (television short film, 2000), *De udvalgte* (television series, 2001) and *Someone Like Hodder* (feature film, 2003).

Director and producer Jannik Hastrup is Danish animation's grand old man. His latest film - the amusing yet gruesome story about *The Boy Who Wanted to Be a Bear* - was inspired by the legends and heroic myths of Greenland.

THE BOY WHO WANTED TO BE A BEAR / KINDERFILMFEST

FROM HANDS-ON CRAFTSMANSHIP TO INTERNET DIRECTING

BY LISELOTTE MICHELSEN

The line is simple: black pen with sweeping elegance in a Japanese-inspired style. The setting is also simple for that matter: a snow-covered Greenland wilderness. But the snow is more than just white in Jannik Hastrup's latest animated feature. The animation frolics with the entire colour spectrum from frigid blue to the golden red of the sunset. And the imagery greatly reflects the story: a relatively simple fable infused with character by means of painful tragedy and warm humour.

Director and producer Jannik Hastrup - who rightfully deserves to be called the grand old man of Danish animation - has always been fond of hand-drawn lines and jazzy styles. His films have been a childhood fixture for several generations of Danes, especially his many short and medium length films about the charming elf Circlean and her comical mouse friends. Yet the relatively sheltered Circlean universe is far removed from the unrelenting, menacing world of *The Boy Who Wanted to Be a Bear*.

The film deals with a Greenland hunter and his wife who gives birth to a son - at the same time that a female polar bear gives birth to a stillborn cub. The she-bear's mate abducts the human baby, who is then reared as if he were a bear cub. But the human father vows to find the polar bears who stole his son, and when he finally succeeds, he kills the she-bear. The boy, now ten years old, does not recognise his human parents, and he remains unhappy, no matter what they do. All he wants is to be a bear. He runs away and, on the advice of his good friend, Raven, seeks out the Spirit of the Fell. Here the boy learns that if he successfully completes three trials of strength, he can be transformed into a bear. He plunges bravely into the tasks, but his happiness is still a long way off.

The Boy Who Wanted to Be a Bear is made for children and adults alike. The screenplay was written by author Bent Haller with whom Hastrup has frequently collaborated, and the story was inspired by various Greenland legends and heroic myths. The film comprises great beauty and several humorous scenes - but also a stillborn bear cub, an unhappy human mother and a polar bear mother who gets killed. The latter events are cruel enough to make even a

seasoned adult filmgoer swallow hard, and one question demands an answer: Why all the sadness?

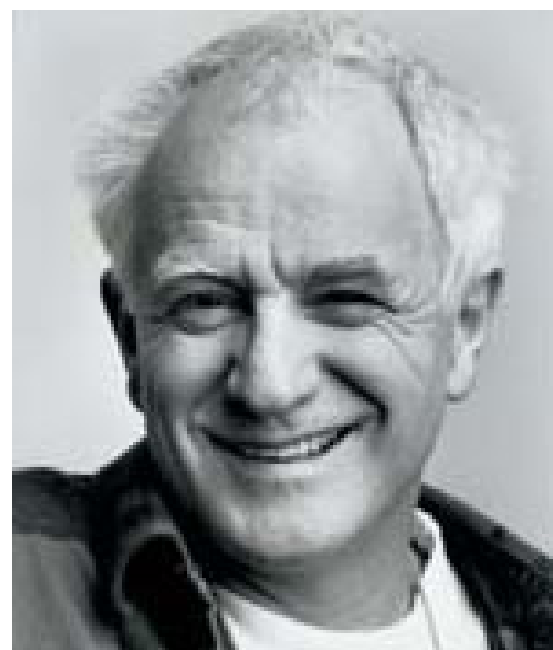
Jannik Hastrup replies, "Because that's life, isn't it?" But he says this with a mischievous twinkle in his eye reminding you that he is also the man behind fantastic, imaginative tomfoolery like *Benny's Bathtub*, a modern animation classic. This very duality - a delight in child's play and humour, on the one hand, and a sorrowful awareness of loss as part of life on the other - typify several of Hastrup's major animated films. The whales in *Samson and Sally* have generated much laughter but also many tears, and life was no bed of roses for *Hans Christian Andersen and the Long Shadow*.

Jannik Hastrup is not concerned that *The Boy Who Wanted to Be a Bear* is tough fare for little ones.

"As long as you sit with them and talk about the film, everything will be all right," he believes. "This 'target-group discussion' about my films isn't new. The way I see it, I make films for everyone between the ages of five and one hundred. Many people think that animated films are for children. Just as many think that films *about* children are films *for* children. That's not how I see it at all. In my opinion, the very categorisation of films into children's films and adult films is an abnormal approach. Obviously children don't have the background to understand some so-called adult films, but every adult was once a child, so they can get just as much out of the so-called 'children's films' as children can. The decisive factor is whether the story is good and has a universal theme, i.e., that it has characters and themes with whom the audience can identify and recognise. Then it makes no difference whether you are a child or an adult."

Jannik Hastrup states that as the film is being made he doesn't think in terms of target groups. Instead, he listens to his intuition and makes his choices based on what he thinks is best. In particular he doesn't think in terms of children's humour either, but bases his choices on his own sense of humour.

"I saw Chaplin's *Gold Rush* when I was four or five, and I was very amused whenever Chaplin fell down, but beyond that I felt terribly sorry for him. Now I see the film from a totally different perspective and understand more layers of its humour and satire. It is a law of nature that children and adults have different perceptions of films, and I think it's only



Director Jannik Hastrup (Photo: Rolf Konow)

positive if a film can give its audience different experiences. By the way, I still think it's funny when someone falls down," he adds. "But it depends on who is doing the falling, of course."

This attitude is felt in *The Boy Who Wanted to Be a Bear* when the main character's friend, Raven, keeps having difficulty landing. The figure of Raven is the story's comic relief, and Hastrup tells how Raven mainly grew out of the animation process. This was possible due to Jannik Hastrup's relatively open working methods.

"We start by making a storyboard consisting of several rough sketches - to get a general perspective. But this doesn't mean that the final film turns out to be just like the storyboard. Space for creativity is imperative, and the vigour derived from interpersonal dialogue is important. Animators often get ideas as they work with the figures, and a director must always be receptive to these ideas. If the ideas are good and work in the context, then we use them. Experience tells me that something new should happen every day, a little unpredictable twist, an unplanned detail. The working process must be kept alive."



Framegrabs

“This also means that new slants to the story may appear along the way. I’ve made films based on Bent Haller’s manuscripts before. His scripts are frequently a little more brutal than the final films. He probably thinks I’m overly sentimental,” says Hastrup, who supports this notion with an example from *The Boy...* of a little love story between the main character and another bear cub that evolved during the animation process.

As many as 25 people have been working on *The Boy Who Wanted to Be a Bear* for a year and a half at the drafting office, which also houses Dansk Tegnefilm 2 (a company owned by Hastrup and producer Marie Bro). Animator Birgitte Faber is the woman behind the unique brushstroke selected for the film. After her style was selected, several different animators were assigned their own character.

“Although everyone draws in the same style, small differences will always arise if for no other reason than the fact that each animator has his or her own personal style and temperament. And this gives the figures life and personality. But it also emphasises the great importance of properly matching the

figure with the animator. During the process of making *Hans Christian Andersen and the Long Shadow*, we experienced in the very first month that it was hard for two of the animators to draw their figures - until we realised that they should try to trade characters. Afterwards, everything suddenly worked much better.”

Whereas Hastrup’s previous films were outright Danish productions, *The Boy Who Wanted to Be a Bear* was made in collaboration with a French production company, Les Armateurs. After the Danish animators made the drawings, they shipped them in cardboard boxes to Angoulême in Southern France where a staff of fifteen scanned the drawings into the computer, adding colour to the figures and combining figures and backgrounds as instructed by the Copenhagen drawing office, until the drawings became moving pictures. So part of Hastrup’s day-to-day work involved reviewing and commenting on the small film sequences sent to Copenhagen over the Internet by the French staff. This was a new method of working for Hastrup.

“In many ways, computers and the Internet have

contributed to easing my directing. It is much easier and faster to make samples and experiments, or modify pictures and the like during the production process. But this working method also has big drawbacks. We don’t have the same contact with each other when we work in different countries. It’s simply very different to sit face to face and discuss things like the shades of a certain colour or your preferences, than trying to explain these things over the phone or in an e-mail. We’ve also had a language barrier which we with some difficulty tried to get around by making English our common ground, but there are also cultural differences in our ways of working and solving problems. On the other hand, we had a lot of the film work done at a relatively low cost, and entering the French market is much easier now.”

Jannik Hastrup says he chose this producing method for primarily financial reasons.

“For the same reason that others have outsourced some of their required labour to places like China where the daily wage is five Danish kroner. Till now, I have made a heroic effort to keep the work on Danish soil. Because if the current trend continues



Framegrab

whereby more companies produce part of their film abroad, Danish animators will end up abandoning their craft to earn a living elsewhere. The animation industry will end up losing many great talents. And it's deplorable that our talented animators are neglected."

According to Jannik Hastrup there is another problem confronting Danish animation: the US competition - which is not based on quality, but on quantity and cost.

"Television stations want animated films, but they're unwilling to pay much for them. So as long as they want to show poor quality, they might as well buy it abroad; the television stations can get it all from the US at a tenth of the price. The result of this trend, however, is that short animated films are dying out. I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to make several major productions. And this has enabled our company to get a little income via royalties, among other things."

Jannik Hastrup bases his opinions of these trends in the animated film industry on almost forty years of personal experience in the industry. He started his career in 1960 in a little studio in which all the job

functions had to be performed by only a few people. And this all-round background has benefited Hastrup ever since he made *Benny's Bathtub* together with Flemming Quist Møller in 1971 - the first of several major productions in Hastrup's career.

"I often chose *not* be the animator of the films I directed because keeping one's distance is important - it enables me to see things from a fresh perspective. But also because many animators are more talented than I am," he adds.

"One of my most important directing tasks in relation to staff is that I must *not* let anyone see the pressure we are under in terms of schedule and finances. An average of two or three seconds of film have to be made each day. Less is accomplished at the start of a production, while at the end we're running full speed ahead. Experience has taught me that forcing people to work round the clock always backfires. During a production process lasting eighteen months it is important to give the staff a good working environment and working hours that let them have a life outside their work."

It's easy to imagine that Jannik Hastrup - an animator

on many of his previous films - misses drawing. But he shakes his head at the question.

"No, I don't miss it. I like being the director, coordinating and watching a production develop, seeing a film being made and getting a life of its own. During *The Boy Who Wanted to Be a Bear*, it was fun to work on the editing, pacing and shaping the images, i.e. laterally reverse something in a scene, modifying and recycling and rearranging. My greatest longing during the work is to see the story when it is finished" ■

Further information in the reverse section.

JANNIK HASTRUP Born 1941. Animator, director and producer. He has also written the screenplay for eleven of his animated films, as well as edited, photographed and played the music for a few others; he sidelined as a jazz musician for a while during his filmmaking career. He has directed 34 short and feature animations, including: *Concerto erotico* (1964), *Hvordan man opdrager sine forældre* (series 1966), *Circleen I - XI* (1968-70), *Benny's Bathtub* (1971, in cooperation with Flemming Quist Møller), *Trællene* (1978), *Samson and Sally* (1984), *Subway to Paradise* (1987), *War of the Birds* (1991), *The Monkeys and the Secret Weapon* (1995), *Hans Christian Andersen and the Long Shadow* (1998), *Circleen - City Mice* (1998), *Circleen 2 - Mice and Romance* (2000), *The Boy Who Wanted to Be a Bear* (2003)

WALLAH BE /
KINDERFILMFEST

TO BE OR NOT TO BE A MUSLIM

Interview with Pia Bovin about her first fiction film, about a suburban boy who wants to become a Muslim. “He is no child hero - just an ordinary boy in search of identity”, says the director.



Director Pia Bovin (Photo: Jan Buus)

BY NATHALIE PADE

This is not a film about a child hero, like Harry Potter or Pippi Longstocking, nor is it a film about the difficulty of the integration of minority cultures in Western European society, contributing to the ongoing high-pitched debate after September 11th. In fact, Pia Bovin refuses to talk about the attack against the World Trade Centre, although it did occur in the midst of her shooting her fiction film, *Wallah Be*, in a Copenhagen suburb with a high population rate of Arabs.

“Of course, the times we live through encourage films about immigrants and integration. But the film is as much the story of an ordinary boy in search of identity - and in this case, the Muslim family represents warmth, closeness, masculinity, and above all, presence”, Pia Bovin states, explaining why her main character, Aksel, who is the younger child in a divorcee family consisting of a hard-working mother, a teenage sister and the ten-year-old Aksel, suddenly wishes to become a Muslim and changes his name to Akhmed.

The plot: Aksel, who is expecting to go on holiday with his father, must suffer the humiliation of spending a week in the after-school club instead. A stray dog and a song contest organized by the club are the start of a friendship between Aksel and two girls, Annika and Fatima. Aksel, who has declared himself a Muslim, gets into trouble, when faced with the strict rules of the religious society: are Muslims allowed to touch a dog? How does one take care of a stray dog who needs loving care, if you cannot touch him? Fatima teaches Aksel: “Muslims have to help others”, but Aksel thinks of himself first and leaves it to his friend Annika, whose mother is allergic to dogs, to take care of the animal, while Fatima is grounded.

“We tore our hair when we found out that Muslims are not supposed to touch dogs, but then someone informed us that it is okay for a Muslim to touch a dog, as long as it does not lick you in the face. Finally, we decided to integrate our dog problem in the film” Pia Bovin says, telling how the dog happened to become a vehicle in the story, symbolic to Aksel’s dilemma, whether to be a good Muslim or a good friend.

THE CHILD AS THE BAD GUY

“It is cool to be a Muslim” is Aksel’s drive, and still, religious laws and ethics are inflicted upon him, to interfere with his quite earthly wish to become a member of the group of teenage Arabs in the suburban neighbourhood.

“Aksel is no child hero. He thinks the Muslims are cool, because they drive fast cars and look good”, states the director, who imposed a strict frame for her story.

“I wanted the film to be a film about an ordinary boy, who is as selfish and complex as is everyone else. Aksel pretends to be helping his friend Fatima, who has been forbidden to participate in the song contest, and goes to see the leader of the Muslim community. But in fact, he does so for himself, for him to get accepted as a Muslim”, Bovin says, pointing out that her film is for “those children who don’t feel like heroes, and who recognize themselves in Aksel. A film for children who know a liar or have been liars themselves. Parents have great difficulties accepting that their children have dark sides and are

as mean as they can be nice”, the director says, adding that the child actor who played Aksel, Adam Gilbert Jespersen, considers Aksel to be the ‘bad guy’ of the film.

“The main character needs an adversary, such is the rule of dramaturgy. But apart from the difficulties that the children face - the authority and rules of adults - Aksel’s greatest adversary is himself and the choices he is forced to make”. Pia Bovin describes Aksel’s motive as “his will to be with his father and to belong somewhere. Wanting to become a Muslim is just another way of manipulating reality”, she states. Admitting, though, that rules and laws in the Muslim community have a reassuring impact on a child like Aksel - as for anybody in search of a structure to their lives. Pia Bovin mentions her own grandfather, the painter Kalle Bovin, who travelled a lot in Bahrain, and afterwards declared himself a Muslim.

“For some time, he bathed every day, trimmed his language and did not touch a drop of alcohol. But it didn’t last long”, laughs the director.

RULES FOR REALITY

In that matter the film does not deal with Islam as such - because, as there are no heroes, there is no prejudice, good or bad, about immigrants either. So asking Pia Bovin about the hot issues of integration in the Danish society is useless:

“Look, we just have to deal with each issue separately. In the research phase of this film, we looked into the life style of a Palestinian family, which became the role model for Fatima’s family in the film. We of course had our own ideas, but quite soon discovered that the problems of this particular family are exactly as in any other family: parents get upset if the children are not where they are supposed to be, if they cheat or do not obey. The rules may be slightly different. But we dealt with this in a very matter-of-fact way, asking the family father, if, in this particular situation, his daughter would be grounded at her house. He answered yes, it happens all the time, and that’s why it happens in the film, too. In the same spirit, we went to ask the Imam what would happen if a Danish ten-year-old boy asked to convert to Islam, and we were told that it would take the father’s permission to allow him to do so”.

Pia Bovin set up two main conditions for making her film about Aksel:

“No death, and no love story between the children”.

“Many stories for children - such as *Harry Potter* and *Pippi Longstocking* imply that the parents are dead, and that death is a motive for these children to be strong and heroic. For me that would have been too easy. Similar with the love story: I didn’t want the children in my film to focus on each other’s gender and to be French-kissing their way through the film, distracting the main issue”.

In the end of *Wallah Be*, Aksel decides to help Fatima, still grounded and depressed in her room. He goes to the family, this time being hypocritically religious, asking Fatima’s brother to help him pray properly, but sneaks into Fatima’s room and makes her go out disguised as himself, in order for her to go to the song contest. Aksel hides in Fatima’s bed, leaving the song performance to Fatima and Annika. All the parents are there, and even Aksel’s father shows up, but doesn’t see Aksel and disappears again. The girls do not win, and there is no happy ending - except for a greater acceptance of things, in general.

From Fatima's family who accept to have been tricked by the children, to Aksel, who discovers that it is actually okay for him to be just Aksel, and not Akhmed, as he insists on being called throughout the film.

"It would have been easy to make a happy ending, and to let 'our' children win the song contest - but I said "Hell no!" - because they were not as good, as were the rap group who actually won", says Bovin, who insisted on staying realistic ("In my family we never won song contests", she adds) and faithful to her initial ambition: to make a film about ordinary children for ordinary children.

"The reactions of my own children, as for all other children, have been that Aksel gets into very embarrassing situations", she says, denying that the lack of dramatic adventure might seem boring to children today.

"On the contrary, I went to the cinema to spot reactions and watch faces. And they were all excited. The Arab kids shouted and laughed and whistled every time someone spoke Arabic in the movie. I am very happy to have made a film for them, too", she says.

THE FEEL-GOOD WAVE

Pia Bovin wants to make a difference, and get closer to the complexity in the human character. And she would like to commit the spectator to a more serious reflection of what relationships really are - to last for more than an hour-and-a-half ...

Her next film, also produced by Zentropa, is about adult relationships and the schism between our love lives and our passionate working lives.

"It is a film about different ways to make ends *meet in modern relationships, and the fact that many people today make a passion of their creativeness in work, instead of making their love last. To improve the dramaturgy in the film, it would be an easy solution to make these people unemployed or even poor - but the fact is, that most people are quite able to provide for themselves, and yet they are not quite happy, and in eternal search of something different ..."

"I try to make more consequent choices than is the general tendency in Danish cinema, where Hollywoodism creeps in, and punch-lines are just there to make the audience go "ha-ha-ha". And so what? In *Wallah Be* another easy solution - and a great temptation - would have been to cast some gorgeous-looking, great kids. But neither Aksel, nor the others, are anything special. I am attacking my new film with an ambition to be serious, and not to make people feel good about themselves. Because the human character is complex, and sympathies tend to move around, instead of being static. I am actually trying to make a white tragedy - if black comedies can be made, why not white tragedies?!"

Pia Bovin asks ■

Further information in the reverse section.



Photos: Per Arnesen

PIA BOVIN Born 1963, Sweden. Brought up in Copenhagen. Graduate of the National Film School of Denmark 2000. Has directed the documentary *Tiden går* (1999) and the short film *The Funeral / Begravelsen* (2001). She has contributed episodes to the popular TV series *The Hotel / Hotellet* (2000/2001) *Wallah Be* is her first feature film.

***Midsummer* - a psychological thriller for young audiences - is director Carsten Myllerup's feature film debut. Quite different from *A New Beginning*, his acclaimed chamber piece in short-film format. An entirely different third film of his making is expected already next year, perhaps revealing that Stanley Kubrick is his ideal: a new genre for every film and a new story yearning to be told.**

NERD AND FAILURE THRILLER'S TAILOR

MIDSUMMER

BY JACOB WENDT JENSEN

Just over a year ago, Carsten Myllerup attended a youth film seminar where he became rather discouraged by the groping approach to the genre expressed by the industry and the seminar participants alike.

"I contend that if a film about a couple of two-year-old toddlers is good enough, a hip nineteen-year-old will also want to go see it at the cinema. It's easy to understand why so few youth films are made if everyone has the same strained approach as the seminar participants. 'Oh my! What a difficult genre!' was an oft heard comment. Isn't it ultimately a question of telling a story? Why should a good story about adolescents be less worthy or more difficult to tell than a good story about a relationship crisis between two people in their early thirties? Granted, young people have a cynical and matter-of-fact approach to the films they watch, yet this can only be countered by a good story. And the good ones come from the heart," says Carsten Myllerup.

The 31-year-old director doesn't mince words and is clearly driven by a powerful desire to make films the rest of his life.

"Many youth films patronize their audiences by

relying heavily on caricature and special effects. Even though our *Midsummer* style relies on typical thriller clichés, we apply them unobtrusively so the audience isn't aware of them until they are surrounded by them. We delay the shock, if it comes at all. A guy goes out to get firewood and hears a strange sound that turns out to nothing. Not till he's returning with the wood is he taken by surprise, just as the audience was starting to breathe easy."

MATH NERD

Carsten Myllerup also succeeds in steadily increasing *Midsummer's* intensity from start to finish. A rare feat in the history of Danish thrillers. The jack-in-the-box pops up in slow motion, so to speak.

"The other day our producer and I were discussing how exhilarating it is to make feature films. Making a long-format film provides space for indulgence and demands more from the director. Contrary to short films, the character development throughout the story must be well structured and logical. This can be difficult as you're rushing about the set shooting the film. To keep the big picture, I catalogue a lot of things beforehand and file them in a thick ring binder. Character development graphs and ideas on how to

compose some of the film's pictures, things like that. If I was ever in doubt as to where a main character was headed at a specific point in the film, I would just look it up," says Carsten Myllerup, and continues:

"The folder idea probably comes from my nerd origins at upper secondary school: I was a math and physics nerd. It explains why I often have a mathematic approach to things. The filmmaking process is largely a matter of getting a comprehensive perspective and keeping it. If I didn't have this control, I'd get the squitters. So it's nice to know I have the folder to fall back on. That's just my way of working, but I have no idea how other directors do it."

TELEVISION SPARKED THE FIRE

Carsten Myllerup grew up in a provincial Danish village and became inspired to become a professional filmmaker one day in March 1994 as he was watching an episode of *The Wonderful World of Frode*. Many Danes were fond of this television series in which Frode Christoffersen criss-crossed Europe before an EU election.

"It was some of the worst rubbish I've ever seen. 'You could do a better job, Carsten!' I thought to myself. Shortly afterwards, I was thumbing rides on the Århus motorway when a large BMW pulled over. It was Frode Munksgaard from the Danish Broadcasting Corporation. Undaunted, I started dragging the programme I had just seen through the mud, and told him about my plans for the future. It turned out that Munksgaard had been the producer of Frode Christoffersen's travel series! He didn't resent my criticism, and even gave me some good advice instead. He repeatedly asked, 'What's it about? Give me your angle!' He gave me the phone number of the Århus Film Workshop, where I made a documentary about the dreams and hopes of three adolescents from three different social classes and later a travel film about South America," says Myllerup and continues:

"It was a very intoxicating period of my life. You know the feeling when you have several things you're fond of doing - but can't figure out what to do? That's when I realized that film was the perfect medium for me. I worked twenty-four hours a day, busted my ass and lost sixteen kilos."

DO-IT-YOURSELF WITH SUPER 16

After that, the budding director applied to the Danish



Photos: Erik Nilsson



Film School twice, but was rejected, even though he made it to the final audition the second time he applied.

“We were seventeen aspiring directors who held a film-school audition party at Park Café – after submitting our audition films. We screened the films for friends and acquaintances at the party and had a great time. When we didn’t get in, we were suddenly faced with waiting two more years, and that was out of the question for everyone. So we started our own independent film school and called it ‘Super 16’. That was back in 1999. Membership is limited to three years, so I’m out of it now. Our goal was to establish an alternate route to the film world, and we succeeded. The teachers are the same as at the ‘real’ film school, and the training has become accepted within the milieu. Although our lessons are not on the same level as the traditional Film School, the vast amount of practical experience in our programme makes us a viable alternative. I made four short features under ‘Super 16,’” says Carsten Myllerup.

One of them was *A New Beginning* with Frits Helmuth. If Myllerup had been admitted to the Danish Film School, he wouldn’t have graduated till next summer. Instead, the ‘Super 16’ route has already resulted in a feature film, and ten episodes of the Danish TV series *The Hotel*.

MINIMUM PRODUCTION TIME

Midsummer was produced for DKK 8.9 million and took only six weeks to shoot last summer in Sweden: a feature film made on the very lowest budget possible. Per Oscarsson (*Hunger*) and Laura Christensen (famous for her appearances in *The Kingdom* and *Taxa* series), were the only actors with professional credentials.

For instance, the film crew’s lighting equipment was limited to two indoor lamps, because it had been estimated beforehand that there wouldn’t be time to use more than two.

During the shootings, the working pace was high and intense on every single, long workday. An oft-heard question was ‘What shooting-day number is it today?’ ‘Just divide the number on the clapperboard by 21,’ was the sardonic reply. An average of twenty-one angles were filmed every day, which is quite a lot.

“The only pressure I felt during the process was in relation to the film consultant. If the film turns out to

be shit, this will be very depressing because the man believed in us. Knowing, as I do now, that I did my best gives me the confidence to calmly await the reactions of critics and audiences to the film. Whatever their reaction, I won’t cringe when I see my name on the screen at the premiere. On the contrary. I would have been nervous if I had made a really awful film, but I know that the film’s craftsmanship is up to par. It is above average compared to much of what we watch.”

EYE-LEVEL CREDIBILITY

Even so, wasn’t jumping at the first, best opportunity a little hazardous – because you risked making a fiasco instead?

“Many warned me not to make a thriller, but the honing of skills I got from the ‘Super 16’ training gave me the confidence I needed. The education served as ‘combat training’ by giving us an opportunity to experiment with widely different filmmaking methods. I knew I would never feel like making a *Scream 4*. It was important to make a film that meets adolescents at eye level and to base it on a plausible background story. Right after the A-levels, I started a stimulating period of my life – yet also a dreadful time filled with equal amounts of emptiness and happiness. There’s a tendency to feel like getting together year after year and say that we’ll be friends for ever and ever,” says Carsten Myllerup.

The *Midsummer* story also involves more than just isolating a group of young people in a dark forest. The main person Christian (played by Kristian Leth, son of film director Jørgen Leth) misses his A-levels when his sister (Lykke Sand) commits suicide. The big mystery is why? During the traditional trip to a holiday cottage in Sweden, Christian finds love (Laura Christensen) and solves the suicide riddle.

KUBRICK IS THE GREATEST

Before the premiere, Carsten Myllerup put his nervous system to the test by holding a test screening for two hundred people at the Empire cinema.

“I snuck into the rear of the theatre, and it was the craziest, most anxiety-generating thing I have ever done. We had three weeks of editing left, and it turned out to be a profoundly great help to us. When you hear one girl say to another, “Don’t touch me now – do NOT touch me!” its exhilarating. We have



Director Carsten Myllerup (Photo: Erik Aavatsmark)

an elk in the film, for instance. The first time it takes a swim, people died laughing, which was definitely not what we had intended. One of the focus group members said, ‘All I could think of was *Otto is a Rhino* (a classic Danish children’s film – *ed*). We reacted with Apple+A+Delete,” says Carsten Myllerup, who wants his next film to have two test screenings.”

Myllerup is currently working on a new project with *Midsummer* scriptwriter Rasmus Heisterberg. In a totally different style.

“I didn’t make a thriller because it’s my favourite film category and I don’t want to keep making thrillers the rest of my life either. It was fun to try and it was a cool experience, but I also want to try other genres. Following Stanley Kubrick’s ideal would be perfect: take on a new genre every time” ■

Further information in the reverse section.

CARSTEN MYLLERUP Born 1971, Denmark. Musician, director and screenplay-writer. During the period 1994-1999 he gained experience in the various phases and tasks connected with production and direction. Among his numerous short and documentary films is the short film – produced by Cosmo Film and New Fiction Film Denmark – *A New Beginning / 2. Juledag* (2000), which received the Luna de Ora for Best Fiction at CinemaLove in Valencia. *Midsummer* is Carsten Myllerup’s feature film debut.





Photo: Ole Kragh-Jacobsen

MY SISTER'S KIDS 2

Following the box-office success of *My Sister's Kids* (2001), Moonlight has released their second children's film with Tomas Villum Jensen at the helm: *My Sister's Kids 2*. Uncle Erik is once again summoned to chaperone his sister's mischievous kids on a skiing trip to Norway, as Mum can't cope on her own after Dad breaks his leg.

Producers Michael Obel and Lars Kolvig, who were also behind the first film *My Sister's Kids*, have something to look forward to. The film set a modern box-office record for audiences flocking to a Danish children's film. The two producers note with pride that after the success of the first film, they "tried to make a sequel that is not only more spectacular but also better in terms of plot and economy. Therefore, it is very pleasing that the audiences also appreciate this initiative and result." Almost 10 percent of the Danish population went to see the first film and more than 10 percent saw *My Sister's Kids 2*.

PRESS EXCERPTS

“The shenanigans are presented in fine form with genuine storytelling pleasure. In short, the film provides many grounds for delight and is deserving of its ‘family film’ label, as not only adults and pre-schoolers will enjoy themselves, but school-age siblings as well (...) Great technical attention to picture and sound details (...) The plot is also funny and caricatured to an extent allowed by such a film, and even the supporting roles are well cast. It is delightful to see the leading roles played by the same actors as last time, i.e. Peter Gantzler as the awkward child psychologist Erik Lund, and Lotte Andersen as snobby Ms Flinth. Her character is so nasty, we feel like choking her, and that’s a compliment. Ms Flinth deserves her own TV show (...) the child actors and actress make fine performances (...) *My Sister's Kids 2* is a wonderful film.” (Morten Dürr, *Børsen*)

“The sister’s oldest children, played by Neel Rønholt and Stefan Pagels Andersen, are particularly full of promise. This is Gantzler’s show from start to finish. He saunters cheerfully through the landscape and gives us a continuous flow of unpredictable, absurd, and funny reactions.” (Bo Green Jensen, *Weekendavisen*)

Kim Fupz Aakeson - a prolific screenwriter, author of numerous popular children's novels and the man behind films like *The One and Only*, *Miracle*, *Minor Mishaps* and *Okay* - reflects on premises and prejudices in children's fiction.

THE ANGUISH OF CHILDREN'S FILMS

ESSAY / PICS FOR KIDS

BY KIM FUPZ AAKESON

Quite a few stories are told in this country, and even if we don't think they resemble each other, we authors employ the same technical mechanisms regardless of whether we are writing a story for a children's film, an opera, a picture book for toddlers, a short story - whatever.

The starting point will be an established order of sorts: Snow White lives a loveless life with her stepmother, the evil queen, who is obsessed by the notion of being the fairest in the land. Perhaps this situation is not enormously amusing for Snow White, but it works and could basically continue for another century without a hitch: the stepmother gazing into the mirror, Snow White on her knees in the wash house.

Until disorder appears. Chaos. The first plot device:

As usual, the evil queen asks her magic mirror on the wall who is the fairest one of all, and lo and behold the mirror replies that although the queen is well preserved for her age, Snow White just got the edge on her, beauty-wise.

Suddenly, everything is out of whack; we have two women under the same castle roof, and one of them wants to be the fairest, while the other actually is. Elementary physics are at work here: things that are off balance have to move, the story is now set in motion, stories are simply movement from cosmos to chaos to a new cosmos of some kind; it's no accident we leave Snow White right when she is about to live

happily ever after. It is a perfect place to end, as the story of Snow White's happy days at the castle with Prince Charming and rose gardens is exceptionally dull.

When the serial killer has been revealed, when Black Beauty wins, after everyone dies in Hamlet and no one else can hurt anyone else, we have no reason to hang around any more, because order (happy order or tragic order) is not the stuff that stories are made of.

That was the technical angle, we mesh the same cogwheels for large and small stories alike, but when it comes to content and substance, some people also assert that children and adults are one and the same.

Whenever you press a scriptwriter's tummy, for example especially us scriptwriters who prefer to write for children's films, we'll say we write above all for ourselves, we only consider our personal perception of what is sad or beautiful or funny or provocative.

And it must be true because we say it so consistently.

Whenever we tell stories, even when we tell stories for children, we have to base them on our own lives, our personal standards and values; there is simply not enough vitality or challenge in our general conceptions of children or, in the case of adult films, in our general conceptions of ordinary people and the general public.

The creation of a work of art is not a democratic process; it must be a personal vision of the world, afterwards we have to



Scriptwriter Kim Fupz Aakeson (Photo: Jan Buus)

“we are all hostages in a consensual hell with nothing but edifying verse”

wait and see whether anyone is interested in confronting our personal statement; democracy and dialogue don't start till the private view or the premiere.

After all, what do we know about children, even if we want to take them into account as we work on our stories?

Generalisations can obviously be made about five to seven-year-olds, or nine to thirteen-year-olds or about girls or about boys, the common traits of the sexes or age groups, very few four-year-olds know how to read, many ten-year-olds want to dabble in puppy love, and if we say we recognise children as a more or less homogenous group of people, then obviously we can make generalisations about this same group.

We can claim that Danes like to eat, that Swedes have a habit of drinking too much the minute they set foot in Denmark, that Finns carry knives, but we don't get very far without lying, lying about all the Finns who never carry a knife, for instance.

FRIENDS WITH EVERYONE?

For years, I made do with an indoor aerial that could take the two national TV channels (and Sweden's TV1, as long as it wasn't too windy), but after a move, I ended up in a dwelling with full cable coverage and 36 television channels to choose from, and I was genuinely concerned about my working routines. This biodiversity of television options must mean there would always be something worth watching?

My fear turned out to be exaggerated.

Whenever I sat down with the remote in hand and took a guided channel tour, I found the same enormity of fiction as one indiscernible mass: women in skimpy swimwear, guys with great hairstyles, languishing kisses, misunderstandings, jealousy, sports cars and good weather; there was no shortage of bad will and conflicts, but isn't all that the stuff drama is made of?

Each dramatic love story was indistinguishable from the next, however; these emotionally charged men and women had nothing better to do than resemble each other by making countless, painful twitches of their mouths and casting hurt, sidelong glances. Yet the men and women who masterminded these series had only tried to satisfy the wishes of the world and all its target groups: nothing was too scary or too violent, too sexually insistent or too innocent, there were no gays, no children forcibly removed from their homes; these masterminds watch every step they take, keeping all potential markets open for sales, keeping all their options open of befriending everybody - or at least as many viewers as possible.

This is exactly what happens whenever we rely on the above-mentioned generalisations about children in our film work - if we start considering every possible aspect of age and gender, we'll theoretically end up with Beverly-Baywatch-Dallas television series; we'll dilute ourselves, lose our character, we will make our stories more asinine than we are (as if we weren't asinine enough already), we'll end up patronising our audiences, like an automatic reaction the instant you start pondering your audience's abilities.

The result may be authentic, the plot may work, it may even be professional, the morale can even be okay - e.g., always tell the truth or be kind to animals - but it is not a personal vision of anything, it has no cracks, snags or rough edges; it ends up lacking a unique approach to the world, the unique perspective we all have inside, like a unique voice or a signature no one can ever imitate.

Because you are never in doubt when you stumble over a personal vision as you zap: suddenly confronted by a glimpse of a Scorsese or Lars von Trier film, you feel the great difference between a story told by a corporation and a story told by a fellow human being.

So it should be true when we assert that we write films for ourselves, even if we write films for children; it should be true that we don't break our neck trying to comply with notions of what children can and cannot handle and can and cannot comprehend and what they think is funny and what they don't think is funny.

But we'd certainly be lying, too. Partly and quite frequently, at least.

REFLEXES AND REFLECTIONS

If asked to write a pop song, my first source of inspiration is not my fear of death, my disgust with my body or my indignation over paedophilia. It would probably end up dealing with love and feelings.

If asked the following week to write a sketch for a weekly television satire, I would probably start by thinking about absurdity, self-contradiction, hypocrisy. Things I don't inevitably sit around pondering, I have my reflexes to sort them out, which is also the case whenever we work on stories for children. To put it mildly.

We have several reflexes that prevent us from getting lost and from keeping all doors open (these two things are closely related); we have several options while still in the hall that we never even consider using, and in the case of children's films, we tend to make a beeline for the children's room.

Wherever we don't have reflexes, we have our thoughts, which are okay. Deliberate thinking is better than reflexes, because thinking is open to discussion, whereas reflexes work

on the sly sneaking around in the bushes after dark.

Regardless of which one is involved, however, the result is that we avoid entering several different rooms, rooms that are too complicated or paradoxical or too difficult for children to handle.

And, most likely, too difficult for us to handle.

POP CULTURE, RAPE AND VIOLENCE

The song of Danish children's films is not insipid pop; it has a twinkle in its eye and deals with important issues: being left out, not believing in oneself, not belonging; the song has a verse about grief, losing one's father or a lost brother, a verse about the first love, about not abandoning one's best friend.

I have also joined in and am not in the least ashamed of the tone and contents of the children's films I have been mixed up with; *Hannibal and Jerry* (Græsted Film, 1997) ended up as a family film of sorts about hallucinogenics; in *Sally's Stories* (Angel Film, 1998), we treacherously undermined any attempts to find a deeper meaning (rather meaningful in itself). In *Miracle* (Nimbus, 2000), we linked grief and uncertainty with musical and standard dancing – but looking nearer to my home and the industry's home, I discover little punk, little raw rock, little opera and realise that ballads or off-beat experimental music are almost non-existent. We never use a large part of the metaphorical keyboard when we play.

The problem with this is that whenever we fail to use a difficult or unappealing starting point, well, we hand over this space to others, to the worst stories, like those in the media, and the media don't know the meaning of consideration and target groups, they don't sing, they prefer to shout right in those cuddly faces.

When ten-year-old Susan was murdered and raped in Ishøj (Danish criminal case a few years ago – *ed.*), the adult population were not the only ones to follow the on-going crime-solving activities. My daughter was the same age at the time, she and her girlfriends had lively discussions on the matter, in other words, these little girls were debating what they could do if anyone ever wanted to drag them down to a basement to rape and murder them.

They deliberated about whether it was dangerous to cry for help, about their chances of physically resisting an adult male – they were mucking around neck deep in their own anxiety seeking solutions to it. They were not afraid of dealing with it, they simply had no other choice.

Children at that age can easily read the headlines in the tabloids and placards containing the essence of the daily horror. Children talk with older children about awful things – television has become unmanageable for parents, unless you have the time for a full court press of your child's media habits. Children zap as they please, and as we all know, some children have 36 channels to zap through, not to mention the Net, and chat rooms and websites for every taste or lack thereof.

Don't get me wrong: I'm not particularly interested in seeing a children's film about rape and murder in Ishøj, it mainly serves as an excellent example of the abyss just outside our workrooms. We alone do not set the agenda, rather we alone restrain ourselves with deliberations and reflexes as to what issues we can bring ourselves to deal with and tell about in a children's film.

The world does its own storytelling, but does it through a megaphone, screaming, stammering, bloodily, unfocused and raw – and brimming with unhappy endings, actually everything we have the potential in our fiction to do differently, which is exactly what stories are made for: to focus and digest reality, make it recognisable so we can share it, talk about it, cope with it. Give reality a context.

And even if we could keep children insulated in Never-Never Land, would we? Each of us can try to clarify the areas we avoid lurking in. Some of this is a conscious decision, a moral code,



Scriptwriter Kim Fupz Aakeson (Photo: Jan Buus)

“we need to see a jumble of other person's lines in the sand, we need to have them trample all over ours”

some out of habit or reflex. Each of us has to find the line we cannot or do not want to cross, yet in order to find it and define it, we sometimes have to cross it, too, and this is precisely where we struggle with a pronounced lack of courage.

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

If I am to have a chance to challenge my own morals, or reveal my reflexes as a scriptwriter of children's films (or as a person, for that matter), then my own efforts are not enough: I need others around me to cross the line, too – aren't we all travellers on the same journey towards personal growth?

My problem is that I grew up in a quiet residential street in the Copenhagen suburb of Albertslund, so my zaniness has limits; I need utterly impossible children's films, children's films that are too much, and children's films that ought to be banned, something that is very difficult for me to find in the Kingdom of Denmark, and I don't impart much of it myself either: we are all hostages in a consensual hell with nothing but edifying verse.

That can be explained (except for the part about Albertslund), because now we come to the money.

Whenever a children's film is made in Denmark, it usually involves around nine, ten, eleven or twelve million kroner, and this is at the low-cost end of the scale. That may not seem costly compared to the US and the international market in general, but it is quite a lot of coin to gamble with all the same.

Not many film consultants are burning with desire to lend their names to a ten-million-kroner venture that no one will ever see (I could name a few names here).

Whenever you bring something to the Danish Film Institute, a manuscript shrouded in difficulty – whether it is a question of morals, target groups or form – then you are sure to be confronted with examples of films that are reminiscent of or bear a slight resemblance to it, and of how poorly they did at the box office; in other words, you're not confronted with artistic arguments, but with financial ones, and this is the very same institute that is supposed to ensure that challenging, demanding children's films are made.

So even when the scriptwriter and the director have pulled themselves together enough to stick their necks out, they are far, far away from home, and the project is often stopped in the budget phase, because it is simply too costly to make a mistake.

Of course it's easy for me to be high and mighty on behalf of the public purse strings, but that's my privilege, and the situation is worse for children's films than for adult films, and the situation is generally much, much worse for films than for books.

Which is not so strange, when you think about it.

When an author of children's books writes, she/he is totally isolated and independent. Isolation is never fun if you're fond of company, but compared to the discussion of integrity and ensuring a personal message in one's works, it has a definite advantage over the film world's jumble of film consultants and merchants and directors and taxi vouchers and midway parties and Nordic TV stations and what have you.

The author also knows that if his/her preferred publishing house refuses to publish, the author has a hundred other publishers to try, and if all one hundred decline, then the indomitable writer can put the whole kit and caboodle on the Net, or save up and publish it himself/herself or get it translated into Swedish and start over with one hundred Swedish publishing houses.

But frequently, all this cavorting about is not even necessary, not even if the book in question is difficult or obtuse.

A book-production budget in Denmark is typically in the neighbourhood of forty to fifty thousand kroner, and it is possible to find publishers who are willing to venture this amount for the sake of art. Several of us have had our books accepted with the following message: 'We want to publish it, but it will be impossible to sell.'

When was the last time anyone ever heard the likes from a film consultant or producer? And wouldn't it be unfair of us to criticise them for it?

ANXIETY AND BUDGETS

Film is a mass media, and the aversion to squandering a fortune is understandable, and films really do cost a fortune, but this fences us in in a tiny yard of so-called unfortunate experiences.

The yard is difficult to break out of, it makes children's films flounder about in the mud, it bogs down the development of the children's film universe, not just the contents, but also the sounds, editing and communication of imagery; the adult film genre transcends barriers first, and only later – much later – do children's films follow suit, children's films are referential, despite the fact that children are not what you would call sissies when it comes to deciphering imagery and extracting information.

Children are raw and can tolerate a pace that would take the breath away from many forty-year-olds, and no, I don't think all our children's films should resemble MTV, but even so, it is thought-provoking to see children's films or children's programmes on television with a host and a talking, slightly brazen, puppet, things have stood still since our childhood, and we adults would never stand for it.

The Dogme concept was not invented by anyone from underground children's film milieus, nothing is invented or experimented with here: we drag our feet and not until the handheld camera and suggestive editing has celebrated one of its anniversaries will we ever get to see these methods employed in a film made for children, the very same children who are hurtling through their lives filled with play stations, pc's, music, and electronic imagery of every sort and preferably on several medias all at once, at the same time they are doing their homework.

So we're telling a lie, not about our scriptwriting intentions, but in terms of our results. Ultimately, we are making children's films based on all sorts of general expectations to children, based on our prejudices about children, based on what is probably appropriate for the target group, based on the expected box-office figures.

And due to the above-mentioned sluggishness, it takes a very loooooong time to change this attitude. We need elbowroom in children's films, and by this I mean more than four zany minutes produced at an experimental film workshop, we have an enormous need for playgrounds for full-scale children's feature films, we need to see a jumble of other person's lines in the sand, we need to have them trample all over ours, we need to get up in the middle of a children's film and shout, 'Now that's going too far!'

And when was the last time anyone did that?

As I write, I am reminded of *Little Big Sister* by Jesper W. Nielsen (Bech Film, 1998). Although the undersigned may not have stood up with indignation, there were others who did: it was a raw fairytale about alcoholism and a little girl who grew up too fast, and this was definitely something to talk about: was it right to tell it like that, was it right to even tell the story? There was a wonderful balm of discussions and commotion, and it should have been the starting gun for a deluge of children's films that went to the brink; instead, *Little Big Sister* became a standing admonition of how few tickets can be sold if a film is too grim (even though it had a happy ending). Oh well.

Virtually all of our children's films would fail dismally if subjected to what we can call the counter test. Because the daring of every statement can be tested: if a statement intends to be interesting or bold, then it must be possible for people who are not crazy lunatics to defend the opposite viewpoint, saying we should have world peace is not particularly daring, because it is excruciatingly difficult to ferret out anyone who believes we should gas our enemies or promote efforts to start a global war.

We may have the courage, but we don't show it in public, and no one is urging us to look for it. We need someone to walk in and put twenty million big ones on the table for four no-budget films that are based on not selling a single ticket at the box office (right – dream on), we need a film that gives us bruises and cuts, rather than a widely popular, entertaining children's film, but close to it: surely they have something in common.

We need to kick down the door to some of the unused rooms, if only to glance in and refuse to go in once in a while. Yet wouldn't a cautious foot inside be a giant step forward? ■

This article was first published in Danish in FILM # 3 (1999). It has also been published in the anthology DE POKKERS UNGER (Høst & Søn 2002).



BALLERINA / KINDERFILMFEST

BOURNONVILLE FOR KIDS

Inspired by Lotta Myréns' classic picture-book, director duo Kunuk Platoú and Valerie Saunders have created an animation film that evokes the atmosphere of the Royal Danish Ballet which has its roots in the Bournonville tradition. Tales about the children of the ballet company are filled with myth. This animated short film uses poetry to document and reflect on the everyday life of the children of the company - in a charming and marvelous way.

The story is simple: Three little girls dance with joy and enthusiasm. One day they are accepted at the ballet company school and everyday life becomes one of dance and fun, but also of hard work and sore toes. They frolic in the wings and josh with the people they meet. But ballet is also a serious business and one day they are on stage when the curtain opens. Ballerina One, ballerina Two, and ballerina Three in tutus and pointy shoes ...

Kunuk Platoú, animator and director from Greenland, graduated from the National Film School of Denmark in 2000. His film was the convincing *Nanoq*, which in 2001 participated in international festivals around the world. Director Valerie Saunders is a producer and owner of the company Rambling Rose. She has also trained in classic and modern dance in Chicago.

ENGLISH TITLE Ballerina **DANISH TITLE** Ballerina **CATEGORY** Animation **COUNTRY OF ORIGIN** Denmark **RELEASE** 12.08.2002 **TECHNICAL DATA** 35mm: 1.66:1 / Dolby Stereo / colour / Danish dialogue, English subtitles **RUNNING TIME** 11 min. **DIRECTOR** Kunuk Platoú, Valerie E. Saunders **SCREENPLAY** Lotta Myréns **SOUND ENGINEER** Christian Lørup **MUSIC** Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky **ANIMATION** Karin Hjort, Trine Laier, Peter Hausner, Karla Nielsen, Mads Juul, Luca Fattore, Christian Wichmann **NARRATOR** Ghita Nørby **PRODUCER** Valerie E. Saunders **PRODUCTION** Rambling Rose Film **FINANCE** Danish Film Institute, DR TV, Swedish Television, Nordic Film- & TV Fund, Nuna Fund, Den Kongelige Ballets Venner, Hjemmestyrets Kulturfond, Napa Nordic Institute in Greenland, The Cultural Fund Denmark/Greenland, Kong Frederik og Dronning Ingrid's Fond, The Foundation for Danish-Swedish Cooperation **INTERNATIONAL SALES** Rambling Rose Film / t +45 3313 3535 / f +45 3313 0790 / office@ramblingrosefilm.com **FESTIVALS** Danish Film Institute

ARAKI - THE KILLING OF A JAPANESE PHOTOGRAPHER / SHORT FILM COMPETITION BERLIN

JAPANESE MANGA AT FULL BLAST - DANISH STYLE!

With an explosive cocktail of animation and 'real' film, *Araki - The Killing of a Japanese Photographer* ignites a fierce story about a man bent on revenge. He has an almost psychotic obsession with his sister's tragic fate as a model for a Japanese sex photographer named Araki. Left behind with his deceased sister's daughter, who is in the seemingly inevitable process of growing up to be an exact replica of her mother, the Avenger takes matters into his own hands. Blood is shed by guilty and innocent victims alike until the Avenger finally drops his pistol when he comes face to face with Araki himself.

Araki - The Killing of a Japanese Photographer is the graduation film of Anders Morgenthaler who studied animation at the National Film School of Denmark. The film takes a powerful, Scandinavian grip on Japanese manga, yet its more detailed background and other qualities set it apart from the genre in general. Moreover, the film's mix of animation and real film dynamically synthesises form and story.

The Avenger's memory of his sister is depicted in real film flashbacks, just as the character of Araki, the sex photographer, appears in animated and real film segments alike. This experimenting with filmic expression injects several new dimensions into *Araki's* blood-and-gore universe.

Araki - The Killing of a Japanese Photographer was produced by David Østerbøg, who will be graduating as a producer from the National Film School of Denmark in 2003.

In continuation of their teamwork, Morgenthaler and Østerbøg are presently working on a feature-length film that carries on the basic themes of the animated film. So if you still have the courage to look their way after this short film, there is every reason to keep an eye on these Danish 'Manga Brothers' - they'll soon be blasting the screen at a theatre near you!

By Christian Jubl Lemche

8 min., Denmark, 2002 **DIRECTOR** Anders Morgenthaler **SCREENPLAY** Anders Morgenthaler **LEAD ANIMATOR** Mads Juul **CINEMATOGRAPHER** Manuel Claro **EDITOR** Adam Nielsen **SOUND EDITOR** Kasper Rasmussen, **MUSIC** Andreas Thomsen, Nils Lassen, **SONG** 'White Trash' **PERFORMED BY** Junior Senior **APPEARANCES** Chang Il Kim, Jeanet Gjerka **VOICES** Brian Paterson, Rikke Hallund **PRODUCER** David C.H. Østerbøg, **PRODUCTION** The National Film School of Denmark & TV-Animation **INTERNATIONAL SALES** National Film School of Denmark / t +45 3268 6400 / f +45 3268 6410 **FESTIVALS** Danish Film Institute



JUMPING OFF

**WIBUR WANTS TO KILL HIMSELF /
OFFICIAL SELECTION / SPECIAL SCREENING**



Photo: Per Arnesen

THE DEEP END

“Italian for Beginners is about people going through personal crises - about living a sad life or a good life. *Wilbur Wants to Kill Himself* deals with even having a life at all,” says director Lone Scherfig.

BY CLAUD CHRISTENSEN

Eleven years have passed since Lone Scherfig made her feature film debut with *The Birthday Trip* (1990). Since then, she has developed her craft by making prizewinning commercials, radio dramas, television series, and the children’s film *On Our Own* (1998). Her breakthrough came with the Dogme film *Italian for Beginners* (2000), that sold nearly a million cinema tickets in Denmark alone.

The English-language *Wilbur Wants to Kill Himself* is Lone Scherfig’s fourth feature film. Three experienced British actors - Jamie Sives, Adrian Rawlings and Shirley Henderson - play the leads.

It is a comedy, but as the title implies, more serious than *Italian for Beginners*.

“I got the idea while editing *Italian for Beginners*. I felt like probing the values lurking in my Dogme film. It’s more penetrating. The characters have more at stake, and I’m playing the keys with more fervour.”

REMOVING THE NEUROTIC WOMEN’S WORK

Wilbur Wants to Kill Himself is about two inseparable Scottish brothers, Wilbur and Harbour, who inherit an antiquarian bookshop and share the flat behind the shop. The brothers are in their thirties, and Wilbur’s life is difficult. Wilbur keeps trying to commit suicide, while his older brother struggles to convince him that life is worth living. Their lives are starting to stagnate, till one day Alice, a single mother with a little girl, enters the bookshop. The lives of these four people start to intertwine.

“Wilbur and Harbour are like two trees growing out of the asphalt, and I knew right away they were two solid pillars who could support an entire film. Wilbur and Harbour are such strong characters filled with so much potential conflict that the moment they start walking and talking, the story evolves by itself. Scriptwriter Anders Thomas Jensen and I didn’t need to find a clue explaining why Wilbur and Harbour evolved into who they are - it grew out of the material. It’s always like that: if the material is good enough, all the answers lie in the material, and this film is so coherent that we had to add some

disorder in the final edit.

“We removed the neurotic women’s work from the film and left in some rough cuts in a few places. The film background of my generation is the National Film School in the 1980s, at its peak of aestheticism. The school’s ideals were aesthetes to the extreme. This has made us a generation of filmmaking perfectionists and is probably one of the reasons why Dogme originated from the same generation, too. Dogme is a natural digression that provides enormous freedom and emphasises that the craft is not an end in itself.

“But I have also learned from my experience over the years. The scenes that would have brought me a B-plus for neatness are not the scenes I am most fond of later on: they lack structural substance. This has nothing to do with a perfect dolly shot or things like that; it involves shots where I capture a strain of something poignant and truthful - or just hilarious,” says Lone Scherfig.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE ACTORS

There were several reasons for moving the story to Scotland. First of all, the English language improves the prospects of *Wilbur Wants to Kill Himself*, which had a budget of more than DKK 30 million, on the international market. Secondly, an advantageous funding model was available if part of the production was located in the UK. Thirdly, the salaries demanded by some of the Danish actors whom Scherfig and Zentropa wanted to use in the film were relatively high.

“You might say that the high salary level for Danish actors forced us to think things over and consider other options,” says Lone Scherfig, who did find a spot for a single Danish actor, Mads Mikkelsen. He plays an important minor role as Horst, a psychologist whose task is to rekindle Wilbur’s will to live, but Horst himself is filled with a melancholic if-only-my-life-had-turned-out-differently attitude.

“As Harbour and Wilbur are like night and day - one is soft and generous, the other filled with aggression - Mads Mikkelsen has to play an entirely different dimension. His character has an inhibited, bruised personality, definitely not Mads Mikkelsen’s traditional type of role, but he has a wide range of ability and I was very pleased to have him in the film.

“I probably wouldn’t have had the courage to pressure Danish actors to the same extent. I have known many Danish actors ever since I attended film school. We have a chaste, ironic distance to our profession, and it was refreshing to work with some

actors who didn’t know all my weaknesses beforehand. It was a more professional crew who made me a more professional director.

“But I still walk through the door every morning and say to myself ‘Today, I want to be a quiet, dignified director,’ and four hours later, I’m behaving as if I’m at a cocktail party. I am very talkative, and I clown around a lot when I’m working. In return, it establishes an informal atmosphere where people are better at making asses of themselves and expressing fanciful whims because we’re already chuckling. But I want to qualify myself to make something even more serious *and* funnier” ■

Further information in the reverse section.

LONE SCHERFIG Born 1959, Denmark. Film studies at University of Copenhagen 1976-80. Graduated from the National Film School of Denmark, 1984. Has written and directed short films, radio, stage drama and television. Her feature film debut *The Birthday Trip / Kajs fødselsdag* (1990) established her as an important director. The film was selected for Panorama in Berlin, New Directors at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and won the Grand Jury Prize and both acting awards in Rouen. Her second feature, the children’s film *On Our Own / Når mor kommer hjem ...* (1998), was recipient of the Grand Prix at Montreal Film Festival and the Cinekid Prize in Amsterdam. Her third feature film *Italian for Beginners*, an overwhelming success with critics and national audiences, was a triple winner at Berlin 2001. *Wilbur Wants To Kill Himself* is her fourth feature film.



Director Lone Scherfig (Photo: Jan Buus)



Photo: Ole Kragh-Jacobsen

SKAGERRAK

A ROCK 'N' ROLL FAIRYTALE

Søren Kragh-Jacobsen went to Scotland after his Dogme success *Mifune* to make a new comedy drama in which Iben Hjejle plays a surrogate mother.

BY MORTEN PIIL

Someone like Lars von Trier announces a film trilogy with the same nonchalance as taking a breath of air. Not so with Søren Kragh-Jacobsen, one of Trier's Danish Dogme brethren, who for years has been quietly working on a trilogy in which women play the leading parts.

"This is a trilogy in which women come to the fore through the things that set them apart from men: their bodies, their sexuality and their motherhood. I've dubbed it the *Women's Trilogy*."

Two of the films in the *Women's Trilogy* have now been made. The first was *Mifune - Dogme 3* (1999), a charming, comedy-drama that won the Silver Bear and the Audience Prize at the 1999 Berlin Film Festival and became an international success. Now, Søren Kragh-Jacobsen has made the English-language *Skagerrak*, also a comedy-drama, but in a raunchier style and drastically dramatic throughout.

Kragh-Jacobsen, who is also known and loved in Denmark as a singer of 'soft rock', calls the film a "visual rock'n roll story", which is also turbo-charged by a resilient rock song by the Eurythmics, *Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)*.

MODERN RESTLESSNESS

Like *Mifune*, the female lead in *Skagerrak* is played by international Danish star Iben Hjejle - a woman who goes through profound yet positive turmoil in a life that otherwise seems devoid of direction and meaning.

The film was shot in Scotland using Scottish and Irish actors. All actors play persons of their own nationality. Hjejle speaks fluent English in the film, but her character is a Dane who breaks into Danish in stressful situations.

Skagerrak starts as a caustic story about two adventurous, but penniless friends, Marie and Sophie, who disembark in Scotland looking for men and liquor. Gradually the film takes on a fairytale atmosphere.

"*Skagerrak* was inspired by good old-fashioned fairytales like *Snow White and The Seven Dwarves* and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, and going back even further we find parallels to the Virgin Mary and the Three Wise Men. Basically, the story is about forgiveness and about watching a tiny, hopeful blade of grass grow out the asphalt against all odds. A liberation of sorts, a redemption."

"I'm not afraid of the metaphysical aspect, of its signs and metaphors - I want to include them as an extra dimension. And this applies to all my films. At the same time as I'm trying to make them as realistically authentic as possible, they contain a powerful element of symbolism and adventure."

"But Iben Hjejle's Marie is also a superficial personification of the restlessness and lack of ambition that in my opinion typify many young people today. She and her best friend Sophie are wandering drifters like so many other young people you meet."

"I've done everything I could to avoid any smattering of euro pudding," says Søren Kragh-Jacobsen.

"Although my film is a modern fairytale, it must convey an authentic story and a depiction of a real milieu. Authenticity is very important to me, otherwise the audience loses interest. If the story is a fairytale at the same time, it takes on a magical quality."

"And setting the story in Scotland seemed like an obvious, stimulating choice, because to me the Scottish mentality feels very close to Denmark's. I have a

couple of Scottish friends whose sense of humour is very similar to Danish humour.”

WOMEN'S TRILOGY

This is the ninth feature film by fifty-four-year-old Søren Kragh-Jacobsen, who is also famous for his children's film classic, *Rubber Tarzan* (1981) and films focusing on friendships between boys and young men, such as *Thunderbirds* (1983) and *The Boys from St. Petri* (1991). So the idea of making a women's trilogy meant radically rejuvenating his theme priorities.

“I got the idea for *Skagerrak* even before I made *Mifune*,” says Kragh-Jacobsen. “It emerged after I heard about the surrogate mother concept, saw a documentary about it and read articles from the UK on the subject. Surrogate motherhood was a widespread phenomenon in the mid-1990s, and I was fascinated by the fact that a woman could use her body and her child as a commodity.”

“So the idea has persisted as a brief plot synopsis for many years now. I got the idea for the third film in the women's trilogy back in 1993 with the story *The Irish Geisha*, about a cultural clash that occurs when a 34-year-old Japanese geisha travels to Ireland. The story even received DKK 200,000 in support from Eurimages and still runs through my head. I worked on it for six months with a British scriptwriter, but we never got a result I was genuinely pleased with. Perhaps because my English partner was always trying for a humorous effect whenever I wanted something poetic or more dramatic.”

“In general, I have experienced this to be somewhat of a British problem, this keenness on being funny every time we get close to something that I would rather infuse with more sensuality or acute pain. But overall I have had an excellent, productive working relationship with the British and Scottish co-producers (the BBC and the film foundations Scottish Screen and Glasgow Regional Film Fund - ed.) in making *Skagerrak*.”

COMFORTABLE ABROAD

Internationally, Søren Kragh-Jacobsen is best known for *Mifune*, but his fantastical children's film *Rubber Tarzan* won countless awards around the world. *Mifune* is the least experimental of the first four Dogme films (“Although I failed to let go of my *mise en scène*, I enjoyed the unplugged directing,” he says of the Dogme experience). Yet from the start of his career Kragh-Jacobsen has always put a high priority on being thoroughly prepared and on good craftsmanship.

“In making *Skagerrak*, I made a storyboard for all the camera settings, and I'm actually a little proud we could shoot the film - 141 scenes in all - in eight weeks at below budget. It cost DKK 37 million. The Scottish film crew did a brilliant job, just as the Danish film professionals usually do - they are very similar to each other.”

But experience shows that Danish directors working abroad with English-language actors often run into problems. How did Kragh-Jacobsen avoid the acting and dialogue rigidity that often sets in?

“My screenwriter, Anders Thomas Jensen, and I wrote the original screenplay in Danish, of course, and inserted all the subtleties and humour we could in our language. We had to rewrite the story many times - it didn't tell itself at one swoop. The next problem was to get it translated without losing the mood or colour, and to accomplish this, we had the

fantastic assistance of our clever dramatist Ruth McCance who went through the screenplay with us down to the last detail on and off for three weeks. We would explain the exact content of the lines to her, which she would then formulate into English, so anyone who read the screenplay had absolutely no impression that it had been translated.”

“As far as the actors are concerned, our top priority was to cast them very carefully based on a precise idea of their character and what they should be able to express. Next it was important to get to know their individual working method and respect it - on the whole my respect for actors increases with every film I make. The good ones - like the actors in *Skagerrak* - are personalities who stand out on screen, and then all you have to do is magnify that personality or restrain it.”

“To get back to the method of working, someone like Iben Hjejle is clearly a method actress who needs to spend time empathizing with the space and atmosphere that pervades a scene. Other actors and actresses in the film could literally find their expression at the drop of a hat. But there was also Simon McBurney, who plays Thomas, and who is a highly respected, experienced theatre professional and renowned as the artistic manager of Theatre de Complicité. He required a few more explanations than everyone else, but he was also incredibly helpful.”

“The experience I gained from using foreign actors and actresses in making *The Island on Bird Street* has also helped me appraise each actor or actress at the screen tests. During the film shooting, I don't prudently stay in the background - I push my actors around and am very physical with them in general. This takes some getting used to, but I actually think they like it. As a matter of fact, the technique originates from the time I did a lot of work with child actors and actresses, who played directly across from me. Sometimes I had to hold a foot down to increase the contact.”

“But in addition to psychological sensitivity and a flair for the dialogue's rhythm and dynamism, a director's basic job is to establish a platform where everyone feels comfortable and feels that it's fun to work on the film. My priority during the shooting is: first heart, then genitals and last of all brain!”

DOGME AND IBEN HJEJLE

Membership of the Dogme Brethren together with Lars von Trier, Thomas Vinterberg and Kristian Levring was a sorely needed challenge and a good source of inspiration for Kragh-Jacobsen.

“In 1996, I made a major international production, the story about the Jewish ghetto from World War II entitled *The Island on Bird Street*, and I'm very pleased with it. But it was tedious to make, and frankly, I was exhausted afterwards. The part I liked about the Dogme Brethren was that Lars von Trier kept encouraging us to try to recapture the joy of filmmaking. And it was inspiring to see Lars and Thomas (Vinterberg - ed.) really cut loose in the Dogme films *Festen* (1998) and *The Idiots* (1998).”

“I had made a brief synopsis about a call girl and a yuppie who go out of their depth - at a dilapidated farm in the sticks. So when I met Iben Hjejle by accident, she was seven months pregnant at the time, I was infatuated by her potential and knew that I had found my leading character: she is vibrant, sensual and has an amazing photogenic radiance. I had a hunch she would become a movie star along the

lines of female leads I've always admired, Jane Fonda, Brigitte Bardot and Jeanne Moreau. And I shared this enthusiasm with several of my colleagues who also felt she was wonderful to film.”

“I introduced her to Stephen Frears at the Berlin Festival where *Mifune* was screened and it led to a role in *High Fidelity* with John Cusack. Since then, she has acted in a couple of US films, including *The Emperor's New Clothes* and also acted in Swedish in a television series made in Sweden. Acting in English or Swedish is no problem for her because of her enormous musicality. So it was splendid to write this leading role for her in *Skagerrak*.”

MEN ARE NEXT

Søren Kragh-Jacobsen is preparing several new film projects, but at the moment his greatest longing is to film a story about a twelve-man choir.

“It should mainly deal with the sexuality of fifty-year-olds - the tyrannical leader suffers from erotomania. In my opinion, too few films are made about this age group's love life. Why confine yourself to films about young people?”

“I have six or seven close friends whom I see on a regular basis, and I've kept up with some of them ever since my school days. We share a house in Sweden which bears the legend “No Admittance to Divorced Wives”. So although I am not going to base the story on my friends, of course, I feel well-versed in the subject” ■

Further information in the reverse section.

SØREN KRAGH-JACOBSEN Born 1947, Danmark. Composer, song-writer, film director. Attended film school in Prague and returned to Denmark where he directed and co-wrote television productions. He made his first feature film in 1978, *Wanna See My Beautiful Navel? / Vil du se min smukke navle?* This was followed by the children's classic *Rubber Tarzan / Gummi-Tarzan* (1981), *Thunderbirds / Isfluglene* (1983), *Emma's Shadow / Skyggen af Emma* (1988), *The Boys from St. Petri / Drengene fra Sankt Petri* (1991), *The Island on Bird Street / Øen i fuglegaden* (1997), recipient of two awards in Berlin, and *Mifune - Dogme 3 / Mifunes Sidste Sang - Dogme 3* (1999), Berlin Silver Bear winner. Among his prestigious awards is the Memorial Francois Truffaut Award from Giffoni. *Skagerrak* is his ninth feature film.



Director Søren Kragh-Jacobsen (Framegrab from *The Purified*, Jargil 2002)

INHERITANCE

The upper class is seldom depicted in Danish films. A mass appearance by 1200 extras isn't what you would call run-of-the-mill fare either. And these are just some of the surprises in Per Fly's poignant tragedy *Inheritance*, about the son of a wealthy man who makes a choice involving great personal costs.



Director Per Fly (Photo: Jan Buus)

A TRAGIC KING'S TALE

BY CLAUS CHRISTENSEN

Love or career? Most would say that love is the natural choice. "But is it always that simple?" asks Per Fly in his new film *Inheritance*. How does the dilemma appear from the point of view of a young person in a tradition-bound industrialist family?

"We prefer to think that the upper class people are just like me – only better or worse. But that's a lot of damned nonsense. I knew nothing about the upper class beforehand, and when I started doing background research for *Inheritance*, I discovered how little I actually knew," says Per Fly.

He debuted two years ago with the feature film *The Bench*, a depiction of a bitter, self-destructive alcoholic. In light of its serious theme, *The Bench* was a surprising hit and enthusiastic critics emphasized Per Fly's ability to put himself at eye level with the main character who lives among the dregs of society.

In *Inheritance* the director has given himself the task of seeing eye to eye with a man who is a person of consequence. This was not easy, so the film has been two years in the making.

"The upper class is difficult to penetrate. You don't just pick up the phone and call a rich man. They are terrified of anything getting out. Especially if you

want to depict one of their psychological aspects, because weakness is frowned on in the business world," says Per Fly, who slowly enlarged his network anyway, gathering material for his film through personal conversations.

"I was also in contact with the nouveau riche, but realised I couldn't tell a story about their milieu. I was more interested in 'old money', which is based on traditions and values and which also has a driving force. This milieu is rarely depicted in films. Television series usually deal with the nouveau riche, who are stupid, do coke, sleep around, buy large houses and live empty lives. We've seen it a thousand times. They live the cliché and this is what people expect to see."

A KING ARRIVES

Inheritance tells the story of Christoffer (Ulrich Thomsen) who is the fourth generation of his family to own the largest steel mill in Denmark. He lives in Stockholm, happily married to a Swedish actress named Maria (Lisa Werlinder). But when his father (Ulf Pilgaard) suddenly commits suicide, Christoffer is summoned home and urged to take over the family's ailing company.

"*Inheritance* deals with power, with the responsibility and costs that power entails. It is a film about will or passion, about choosing between duty and freedom. Does free choice really exist? It is a matter of making decisions that have far greater consequences than were anticipated," says the director. "*Inheritance* is a tragedy, because the main character is a person who is unable to control his own destiny. He puts himself at the mercy of a system that is greater than himself. I was curious to know why he does it. What motivates him to make this decision?"

42-year-old Per Fly graduated from the National Film School of Denmark in 1993, and belongs to a generation of Danish directors who are as equally inspired by the American film narrative as they are by the European art film tradition. Whereas *The Bench* is a mixture of melodrama and social realism, *Inheritance* is an unusual Danish film in that it is an

unrelenting drama of destiny. And in spite of its resemblance to a chamber play, the film includes a mass appearance by twelve hundred extras.

"I make films about heroes and 'kings'. When Christoffer arrives at the steel mill, I depict him as a king entering his kingdom. That explains all the gates and bars he has to pass through. It is forbidden territory. Confronted with twelve hundred workers and the enormous machines that are filled with such power, it no longer stands to reason that he should choose love.

"Because at this awe-inspiring place you have to pull yourself together. Here you have to do what you were trained to do. Christoffer is incapable of just standing by and watching the fourth generation of the family's steel mill go down the tubes and seeing people lose their jobs. He has to take responsibility, which means he has to sacrifice some of his personal happiness," says Per Fly, who early on in the process took the actors on a field trip to the carefully selected location, Frederiksværk Steel Mill, so they could feel the atmosphere of the place and the forces Christoffer is up against.

POWER GAME

In the opening scene of *Inheritance*, Christoffer is on a business trip in Sweden. He sits down on a bench in a town square and looks with longing for a certain woman. From there the film goes back in time and tells Christoffer's story in flashbacks.

"All narrative can be boiled down to the importance of arousing an audience's interest in what will come. It is a question of sending energy out through the film. But the fascination of *Inheritance* lies not in how the story will end. The titillating factor is in the emotional development of the main character, and I often skirt the dramatic scenes. I avoid showing the scenes that the audience thinks they are going to see and instead show the scenes leading up to or following the dramatic event itself."

Three screenwriters besides Per Fly have been working on the screenplay. Scriptwriter Mogens Rukov (*The Celebration*), Per Fly's former teacher at



Photos: Per Arnesen



the Film School, played a decisive part.

“The film plot originally dealt with a man who loses his beloved, because he chooses to take over the inheritance. But then Mogens said, ‘No, we have to take it further than that. It has to be a story about a man who makes a conscious decision to reject love.’ That was when the film revealed itself to me. Suddenly, the story became twenty miles longer. We moved away from looking at the world through middle class eyes to looking at the story through upper class eyes.”

As a business executive, Christoffer is forced to make unpleasant decisions. The company has to lay off several hundred employees, and when Christoffer’s ambitious brother-in-law (Lars Brygmann) is disloyal to the company, Christoffer has no other choice but to fire him.

“I have been learning about manipulation and power games for two years. Christoffer has a single-minded thirst for power. He has the ability to manage the company. And I respect him, even for his cynicism. Some might say that he is a disagreeable character for laying off two hundred workers, even though someone has to do it. Whenever I have to create a character, I never work in terms of like or dislike, by the way. In my opinion, the entire like/dislike discussion is hogwash from start to finish. Travis from *Taxi Driver* is a fantastic main character, yet no one would ever dream of saying that he was likeable guy!”

“My goal is to help audiences understand why people act as they do. I want to understand the psychological mechanisms and delve further and further into the character at the same time that I delve further and further into myself. That’s also why satire is very difficult in my films. There are usually a few scenes with a satirical air about them – but I always end up cutting them out of the film.”

IMPOSSIBLE TO IMPROVISE

Per Fly is generally inspired by Mike Leigh’s working method, i.e., thoroughly researching the milieu and closely cooperating with the actors who after a

prolonged improvisation process gradually work their way into their characters.

“We also tried to improvise in *Inheritance* but it didn’t work at all. It is impossible to start improvising about the people in the film. Whatever they communicate is only the tip of the iceberg. Whenever they say something, their words are simultaneously infiltrated with hidden strategies and repressive mechanisms. Improvising that sort of thing is impossible. Repression is incredibly difficult to play and demands a very accurate screenplay.”

Ulrich Thomsen (*Festen*) is an actor who successfully imparts an enormous inner life using only a few artistic effects. But the film’s minor roles are also excellently cast, combining young talents with seasoned actresses and actors such as Ghita Nørby (who plays Christoffer’s dominating mother) and Peter Steen (Christoffer’s loyal right-hand man at the company).

Harald Gunnar Paalgard’s scintillating camerawork underpins the fine plot subtleties, and by focusing on glass, doors and closed rooms he establishes an oppressive, claustrophobic atmosphere. The production design shows great attention to detail, even if the film never makes a great display of the affluence and profusion that appear merely as living conditions. Per Fly’s thorough research in the milieu is noticeable.

“How does a rich man arrive at a hotel? How is he received? Does he walk over to the reception desk? We took a research field trip to the Radisson SAS Royal Hotel, which has one of the most expensive suites in Copenhagen. A rich man would never walk over to the reception desk. The trip through the reception area to the suite must be as brief as possible. No stops along the way. At the beginning of the film, Christoffer is received as he alights from the taxi and led directly to the elevator which is kept waiting for him. By so doing, we say – without a single word – that Christoffer is very wealthy.”

Per Fly mentions another example of the benefits of research.

“In one of the early screenplay versions, Christof-

fer’s sister has an extramarital affair. She had met a man who was not from the same milieu. But then my research source said, ‘How would she have met him? She would never leave her own element!’ I asked why she couldn’t have met him at her daughter’s kindergarten, but the families at the daughter’s kindergarten are also from the same class. They know what they’re doing. They don’t want to risk anything. Meeting someone from outside your own class is not that easy, which explains why they grow up with an ingrained affinity for their families. I have tried to depict this loyalty that is so essential to these people.”

MAJOR WORK

Inheritance is the second part of a trilogy that takes place in the lower, upper and middle classes of Denmark respectively. The trilogy is already destined to be a major work in Danish film. After *The Bench* and *Inheritance*, Per Fly will start on the third film that is rooted in the middle class.

“Reality is the sustenance of my stories, but I’m no sociologist, just as I don’t have a political message beforehand that I’m trying to prove. I’m curious, I am exploring a strange new world. The films are not about the upper class or the lower class; they take place in three different classes, but the trilogy is clearly political in the sense that I am presenting Denmark as a class-divided society. I try to get a deeper understanding of the people we meet in the business sections of our newspapers, and I want to show some fundamental cause-and-effect relationships. Because you can’t discuss how to improve society until you see things as they really are” ■

Further information in the reverse section.

PER FLY Born 1960. Film director. Graduated in direction from the National Film School of Denmark, 1993. Made the children’s short film *Calling Katrine* (1993) followed by two puppet films, *The Little Knight* (1999) and *Prop & Berta* (2001). Per Fly has directed several episodes of the satirical television show *Ansjosen* (1995-96) and three episodes of the television series *Taxa* (1998). The feature films *The Bench* (2000) and *Inheritance* (2003) are the first two parts of Fly’s film trilogy.



Director Morten Arnfred (Photo: Rolf Konow)

The world's most long-standing production company, Nordisk Film, wants to reorder the priorities of the film production agenda by means of its Director's Cut concept and a film package - so far comprising three films. The vision is to make better films for less money and change the industry's production patterns.

LESS IS

MORE

DIRECTOR'S CUT

BY PIL GUNDELACH BRANDSTRUP

The initiators of Director's Cut are producers Åke Sandgren and Lars Kjeldgaard. Budgets are lower, financed after a simpler model, the decision-making process from idea to implementation is shorter, and the production process is based on digital technology and small, mobile crews. Sandgren: "The funding process has become time consuming and complicated. Before a film gets the go-ahead, there are so many time-outs that one starts to wonder whether making the film is even worth it. We want to avoid this by reducing costs to such an extent that the number of funding sources is also reduced."

Sandgren's own experience as a Dogme director has also served as input for the manifesto. After working with *Truly Human*, he felt the desire to keep working with a small film crew, but without the fixed set of rules: "If you intend to make inexpensive films with photographers, scenographers, etc., you can't tie their hands behind their backs. In the long run, it is like depriving them of their instrument. The useful aspect of Dogme is the small crew and the freedom this gives. Whereas Dogme rules do not allow optical finish work and post synchronisation, Director's Cut can utilise all the advantages of

digital technology." The films are not launched as Director's Cut, however: "It is merely a production concept - a tool, a reason for discussing how things are done. If a film crew starts following the usual work routine, this costs 13 million DKK. The question is how can one break out of this routine for the benefit of the director and the film?"

From a funding perspective, it was beneficial to present the films as a complete package, however. Dispersing the risk over several films reduces the pressure of expectation on the individual films and may be the greatest potential source of freedom offered by the concept.

The directors are very different: Morten Arnfred and Birger Larsen are seasoned professionals and debuting Christoffer Boe's examination film *Anxiety* aroused great interest. "He belongs to a generation that don't feel like they're being punished just because they have limited resources. They take a more minimalist approach and are not deterred by digital media." All the directors received the same vote of confidence, as Nordisk Film and TV 2/Danmark based their decision to fund solely on the synopsis. The manuscript still has to undergo the usual rewrites. But the intention of an early guarantee that the film will be made is to establish a positive, creative sphere for the director to work in ■



Photo: Rolf Konow

Morten Arnfred's *Move Me* is the first of the three planned Director's Cut-films. FILM was on the set and spoke with Morten Arnfred about working within the Director's Cut framework.

BY PIL GUNDELACH BRANDSTRUP

Move Me deals with upper-class Sara, whose life abruptly changes when her husband informs her he is involved with his younger assistant manager. To Sara, this means a new life in unfamiliar surroundings.

"As the upper-class woman who moves into a middle-class neighbourhood, Sara becomes a catalyst for suburban intrigue. Through the story, she establishes relationships to the various residents in the neighbourhood. I remove the roof of four houses and look in. It is not a story filled with dramatic events, but a story of warmth, humour, pain and joie de vivre," says Arnfred.

The film budget has no room for stunts or expensive sets. On the other hand, we learn about a wide range of milieus through which Sara passes en route.

"Our task was to discover how we could cast a spell and use the magic of film and a few, simple means to transform what we have to work with. Our production designer's imagination and toolbox have been amazing. Every member of the film crew has contributed something by pulling things off the wall and out of kitchen cupboards and bringing whatever we needed to the set. That's the sort of team spirit our crew has had. Everyone knew this was different from normal, conventional productions, and for that I am very grateful."

Making *Move Me* for DKK 8.5 million was a hectic experi-

ence. Arnfred did not use the cheap video cameras as planned. The film was shot on 16mm using a Steadicam. With Dirk Brüel as photographer and Jacob Bonfils as Steadicam operator, Arnfred distanced himself from Dogme's grainy textures and handheld pictures.

"We set up lighting, even though we had intended to virtually avoid it to save money. But I wanted to get away from the Dogme look, which doesn't nurture the visual expression. Once *Move Me* is blown up on 35mm and digitally reproduced, it will look great." High ambitions can get in the way when time is short, however, and when the incentive focuses more on completing the day's programme than getting the best possible results out of each film sequence.

"Being forced to make do with the toolbox at hand is very inspiring, but can also be rather tedious. It shouldn't set a standard because all of us have worked our fingers to the bone to make it, and it was occasionally too much. Perhaps *Move Me* can help to change the industry's production patterns anyway, such as in terms of staffing rules that are not adapted to the possibility of making lower-cost films using smaller crews and digital technology."

"I'm convinced that more low-budget films will be made, and I hope that a film such as this will contribute to finding some production patterns that involve less rigid staffing rules. You don't need a crew of thirty-five to tell a good story," concludes Arnfred ■

THE PARTICIPATING

DIRECTORS:

Morten Arnfred
Christoffer Boe
Birger Larsen

INITIATORS:

Lars Kjeldgaard
Åke Sandgren

DIRECTOR'S CUT:

- Budget: roughly DKK 9 million per film
- The films are shot on location
- Small, hand-picked production crew
- Short shooting schedule and long editing process
- Production decisions are based on a synopsis

LOOSENING THE TIGHT BUDGETARY GRIP:

After funding the first film, producer Åke Sandgren had to revise the concept of the fixed budget, when *Move Me*'s DKK 8.5 million turned out to be not quite enough. The following budgets will be harmonized more individually and will end up somewhere in the neighbourhood of DKK 9 million

INVESTORS:

Nordisk Film and TV 2/Danmark are standing investors

THE AVAILABLE MEANS

THEORY

MOVE ME / EUROPEAN FILM MARKET

THE CAMERA INSIDE MY HEAD

NICOLAS WINDING REFN / FEAR X: A MONTAGE OF QUOTATIONS

BY HENRIK LIST

PHIL: *You realize you have to be willing to kill this guy?*

HARRY: *I'm not a murderer.*

PHIL: *No, you're not. But you can't change what happened, what used to be...*

HARRY: *They're such horrible words... Was, had been, used to be.*

(Dialogue from FEAR X, written by Hubert Selby Jr. and Nicolas Winding Refn)

The thirty-two-year old, self-taught director and scriptwriter Nicolas Winding Refn is undoubtedly one of the greatest young talents in Danish film. He is an uncompromising and – in a Danish context – frequently controversial auteur brought up on cult and exploitation movies whose English-language *FEAR X* marks the first time he has worked outside Denmark.

Nicolas Winding Refn – aka “Jang” – debuted in 1996 with *Pusher*, a stylistically consistent, hard-boiled, humorous gangster film, that, along with Ole Bornedal's *Nightwatch* and Lars von Trier's *The Kingdom* (both 1994), heralded the start of the new film boom in Denmark of the 1990s, two years

before the Dogme wave rolled in. *Pusher* was an immediate box-office success, especially among young audiences with an eclectic, postmodern taste in films, close to the director's own, and golden lines from the film, such as “Did you get busted, Frank?” – became *de rigueur* in cafes and street corner conversations that year.

Instead of capitalizing on this astonishing success by making *Pusher 2* – or remaking the first film in Hollywood, as he was offered to do – Refn looked inwards to make *Bleeder*, a more personal, existential and ‘adult’ art-house drama, which was selected for the Venice Film Festival in 1999. Some people were disappointed by the film's lack of action and one-liners, but to Refn, this portrait of a group of young, estranged, big-city Danes in modern-day Copenhagen was a daring departure from widespread expectations and his own genre roots.

By virtue of his childhood and early youth in New York City – and a lifelong affection for American movies from the hand of Hollywood and independent directors alike – it seemed obvious that Refn should take an even bigger step with his third film, *FEAR X*.

FEAR X is an intense, baffling and nightmarish psycho-thriller, a *film noir* in colour, about security guard Harry Caine who becomes obsessed with

solving the apparently meaningless murder of his wife, Claire. She was shot down with an unidentified man in an underground car park beneath the shopping centre where Harry works.

The film is a Danish-international co-production, written together with the great US author Hubert Selby Jr. and primarily shot in Winnipeg, Canada, with the US character actor John Turturro playing the lead. Turturro's character is a man in a twilight zone between dream and reality who gradually picks up the scent of a conspiracy and perhaps personal redemption. The smouldering, evocative electron music on the soundtrack was composed by Brian Eno – the ambient British composer and techno pioneer.

In the book “*Kameraet i hovedet – FEAR X og Nicolas Winding Refn*” [The Camera Inside My Head: *FEAR X* and Nicolas Winding Refn], journalist and writer Henrik List (see www.pussyland.dk) has followed this art thriller project – and Refn's ups and downs along the way – since the project started in 1999.

Kameraet i hovedet will be published by People's Press in connection with the Danish premiere of *FEAR X* this spring. The following quotations are excerpts from a series of exclusive interviews with Refn made especially for this book.



Photo: Rolf Konow



Director Nicolas Winding Refn (Photo: Jan Buus)

“I’ve already made this film in my head; now all we have to do is make it one more time – together!”
(Nicolas Winding Refn to actor John Turturro at the filming start of FEAR X in Winnipeg, Canada, March 2002.)

“I knew that my next film had to be in English, that it had to be thriller, and that I wanted to work on it with Hubert Selby Jr.”

“I read very slowly, so I have to be selective about the books I read. My friend Peter gave me *Last Exit to Brooklyn* (by Selby Jr. – ed.), which I read and which somehow laid the groundwork for *Bleeder*. That’s when I realised I wanted to work with him, but I never knew he would write a thriller. All I knew was that he had the human insight I felt I needed and that I had something to learn from it on a personal level.”
(On co-scriptwriter Hubert Selby Jr.)

“It’s going well here in Winnipeg, but it’s very difficult. We have to make some drastic budget cuts, so now I’ve rewritten the screenplay again to make it less expensive (...). I have also had my share of depressions over here, many in fact. I have considered applying for work at Video Netto, and Liv (Refn’s partner – ed.) wants to work in a kindergarten, and we would live happily ever after instead of struggling with all these problems. But even if life would certainly be easier and more enjoyable, I can’t stop getting new ideas for the film, which rekindles my great desire to make this film (...). The day I was born, *Ain’t No Mountain High Enough* topped the charts, something I must never forget!”
(E-mail to Henrik List from Winnipeg during the pre-production, October 2001.)

“Right now, this film is a big flop. All I want to do now is get it over with.”
(On the set in Canada, before the start of the second day of shooting, 12 March 2002.)

“I think he’s nervous. And he is very, very hard working and pushes himself to extremes. He is a director himself, and we’ve never worked together

before, so I think he’s nervous about letting me in on anything (...). He’s familiar with a lot more technical expressions than I am, of course, he is trained in such things, whereas my work is based more on feelings and intuition (...). He is unsure of his first dialogue scenes, they’re important to him – so what I sometimes do is retake the scenes over and over without saying very much, sort of to see his reactions to this and try to get into it. He got quite angry and hot-tempered with me when I wanted to take another close-up after two takes. Very hot-tempered actually. Quite aggressive.”

(On John Turturro on the set in Canada.)

“In *Bleeder*, I really felt I was on thin ice. And here I feel I’m on thin ice again, and that the consequences will be even greater. The water is deeper and colder under the ice...”

(At Hotel Fort Gary, Winnipeg, during the shooting. The temperature is twenty below outside!)

“I’m colour blind, you know, so only bright colours make a real impression on me (...). Red is my favourite colour. And red is a significant colour in *FEAR X*, like it was in *Bleeder*. I’ve made a red film again!”

(On colours and production design.)

“I would rather experiment with content than form...”

(On the idea behind FEAR X at the start of shooting at Nordisk Film’s studios in Risby, outside Copenhagen, 30 April 2002.)

“My cooperation with Larry Smith (the film’s director of photography who was Stanley Kubrick’s photographer for years – ed.) was sublime from the outset; it was a fantastic experience. I learned a lot from him, all sorts of technical things; he taught me how you can’t zoom without enough light, things like that. So there is an enormous amount of basic camerawork I knew nothing about, and I think he found that amusing, at the same time that he always respected my ideas and my decisions. He was good at finding solutions, even in the most impossible situations and was incredibly skilled at setting lights.”
(On director of photography Larry Smith.)

“I am so exhausted, physically and mentally, but very pleased at the same time, very emotional because we’ve done it. Many people didn’t think I could complete this project, but I’ve done it anyway, against all odds. We made a film without big money, but with all sorts of talents in front of and behind the camera, and we actually succeeded – even if I had my doubts occasionally...”

(After shooting the last scenes in Denmark, May 2002.)

“In my world, there are two ways of doing things: my way or no way. And that’s sort of my motto. On the other hand, I ask everybody for their opinion; it’s not because I’m on some ego trip or anything like that. I do it my way out of necessity, because it’s the

only way I can get involved. But when I’m involved in something, I get involved past a point where it starts to get personally unhealthy for me.”

(On himself as a director and his style of directing.)

“It was pretty damned good anyway that I got John Turturro, because he has added a dimension that few other actors are capable of (...). The film is only better because he has been on it, you know, more than any of us could have imagined (...). Well, yeah, it was hard working with him, especially in the beginning when we weren’t tuned in to each other very well. I think I was wise just to let him blow off steam. I mean instead of starting to play up to him, I let him vent his frustrations and get them out in the open. We moved on from there, and it was an intense experience for both of us. Even if it has also been easy for me at the same time, because he’s the type of actor who delivers his performance with unwavering certainty.”

(On Turturro, Copenhagen, 15 May 2002.)

“I trust her more than anyone, so for that reason alone the editor is absolutely vital to me (...). She’s always right whatever she says ...”

(On the symbiotic cooperation with editor Anne Østerud in conjunction with the first complete edit of FEAR X, 9 June 2002.)

“As I see it, being an artist is like being a terrorist (...). I’m a terrorist because I’m an idealist. As a terrorist, I have two courses of action to choose from. I can either take up arms and blow up a petrol station. Or I can make something that inspires and affects other people. I don’t believe in throwing bricks, but in making films!”

(Manifesto)

“My storyboards are getting smaller and smaller, because with each film I get a clearer idea of what I want in advance, inside my head – the camera inside my head – and in reality I have a very minimalist style, don’t I!?”

(On his working method, autumn 2002.)

HARRY: I need to know why my wife was killed.

PETER stares at the floor, slowly looks up.

PETER Is that all you need?

HARRY glances out the window at the night sky, thinking... nods his head, returns attention toward the darkness around PETER.

PETER: You mean you really don’t want to kill this man?

HARRY: I am not a murderer ■

FEAR X: Selected for World Cinema at Sundance, for the main programme at Rotterdam, as well as for the Nordisk Tävling Competition, Göteborg.



Photo: Jens Juncker-Jensen

DOGME AND DANCE

OLD, NEW, BORROWED AND BLUE

In her first feature film for adults, *Old, New, Borrowed and Blue*, young Danish director Natasha Arthy presents an astonishing version of how a Dogme film can also turn out.

Katrine and her fiancé are relaxing in Katrine's flat when a Swede from Katrine's past suddenly rings her phone and her doorbell. He just returned home after a two-year stint in Kenya, and now it's time to make dinner for his old friend Katrine. As Katrine and her fiancé are to be married in just two days, they don't have time for such things, but in walks Thomsen with dinner and vodka. The vodka soon sends Katrine's fiancé to bed and Katrine and Thomsen on a long night-time journey filled with old records and memories. The next morning, Thomsen is about to leave the flat, as visiting time has run out, but for some reason he hangs around, and when Thomsen is too afraid to phone the lab for the results of an AIDS test, Katrine does it for him. The result is most likely positive, Thomsen is ill, but Katrine somehow manages to tell him the opposite, because she cannot bear to tell him the truth. Now they are stuck with each other, and Thomsen, who is exhilarated about the good news, wants to personally see to it that Katrine gets 'something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue' as wedding tradition prescribes. They soon depart on an insane expedition through town and through their common past in an old car he has just purchased. They rush along because Thomsen is a fun guy, but tomorrow is another day - a wedding day.

BY MICHAEL KJÆR

Young Danish director Natasha Arthy just completed her first feature film for adults: *Old, New, Borrowed and Blue*. The result is a grotesque love comedy that was filmed in compliance with Dogme rules laid down in 1995 by Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg in the Dogme Manifesto. Natasha Arthy had previously made her mark through her unique ability to visualise fantastic, colourful stories for children, most notably the short children's film *Penny Plain* (1997) and more recently in *Miracle* (2000), that was nothing short of a musical for children. Therefore, it is surprising that she chose to make her first feature film for adults according to the Dogme rules that induce a naturalistic, almost documentary style.

"I never thought I would end up making a Dogme film, either," says the director, who made the film in close cooperation with Kim Fupz Aakeson, one of Denmark's most productive and successful screenwriters who recently wrote the screenplays for films like Anette K. Olesen's *Minor Mishaps* and Jesper W. Nielsen's *Okay*.

"For a long time though, I had wanted to make a film about my own generation, and one day Kim Fupz Aakeson stood there with a story. It was relatively simple, and we both agreed that we would do it proper justice by telling it with a naturalistic expression instead of a more aesthetic filmic expression. Besides, I really felt like fully concentrating on the directing and the story. That's why Dogme became an option."

A LIVE MINI-CONCERT SUDDENLY BEGINS

Not long after the film starts, a strange little live concert sneaks in among the characters. Natasha Arthy and Kim Fupz Aakeson have taken the Dogme Manifesto literally when it dictates that a Dogme film may *only* include the sounds that exist *on location* and wrote a little trio into the action.

"The musicians appear as imaginative characters who help to describe the mental state of one of the characters. Together with composer Kåre Bjerlø, I discover a very simple musical universe that resulted in small live concerts spread out over the entire shooting sequence. It was a lot of fun, and I am very pleased with the result," says Natasha Arthy, who did not want to renounce her propensity for using music as a means of redeeming a film's action - and when this small trio suddenly appears on screen, the film loses some of its realism for a moment.

Old, New, Borrowed and Blue is a surprising version of how a Dogme film can also turn out.

RACING WITH FATE

Why doesn't Katrine just tell Thomsen the truth about his disease so she can start preparing for her wedding the next day, and why does Thomsen hang around? What's holding them back and sending them off on this grotesque expedition together?

"The film shows how difficult it can be to figure out what you really want to do in today's modern world with all of the choices we have to consider every day. It depicts some people who are incapable of getting genuinely in touch with their innermost feelings, which makes them incapable of talking to each other and telling the truth. As a result, the problems they have been unable to deal with for a long time suddenly overwhelm them during the three critical days we follow them," explains Natasha Arthy. But Katrine and Thomsen do not want to be overwhelmed, and their race with fate is wild and exhilarating, to put it mildly ■

Further information in the reverse section.

NATASHA ARTHY Born 1969, Denmark. Radio host. Studied at the University of Bristol and at the University of Roskilde. Produced and directed numerous children's programmes for DR TV. Her entertaining and original short film *Penny Plain / Fanny Farveløs* (1997) is included in part 2 of *Bunny's Tales/ Karla Kanin Bio* a Danish feature film series for children. Her feature film debut *Miracle / Mirakel* was awarded at festivals worldwide, and is recipient of first prizes at Giffoni, Montevideo, Montreal, Rimouski and Zlin. *Old, New, Borrowed and Blue* (Dogme) is Arthy's second feature film.



Director Natasha Arthy (Photo: Robin Skjoldborg)



Photo: Ole Kragh-Jacobsen

THE GREEN BUTCHERS

Anders Thomas Jensen once again reveals his surreal twists.

BY KIM FOSS

Although he turned thirty last spring, Anders Thomas Jensen remains the Wunderkind of Danish film. He first rose to fame (but not exactly fortune) after writing and (or co-)directing three short films, all of which were nominated for Academy Awards: *Ernst & the Light* (1996), *Wolfgang* (1998) and *Election Night* (1998), the latter received an Oscar in the short film category.

Since then Anders Thomas Jensen has written and co-written a number of Danish features including three Dogme films: *Mifune* by Søren Kragh-Jacobsen (1999, a Grand Prix Silver Bear winner in Berlin), *The King is Alive* by Kristian Levring (2001, selected for *Un Certain Regard*, Cannes) and *Open Hearts* by Susanne Bier (premiered at Toronto and San Sebastian in 2002).

Films like *Open Hearts* and *Wilbur Wants to Kill Himself* by Lone Scherfig (2002) – in both cases love stories written in cooperation with a female director – have been showcases for the writer’s knack for more mature and sensitive issues such as love, fidelity and emotional ties between grown-ups and children. A surprising development, in Denmark at least, where audiences have become accustomed to the more youthful trademarks of Anders Thomas Jensen: the scarcity of

female elements in his stories and his almost Tarantino-esque blend of fun and violence.

Like Tarantino, Jensen’s formal film education is limited to working for a few years in a video store, but if you ask Anders Thomas Jensen himself, the Coen Brothers and Martin Scorsese are bigger inspirations.

His bold humour was especially evident in the domestic box office hits *In China They Eat Dogs* (1999) and the prequel *Old Men in New Cars: In China They Eat Dogs 2* (2002), both penned by Anders Thomas Jensen (and both directed by Lasse Spang Olsen), who seems to be a particularly successful writer of violence, cynicism and misogyny – all played for laughs.

The same – although to a lesser extent – can be said of the self-taught director’s feature debut, *Flickering Lights* (2000), which also had a very healthy run in Danish theatres.

One hotly debated scene involved the shooting of a cow. Animals were certainly harmed during the filming, but as Anders Thomas Jensen informed the press, “The poor animal was actually put down by a vet and slaughtered immediately after we shot the scene – like thousands of other cows across the country.”

Dead meat also plays a big part in Anders Thomas Jensen’s second outing

as a director, *The Green Butchers* (2003) – a comedy that combines the trite, the morbid and the amusing.

Bjarne and Svend are pals. Sweaty Svend (played by local heart throb Mads Mikkelsen) has great ambition driven by an equally great inferiority complex, while brooding Bjarne (played by Nikolaj Lie Kaas, *Shooting Star* in Berlin this year) cares about little else than Astrid, his girlfriend. Starting their own butcher’s shop gives them an opportunity to escape from their vicious boss.

Idiomatic dialogue has always been at the fore of Jensen’s films. *The Green*

Butchers is no exception.

You can be sure the director was laughing his head off as he wrote the dialogue. Audiences are bound to do the same.

You can’t please them all, and this is especially true of Anders Thomas Jensen, whose talent is too broad for some: *Wunderkind* to highbrows, *enfant terrible* to lowbrows. Everyone agrees on one thing, though: Anders Thomas Jensen is one of the biggest talents working in Danish film, period ■

Further information in the reverse section.



Director Anders Tomas Jensen (Photo: Rolf Konow)

ANDERS TOMAS JENSEN Born 1972, Denmark. Screenplay-writer on a number of Danish feature films, including the two Dogme films *The King is Alive / The King is Alive* (2001), selected for *Un Certain Regard*, Cannes, and *Mifune / Mifunes sidste sang* (1999), a Grand Prix Silver Bear winner in Berlin. He has also written the screenplay for Søren Kragh-Jacobsen’s *Skagerrak / Skagerrak* (2003), as well as Susanne Bier’s *Open Hearts / Elsker dig for evigt* (2002). His contribution to short films is studded with awards: In three consecutive years he had a short film nominated for an Academy Award. These were all written and (or co-) directed by Jensen himself and produced by M & M Productions: *Ernst & the Light / Ernst & Lyset* (1996), *Wolfgang / Wolfgang* (1998), and *Election Night / Valgaften* (1998), the latter being recipient of an Oscar. His feature film debut *Flickering Lights / Blinkende lygter* (2000) was a box office success and was praised by critics who ranked the film as a brilliant and witty buddy movie. *The Green Butchers* is Anders Thomas Jensen’s second feature film.

Actor Nikolaj Lie Kaas, this year's Danish Shooting Star, has been giving successful performances for almost ten years now.

A RAPIDLY DEVELOPING TALENT

BY MORTEN PIIL

As a two-time recipient of the Bodil, the most coveted Danish film award, Nikolaj Lie Kaas is a prominent member of Danish film's young, upcoming generation of film actors who demonstrate their talents with equal excellence on stage and before the camera.

Even if Kaas is a rapidly developing talent in theatre and film, his greatest impact has been on the screen. After many acclaimed performances in minor roles, he played his first lead as the older brother who resembles Kasper Hauser in Åke Sandgren's satirical fable and Dogme film, *Truly Human* (2001). His open, trusting, boyish face emanates rare honesty, and he unsentimentally plays the wondering, guileless human being born into the strangest of all worlds – the Danish welfare state, year 2001. A performance filled with pain and poetry.

In 2002, Kaas again played the lead in a Dogme success, Susanne Bier's *Open Hearts*. In this film, he plays young Joachim, who is paralysed from the neck down after a traffic accident, and he struggles to rid himself of suppressed indignation and anger over his fate. Kaas plays the part with new acidity and aggression.

Most recently, Kaas plays one of the leads in Oscar-winner Anders Thomas Jensen's new comedy, *The Green Butchers* (2003). In this film, he plays Bjarne, a thick-skinned, ill-fated butcher's assistant, who is given a big challenge by his colleague (Mads Mikkelsen): they want to open their own butcher's shop together. Kaas actually plays two parts in the film, because he also plays Bjarne's brain-damaged twin brother, but that is another story altogether!

DUAL AWARD-WINNING DEBUT

Nikolaj Lie Kaas (b.1973) is the son of famous actor and comedian Preben Kaas and dancer and author Anne Marie Lie. Both died before he turned sixteen, so he had to carve out his acting career on his own. He was educated at the Danish National School of Theatre, 1994-98, and has played the demanding title role in Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* at the Royal Theatre. In 2002, he also played the misanthropist Michel for the same theatre in the dramatisation of Michel Houellebecq's novel *Atomised*.

Already in 1991, he won both Danish film awards, the Bodil and the Robert, for his supporting role as the immature member of the resistance movement in Søren Kragh-Jacobsen's *The Boys from St. Petri*. In this film, he plays headstrong Otto who supplies weapons to a group of students, the so-called Churchill Gang, that turn their boyish pranks against the German occupation forces into genuine sabotage. He won another Bodil for best supporting actor as "Spaz" in *The Idiots* (1998), Lars von Trier's Dogme film about an experimenting collective. His interpretation of Jeppe, a member of the collective who falls unhappily in love with one of his "co-spazzes", is raw and boyish.

He has also demonstrated a flair for comedy as the cook in the action comedy *In China They Eat Dogs* (1999), and as the awkward gangster in Anders Thomas Jensen's *Flickering Lights* (2000) – both big audience hits. In the latter, his disarming, innocent personality emanates naivety and purity – the most prevalent personality traits of Nikolaj Lie Kaas. But he has emphatically demonstrated that his range of talent is much greater and fully capable of playing roles that are filled with far more dangerous unpredictability.

NIKOLAJ LIE KAAS / SHOOTING STAR

FILMS:

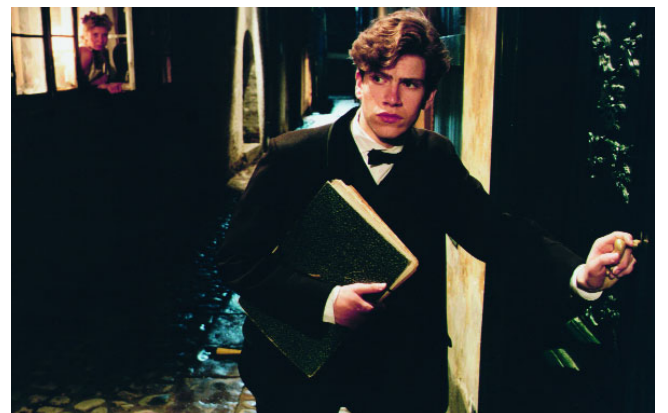
The Boys from St. Petri (1991 – Bodil and Robert awards)
Min fynske barndom (1994)
The Idiots (1998 – Bodil)
Possessed (1999)
In China They Eat Dogs (1999)
Max (2000)
Flickering Lights (2000)
Truly Human (2001)
Jolly Roger (2001)
Old Men in New Cars (2002)
Open Hearts (2002)
The Green Butchers (2003)



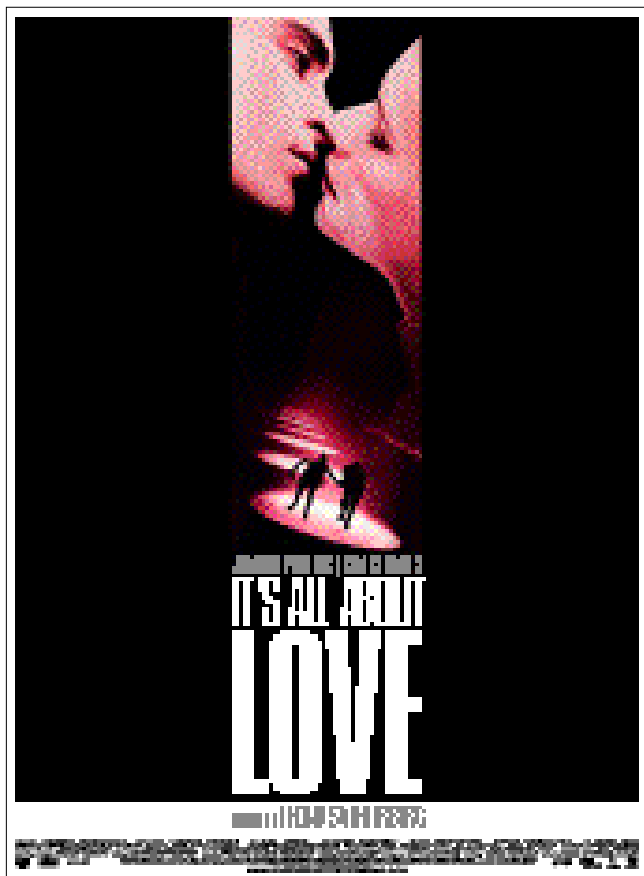
Truly Human, 2001 (Photo: Per Arnesen)



The Boys from St. Petri, 1991 (Photo: Metronome Production A/S)



Min Fynske Barndom, 1994 (Photo: Asa Film Production)



PRESS REVIEWS

“Vinterberg stuns with Grimm vision. (...) Hugely imaginative, conceptually compelling and arresting in its visual panache, *It's All About Love* can be seen as a millennial fairy tale and Thomas Vinterberg as its latter-day Grimm (...) Like a kid let loose in a sweet-shop, Vinterberg has reacted against the Dogme ethos and fashioned a world of opulent interiors and vast exteriors. Production designer Ben Van Os created luxurious settings for the likes of Peter Greenaway and Sally Potter. His materials are snow and ice, silk and steel (...) Certainly audiences have not seen something like this for a while.”
(*Screen International*)

“The title of this magnificent gesture of a film explains at least half of it, because it's all about love (...) Many will be astonished. Some will be overjoyed. This atypical, worldly, Danish film will also be the butt of a lot of criticism. But it shouldn't leave us cold, because it describes the human plight in a world in which inhumanity hides behind sweet, poetic facades (...) This film has to be felt and understood from the heart as a great, spellbinding gesture that has faith in the human race, yet also warns that everything will come to an end if we keep doing nothing, as we do right now. Even though there is chaos in the world, love can straighten out everything if only we let it. This is probably the essence of what Rukov and Vinterberg are saying in their promising, cinematic fairytale. See it for its snow and its lovers. See it for its quotes, including everything from a *Rosebud* paperweight, *Blade Runner* cities and Hitchcock women to decadent lanterns à la David Lynch and inscrutable, seductive skating princesses who twirl like symbols of innocence and experience in a seventies film like those by Mike Nichols, etc. Or if necessary, see it for its flying Ugandans. For once, all the film effects are important in a film that tries to be gentle and profound at the same time. Thomas Vinterberg has put his heart and soul into this faux pas that at least has style and format. It is also a film worth seeing more than once, because even if the film falters on the whole, its elements are beautiful.”
(*Weekendavisen*)

“A lyrical story in pictures (...) visually magnificent, intoxicating (...) a tiger's leap forward for the young, impetuous director Thomas Vinterberg who has created a challenging illustrated work that is as unrelated to his breakthrough film *Festen / The Celebration* as one can imagine (...) fans of filmmakers like Wim Wenders will relate to Vinterberg's latest film right away, a film whose tones of longing are reminiscent of *Faraway, So Close* (...) although Vinterberg's dream world is convoluted and gloomy, it is also fascinating. The viewer is unknowingly seduced by this story of a man and a woman who rediscover love as the world comes to an end with a hushed sigh. *It's All About Love* is a bizarre, beautiful film and - despite everything you may have heard about the film over the last few weeks - a complete surprise as well.”
(*Børsen*)

“Wildly beautiful and saturated with emotion (...) Thomas Vinterberg uses brawny direction to make many scenes dynamic, intense and saturated with a compelling atmosphere on several levels simultaneously (...) a strange dream, a fatalist vision of love's sad fate in a restless, mad world, and this effective visual presentation of visionary themes is the film's strength (...) experienced without prejudice as a mildly hallucinogenic fairytale of love and death, it is pent-up by heroism and fascination.”
(*Berlingske Tidende*)

“In *It's All About Love*, Thomas Vinterberg demonstrates that he is one of the most ambitious Danish filmmakers of recent years (...). And the results of his ambitions are worth seeing.”
(*Jyllands-Posten*)

“It's as if Thomas Vinterberg has literally done as he pleases in making *It's All About Love*. This time, he risks nothing short of himself - i.e., his own doubt and insecurity, his own creative urge and imaginative capacity (...) a peculiar, highly personal, enigmatic and scintillating sense of imagery (...) elegantly turned moods filled with eeriness and alienation, scenes inspired by master directors such as Hitchcock, Polanski and Kubrick (...) It is matchless in Danish film history - in terms of technique and imagination (...) There is actually life after *Festen / The Celebration*.”
(*Politiken*)

“Thomas has a flaw - which is also a charm in its own right, however. It is tremendously difficult for him to make up his mind. And it was particularly difficult for him following *Festen / The Celebration*. We talked about the new film, even before one word was ever written about it, and we discussed many different films in our conversations. But he kept constantly returning to *It's All About Love*. That's why I urged him to choose it, too. That was where he was and it was very personal to him. So even long before the outline of a manuscript ever appeared, we started to discuss how the film should look. It shouldn't be Dogme; we had already done that. And I work on the principle that I want to go somewhere new in every film. Repetitions are tedious, so we agreed we should probably get as far away from Dogme as possible. (...) *It's All About Love* is a noble attempt to make something authoritarian.”
(*Director of photography Anthony Dod Mantle on his cooperation with Vinterberg in Politiken*)

SNOW IN JULY

IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE / OFFICIAL SELECTION / SPECIAL SCREENING

It's All About Love had its world premiere in January in Denmark and was presented at the Sundance Festival last month. In Denmark, where it is screening in 21 cinemas, *It's All About Love* has been given an enthusiastic welcome. See interview with Thomas Vinterberg in FILM#22 available on DFI website: www.dfi.dk

DIE ASTA

**ASTA NIELSEN,
THE TALKING MUSE /
DOCUMENTARY IN
PRODUCTION**

Asta Nielsen is seen as the spiritual godmother of many famous actresses. With her enormous dark eyes, mask-like face and slender figure she was destined to become a diva. Between 1910 and 1932 she made 74 films. She is often called "the first great international star". Thanks to an enormous amount of large tape reels containing recordings of more than 80 hours nightly telephone conversations between Asta Nielsen and a carefree, innovative personality, Frede Smith, Asta Nielsen's private life is revealed for the first time ever.

For several years director Torben Skjødt Jensen and assistant Orla Fokdal have been working on a documentary about world-famous Danish actress Asta Nielsen (1881-1972).

The documentary was conceived as a journey that would follow the actress' footsteps to the different parts of the world her career led her. By mixing film archives, photo archives, audio material and interviews with people who knew her, the film intended to answer the following questions: What made Asta Nielsen's screen presence so alluring? What special talent did she possess that mesmerized audiences all over the world? What were her circumstances and the circumstances of her era that made her into Die Asta - the world's first true movie star?

While working on the film, the crew made an astonishing find among the personal effects of deceased antiquarian bookseller Frede Smith: they found two cardboard boxes labelled 'Asta'. Back then, Frede Smith was renowned for his head-over-heels adoration of the great star of silent movies, and it was also a well known fact that a steady friendship evolved between the two of them starting in the 1950s and lasting until the death of Asta Nielsen. Even so, it was quite surprising to find Asta's scrap-books from 1908 to 1940 - otherwise presumed lost - in the boxes, as well as personal props and especially eighty hours of old reel-to-reel tapes on which



Photo: DFI archive

Frede Smith had recorded confidential conversations with Asta Nielsen from 1957 to 1959. The tapes were never played for anyone, but - according to Frede Smith - were his contribution to our 'cultural heritage'.

These tapes shed new light on the myth of Asta Nielsen who was never fond of talking about intimate matters. In her great autobiography *Den tiende muse (The Tenth Muse)* she reveals nothing about her private thoughts and perceptions, but in her nightly phone conversations with Frede, the Tenth Muse becomes a Talkative Muse and discusses subjects such as her marriages, her clash with the Danish mentality when she returned from Germany in 1937, her relationship to nazism, her attempted comebacks, her, in many respects, lonely and embittered life and especially her relationship to her daughter Jesta.

Asta Nielsen, The Talking Muse - which also includes scenes from many of the films in which Asta Nielsen played a part - presents an intimate, objectively candid Asta Nielsen for the very first time. It adds new facets to the official image of this radiant, admired film idol who was also infamous for her

stubbornness, her determination and her uncompromising attitude to the surrounding world.

Furthermore Torben Skjødt Jensen will this year complete a feature film on Asta Nielsen for DR TV (Danish Broadcasting Corporation). The film *The Abyss* takes place in 1964, in Asta Nielsen's apartment, where she meets a filmmaker. The meeting is for the purpose of making a film portraying her life, but the filmmaker comes to realise that revealing other peoples' secret lives, is not without severe consequences.

The Abyss will be premiered in August at the Copenhagen International Film Festival (see page 33).

ASTA NIELSEN, THE TALKING MUSE approx. 90 min **EXPECTED RELEASE** Spring 2003 **DIRECTOR** Torben Skjødt Jensen **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR** Orla Fokdal **EDITOR** Oliver Bugge Coutté **PRODUCTION** Point of No Return Production

TORBEN SKJØDT JENSEN Born 1958. During the 80s and 90s, Torben Skjødt Jensen became a major influence on the video scene in Denmark, directing *Angelface* (1983), *It's a Blue World* (1990), *The Flâneur Trilogy* (1992, 1995, 1998), *Carl Th. Dreyer - My Metier* (1995), *To Be or Nothing to Eat* (1996). Feature film debut in 1999 with *The Man Who Would Live Forever*.



Photo: Lars Høgsted

BERTRAM & CO.

In December 2002, producer Regner Grasten released his latest feature film, *Bertram & Co.*, a comedy for the youngest cineastes and their families, based on a novel by Bjarne Reuter, adapted for the screen by Torvald Lervad, and directed by Hans Kristensen.

Grasten has been producing feature films since 1987. Between his major box-office successes – the *Crumbs Family* films in the early nineties, and his latest romantic comedies about the young couple Anja and Viktor (*Love at First Hiccough*, 1998; *Anja & Viktor*, 2001; *Anja After Viktor* 2003) – Grasten has delved into stories that unfold the dramatic content of human experience: *Stolen Spring* (1992) and *Like A Girl* (1995), both directed by Peter Schröder. Right now Grasten is in the news again with his latest production *Cinder Rockin' Rella*, directed by Charlotte Sachs Bostrup. Later this spring he will be releasing *Anja After Viktor*, also directed by Charlotte Sachs Bostrup. Currently he is developing *Lost Generations*, which is based on a series of novels by best-selling author Christian Kampmann. The film is inspired by *American Beauty*, and Grasten wants to portray a family's decline from 1954 to 1974.

Regner Grasten frequently refers to classic dramaturgy and inspiration from American comedies when he discusses his life and craft as a scriptwriter (under a pseudonym) and producer.

Grasten: "Just make one mistake and the viewer's subconscious vanishes. Rhythm is very important, and two or three minutes can be crucial in determining whether we attract 374,000 or 800,000 viewers to the cinema."

Grasten is a big fan of test screenings for select audiences, but he never uses questionnaires. He prefers to stand in the theatre itself during the screening and pick up the mood of the audience.

"The problem with asking an audience for their opinion is that it's often hard for them to define their experience. They start trying to recall the film and maybe even point out a specific scene, which in reality has nothing to do with the problem. Film is a feeling, and that's what makes it so complicated."

"Regner never chooses a cheap solution to make money. He is not contriving either, he just has a healthy, popular taste. Regner wants people to enjoy watching his films. And he is deeply involved in every single aspect of the film," says one of Grasten's collaborators, director Charlotte Sachs Bostrup.

Further information in the reverse section.

COPENHAGEN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL AUGUST 13th - AUGUST 20th 2003

Copenhagen International Film Festival (CIFF) is a new international film festival located in the heart of Copenhagen. CIFF is the first Danish feature film festival to present a main competition and an international jury. The festival's Golden Swan awards will be awarded to the best film, the best female actor, the best male actor, the best script and the best cinematography. We expect all jury prizes to be cash awards. The Danish member of the jury is the acclaimed director Bille August, who will be joined by 6 other internationally recognized filmmakers.

CIFF will be both a major audience event and a new meeting place for film professionals. The festival combines film culture with a focus on the creative and business aspects of filmmaking – establishing a platform for film and TV buyers, sales companies, production companies, producers, development executives, distributors, etc. This forum establishes an international gateway to the Danish and Nordic film industries, a development priority for CIFF in the years to come.

A strong focus on European films and European filmmaking is as important and necessary today as it has ever been. CIFF aims to play a central role in strengthening European film production and distribution, and especially in encouraging young filmmakers to contribute their visions to our festival.

We look forward to welcoming you to Copenhagen in August 2003!

CIFF is primarily a feature film festival with a competition programme consisting exclusively of European feature films. Among the regular features every year are a series focusing on one or several European countries, and a comprehensive Nordic series. CIFF also features films from other parts of the world like America, Asia, Latin America and Australia. The programme includes special events, seminars, live interviews and master classes, and will be presented at a press conference at the end of July 2003.

Whilst there are no short or documentary programmes at the first CIFF, a few selected feature-length documentary films will be presented in the feature film categories.

In collaboration with Copenhagen's major cinemas and the cinemas at the Danish Film Institute CIFF offers guests an optimal festival venue with all screenings within easy walking distance of each other. The centre of Copenhagen has a wide selection of hotels, restaurants, cafés and shops, as well as the famous Tivoli amusement park, giving our festival guests easy access to what the Danish capital has to offer.

Accredited guests are welcome to use the festival's hotel booking service from March 2003. This service and general information about accommodation will be available on our website.

CIFF welcomes filmmakers and movers and shakers from all areas of the film industry.

A great film programme, good business opportunities, fun parties and informal gatherings are the festival essentials that make socialising and networking easy. Organisation is the key, and as part of our professional service we offer a centrally located festival centre with accreditation, information, market desks and computer facilities for the press and accredited guests. A press desk will provide all the necessary material, as well as assisting the press during the festival. All accreditation forms will be available on our website from March 2003, together with festival regulations and all the practical information you need.

The films selected are by invitation only. The deadline for submission is May 1st 2003. CIFF cannot guarantee return of uninvited film submissions or material. Film entry forms are not available on our website. If a film is selected by the festival an entry form will subsequently be sent to you by e-mail.

www.copenhagenfilmfestival.com

CIFF Festival Secretariat / Indiakaj 12 2100 Copenhagen Ø Denmark / Tel: 0045 3544 1146
Fax: 0045 3543 1148 / Email: info@copenhagenfilmfestival.com

Festival Director Janne Giese / Email jg@copenhagenfilmfestival.com / Mobile +45 2370 7495

Festival Coordinator Valeria Richter / Email valeria@copenhagenfilmfestival.com /
Mobile +45 2613 3725

Head of Programme Michael Søby / Email micsob@mail.dk / Mobile +45 2422 6461

Festival Secretary Susanne Cordes / Email sus@copenhagenfilmfestival.com

Production Assistant Casper Marrott / Email casper@copenhagenfilmfestival.com

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