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# FILM

# #63

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FILM#63/ CANNES ISSUE

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**REALITY BORES ME**  
Henrik Ruben Genz brings the grotesque life of the Danish stage to the screen, creating a surreal and grotesque image, recalling the American grotesque of Edward Galt's *Unhappy* and the Danish grotesque of *Unhappy*. **PAGE 4**

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**FILM#63 / CANNES ISSUE**  
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Subscriptions: ninac@dfi.dk

**DANISH FILM INSTITUTE**  
GOTHERSGADE 55  
DK-1123 COPENHAGEN K  
DENMARK  
T +45 3374 3400  
susanna@dfi.dk / agnetes@dfi.dk

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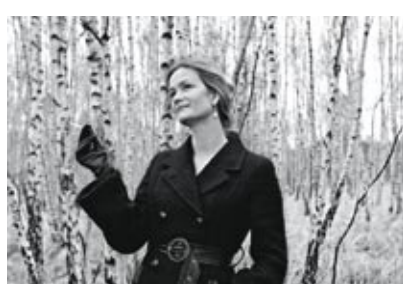
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# FICTION IN THE SERVICE OF TRUTH



Flame & Citron Photo: Erik Aavartsmark

Ole Christian Madsen's *Flame & Citron* merges history-writing with psychological portraits, adding new facets to the story of the Danish resistance. With more than half a million tickets sold since its release on March 28, the film has proven to be one of Danish cinema's greatest successes in recent years.

BY SOPHIE ENGBERG SONNE

"Do you remember April 9? I bet you do. Everyone does." The line, from Ole Christian Madsen's new film *Flame & Citron*, refers to the day Germany occupied Denmark in 1940. A fateful day, the first in five years of German occupation that divided the

Danish people: those who quietly submitted and those who dared take up arms against a superior force. Among those who dared were two resistance fighters known as Flame and Citron – the first named for his flaming red hair, the other for his job as a mechanic at the Citroën car factory. Madsen's film is the product of eight years of research and, as the

director puts it, is "loosely based on real events". It wasn't easy, he says. There is no tradition for such free historical films in Denmark.

"I think we're incredibly puritanical about our own history in this country," Madsen says. "It bugs me that demands for historical accuracy stand in the way of interpreting the truth in a way that, though it may not





Flame &amp; Citron Photo: Britta Krehl

correspond absolutely to reality, is somehow more true. We lack an understanding that fiction can play an active role in shaping our identity. It's a shame, because it means we have no real sense of our history."

#### CONTENT DICTATES STYLE

Working on *Flame & Citron*, Madsen debated whether to take the straight path and do docudrama-style rendition or let fiction have more of a say. "I chose the latter," he says. "Because to me, it's an outrage that fiction was never allowed to help narrate Danish history.

"Even so, I tried to keep a soft touch style-wise out of respect for the film's subject. It's important to break free of the period description when doing a film like *Flame & Citron*. Essentially, I made the film the way I would have, had it been set in the present. I don't keep long shots longer because it's a historical film. There are no horse-drawn wagons or cackling hens streaking through the frame. Much of the stylistic effort involved eliminating the distance to 1944, trying to leap across 60 years and make them disappear for the audience."

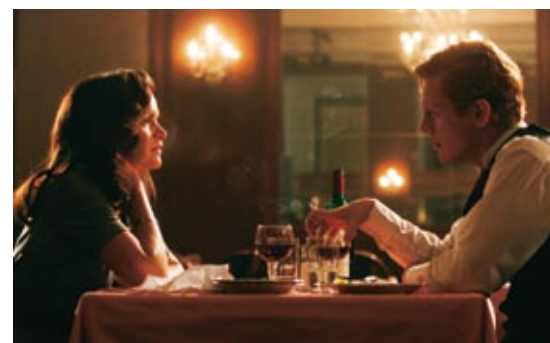
Madsen graduated from the National Film School of Denmark in 1993, in the same class as Per Fly and Thomas Vinterberg. He had his big breakthrough in 2001 with *Kira's Reason - A Love Story* and later had big hits adapting Jakob Ejersbo's bestselling novel *Angels in Fast Motion* (2005) and the love drama *Prague* (2006). Alongside his films, he directed episodes of the TV series *Taxi*, *Unit One* and the historical drama series *The Spider* (2000). *Flame & Citron*, co-written with Lars K. Andersen, is a story of two prominent resistance fighters, Bent Faurschou-Hviid and Jørgen Haagen Schmith, better known by

their handles, Flame and Citron. "They were two of the most flamboyant characters in the resistance. There were very few like them," Madsen says. "Making them the leads in my film, I could lean on the mythology that surrounds them."

#### THE STORY OF FLAME AND CITRON

"Flame, a friendly but phlegmatic character, was obsessed with firearms at an early age," Madsen says. "He grew up in Asserbo, north of Copenhagen, where his father ran a fancy hotel. When he was nine years old, he brought home a rifle and shot down the neighbour's weathervane. Flame had a complicated and hateful relationship with his father who was friendly to the Germans and very subservient to authority. When his father sent him to Germany to apprentice as a waiter, he developed a powerful hatred of fascism. Returning to Denmark, he joined the navy and learned how to shoot - he was marksman of the year in 1941. He was 19, just a kid, when he joined the resistance."

Citron, 10 years his senior, was a completely different type, more or less a dropout from his social set. His father died when Citron was little and his mother kept a home and four children running on her widow's pension, so they grew up shabby-genteel. "Citron always had problems with authority and was considered a loser, even by his own family," Madsen says. "Growing up, he was fascinated by the bohemian scene, and for years he worked as a stage manager at Zigøjnerhallen, a Jewish variety hall. He loved that life. That's where he met Bodil, who was a lot younger than he. She quickly became pregnant, but Citron had an incredibly hard time settling down."



Flame &amp; Citron Photo: Alzbeta Jungrova

"Though Citron was among the 'older' members of the resistance - he was 33 when he died - he operated on the street level," Madsen says. "Assassinations usually fell to younger members because it took a sense of recklessness that tends to have passed in someone with wife and kids and responsibilities.

"Both Flame and Citron were enormously well suited for war. They kept on fighting, even when everything and everybody around them told them not to," Madsen says.

Portraying the two "illegals", as the resistance fighters liked to call themselves, gave Madsen an opportunity to explore human psychology in crisis situations - a recurring theme in his films, whether set in Copenhagen or Prague, or dealing with drug abuse, war or divorce. He seems hard put to do a film about ordinary people in ordinary circumstances?

"You may have a point," he concedes with a laugh. "Well, ordinary people in ordinary situations shouldn't be in movies. There's way too much of that in our lives already. I'd rather do a different

“Drama often deals with fear on a subconscious level. Drama lets us set up situations we fear ending up in ourselves. That way we deal with our fear.”



Flame & Citron Photo: Erik Aavatsmark



Director Ole Christian Madsen Photo: Jan Buus

kind of story. Drama often deals with fear on a subconscious level. Drama lets us set up situations we fear ending up in ourselves. That way we deal with our fear.”

#### THE ULTIMATE PRICE

What is the drama behind the story of the “illegals”? As Madsen reveals, he had two parallel agendas with his film. “First, I wanted to do a story about these two heroes,” Madsen says, “try to make them modern heroes with cracks in their souls and doubts and insecurities, so we can mirror ourselves in them today. Second, I wanted to examine what war is and what it does to people. What was their moral dilemma? Was it right what they did? And at what price?”

As the film makes plain, freedom fighting came at a very high price to those involved. “To do what they did, they had to dismantle their humanity. That’s why I think there would have been little hope for them once the war ended, had they survived. It was too late,” Madsen ventures. “You can think of my film as an investigation of what happens psychologically to someone who sacrifices himself in war. Still, I deliberately chose not to create conventional psychological portraits. My impression is that it’s not what it was like back then. Things weren’t discussed. People kept the pressure bottled up inside until it killed them. Three years like that and they were done for,” Madsen says.

#### MYTHOLOGISING AND DEMYTHOLOGISING

Building on the myth of the two resistance fighters, while at the same time demythologising them, the

film indirectly undermines the Danish self-image of the resistance as a cohesive whole. In reality, people were operating in a grey zone, where everything that was black and white when war broke out slowly became a fog that erased right and wrong, and no one was what they appeared to be.

Madsen is willing to run the risk of bruising the Danish self-image. Not because it’s impossible to forgive that mistakes were made during the war, but because the nation has since neglected to talk about the mistakes that were made. “So many difficult questions crop up,” Madsen says. “Why was it important to tell the story of Denmark as a land of resistance, even if it wasn’t? We collaborated with the Germans. There were no more than 1,000 active resistance fighters in the entire country. No one else dared. What is this collective misrepresentation we have created that still shapes us today?”

Back to April 9, the day of occupation. Obviously, Madsen was not alive back then, yet he has no problem evoking that day. “I have so many images of April 9,” he says. “I grew up in a family of military officers and my grandfather was very close to the resistance. I used to sit at the table as a kid with these old resistance fighters and listen to their stories. They would talk about the shame. So, I feel I know April 9 and what it represents and the feelings it aroused, even if I wasn’t alive at the time” ■

For further information on Flame & Citron, see reverse section.

#### OLE CHRISTIAN MADSEN

Born 1966, Denmark. Graduated in direction from the National Film School of Denmark, 1993. Awarded for his graduation film *Happy Jim*. Directed the highly acclaimed six-part drama series *The Spider* (2000) and episodes of the TV series *Taxi* and *Unit One*. Has written and directed a number of short fiction films, including *Sinan’s Wedding* (1996). Madsen’s feature film debut was *Pizza King* (1999). His second feature was the critically acclaimed *Kira’s Reason – A Love Story* (2001), awarded at Mannheim-Heidelberg and Viareggio. *Angels in Fast Motion* (2005) drew a large audience in just a few weeks and brought home awards for Best Actor and Actress at Taormina. *Prague* (2006), another boxoffice success, brought home the Jury Award for Overall Excellence at San Jose. *Flame & Citron* is Madsen’s fifth feature film.

#### NIMBUS FILM

Founded 1993 by producers Birgitte Hald and Bo Ehrhardt. Were later joined by director Thomas Vinterberg. CEO is Jørgen Ramskov (since 2006). Considered a major player in Danish cinema, having attained success in seeking out new talents and emphasizing innovation. The company values long-term relationships with individual filmmakers and gives precedence to the creative collaboration between director, scriptwriter and producer. Celebrated for several dogme films, especially *The Celebration* (Thomas Vinterberg, 1998) and *Mifune* (Søren Kragh-Jacobsen, 1999). Has a strong brand in short fiction with such titles as *The Boy Who Walked Backwards* (Thomas Vinterberg, 1994) and Oscar nominee *Teis & Nico* (Henrik Ruben Genz, 1998). Feature films range widely in genre: Nikolaj Arcel’s political thriller *King’s Game* (2004) scored sky-high with the audience and critics alike, Dagur Kári’s bitter-sweet comedy *Dark Horse* (2005) was selected for Un Certain Regard at Cannes, and Pernille Fischer Christensen’s debut, the intimate two-person drama *A Soap* (2006) was double-winner at Berlin. Participants at the Berlinale 2008 were Natasha Arthy’s youth action drama *Fighter* (2007) and Søren Kragh-Jacobsen’s political thriller *What No One Knows* (2008). Has helmed Danish cinema’s costliest production ever, the resistance drama *Flame & Citron* (2008).





# REALITY BORES ME

**Henrik Ruben Genz brings the grotesque tale in *Terribly Happy* to life in stark, carefully composed images, recalling the American provinces of Edward Hopper's lonesome tableaux or classic westerns. The calm editing furthers the impression of time passing slowly in the country. But under the quiet surface secrets lurk.**

BY SOPHIE ENGBERG SONNE

Henrik Ruben Genz' new film *Terribly Happy* is another adaptation of an Erling Jepsen novel, following up last year's big hit, *The Art of Crying* directed by Peter Schønau Fog - although Genz' film is all its own. It's the story of a Copenhagen policeman Robert, who is transferred to a Southern Jutland

backwater. Though we don't know the back-story, he clearly considers his new job a sentence to be endured.

Meanwhile, the job of a small-town cop turns out to be a lot less laid-back than he expected. Country life may look simple, but the locals are nothing if not twisted, and Robert has a hard time adjusting to village life and the macabre, reigning social order.

**"In classic oaters, the hero arrives to civilise a place. But here, it's the hero who becomes civilised on the terms of the new place."**



*Terribly Happy* Photo: Karin Alsbirk

Genz knows what he's talking about. A Southern Jutlander himself, he was born in 1959, three years after Jepsen.

In fact, the two boys, Henrik and Erling, grew up on opposite sides of the same street. "It's almost impossible to live any closer than we did," Genz says. "Erling's parents had a grocery store on one side of the street and we lived on the other side. From my bedroom window, I could keep tabs on what was happening in their house. Back then, I wasn't aware of all the grim events he describes in *The Art of Crying*. But his house had a special atmosphere of something sealed in and claustrophobic – though, as a child, you don't have the words to describe it."

"I'm aware that opening with 'a man rides into town' sets a certain western mood. Still, in our day and age, isn't it okay to take things off the shelf and use a bit of everything?"

#### NO MIND FOR GENRES

Genz originally majored in drawing and printmaking in 1987 and later attended the National Film School, graduating with his student film *Cross Roads* in 1995. Subsequently, he worked at the Danish Broadcasting Corporation DR, directing a number of short films, documentaries and episodes of TV series, including the popular dramas *Nikolaj & Julie*, *Better Times* and, most recently, four episodes of *The Killing*.

Genz' short *Teis and Nico* was nominated for an Oscar in 1999, and in 2003 he directed his first feature, the children's film *Someone Like Hodder*. His next film was a comedy, *Chinaman* (2005), about a construction worker who falls in love at his local Chinese takeaway.

*Terribly Happy* is hard to pigeonhole. It has traces of many disparate genres, including folk comedies, westerns and horror films. "I don't know squat about genres, and I don't really think in terms of genres when I make a film. But of course, my film has certain genre characteristics. I'm obviously aware that opening with 'a man rides into town' sets a certain western mood. Still, in our day and age, isn't it okay to take things off the shelf and use a bit of everything?" Genz asks rhetorically. "Instead of thinking in terms of genre, I wanted the film to be experienced as a nightmare in a surreal, parallel world where things are fairly realistic, but everything is always shifting ever so slightly."

#### WHAT THE BOG HIDES

Robert comes to town as a good cop. Though he tries to keep cool and concentrate on his job, he soon falls for the local beauty, Ingelise. But there's a price: Ingelise's husband is the most dangerous man in town. Adapting Jepsen's novel, Genz chose to focus on Robert's development, as he switches from one code to another. "In classic oaters, the hero arrives to civilise a place. But here, it's the hero who becomes civilised on the terms of the new place," Genz says.

Some directors would balk at taking on a Jepsen adaptation on the heels of Peter Schønau Fog's huge success with *The Art of Crying*, but Genz is taking it all in stride. "For one, I started *Terribly Happy* before *The Art of Crying* was even finished," he says. "That it became such a big hit is great, but it didn't affect my work. At best, it will help my project, because a lot of people are looking for another helping of Jepsen. At worst, people will compare my film to his and be disappointed by the differences."

Genz' film has traces of the novel's characteristic magical realism. "In the reality we usually inhabit, people are convicted and punished when they commit a crime against society. But here, the pub is judge and jury, and anyone who threatens the community literally ends up in the bog. The bog is an image of the community's lawlessness. That's a radical break with reality, of course, but I hope the viewer will accept it as part of the film's context," Genz says.

#### THE TYRANNY OF SILENCE

*Do you recognize the novel's image of a provincial town in Southern Jutland?*

"It's hard to say, because memory is always a bit diffuse," he says. "People are always asking me, amazed, 'Was it really that bad?' That I'm not amazed may be because I don't see





Terribly Happy Photo: Karin Alsbrink

**“Maybe because I trained as a printmaker, I long for a classical expression. What’s hip right now may be terribly outdated three years from now, whereas classical things have a lasting modernity.”**

how weird it is myself. Maybe because it’s familiar to me. The thing about Erling’s descriptions is you think he’s lying – or at least laying it on thick – but he’s really very exacting about the truthfulness of his stories.”

*How much is true and how much is made up?*

“Uh-oh, don’t ask me that,” Genz laughs, turning serious. “The scenario is fictional, but there’s a certain truth to it that’s about the tyranny of silence. Though the description isn’t 100% realistic, thematically there’s something there that I think will be familiar in a lot of places: Everyone knows everything, but as long as no one says anything, it’s not really happening. That’s one of the rules: We keep quiet and as long as we do that, things never happened.

“It’s about putting all the demons into the bog. In that sense, the bog is a psychological place where all the truth that can’t be handled is concealed, a mental bog. But the moment someone comes in from outside and scratches the surface a bit, everyone turns out to know everything.

“I recognize that from real life. That’s how a small town works. Everyone is at everyone else’s mercy and you have to keep quiet about what goes on in people’s homes, or the community breaks down,” he says.

#### OUTSIDE TIME AND PLACE

The magical realism renders *Terribly Happy* oddly timeless. No outer signs reveal whether we are in 1968, 1988 or 2008.

“Maybe because I trained as a printmaker, I long for a classical expression. What’s hip right now may be terribly outdated three years from now, whereas classical things have a lasting modernity. I don’t need to be in on the latest thing. I actually pull back from it,” Genz says.

*Is there a straight line from Someone Like Hodder to Terribly Happy?*

“Stylistically, there’s a connection. But content-wise, my films are widely different,” Genz says. “Probably, what they have in common is that they strip reality of all unnecessary things, leaving a somewhat artificial, detached or staged reality. Some people like real life with all its sprawl – I try to get rid of everything insignificant.

“A lot of my work is made in doubt, and out of that doubt I have to create a framework that I believe in and that will last beyond autumn 2008. That’s why I go for a kind of non-time and non-place in my films. I have a need for the fantastical, for distancing myself from reality. When I watch films set in the reality I move in every day, I’m bored. I think films should strive for an element of magic – lifting the action out of the day-to-day. Well, reality simply bores me, I guess. Can you say that?” Genz asks with a shy laugh. “The material should have a level of fantasy that allows you to re-experience the film in any given period of your life and always get new aspects out of it. I think that goes for *Terribly Happy*, too. It’s not ‘clear’ or complete but open. Then, it doesn’t really matter what genre or type of story it is, as long as it’s fresh every day” ■

*Terribly Happy is planned to premiere in August. For further information on the film, see reverse section.*



Director Henrik Ruben Genz Photo: Jan Buus

#### HENRIK RUBEN GENZ

Born 1959, Denmark. Graduate of the National Film School of Denmark, 1995. Received Best Film and Script Award for his graduation film *Cross Roads* at the Film School Festival in Munich. His short fiction film *Teis & Nico* (1998), a festival hit worldwide, received the Crystal Bear in Berlin and an Academy Award nomination. Has directed a number of TV series, including the Emmy nominee *The Killing* (2007). Genz’ feature film debut, *Someone Like Hodder* (2003), also popular at festivals, was awarded in Buenos Aires, Chicago, London and Zlin, among others. *Chinaman* (2005) was a winner at Karlovy Vary and received the Grand Prix and Silver Arrow for Best Actor (Bjarne Henriksen). *Terribly Happy* is Genz’ third feature film.

#### FINE & MELLOW

Founded 2002 by Thomas Gammeltoft, former producer and co-owner of Angel Production. The company consists of a joint partnership between Nordisk Film, Thomas Gammeltoft and directors Hella Joof and Jannik Johansen. Director Jannik Johansen made his debut with the drama-comedy *Stealing Rembrandt* (2003), which was excellently received with over a quarter of a million admissions in its first weeks. Hella Joof’s comedy *Oh Happy Day* (2004) enjoyed the same success and has been sold to Disney for a US remake. *Chinaman* (2005), starring Bjarne Henriksen and US-Chinese diva Vivian Wu (*The Last Emperor* and *Pillow Book*), was award-winning director Henrik Ruben Genz’ second feature film. Another Jannik Johansen feature was *Murk* (2005), a psychological thriller written by Oscar winner Anders Thomas Jensen in collaboration with the director. *Terribly Happy* (2008), helmed by Henrik Ruben Genz, is based on a novel by Erling Jepsen who was also the original author behind *The Art of Crying* (Peter Schønau Fog, 2007).



# POWER GAME IN AN ICE-COLD WORLD

**Civilisation is a wonderful thing, Kristian Levring says. But we need to keep in mind that people are animals who need a certain freedom. That's the subject of all his films, including his latest, *Fear Me Not*.**

BY CHRISTIAN MONGGAARD

Who are we and who do we pretend to be? Kristian Levring asks in his new Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde-inspired drama, *Fear Me Not*. "Surely, we are all fascinated by how it's possible to live with another person without knowing who that person is," the Danish director says.

*Fear Me Not* stars Ulrich Thomsen, Paprika Steen, Lars Brygmann and Stine Stengade. Thomsen plays Michael, who is taking a leave of absence from his job – the unspoken reason being that he has suffered a minor breakdown – and decides to enrol as test subject in a medical study of some new antidepressants, under the direction of his brother-in-law (Brygmann). Quickly, Michael changes, growing distant from his wife (Steen) and his family life, as he finds himself increasingly at the mercy of his passions and compulsions.

"Then it all comes down on his head," says Levring, who co-wrote the screenplay with Anders Thomas Jensen. "Civilisation is a very thin veneer, and it doesn't take much before it starts cracking. Renoir, whom I adore, did a version of the Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde-story, *Experiment in Evil* (1959), with Jean-Louis Barrault. I watched it when I was 13 and it really impressed me. Barrault's character doesn't change physically, which is a lot scarier than a classic horror film where someone grows fangs."

## THE AUDIENCE CAN THINK FOR THEMSELVES

To Levring, Michael is no psychopath. Nor is he convinced that Michael's mental transformation in *Fear Me Not* is inevitable. "If the thing with the drugs hadn't come up, I'm not sure he would have come undone like that," the director says. "He's had some bad luck. Things could have worked out differently, but life has kicked him around a lot. Describing the character, it was important not to have one thing making him what he is. Let's say, he was physically abused as a child and that's why he's a psychopath. I wanted to avoid that kind of interpretation."

There is room for discussion. Levring and Thomsen spent a long time talking about the character without arriving at an ultimate explanation to serve up to the audience. "I personally prefer the kind of film that lets you do your own thinking about why something happens. Completely extreme things happen to some people, and there is no one explanation for their mental state. Where most people are concerned, there are many explanations for the way they are."

Ambiguity and nuances were a big issue for Levring and Jensen, as they were writing *Fear Me Not*. The script was rewritten several times and the film changed genres in the

process. "I could easily have made a splatter film," Levring says. "At one point, we actually had a splatter version. But the scenes turned increasingly psychological. That presented a conflict and we had to clear up our concepts. We spent a long time defining the genre. Now, in a sense, the film is beyond genre. Personally, I'm sick to death of violence in films, and it's interesting to me to make a film that deals with some very violent things but really shows very little violence. Instead, we try to keep the audience on their toes: What's he doing, when will he do that?"

## FORMS AND TRADITIONS

Isolated people losing their civilisation is a recurring theme in Levring's films, not least his English-language breakthrough, *The King Is Alive* (2000). The film, which was also conceived in close collaboration with Jensen, strands a group of tourists in an African desert and watches as their genteel facades soon start cracking.

Levring attended the National Film School of Denmark with Lars von Trier and was one of the four original Dogme Brothers. *The King Is Alive* was the last in the first cycle of Dogme films. It was also his first feature in 14 years. Straight out of film school, he made his directorial debut with the ill-received *A Shot from the Heart* (1986). "It was a fiasco, a crisis, but it taught me a lot," he says today. "You always learn more from your mistakes than your successes." Instead, he went into commercials. His work took him out of Denmark, first to France and later to Britain, where he became much in demand as a commercial director and still lives. In 1995, when von Trier called and asked him to be a partner in Dogme95, he couldn't refuse.

Levring made his second English-language feature in 2002, *The Intended*, working with the actress Janet McTeer, who co-wrote and starred in the film. McTeer also acted in *The King Is Alive*. Around that time, Levring decided to break out of commercials and dedicate himself to features. *The Intended*, a mental image of the crumbling British empire set at a trading post in the Malay jungle in 1924, depicts a group of very different people, desperately and without much luck clinging to tradition and form.

It would seem obvious to question Levring's faith in civilisation as an idea. "Don't get me wrong," he says. "I think civilisation is a wonderful thing. It's wonderful that people can live together in cities without killing each other all the time. But, I think it's also important to remember who we are. If we only want to see ourselves as a very upstanding, even righteous, race – that's a very limited view of the animals we also are. Unless we accept that, what happened in Germany 60-70 years ago could easily happen again."

It's tough on people, always having to do the right thing and live the right way, Levring says, even though we do need certain frames to act within. "I've tried living in countries where people are very uptight, and that's not a good thing. We need a certain freedom. There should be limits, of course,

"I've tried living in countries where people are very uptight, and that's not a good thing. We need a certain freedom. There should be limits, of course, but if we make those limits too tight, something's got to give."





Fear Me Not Photos: Per Arnesen

“In the Victorian age, the setting of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, people were completely locked in place. Meanwhile, you read about the vast number of prostitutes living in London at the time – literally hundreds of thousands. There really was an underworld and an overworld. And, in our world, there still is.”





Director Kristian Levring (pointing) Photo: Per Arnesen

**KRISTIAN LEVRING**

Born 1957, Denmark. Brought up in France and Switzerland. Graduated in editing from the National Film School of Denmark, 1988. Levring is the fourth signatory of Dogme95. Has directed more than 300 commercials, for which he has received numerous Danish and international awards. Has also edited a large number of documentaries and feature films. His directorial debut came in 1986 with the science fiction film *A Shot from the Heart*. The English-language desert drama *The King is Alive* (2000) is Levring's contribution to Dogme95. The film took home an award at the Film Camera Festival in Bitola, Macedonia, and Jennifer Jason Leigh won for Best Actress in Tokyo. In 2002 Levring returned with the critically acclaimed UK production *The Intended*. *Fear Me Not* is Levring's fourth feature film.

but if we make those limits too tight – as the Michael character did in his life – something's got to give. In the Victorian age, the setting of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, people were completely locked in place. Meanwhile, you read about the vast number of prostitutes living in London at the time – literally hundreds of thousands. There really was an underworld and an overworld. And, in our world, there still is."

**THE HOUSE AS A FIFTH CHARACTER**

Like the desert in *The King Is Alive* and the jungle in *The Intended*, the architect-designed house, where Michael and his family live, plays a major role in *Fear Me Not*. Like the two other films, *Fear Me Not* was shot on location. Its well-composed frames have a similar texture and grain – not surprising, since all three films were shot by the same cinematographer, Jens Schlosser.

"After all, we live in the world we live in," Levring says. "It's an important part of who we are. Sometimes a room can speak as loudly as any line of dialogue. It's an interesting way of looking at people. I like films that have an inner landscape, a psychological landscape. The film has a lot of nature shots, which become psychological states. At least, that's how they were intended. As I see it, that's something films can do, but a lot of the time it's not used as much as it should be.

"I was thinking, if you were doing a modern version of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, it would be set in a world where everything is designed through and through. That's today's image of the upper middle class. *Fear Me Not* could easily have been what I think of as a kitchen-table film. It has a lot of family scenes. Keeping it visual was a fun problem to solve, not just setting up a camera in an IKEA kitchen. I always thought of the house as a fifth character in the film. The house is very open, while the film deals with people who conceal everything. They hide their cards. So, I liked the idea of making the house so open. *Fear Me Not* could have been made with lots of shadows and darkness, and it was fun to go against that," Levring says.

For Levring, it was important to make the film – which is about control, or loss of control – in a very controlled manner. Everything was storyboarded. The 90-minute film had a 90-page screenplay, and very little footage was shot that didn't make it into the final film. "It's more like Hitchcock would have conceived a film," Levring says. "It's about a power game in an ice-cold world, and the style should match that. It's a controlled film, unlike my other films."

**BACK IN DENMARK**

*Fear Me Not* is the 51-year-old director's first Danish-language film in more than 20 years. It proved to be a good experience:

"Danish directors might moan about what it's like to make a film in Denmark. But for me, it went like a dream. It's easier to make a film in your native language. Directing in a language other than your own, you have to go over what you're doing an extra time. In Danish, my reactions are more immediate, which makes the work easier, more sure. Writing dialogue you're much more certain about the finer meanings of a line. I would gladly take that discussion with anyone who thinks otherwise. That's not saying that you can't make films in a language other than your own, but it's just easier in your native tongue."

*The King Is Alive* was shot in Namibia, *The Intended* in Asia and at one point *Fear Me Not* was supposed to take place in a nondescript American suburb. "I tend to make things harder for myself than I need to. You can probably tell from watching some of my films," he laughs. "With this film, I thought: Filmmaking doesn't have to be hard. There are a lot of great actors in Denmark and a lot of good film people, so why not shoot a film here? Why do you always have to run around and shoot all over the world? Actually, it was Anders Thomas who asked me, 'Why do you make it so hard for yourself?! And he's right' ■

For further information on *Fear Me Not*, see reverse section.

**ZENTROPA**

Founded 1992 by director Lars von Trier and producer Peter Aalbæk Jensen. One of the largest production companies in Scandinavia. Has established a platform for young filmmakers and veteran directors alike, and covers feature film production as well as a range of services within DVD manufacture, digital communications and concept development. Is greatly acknowledged for having reinvigorated the industry with Dogme 95. In 2008, Nordisk Film buys 50% of Zentropa shares, thus becoming co-owner. International breakthrough came with Lars von Trier's *Breaking the Waves* (1996) and continued with Lone Scherfig's Berlin winner *Italian for Beginners* (2000), one of Zentropa's greatest successes with a record-breaking number of admissions. Trier's *Dancer in the Dark* (2000) received the Palme d'Or, and also selected for Cannes were *Dogville* (2003) and *Manderlay* (2005), the first two films in Trier's US trilogy, awaiting *Washington*. Zentropa has launched several films by Susanne Bier, Per Fly and Annette K. Olesen, and is coproducer of Thomas Vinterberg's English-language features. Other notable achievements include Crystal Bear winner *We Shall Overcome* (2006), Oscar nominee *After the Wedding* (2006), the special effects tour de force *Island of Lost Souls* (2007) and winner in Rotterdam and Göteborg *Go with Peace Jamil* (2008). Shorts include Oscar nominee *At Night* (2007).



# TROELL'S MOMENTS

**You rarely see two countries acting as equal partners on a film. The Danish-Swedish coproduction *Everlasting Moments* by Swedish veteran auteur Jan Troell is the happy exception.**

**Thomas Stenderup, the film's Danish producer, tells about his collaboration with Troell.**

BY AGNETE DORPH STJERNFELT

A boy is sitting at the bottom of a lake, the water around him streaked through with light from above. Reeds sway in the dim underwater half-light. We are near the end of *Everlasting Moments*. The boy is

Maria's seventh child, a child her husband forced on her, raping her after a fight. A child she tried to lose by jumping off the kitchen table. A boy who was struck by polio and is now enjoying his weightlessness in the water.

The scene does nothing to advance the action. The boy isn't essential to the central story - much less so his enjoying weightlessness.

This is vintage Jan Troell. In his storytelling, he takes his sweet time with incidentals, often including generously calm scenes for their own sake. Scenes and shots are important in themselves. You might even say that the boy is Troell himself, resting immersed and weightless in his images, with his own light-streaked, translucent perspective on the world, the way of images.

Or, as the photographer in the film, Pedersen (a.k.a. Piff Paff Puff), tells Maria: "What do you see as you look through the camera, Maria? You see a world there to be explored - to preserve, to describe. Those who've seen it, they can't just close their eyes. You can't turn back."

## INTUITION AND PREPARATION

Troell's images have tremendous poetry. From his early feature *This Is Your Life* from 1966 to *Everlasting Moments*, images are the crux from which everything else draws significance and weight.

Discussing his work method in an interview in this magazine five years ago, Troell characteristically said that he prepares for his films by looking at pictures: "I look at pictures. Black and white pictures in books of photography. Or I charge up by going to art shows. When I leave the gallery, I find that I see people more clearly. I always take along some photo books when I'm shooting, and if I have a problem with a shot for a film, for instance, I pick up a photo book and open it on a random page and find the solution there. That usually works." (FILM#30, p. 23)

Troell shoots his own films, though in recent years he has been sharing the camera with the Swedish cinematographer Mischa Gavrjusjov.

Thomas Stenderup, his Danish producer, discusses Troell's method: "The biggest challenge of producing *Everlasting Moments* was allowing Jan to create his

Troell with his leading actors, Maria Heiskanen and Mikael Persbrandt



Photo: Nille Leander



film. That is, giving Jan the time and other conditions he requires, while keeping the film on budget and on schedule.

“Jan has his own way of working where time is all essential. He needs time, lots of time, on an actual location – he doesn’t like to work in the studio – before he is ready to shoot,” Stenderup says.

“He is not a traditional director of actors. Of course, he knows where he wants to go with a character or a scene, but I never saw him direct actors in the usual sense. Instead, he puts a big effort into casting. Often, I suspect, he picks the actors long before the story has taken its final shape. He spends a lot of time talking with the actors about their parts before shooting. And he hopes to be surprised when he does! For extended or difficult scenes between two actors, he might ask them to go off by themselves somewhere – and come back with their take on the scene. Which, most often, he gladly accepts. In general, he is extremely attentive to the players in terms of lines, arrangements, etc.

“Troell doesn’t work from storyboards or anything like that but lets intuition and the moment rule. Usually, he will walk around the location for a long time by himself to sort of get a handle of the place. Only then does he decide where to put the camera, which allows him to work – and operate the camera – in his own way. It’s a unique method that I think is crucial to Troell’s famous poetic imagery.

“He almost always keeps the camera mounted on a jib arm on a dolly. This set-up gives him a lot of mobility that he exploits with his intuition. He doesn’t do ‘set-ups’ or ‘takes’ in the conventional sense. Practically no two takes are alike in terms of framing and focus. Every time he turns on the camera, something new happens – as if he were shooting a documentary. As a result, the footage for each individual scene includes a wealth of frames and details. His experience and control tell him when he has a scene covered – his way.

“This method is very demanding of his co-cameraman, Gavrjusjov, who is responsible for lighting scenes in a way that allows Jan to take ‘liberties’. It also asks a lot of the set designer, Peter Bävman, responsible for giving each set the flexibility Jan needs.

“In other words, Jan doesn’t know exactly what shots he will be doing, when he meets up with his crew in the morning. I’m sure he has a clear goal, an inner image. But the location, moods, characters or details in the now decide the outcome. And that can take time. On some days, even a lot of time. But once he actually starts shooting, he usually works pretty fast, and we usually complete the day’s schedule, because we prioritise the time we have.

“The challenge lay in enabling Jan to work like that. At first glance, it looks like production hell, not knowing what we’ll be doing when we get together in the morning, since everyone on the crew needs to know things to be able to prepare and

plan. So, the first requirement is to make everybody understand that’s how it is. That it *will* get frustrating at times. And then, having the time (and money) to work this way.

“Jan and I made a deal that we would put a priority on time, no matter what the budget. Sure, it’s a historical drama with potentially pricy set-ups, but having the time to create the images had to be the top priority.

“Over two years, we raised around 5 million euros from 26 financiers in five countries. Crucially, both Sweden and Denmark embraced the film, recognising the project as equally Danish and Swedish. Moreover, we secured distribution for the film across Scandinavia and in Germany.

“On that backdrop, we decided to spend 13 weeks on shooting, plus one week on second-unit shooting. In other words, we put a marked priority on time – and, to a slightly lesser degree, on big historical sets. We had intended to solve a lot of those digitally (cheaper!), but ultimately we dropped a lot of the digital effects, because Jan would rather shoot what he saw and felt on location,” Stenderup says.

*How did this method of working affect the editing?*

“Jan shoots a large amount of footage, which is one reason why he prefers 16mm – then film stock doesn’t eat up the whole budget. At the same time, it gives him the not-quite-perfect visual aesthetic he prefers. With such large and very varied footage, it’s a bit like cutting a documentary. We set aside

In Sweden in the early 1900s, in a time of social change and poverty, the young working class woman Maria wins a camera in a lottery. The camera enables Maria to see the world through new eyes, but it also becomes a threat to her somewhat alcoholic womanizer of a husband, as it brings the charming photographer Pedersen into her life.





26 weeks for editing, which, it must be said, is quite a long period for editing a fiction film. That we picked the Danish editor Niels Pagh Andersen was no coincidence. He is known for his fine work on a number of documentaries, and Jan and Niels quickly clicked into a fruitful collaboration. Jan, for once, left the main responsibility for editing with someone else – though he did have a hand in it,” Stenderup says.

#### FRIENDLY, HUMBLE – AND STUBBORN

Stenderup is known for his huge, uncompromising personal engagement he pours into the films of his small production company, Final Cut. His reasons for throwing himself into a project as unwieldy as *Everlasting Moments* are characteristic of Stenderup as a producer:

“I’m a huge admirer of Troell’s films. As I see it, he is an auteur of the first order. I’m blown away by the poetic power of his images,” Stenderup says.

“The first time I read the proposal for the film, I thought, ‘This could be a real Troell film!’ The material actually comes from a book by Jan’s wife, Agneta Ulfsäter Troell, about her family’s history – a wonderful book. But Jan made the material his own. Perhaps he saw himself in it. At first glance, *Everlasting Moments* is a classic story of a working woman’s emancipation. What makes the material unique for me, is its poetic-emotional layer regarding the magic of photography: capturing a moment on a piece of photosensitive paper as proof of an ‘everlasting moment’, real people living, smiling, dancing, crying. Emotionally, a photograph becomes a reminder, and an aid, to live life on the conditions of mortality,” the producer says.

“Then I thought, ‘Will financing and producing this fairly costly, large-scale historical drama ever work out?’ But, I had the sense that Jan simply had to do this film. So we made a deal to do the film, no matter how much or how little money we got together. On that premise, the project got rolling.”

*What kind of dialogue did you and Troell keep up about the film? How do you work together?*

“Mainly, we talked a lot *before* the shooting, about the general things – crew, casting, etc. But we also discussed the story, which Jan co-wrote with Niklas Rådström and Agneta. For me, these talks involved finding out what the most important things were in order for Jan to realise the film in his own way – and, as I mentioned, that was mainly a question of time.

“For Jan (the artist), I (the producer) am the capital. And, as such, I represent restrictions of time and money. Jan basically seems to need this personified conflict in his daily work, possibly to sharpen his eye on how to best use the limited resources. And where that’s concerned, Jan tends to have sharp opinions. I practically never interfere in the shooting, but I watch all the footage as we go along. Periodically, we discuss the footage and the progress of production, and I feel free to say exactly what I think. I recommend things, big and small. And sometimes, Jan will ‘buy’ one of my suggestions. Overall, I’d say, Jan’s great strength, regardless of his method, is making everyone feel they are contributing to the film.

“Naturally, we experience conflicts of various degrees in the process. Personally, my problem



Photo: Nille Leander

#### JAN TROELL

Born 1931, Sweden. One of the most important Scandinavian filmmakers. His best-known works are *The Emigrants* (1971), which earned Oscar nominations for Best Picture, Director, and Screenplay, and its sequel, *The New Land* (1972). The films were hailed collectively as the Swedish equivalent of *Gone With the Wind* and were notable for Troell’s direct and humane treatment of his characters’ plight. After a couple of American film assignments, *Zandy’s Bride* (1974) and *Hurricane* (1979), Troell returned to Scandinavia and to Swedish history with *The Flight of the Eagle* (1982), a story of the failed 1897 balloon expedition to the North Pole undertaken by S.A. Andrée. Since then, Troell has made *Sagolandet* (1986), *Il Capitano* (1991), which won the Silver Bear in Berlin, *As White as in Snow* (2001) and, in 1996, the best example of a Scandinavian coproduction becoming a hit in all its local territories, the acclaimed *Hamsun*.



Photo: Robin Skjoldborg

#### THOMAS STENDERUP

Born 1954, Denmark. MD in Economics, 1981. Graduated as creative producer from the National Film School of Denmark in 1989. Teacher at the University of Copenhagen and Roskilde (1981-87). Chief editor of a weekly youth magazine, *Transit*, at the national broadcaster DR (1989-91). Secretary General of EU’s Media Project for the Creative Documentary, an initiative of the MEDIA Programme under the European Community (1991-93). Created Final Cut Productions (1993). Head of Department and responsible for financial support of feature films and documentaries at the Danish Film Institute (1998-2001). Has been a member of the boards of Filmkontakt Nord, Danish Producers Association, The Council for Shorts- & Documentaries, Eurimages and Nordic Film- and Television Fund.

#### FINAL CUT

Founded 1993 by Thomas Stenderup. Although creative documentary is its original line of production, the company has been involved in feature film production since 1998. Produces short fiction as well. Has released a number of awardwinning documentaries, among them *Portal to Peace* (Thomas Stenderup, 1996), a cinematic poem about burial rituals in Cuba, and *The German Secret* (Lars Johansson, 2004), a personal and dramatic uncovering of a family past. Among the company’s acclaimed features is Peter Schønau Fog’s feature film debut *The Art of Crying*, which brought home 14 international awards last year.



Photo: Nille Leander

#### Troell’s standard set-up, a 16mm camera on a jib arm mounted on a dolly

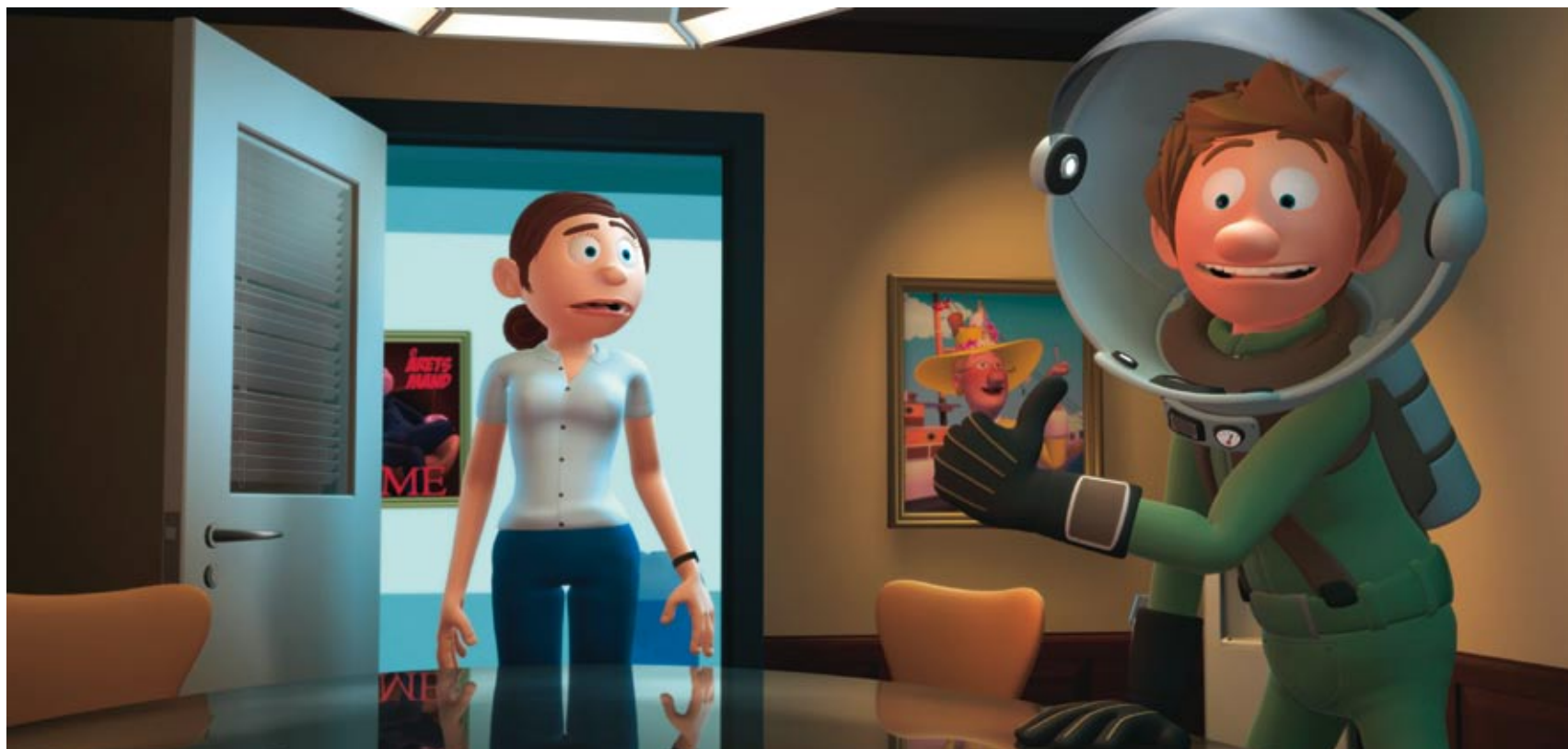
was that it’s hard to say no to Jan, because he’s both friendly and humble. And because he’s stubborn. All of which make the conflicts harder. At times, I really have to pull myself together to say no to him and hold on, inside, to the need to defend the film – including parts we haven’t come to yet that might need additional resources, too. Jan isn’t always all that understanding about this. Still, our whole collaboration rests on a basic trust that ultimately we want the same thing. And an understanding that, once in a while, we have to take some battles – for the film’s sake,” Stenderup says.

*What did you enjoy most working on this production?*

“Basically, it’s a huge pleasure to produce a film by a visual poet I admire enormously: being close to the creation of these ‘everlasting moments’. Production-wise, it’s a complicated film, and people went above and beyond the call of duty. The film is not quite done yet, but I’ll go out on a limb and say I’m really happy about it,” Stenderup says, “and well satisfied with the process of making it” ■

*For further information on Everlasting Moments and the documentary Troell’s Magic Mirror, see reverse section.*





Journey to Saturn. Framegrab

# DANISH ASTRONAUTS MAKE FIRST BEER RUN TO SATURN

**Cultivating a unique style and encouraging young animators to develop creative solutions on a low budget is one way for a small nation with a very down-to-earth sensibility to reach for the stars. That's the philosophy behind the second computer-animated feature from the internationally respected Danish animation studio A. Film.**

BY KIM SKOTTE

If you told the people behind *Ice Age* or *Shrek* how computer animation is done in Denmark, they would think you were putting them on. At a budget of less than two million euros, *Journey to Saturn* is almost laughably cheap by Hollywood standards; a 90-minute animated film made for the price of a medium-sized bag of peanuts.

Nonetheless, A. Film in Copenhagen churns out 45 seconds of finished animation a week, an almost staggering output in a world where three seconds

of finished film a week is a not-unusual production pace. This spring, they are forging ahead full steam on Denmark's most ambitious computer-animated feature to date. Actually, without competition, the most ambitious ever. Granted, only one other 3D animated feature was ever made in Denmark. But still!

*Journey to Saturn* is the story of a crew of beer-chugging Danish astronauts, so-called Daneonauts, dispatched to Saturn in a fit of greed and nationalistic overreaching. Carrying a cargo of essentials – bottle openers, dildos, bad jokes and Moon Boots – they stumble into one outrageous spacecapade after another, ramming a vicious space monster and even reaching the Gates of Heaven. Danish folk wit has always been exceedingly relaxed about Pearly Gatekeeper Saint Peter, pictured here as a bouncer at a heavenly corner bar.

#### AMERICAN-DANISH DIRECTOR

While broadly aimed, the film is still light-years away from the typical computer animation formula of funny animals and ironic pop culture references.

Be that as it may, there is at least one American who does not scoff at the project. The film is directed by an American, Craig Frank, with two youthful Danish co-directors, Thorbjørn Christoffersen and Kresten Vestbjerg Andersen.

*Journey to Saturn* takes off from a classic Danish comic book from the seventies that is almost too Danish to be true. Even so, it was Frank, the 'foreign worker', who went to bat for the idea of adapting the book.

"I read *Journey to Saturn* a few years ago and just thought, 'Fuck, that's so cool!'" the American director says. Hailing from St. Louis, Missouri, Frank has lived and worked in Denmark for 17 years. He is married to a Danish woman with whom he has twins. By a roundabout route – Frank has a degree in art history from Columbia University and a background in painting, drawing and advertising – he ended up in the wonderful world of animation, Danish style.

"I'm a seventies guy," Frank says. "I read a lot of underground comics in the States and I could tell





Journey to Saturn. Framegrab

that *Saturn's* style was very inspired by *The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers* and Robert Crumb. But the story noodled around in a whole other orbit. I was crazy about the idea of this little country going out and showing the big boys what they're made of but fuck everything up, because they happen to insult some aliens! To me, it was obvious this was what we should do after *Terkel in Trouble*."

*Terkel in Trouble*, A. Film's first feature-length 3D animated project, was an ironic and blunt comedy about schoolyard bullying, boozing, steel-pipe wielding and other hijinks. They developed the technique as they went along. The budget was low, and the youthful computer whizzes Thorbjørn and Kresten learned by doing.

*Terkel in Trouble* was a huge hit in Denmark, so launching a new project as fast as possible seemed the obvious way to go. After some wrangling over the rights, Frank got his way. Hard disks were booted and soon spaceship engines were gunning, too, at Denmark's cartoon counterpart to Cape Kennedy: Cape Kurt, named after the ruthless businessman Kurt Maj, the expedition's financial backer.

The runway was cleared for blastoff of the project, which Frank jokingly calls an "epic movie with a very small piggybank".

#### THE MAN BEHIND THE STORY

*Journey to Saturn*, the Danish comic book, is from 1977. In his all-too brief career, the cartoonist Claus Deleuran penned a fistful of good-natured, anarchic and biting satirical comic book gems steeped in the left-wing political scene of the day. His black and white strips were totally laid-back, teeming myriad hilarious eyeball kicks. *Journey to Saturn*, one of the best and most popular of his books, spoofs the Danish dreams of empire. The superpowers usually have space to themselves – but a happy-go-lucky attitude, home-grown ingenuity and, better not forget, a case



Journey to Saturn. Framegrab

of beer will get you far. Especially, when throwing in a notoriously lax view of authority. A gaggle of drunken, horny Danes under the command of a rigid military man, Anders Skrydsbøl, journey into space, facing down perils of all sorts and even saying hello to no less a deity than Hippie Jesus himself.

#### OLD COMIC BOOK, NEW TECHNOLOGY

Bringing in trendsetting Danish director Nikolaj Arcel and up-and-coming young screenwriter Rasmus Heisterberg to co-write put the script in the best possible hands. The story is more linear now and Deleuran's sprawling cast of characters has been whittled down. A supporting character in the comic, Per, has been promoted to leading man. His and the other voices are mouthed by some of Denmark's hottest comedians.

Technically, *Journey to Saturn* builds on the lessons learned from the pioneering work on *Terkel in Trouble*. Visually, the new look is a lot more refined and much less puppet-like than *Terkel*, which could almost be characterized as digital claymation. Lighting is a special concern. And A. Film, like Pixar, has deliberately been playing around with coloured, instead of black, shadows. To boot, Kresten has invented a special character generator, a technique that makes it possible to do crowds by giving each



Journey to Saturn. Framegrab

character individual features. There are plenty of occasions for that in *Journey to Saturn*. The film's central plot involves 250 characters and calls for a lot of crowd scenes.

"This is a lot more sophisticated, especially in terms of the gestures," Frank says.

#### ONE-JOKE-A-DAY MINIMUM

The production follows certain basic guidelines. As a rule, Craig, Thorbjørn and Kresten do not let a single production day pass without sneaking at least one little extra joke into a scene.

Are we dealing with a special Danish brand of humour? A logical question to ask an American who seems to have caught the undeniably very Danish tone of Deleuran's comics.

"To me, it's a singularly relaxed way of reacting to something very dramatic and drastic happening by popping open a brew and going, 'Oh, it'll be fine.' That's a very Danish thing," Frank says.

"Otherwise, I think Danish and British humour are actually very closely related," Frank says. "Both deal in irony and sarcasm. The same goes for the famous Danish *Jantelov* (10 variations on 'Don't think you are better than anyone else', *ed.*). I think I more or less grew up with that! We were six brothers in my house, and all I ever heard was my





Journey to Saturn. Framegrab

mother going, "You think you're so special. Don't you believe it!"

"So, sarcasm and irony is where I'm coming from. On the other hand, Danish humour has a lot fewer one-liners than American humour. Danish humour is more about winding things up and watching them go. And so is the humour in this film," Frank says.

#### BOYS WORKING LIKE MEN

The small rooms at A. Film are humming with activity, big kids guzzling cola and busting each other's chops. On computer monitors, character details are turned and tweaked to get the right texture, expressions and gestures. How does light fall on Saturn? Clearly a case for drawing on your imagination. But more down-to-earth questions stir the mind, as well. In computer animation, how do you make a heavy-set guy look really hefty? A lot of things that are obvious and simple in real life call for advanced technical inquisitiveness in the digital realm.

The easy, upbeat mood masks the intense concentration of the young animators working six to a room. They are busy. They have a variety of deadlines to meet up to the planned release in late September. The visuals are supposed to be finished in May. Then comes the sound, score and mixing which will last into June. For now, the studio - a quaint Danish mix of Pixar and NASA - is on schedule.

The countdown has begun to what, in more ways than one, is an unusual Danish journey in time and space - both deep space and cyberspace. Let's hope they never run out of beer or lame jokes in either space: to a Dane, that would be a cosmic disaster of cataclysmic proportions! ■

For further information on Journey to Saturn, see reverse section.

**"Danish humour has a lot fewer one-liners than American humour. Danish humour is more about winding things up and watching them go."**

*Craig Frank*



#### A. FILM

Founded 1988 by producer Anders Mastrup and animators Stefan Fjeldmark, Karsten Kiilerich, Jørgen Lerdam and Hans Perk. In 1995, Egmont bought into the company, making A. Film part of Egmont's film production branch, Nordisk Film. Today, A. Film is one of Scandinavia's largest animation houses, producing classical hand drawn and 3D animation. Has subcontracted for Warner Bros. Feature Animation, Don Bluth Studios, Fox Feature Animation, MTV Productions and others. Renowned for hits such as the international coproduction *Help! I'm A Fish* (2000), winner at Chigaco, and the low-budget 3D *Terkel in Trouble* (2004), which sold more than 350,000 tickets in its first weeks. Received an Academy Award nomination for the short *When Life Departs* (1996), a documentary-animation exploring childrens' attitudes toward death.

#### CRAIG FRANK

Born 1961, USA. Holds a degree in Art History from Columbia University. Has a background in painting, drawing and advertising. Art Director at different companies in Copenhagen, and since 1998 employed by A. Film. Has received a number of awards and nominations for his work. *Journey to Saturn* is his feature film debut.



#### THORBJØRN CHRISTOFFERSEN

Born 1978, Denmark. Self-taught 3D animator and illustrator. Began as a storyboarder at A. Film where he worked on *Jungle Jack*. Animated a number of commercials, among others for Coca Cola. Worked as a storyboarder on Disney's TV series *Tarzan*. Directorial debut with the low-budget 3D *Terkel in Trouble* (2004), a festival and domestic boxoffice hit, and recipient of the Youth Award at Malmö BUFF.



#### KRESTEN VESTBJERG ANDERSEN

Born 1978, Denmark. Self-taught 3D animator. Worked freelance with web design for Ecco, Solar and Certus. Employed by A. Film as a 3D animator. Has worked on a H.C. Andersen film for A. Film and on a production for Disney. Awarded at Annecy. Directorial debut with the low-budget 3D *Terkel in Trouble* (2004), a festival and domestic boxoffice hit, and recipient of a Youth Award at Malmö BUFF.



# EXILED IN YOUR OWN LIFE



**Young Man Falling** directed by Martin de Thurah has been selected for the medium length films section of the 47th International Critics' Week.

*Young Man Falling* is an experimental film with a captivating visual style. The film tells the story of 17-year-old Hue, who is living on the fringe of a true perception of reality. Cars pursue him, while a world full of rules and systems asks for his attention. How can he concentrate on his preparations for his French exam when the stuffed animals in his room begin to interfere? And what about Irene who disturbs with her invitations?

In an interview in Lodown Magazine, editor in chief Sven Fortmann describes de Thurah:

"I clearly remember the circumstances when I met director and all around visual maverick Martin de Thurah for the first time.

"At that time, his career already went bananas. He completed six major music video clips (and won several highly acclaimed awards) in 2005. His phone literally didn't stop ringing after he directed the groundbreaking video for Carpark North's single *Human*, a 3-minute distillation of pure genius that already introduced all the elements of the de Thurah universe to an international audience: complex and often dreamlike scenarios that comfortably sit between reality and fictional vision while bursting with emotional power and unique images. He didn't necessarily reinvent music videos, he just reminded us of the endless possibilities and excitement this medium is still capable to cause when things are done right.

"After working almost non-stop 2005-06 he decided to take a break from the music video business in order to prepare for his first film which he finally shot in Copenhagen's suburbs. The result, *Young Man Falling*, co-written with Rune Schjøtt, tells a simple story of the complex emotional world of a troubled teenager. Stripping things back to its quintessence while leaving enough room for highly impressive imagery within a duration of 45 minutes only – a format that last made an impact through the short films of Hal Hartley – de Thurah dives deeply into the psyche of Hue, a young man who uncomfortably alienates himself from life due to the stress of taking school-leaving exams, the loss of a family member and this thing called love. And it probably is the most honest film about teenage angst since Mike Mills surprised and impressed us with *Thumbsucker* two years ago."

And de Thurah comments on *Young Man Falling*:

"For this film I chose to work with subjects like the feeling of being in exile in your own life and the space between people.

"These are subjects that have been following me all my life, this kind of situation where you sit in a crowd and try to figure out if you're a part of this world or not. I think it's a concern for many people, especially when you're young and you don't know anything about the world. And you certainly don't know anything about love, even if love would hit you right in the face. It all connects to this huge insecurity.

"My ambition was to make a good film regardless of marketing aspects. I had to push that aside even though the film market in particular is a very conservative one. For me it was important to step away from making music videos. You know, it was kind of weird, I heard people were surprised about the film being so powerful ... they expected the film to be beautiful and more about form. It felt strange for me because I believed my videos always had a lot of content as well ...

"I tried my best to make it strong on all levels. That might be a strange thing to say for someone who got a reputation through music videos, but I don't like to be spectacular, the focus was always on the story, to tell things in this specific way that you really feel the protagonist's desperation" ■

(Lodown Magazine, November 2007)

For further information on *Young Man Falling*, see reverse section.



Director Martin de Thurah  
Photo: Søren Solkjær Starbird

## MARTIN DE THURAH

Born 1974, Denmark. Has a background in visual arts. Graduated in animation direction from the National Film School of Denmark, 2002. Visual effects artist on Danish feature films and director of music videos and short films. His video for Carpark North, *Human*, won Best Music Video at RESFEST, a Grammy at the Danish Music Awards and a Grand Prix at the Festival International des Art du Clip in Provence. De Thurah won Best New Director award at the CADS Music Vision Awards in London in 2006.

## TJU-BANG FILM

Founded 1997 by filmmakers Søren Fauli, Niels Gråbøl, Jacob Thuesen and Per K. Kirkegaard. Originally formed as a creative working collective, the company today produces their own films including fiction and documentaries. From 2005 owned by SF Film, thereby widening the scope towards feature films. Giving priority to creative documentaries, the company has signed acclaimed titles such as *Detour to freedom* (Sidse Stausholm, Mikala Krogh, 2001), *My Grandad's Murderer* (Søren Fauli, Mikala Krogh, 2004), winner in Paris and Sevilla, and *The Monastery* (Pernille Rose Grønkvær, 2006), recipient of more than a dozen awards, among these the Joris Ivens in Amsterdam. Also selected for IDFA was Phie Ambo's *Mechanical Love* (2007). The company signs its two first feature films with *Moving Up* (Christian Dyekjær, 2008) and *The Gift* (Niels Gråbøl, 2008).

# NETWORKING PRODUCERS UNDER SHADY PALMS



Producer Louise Vesth Photo: Christian Bjerregaard

**Louise Vesth of Zentropa will be representing Danish cinema as *Producer on the Move* in Cannes.**

BY SOPHIE ENGBERG SONNE

For the ninth year running, *Producers on the Move* at the Cannes Film Festival is the meeting place for the best and the brightest among young European producers.

Representing Denmark this year is Louise Vesth of Zentropa. In 2007, another Danish woman, Sarita Christensen of Copenhagen Bombay, was a *Producer on the Move*, and in 2005 Tine Grew Pfeiffer of Alphaville Pictures represented Denmark at the international industry meet.

Vesth, 35, is a producing graduate of the National Film School of Denmark. Working at Zentropa, she has produced Pia Bovin's children's film *Wallah Be* (2002), Aage Raisen-Nordentoft's youth film *Kick*

*'n' Rush* (2003), Christian E. Christiansen's *Life Hits* (2006) and Anders Rønnow Klarlund's *How to Get Rid of the Others* (2007). Most recently, Vesth produced Christian E. Christiansen's *At Night* (2007), an Academy Award nominee for Best Short Film. Christiansen is currently remaking *At Night* as a feature, due for release on August 1, 2008.

Cannes offers the selected producers opportunities for exchanging experiences and forging international contacts. What does her selection mean for Vesth?

"I'm not quite sure what it will mean," she says, "but I'm going in with an open mind." She points to the many opportunities for building networks with her European colleagues. "I hope to establish some relationships that might lead to something when I get back home. As a producer at Zentropa - a company with an international profile, looking

for even more of an international focus in the future - this opportunity is a real gift," Vesth says.

As the European Film Promotion, initiator of the programme, puts it, *Producers on the Move* picks "ambitious producers who have caused a stir in their home countries with their quality productions and in some cases have already made an impact at the international level." That's not entirely how Vesth would describe herself - leaving that for others to decide - though, she agrees, she is ambitious. "Sure, I'm an ambitious person, in the sense that I'm very much engaged in what I do. Still, my work is as much a hobby as a job - filmmaking, after all, is a lifetime commitment."

What type of film does Vesth like to throw herself into?

"For now, my project profile is probably marked by my willingness to give difficult projects a chance. I like to go to bat for my projects. At issue may be new talents needing to go the extra mile to prove their mettle or the nature of the project itself. Case in point: Anders Rønnow Klarlund's upcoming *Memories* is a challenging film. Told entirely in stills, it takes an entirely different path than our usual way of producing films."

This is not the first time Vesth serves as ambassador for Danish cinema abroad. Earlier in the year, she was in the Kodak Theatre in Los Angeles in a seat next to Christiansen, crossing her fingers that their short film *At Night* would come away with an Oscar. "It was super cool," Vesth says. "It was a life-long dream of Christian's, and he was as giddy as a kid whose biggest wish comes true. Also, for our future collaboration, it's cool that people appreciate what we're doing, though that doesn't carry much weight in the Danish system. There, other parameters count."

Though they returned from Hollywood without an Oscar, Vesth is still happy to represent Denmark and Danish cinema abroad, as she is now, in Cannes. "I feel really good about it," she says. "I'm proud to be a part of Danish cinema and I want to help keep Danish films visible abroad. I gladly do my part in that" ■

**"For now, my project profile is probably marked by my willingness to give difficult projects a chance. I like to go to bat for my projects."**







# EX PRES SIO NIST GENRE FILM

**Danish cinema is no longer all dogmas. It's genres, too. Among the new style-conscious genre films is Kasper Barfoed's thriller, *The Candidate*. Cinematographer Manuel Alberto Claro was in charge of the film's documentary-expressionist feel.**

BY EVA NOVRUP REDVALL

The *Bourne* films and *The Insider* are a few of the American titles that pop up, when cinematographer Manuel Alberto Claro describes the many discussions he had with director Kasper Barfoed about the mood and style of his new thriller, *The Candidate*. Claro previously shot Christoffer Boe's *Reconstruction* (winner of the Camera d'Or in Cannes, 2003) and *Allegro*, as well as Dagur Kári's *Dark Horse* (in the running for Un Certain Regard, 2005). *The Candidate* is Claro's first pure thriller. Merging a tight, driving plot with a sensual narrative empathising with the protagonist's predicament was an exciting challenge.

The dominant protagonist is played by Nikolaj Lie Kaas (star of *Reconstruction* and *Allegro*, Susanne Bier's *Brothers*, Lars von Trier's *The Idiots*, and many other Danish films). Playing defence attorney Jonas Bechmann, he is hurled into a web of dramatic events, starting when he wakes up from a night on the town and finds a young woman dead in his hotel bathroom.

Remembering nothing, he panics and flees the room. But he is soon blackmailed by people threatening to reveal his secret. Bit by bit, he discovers that the blackmailers may have had a hand in his father's mysterious death the year before, setting the stage for a fast-paced yarn with action and chase scenes that are a far cry from the standard Danish film ingredients.

## VISUAL CONTRACT

As Claro puts it, part of the fascination of doing *The Candidate* was anchoring a genre mostly associated with Hollywood movies in a Danish reality and a recognisable Copenhagen. An array of unusual tools was employed in this process; prime among them a so-called visual contract. A kind of manual for the film's visual style, the contract compiled various forms of mood and character images, alongside illustrations, stills and collaged images, serving as inspiration for each scene in the script. Devised by production designers Nikolaj Danielsen and Sputnik, the contract kept everyone on the crew focused on just what kind of film they were making.

"When you go for a certain visual style that's not all that common in Danish cinema, it's a big help that the whole crew is hooked into what we're creating together," Claro says, showing me the impressive visual manuscript. "For me, the visual contract was a huge inspiration that made it easier to talk grain and texture, as well as specific locations. We deliberately strove to reflect Jonas' character in his surroundings by depicting his conflict - between the old system and contemporary reality - in the film's use of wood and glass. The aim of the visual style was to create what we called 'documentary expressionism', and the visual contract was essential in specifying what we really meant by that."

## A RAW, HAND-HELD LOOK

*The Candidate* is the first Danish film shot in the 2-perf format. A bleach bypass was done on the original camera negative to get a rawer, grainier look. Everything was shot with a hand-held camera. One aspect the filmmakers were going for, inspired in part by the *Bourne* films, was establishing a sense of the camera not knowing any more than the protagonist does.

"We deliberately worked with the camera trailing behind a little bit. The camera could never be waiting for the action. The film is fast paced and the camera latches on to the action," Claro says. He was delighted with the opportunity to do an effective genre film in a Danish setting.

*The Candidate* opens in autumn 2008. In the interim, Søren Kragh-Jacobsen's conspiracy thriller *What No One Knows* (which screened in Berlin) will be working the same Danish genre ground broken by Ole Christian Madsen this March with *Flame & Citron*, the historical action drama about two Danish WW2 resistance fighters. The Dogme95 Manifesto banned genre films and superficial action, but in the new millennium action-based genre films have been making a strong showing, and their ambitions reach beyond Denmark ■

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



Cinematographer Manuel Alberto Claro  
Photo: Per Morten Abrahamsen

## MANUEL ALBERTO CLARO

Born 1970. Graduated as a stills photographer from Milan's Istituto Europeo di Design in 1994 and from the National Film School of Denmark in 2001. Has shot Christoffer Boe's two first features *Reconstruction* (2003), winner of the Camera d'Or in Cannes and the Bronze Frog at Camerimage, and *Allegro* (2005) which premiered at Venice Film Festival. Other films include Dagur Kári's *Dark Horse* (2005), selected for Un Certain Regard in Cannes. His latest feature is the American production *Weapons*, premiering in 2008.



Director Kasper Barfoed Photo: Jacob Kusk

## KASPER BARFOED

Born 1972, Denmark. B.A. in Comparative Literature at the University of Copenhagen. Wrote and directed the short film *The Performance* (2002) which received Best Comedy Short Award at Los Angeles Shortsfest in 2003. His feature film debut was the boxoffice success *My Sister's Kids in Egypt* (2004), and in 2006, he signed *The Lost Treasure of the Knights Templar*, winning awards in Riga, Lübeck and at Cinekid in Amsterdam. *The Candidate* is Barfoed's third feature film.

## MISO FILM

Founded 2004 by the producer team Jonas Allen and Peter Bose. Miso Film is producer of *Varg Veum*, a six-film franchise with a budget of 12.4 million euros, based on Gunnar Staalesen's successful private-eye novels. Coproduced Gunnar Vikene's Norwegian feature film *Trigger* (2006) which was selected for the Generation Kplus programme in Berlin, and is currently coproducing *Max Manus*, a Norwegian WW2 resistance drama directed by Espen Sandberg and Joachim Rønning.





Producer Regner Grasten. Photo unknown



Head of Production & Development Claus Ladegaard (DFI) Photo: MEW



CEO Henrik Bo Nielsen (DFI) Photo: Erik Molberg Hansen

# LOW-BUDGET DANISH FILMS SET THE PACE

**Tougher earnings opportunities in the market, along with a need for innovation and reinvention, are putting the brakes on medium-budget Danish films. Now, many film companies are focusing on inexpensively made films instead. At the other end, high-budget productions are gaining ground as well.**

BY DORTHE NIELSEN

A snapshot of today's Danish film market reveals several different tendencies, notably a marked focus on low-budget films. Films costing around 2.5 million euros have dominated Danish cinema for a number of years, but now the film industry is reading the writing on the wall. Innovation is called for to prevent Danish cinema from falling into a slump after the worldwide success of *Dogme*.

One way to go is low-budget films. Several Danish film companies are moving into inexpensive filmmaking, and the Danish Film Institute (DFI) is keeping pace with its Rå|Film pilot fund.

"Producers are familiar with the financial framework and are very adept at making films in the 2.5

million euro range. However, recent years have seen increased diversity, and we want to support that trend," Claus Ladegaard, DFI Head of Production & Development, says.

As Ladegaard points out, excellent films have been made for around 2.5 million euros, including Niels Arden Oplev's *Worlds Apart*. There are no plans to cut out medium-budget films, he says. All it takes is getting away from formulaic thinking.

## COMPETITION SQUEEZES MID-SIZE FILMS

Despite many fine examples to the contrary, "medium-budget films" have a hard time breaking even in a cinema market that has seen an explosive increase of 34% in the number of film releases. In 1999, 176 films were released theatrically. Last year's figure was 235, a vast majority of them American. Danish features made up just 27 of the 235 releases.

"Competition for people's time is heated. Considering the growing number of choices, and the subsequently shorter periods to break even, standard films costing around 2.5 million euros are becoming a financial headache to producers," Henrik Bo Nielsen, CEO of the DFI, says.



Producer Peter Aalbæk Jensen. Photo: Zentropa

This fact is not lost on the Zentropa film company:

“There is no money in medium-budget films. Films in the 2.5 million euros range have become too expensive to be innovative and too cheap to be unique. Consequently, our declared strategy now is either to make very inexpensive films or very expensive films,” Peter Aalbæk Jensen, head of Zentropa, says.

#### A DANISH MIRAMAX

As a step in this strategy, Zentropa last year partnered up with film producer Regner Grasten to start a low-budget company, Filmfabrikken. Taking American Miramax as its model, Filmfabrikken intends to make alternative films and release them with a big splash to win back some space in Danish cinemas from mediocre American films that, Grasten contends, should go straight to DVD. Filmfabrikken’s films have a budget cap of 1.2 million euros, so there’s room to take risks and, not least, market them aggressively.

“Right now, warning lights are flashing,” Regner Grasten says. “There is declining interest in going to the movies and watching anything but solid mainstream films. If we want to trigger broad, renewed interest among moviegoing audiences, we need to take some risks, think in terms of audiences instead of target groups and put money into marketing.”

As films get more expensive to make, producers hold back from taking a risk on unknown directors or in earnest experiment with the art of film, followed up by broad marketing. “In Filmfabrikken, we want to create a growth tank for cinema culture – just as Miramax did in the US. For a company to survive doing mainstream films, it’s essential to learn from the underground,” Grasten says.

#### PILOT FUND FOR RAW FILMS

To foster innovation in Danish cinema and support the industry’s focus on low-budget films, the DFI this year launched a pilot fund specifically designed to subsidise such films. Rå|Film makes grants to films that have budgets of no more than 10 million kroner (1.34 million euros).

“With Rå|Film, we hope to contribute some innovation to Danish cinema, because such

“There is no money in medium-budget films. Films in the 2.5 million euros range have become too expensive to be innovative and too cheap to be unique. Consequently, our declared strategy now is either to make very inexpensive films or very expensive films.”

*Peter Aalbæk Jensen, head of Zentropa*

low budgets force filmmakers to take risks, and basically demand a good story, since you can’t just crank up the effects,” DFI CEO Henrik Bo Nielsen says.

Both Rå|Film and Filmfabrikken are wide open in terms of genre. The same goes for those who will be making the films. It doesn’t matter if they are young talents or seasoned industry veterans. What counts is innovative thinking. In addition, Filmfabrikken has a set goal of each film selling 100,000 tickets, while Rå|Film operates with a potential audience requirement of 75,000.

“After a few years of niceties, people are looking for something raw and unglossed. Moreover, there is a financial incentive for low-budget initiatives. So we’re folding the quality dimension in with an audience requirement to try and make room in the films for both good finances and originality,” Ladegaard says.

#### MORE LOW-BUDGET EFFORTS

Apart from Filmfabrikken and Rå|Film, the Nimbus Film company is undertaking a partnership with the Danish broadcaster TV 2 to produce a series of low-budget films at around 1.5 million euros.

The main goal of the partnership is to bring new filmmakers and new stories to the screen, while contributing to continued innovation in Danish cinema. As a requirement for each new film, two of the principal functions – director, writer, producer, cast, DP or editor – must be filled by people who are making their first feature.

#### INTEREST IN BIG-BUDGET FILMS

Another tendency in the Danish film market is a growing interest in films with a higher price tag. This is apparent at Zentropa, now that Nordisk Film has acquired a 50% stake in the company.

“There is growing interest in doing big films. At the moment, we’re seeing several players on the Danish film scene cooking up big projects,” Nielsen says.

The DFI is looking at how to best support this tendency of more Danish film companies looking to run with the big dogs. “How that will turn out, we can’t say yet,” Henrik Bo Nielsen says ■

#### ZENTROPA

Steered by CEO Peter Aalbæk Jensen since its foundation in 1992, Zentropa has established itself far beyond the Danish borders. Co-founded by Aalbæk Jensen and filmmaker Lars von Trier, Zentropa is known and respected the world over for edgy films by von Trier and other directors, including Susanne Bier, Lone Scherfig, Per Fly and Annette K. Olesen. The company was a linchpin in the Dogme concept and other vanguard projects. Zentropa’s films have won the Golden Palms and the Silver Bear, while Zentropa has represented Denmark at four Academy Award ceremonies.

On February 7 of this year, Egmont-owned Nordisk Film acquired a 50% stake in Zentropa. The new partnership means a cash infusion for Zentropa. The goal is to increase the number of international productions and create a Northern European powerhouse capable of attracting the strongest creative forces.

#### REGNER GRASTEN FILM

Since 1985, Regner Grasten and the company that bears his name have been behind numerous Danish blockbusters, mainly family films. Grasten’s big breakthrough came with the *Crumbs* movies (1991-94). Starting in 1999, Grasten has created a strong brand in the *Anja & Viktor* films. The fifth film in the series, *Anja & Viktor – In Sickness and in Health*, is due out in Denmark on September 12.

Over the years, Regner Grasten Film has produced several films based on Danish bestsellers, including *Stolen Spring* (1993), *Just a Girl* (1995) and *Lost Generation* (2004).

From the outset, the company has focused on marketing.

In connection with forming its low-budget subsidiary Filmfabrikken, Regner Grasten Film moved to Filmbyen in Avedøre, near Copenhagen, which is also home to Zentropa, Nimbus Film and others.

#### FILMFABRIKKEN

Filmfabrikken is a low-budget production company formed in partnership between Regner Grasten Film and Zentropa, aiming to kick new energy into Danish cinema by making edgy and off-beat films with broad audience appeal.

The budget framework is 0.5 to 1.2 million euros a film, in addition to marketing costs. All the films will be lavishly marketed and promoted. The goal is to release three to four films a year, with admissions of at least 100,000.

Filmfabrikken would like to export its films, naturally, but it’s not a priority, Regner Grasten says.

#### RÅ|FILM

To stimulate innovation in Danish cinema and support low-budget films that take an innovative and interesting approach to storytelling, the Danish Film Institute this year launched the Rå|Film pilot fund.

The fund of 15 million kroner (approx. 2 million euros) will speed subsidies to feature films with budgets of up to 10 million kroner (1.34 million euros) and potential admissions of at least 75,000.

The fund can issue development grants of up to 200,000 kroner (27,000 euros) and production grants of up to 3 million kroner (400,000 euros).

Grant applications are processed by an editorial board of three Film Institute employees, plus theatre manager Jon Steffensen and life-style expert/communications advisor Henrik Byager.

As a condition for receiving a Rå|Film grant, applications must show a certain development level and be set to start production shortly after grants are made.

Rå|Film will run for a year and then be evaluated.



# CROSSING

**The ThinkTank on Film and Film Policy was formally set up in June 2007 with the support of the Danish Film Institute. One focus of the initial work that it has kicked off with a three-day workshop in Vienna in April and which continues with a similar workshop in Amsterdam in June, is on the factors that affect the ability of films to access international markets.**

BY JONATHAN DAVIS & HENNING CAMRE

If, as is the case for several European countries, a country's films have a percentage market share in their home market in single digits, and citizens in those countries go to the cinema on average twice a year, it means that each individual will see in the cinema an average of one national film less than once every 10 years. This raises the question – being addressed by filmmakers, distributors and film funders, as well as by the ThinkTank – about how to build an identity for and an awareness of a country's cinema. And if this is the situation for a country's cinema at home, what are its prospects abroad?

#### WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

If, as is the case for most European countries, you are a small country with a big neighbour (with which you may well share a common language), what can you expect? The usual answer to this question is: "Not very much." The big neighbour makes it even more difficult for you to reach your national audience as you compete not only with Hollywood but with the better-funded, better-promoted and better-distributed blockbusters from across the border.

Analysis carried out by the ThinkTank to prepare for the Vienna and Amsterdam events, undertaken with the help the European Audiovisual Observatory and of filmmakers and funding bodies in Austria and in the Benelux countries, suggests a more complex relationship between the cinemas in those countries and, in the case of Austria and Belgium, their big next-door neighbours. For example, Flemish children's films do much better in the Netherlands than Dutch children's films do in Flanders. And while Dutch and Flemish TV programmes do well in each other's markets, the films for adults – like the children's films and the TV programmes, in the same language – do not. And the performance of French films in Belgium and of German films in Austria is less than half as good as

what one might expect based on their performance in their big home markets.

While audiences do identify with national films, this identification is not primarily about language. It would seem that some filmmakers and some film funding bodies are being more successful in capitalising on the audience's identification with its national films than others.

#### ATTITUDE MATTERS

The main conclusion of this work is really a proposition for further discussion: The reason why European films don't travel has little or nothing to do with language. It has to do with the attitude of the people who make, distribute and pay for the films to be made, in particular their confidence in the ability of the films they are handling to appeal to foreign audiences.

The industry's lack of confidence is based on the self-fulfilling prophecy that the opportunities for films outside of their national market are so limited that they are not worth bothering about. There are not the slots in the release schedules or space in the public's and the media's attention for these films. So even if a film were wonderful, there is no way of getting it to the audience. Better to concentrate on the main business which, in the case of the filmmakers is satisfying their pay-masters, the public funds, and in the case of the public funds, satisfying *their* pay-masters, the politicians.

In Belgium, France and the Netherlands, it will often be left up to fragile, independent distributors to handle the next-door neighbour's (and other countries') films, releasing them long after the big campaign for the national release has taken place. This is hardly a recipe for realising the films' full potential or the creation of wonderful cinema.

#### A SUCCESSFUL EUROPEAN FILM IS FRENCH

When the ThinkTank was being launched, we prepared a dataset of European films in official selection at Berlin, Cannes, Venice and Toronto: These were the films that were likely to be distributed outside of their country of origin.

We used this dataset to produce an analysis of how European films get to be seen around the world. This analysis was made available for the first ThinkTank meeting in Copenhagen in June 2006 and published in February 2007 in The Copenhagen Report ([www.filmthinktank.org](http://www.filmthinktank.org)).

The results of this work were summarised by Giorgio Gosetti, the man who for many years was in

# BOUNDARIES

charge of promoting Italian cinema, more recently the director of the Rome Film Festival and a member of the ThinkTank advisory: “Your definition of a successful European film is a film either produced or sold by a French company.” Giorgio was reacting to the preponderance of titles in the dataset that originated with and/or were handled by French producers/sales agents. He was also reacting to the apparently poor performance of Italian producers and sales agents.

To build on this analysis, as part of the ThinkTank’s current programme, and with the help of the Austrian Film Institute and the European Audiovisual Observatory, we have produced analyses of films produced in Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands. In keeping with the ThinkTank approach, and in contrast with much of the data that are published both at a national and a European level, we do not only look at the successful films; indeed, we think we can learn more by looking at the unsuccessful films.

Our idea was to see what we could learn from the films produced in these three countries. In particular:

- How did French-Belgian films fare in France, and Flemish films fare in the Netherlands relative to the national films in France and the Netherlands?
- Did Dutch films perform better in Belgium than they did in other European countries?
- Where did Austrian films perform best?

In short, we wanted to go beyond the common-sense view that language is both the unique selling point for national films, especially in those countries that tend not to dub, and the obstacle to the circulation of films around Europe.

## WHO CARES?

In Scandinavia, it is well-understood that films from one Scandinavian country do not tend to perform well in other Scandinavian countries even when their languages are very similar. By looking at the Austrian, Belgian and Dutch films, we hoped to shed some light on this issue. Does the audience’s identification

with national films extend beyond language to include particularities of which filmmakers wanting their films to be seen in different countries need to be more aware? Or is the poor performance of films outside of the country of origin less to do with language and culture and much more to do with industrial structures, in particular the difficulty films from other countries find getting the distributors’ and audiences’ attention. To put it very cruelly, is it a case of films from other countries being nobody’s business and nobody caring whether they are seen or not? Not the distributors in the country and probably not the people who made the film either. And the people who financed the film, do they care? And if they care, what if anything can they do about it?

It is clear from the data that French-produced films enjoy better access to the Belgian market than they do to any other foreign territory. Likewise, Belgian films are more likely to be distributed in France and/or the Netherlands than in any other countries outside Belgium. The same number of Belgian films – 23 out of 55 in our sample – is released in the two neighbouring countries but they are often different films: nearly all the Belgian films released in France are Francophone films and nearly all are Franco-Belgian coproductions. On the other hand, only a handful of the Belgian films released in the Netherlands were Dutch-Belgian coproductions and half were French-language.

## LANGUAGE IS NOT THE MAIN FACTOR

Straightaway we can see in relation to Belgian films in the Netherlands that language is not the main factor. Nevertheless the access that Belgian films enjoy to the Dutch market is striking: The number of Belgian films released in the Netherlands is between three and six times greater than the number released in the much bigger markets of Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK.

Let us now look at the traffic of Dutch films. 40 Dutch films produced between 2002 and 2005 were

released outside of the Netherlands. Of these 40, 31 were released in Belgium. 14 were released only in Belgium.

The sense that Belgium (or rather Flanders) is a fairly easy market for Dutch films turns out to be rather deceptive. Whereas Flemish films perform quite well in the Netherlands (their Dutch admissions are nearly 50% of what they achieve in Belgium), Dutch films do considerably less well in Belgium: their Belgian admissions are 3% of their Dutch admissions. All things being equal, if language were the key factor, these Dutch films would have got around 5 million admissions in Flanders. They got 236,000.

There is a complicated dynamic in operation: There seems to be a barrier in Belgium – even in French-speaking Belgium – to French films, just as there seems to be a barrier in Flanders to Dutch films. The barrier would also seem to operate in the opposite direction: French-speaking Belgian films on average achieve about twice the admissions in France that they do in Belgium even though the French market is 20 times the size of the French-speaking Belgian market.

Is this same barrier evident in the case of Austrian films in Germany and German films in Austria?

The German cinema market is eight times larger than the Austrian one. On average, the German audience for a German-language film is 15 times larger than the Austrian audience, that is, twice what one would predict. The exception is for Austrian-produced films: Of a sample of 92 Austrian films produced in the period 2002 to 2006, 25 were released theatrically in Germany. On average, their Austrian audience was two-thirds the size of their German audience.

## HOW TO GROW BIGGER MARKETS

In its first activities, working with the film sectors in Austria and in the Benelux countries, the ThinkTank is seeking to confront these issues. In discussion with filmmakers and the other stakeholders in those countries, along with inputs from experts around the world, the ThinkTank is busy developing ideas for how to improve the destiny of our cinemas.

In September 2008, we will begin to bring together these ideas at the Forum on the Future of Film Policy which the ThinkTank is working with the Council of Europe and the Polish Film Institute to put together. We will be publishing results and – we hope – hosting your contributions to our work on our website: [www.filmlinktank.org](http://www.filmlinktank.org) ■

**“If, as is the case for several European countries, a country’s films have a percentage market share in their home market in single digits, and citizens in those countries go to the cinema on average twice a year, it means that each individual will see in the cinema an average of one national film less than once every 10 years.”**



# TROUBLE TURNS ME ON

**Meta Louise Foldager, Lars von Trier's producer, is busy preparing his new thriller *Antichrist* – and she has other projects in the works.**

BY MORTEN PIIL

Meta Louise Foldager, at age 33, is facing the biggest challenge of a skyrocketing career that has amazed the Danish film industry and landed her as a central producer at Zentropa.

Lars von Trier's new film *Antichrist* is now ready in script form and will be up and running over the summer. Emerging from Foldager's office after our interview, I find Trier reclining in a sofa, beaming like the Buddha: A creative crisis appears to have been overcome, the furnace stoked with fresh provocations!

#### FILMS WITH BITE

Clearly, Trier is only too happy to be passing his recently penned project into Foldager's capable hands. Problems do not intimidate her. On the contrary, they stimulate her.



Producer Meta Louise Foldager Photo: Christian Geisnæs

“Films where everything runs like clockwork are not really the most fun to work on. Certainly it’s more challenging to be confronted with problems,” she says.

To be sure, Foldager’s name is not associated with middle-of-the-road products. She is drawn to projects with bite. One, Omar Shargawi’s *Go with Peace Jamil*, is the first film to depict life-and-death religious conflicts in Denmark’s Muslim immigrant community. Before it opened in Denmark, Shargawi’s film had already attracted considerable praise, especially after it won the Tiger Award in Rotterdam.

*AFR*, another off-beat hit for Foldager, was a challenging mockumentary about the fictional murder of current Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen. In 2004, Foldager produced *King’s Game* was a huge popular and critical hit that blazed a new trail in Danish cinema.

#### ANOTHER AMERICAN STORY

Like other Trier productions, *Antichrist* is shrouded in secrecy. Technical innovations are in store this time, as well, though the form will likely be more extroverted than Trier’s *Dogville* or *Manderlay*.

“*Antichrist* is a thriller-slash-horror film,”

Foldager says. “We plan to shoot in late summer, and the budget right now is around 8 million euros. The screenplay has just been finished, so now we can start casting. The film will be shot in Germany, near Cologne, but the action is set in the US. We have found our main location, a cabin in the woods. That’s really all I can say.”

*Stylistically, will the film take the same minimalist tack as Trier’s recent pictures?*

“I wouldn’t say that. It’s hard to talk about without getting into what the film will be like, and I don’t want to do that. You might say, though, that *Antichrist* mixes certain minimalist elements with highly visual, expressive stylistic features that are more in the vein of Lars’ earlier films, like *Europa*,” Foldager says.

#### TRIER’S HONESTY

*What’s it like to work with Trier?*

“For me, it’s very special. Maybe I can explain it like this: If you went back in time and pretended you were a producer for Carl Th. Dreyer, what would you focus on? I would focus on letting Dreyer be able to make more films and letting him make exactly the films he wanted to. It should not have been so hard for him to get his films financed,” Foldager says.

“That’s my approach to working with Lars: He should make more films and make them exactly the way he wants to,” she says. “You help get some films started that you know will interest people – years from now, too – and for me that’s both fun and a great privilege.

“He’s not hard to work with, actually, for the simple reason that he always says exactly what he means. Of course, that can hurt at times, but you always know where he stands, and I value that honesty,” Foldager says.

#### “I DON’T DO ANY ONE THING, BUT I’M PART OF EVERYTHING”

*How would you more generally describe your work as a producer?*

“I strive to be the film’s woman from start to finish and, it follows, the director’s closest collaborator throughout,” she says.

“If you have a working partnership with a director, you are the film’s steady anchor point from the first glimmer of an idea and throughout the whole preparation process of writing, researching, casting and financing.

“It’s a weird job in a way, because I don’t really do anything specific – I don’t have main responsibility for the screenplay, casting, promotion or production. In terms of financing, I can choose to work with specialists, too. Nor am I responsible for production management – though I’m there, on set, every day, watch the dailies, and talk with the director. Should any problems with the production arise, I’m the one who has to solve them. I have general responsibility and I’m involved from start to finish as a catalyst and a fixed anchor point,” Foldager says.

“It’s my job to make sure that everyone working on the film has the best possible tools to deliver the best possible performance in their areas of responsibility. My role during the editing phase varies a lot, though I keep close tabs in the post production phase

**“If you went back in time and pretended you were a producer for Carl Th. Dreyer, what would you focus on? I would focus on letting Dreyer be able to make more films and letting him make exactly the films he wanted to. It should not have been so hard for him to get his films financed.”**

as well. I’m the one who calls in possible editing consultants and deals with the music production, which can be a very demanding and crucial process sometimes. Then comes promotion and festival follow-up, in which I also play a part,” she says.

“In brief – I don’t do any one thing, but I’m part of everything! I’m the employer. I make sure there’s enough money, and that everybody is happy and has the conditions they need to do their best for the film.

“It’s a long process. It can range from a year and a half to well over a decade, sometimes. I have two projects I know I want to complete, but they may not come to fruition for ten years or longer. So, it’s extremely important to pick the right projects before spending a big chunk of your life on them,” Foldager says.

#### LIKE BEING IN A RELATIONSHIP

*Which of the many aspects of your work are most exciting to you?*

“Actually, the films that run smoothly are not the most exciting ones. It’s certainly more challenging to confront problems, films with grit in the gears, and then try to make a difference. It may be that I need to come up with certain material things, or it’s more of a psychological thing when people have a hard time working together and I have to try and bring them together,” Foldager says.

*Do you have a particular method for handling disagreements?*

“No. On some films, something magical happens and everyone works well together. In other cases, just as inexplicably, there’s bad chemistry from the outset. You have to be sensitive and set



*Go with Peace Jamil* Photos: Christian Geisnæs

things straight, if possible. If you can’t do that, if an employee is irredeemably on the wrong track, you have to let that person go. The sooner the better, preferably, or you could hurt the film.

“My closest collaborator is the director, of course, and the better I get to know him or her, the better my chances are of getting a sense of how he or she works with the different people on the crew.

“So it’s a huge advantage to know the director really well. Then you have the best opportunity to find out whom he or she will be able to work with.

“Working with a director is a bit like being in a relationship. When you meet for the first time, you practically fall in love with all the energy and ideas you are both bursting with, and you really want to work together. Then, you get to know one another better, which of course means that you also discover one another’s faults. At some point, you reach the stage where you start loving one another despite your flaws and shortcomings, and only then does the real collaboration begin. And hopefully, it will last for years and years to come” ■

*For further information on Zentropa, see page 11.*

#### META LOUISE FOLDAGER

Born 1974. Has worked for Zentropa since 2006 as Lars von Trier’s producer, their first film together being the comedy *The Boss of It All* (2006). Has produced Nikolaj Arcel’s boxoffice hit *King’s Game* (2004) and acclaimed titles such as Ole Christian Madsen’s *Angels in Fast Motion* (2005), Arcel’s *Island of Lost Souls* (2007) and Morten Hartz Kaplers’ *AFR* (2007), winner of the Tiger Award in Rotterdam. Productions in 2008 include Berlin winner Pernille Fischer Christensen’s *Dancers* and debuting directors Omar Shargawi’s *Go with Peace Jamil* and Heidi Maria Faisst’s *The Blessing*.





Danish Dynamite poster Photo: Per Kjærbye

## DANISH DYNAMITE: A STORY OF THE DANISH NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM

Debuting directors Mads Kamp Thulstrup and Carsten Søsted have co-directed *Danish Dynamite*, a film about the Danish national football team's evolution from amateurs to European Champions.

Opening in 1979 when the national team was a gang of happy but lackadaisical amateurs coached by pub owner Kurt Nielsen, the film chronicles victories and defeats over the decades with Danish football legends Preben Elkjær, Søren Lerby, Søren Busk, Michael Laudrup, Peter Schmeichel, Ole Quist, Sepp Piontek and John Faxe Jensen. At heart, the film is about the Danish self-image and the vicarious, shared experiences the national team has afforded the Danes. A football lover's smorgasbord serving up victories, defeats, scandals, legendary comments, interviews and never-before-seen footage. Produced by Karoline Leth for Tju-Bang Film. Nationwide release May 9 (60 prints).

## EUROPEAN FILM AWARDS IN DENMARK 2008

This year, the European Film Academy and EFA Productions gGmbH will present the 21st European Film Awards in Copenhagen, December 6.

As members of the European Film Academy, film stars, awardwinners and nominees congregate in the

Danish capital for this year's European Film Awards, they will for the first time be joined by European high nobility. Crown Prince Frederik and Crown Princess Mary of Denmark will be among the 1,500 guests at the glamorous ceremony at Copenhagen's Forum attended by the cream of the Danish and European film communities.

The 21st European Film Awards marks the first time the prestigious event is held in a Scandinavian country.



Director Lone Scherfig Photo: Jan Buus

## LONE SCHERFIG FILMING IN LONDON

Danish director Lone Scherfig has started shooting her latest feature in London. The shoot will run through early May, with additional locations in Oxford and Paris. Her new feature, *An Education*, is written by UK writer Nick Hornby (*About a Boy*, *Fever Pitch*). Hornby's script is based on a memoir by British journalist Lynn Barber. The story is set in London in the early 1960s. A 17-year-old girl (Carey Mulligan) falls under the spell of an utterly unsuitable

thirty-something man (US actor Peter Sarsgaard, *Kinsey*), who introduces her to an exciting new world of art auctions, trips abroad and smoke-filled clubs. Alfred Molina and Cara Seymour star as the girl's parents.

The cast also includes Mulligan's *Pride and Prejudice* co-star Rosamund Pike, recent Silver Bear winner Sally Hawkins (*Happy-Go-Lucky*), British star Emma Thompson (*Love Actually*) and up-and-coming young actor Dominic Cooper (*The History Boys*), replacing Orlando Bloom as Sarsgaard's character's business partner. Bloom had to drop out at the last moment due to reported scheduling conflicts.

Scherfig has directed several award-winning films, in addition to numerous commercials and TV dramas. Scherfig's Dogme film, *Italian for Beginners* (2000), was one of the biggest Danish popular and critical hits ever, and a big awardwinner at Berlin. Scherfig's first English-language feature, *Wilbur Wants To Kill Himself* (2002), played festivals worldwide, bringing home awards from France, Portugal, the US and Japan. Most recently, Scherfig made the Danish-language *Homesick*.



Director Susanne Bier Photo: Jan Buus

## SUSANNE BIER IN THE CINÉFONDATION AND SHORT FILM JURY

Danish director Susanne Bier is a member of this year's Cinéfondation and Short Film Jury. Bier gained international acclaim when she was Oscar nominated for 2006's *After the Wedding*. Other notable achievements include *Things We Lost in the Fire* (USA 2007, UIP) as well as the richly awarded boxoffice successes *Brothers* (2004), *Open Hearts* (2002) and *The One and Only* (1999).



Actor Mads Mikkelsen. Photo unknown

## DANISH ACTOR MADS MIKKELSEN TO STAR IN ANNO SAUL'S THE DOOR

Anno Saul's mystery thriller *The Door* (*Die Tür*), based on Akif Pirincci's 2001 novel *Die Damalstür*, will star the internationally renowned Danish actor Mads Mikkelsen – who worked with director Ole Christian Madsen last year on Madsen's new thriller *Flame & Citron* (see page 3).

Author Pirincci is best known for his "cat crime fiction" series centering on the feline detective Felidae, which spawned an animation feature film under the same name by Senator Film in 1994.

*The Door* will be released theatrically in Germany by Senator Film Verleih.

## NEW COPENHAGEN FESTIVAL ORGANIZATION

Mikkel Harder Munck-Hansen is appointed CEO for the newly established Foundation of the Copenhagen Film Festivals. He will be running Denmark's three largest international festivals: BUSTER Copenhagen International Film Festival for Children and Youth (Sep 19-26), CPH:DOX Copenhagen International Documentary Film Festival (Nov 7-16) and a new feature film festival to be launched in 2009 replacing Copenhagen International Film Festival and NatFilm Festival. Mikkel Harder Munck-Hansen comes from a position as head of drama at The Royal Danish Theatre.



Steffen Andersen-Møller Photo: Robin Skjoldborg

## NEW AT DFI

On 15 May, Steffen Andersen-Møller, 49, is replacing Anders Geertsen as head of the Danish Film Institute's Audiences & Promotion Department.



Actor Jesper Christensen. Photo unknown

## JESPER CHRISTENSEN RETURNS AS MR. WHITE

James Bond isn't done with Mr. White just yet. The Danish actor Jesper Christensen, 59, will reprise his role as the mysterious villain in the coming Bond film.

The department is tasked with disseminating Danish films to the largest possible audience, including promoting Danish cinema culture and Danish films abroad.

Andersen-Møller brings with him years of management experience, mainly from Danish media companies.

"The Board and I picked Steffen Andersen-Møller, because we wanted someone with wide management experience and the ability to get things done. We are facing a number of major, exciting challenges, among them digitising Danish cinemas and digital distribution.

"We are convinced that Steffen brings to the Film Institute the right combination of experience and engagement," DFI CEO Henrik Bo Nielsen says.

*Quantum of Solace*, the 22nd film in EON Productions' James Bond series, continues the high-octane adventures of *Casino Royale*. The title comes from a 1960 collection of short stories by 007-creator Ian Fleming.

Screenwriter Paul Higgis promises that the new film will give Christensen, as Mr. White, a taste of 007's hands-on interrogation methods.

With over 50 films to his name, Christensen is known as one of Denmark's most intelligent, wide-ranging character actors with an unrivalled ability to switch from amicability to unpredictable menace at the drop of a hat. Making the transition to English-language films, Christensen has starred in *The Interpreter*, *Revelations* and *Casino Royale*.

*Quantum of Solace* is due for release on November 7, 2008.

## INTERNATIONAL SALES AGENT

With a year-long experience and know-how of selling arthouse films, family films and mainstream titles, the merger of Trust Film Sales and Nordisk Film International Sales underlines the power of joining forces. The new company, TrustNordisk, will handle no less than 500 titles in their catalogue ranging from festival prize winners to the best of European family films and mainstream films for television



Rikke Ennis, CEO  
rikke@trustnordisk.com  
+45 2060 5062



Susan Wendt, Head of Sales  
susan@trustnordisk.com  
+45 6029 8466



Nicolai Korsgaard, Sales Manager  
nicolai@trustnordisk.com  
+45 2421 4133



Tine Klint, Head of Projects and  
Business Development  
tine@trustnordisk.com  
+45 2010 8580



Marie-Louise Rasmussen, Junior Sales  
louise@trustnordisk.com  
+45 2945 6758

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