

FEMALE DIRECTORS HIT BOX OFFICE

"If you want a commercial hit, have a woman direct" (Peter Aalbæk, Zentropa). FILM presents Bier, Steen and Joof; and a number of other Danish female filmmakers suggest the reasons why there are so many women directors in Danish film.

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ANIMATION ON THE TOP

With *Asterix and the Vikings* and *Terkel in Trouble*, wheels big and small are turning at A.Film, Denmark's animation flagship, and in the fantasy feature *Strings*, Anders Rønnow Klarlund has created a world and mythology all his own.

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FILM CANNES SPECIAL ISSUE

The DFI's special CANNES issue on new Danish films directed by Susanne Bier / Paprika Steen / Hella Joof / Stefan Fjeldmark / Anders Rønnow Klarlund / Bille August / Lars von Trier / Thomas Vinterberg / Peter Flinth / Nikolaj Arcel / Henrik Ruben Genz / Charlotte Sachs Bostrup and Rumle Hammerich.

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Connie Nielsen and Ulrich Thomsen in Susanne Bier's *Brødre*.
Photo: Erik Aavatsmark

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The Danish Film Institute is the national agency responsible for supporting and encouraging film and cinema culture. The Institute's operations extend from participation in the development and production of feature films, shorts and documentaries, over distribution and marketing, to managing the national film archive and the cinemathèque. The total budget of the DFI is DKK 362 m / EURO 49 m.

■ All articles are written by freelance film critics and journalists.

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Connie Nielsen in *Brødre*. Photo: Erik Aavatsmark

VIOLENCE IN THE EVERYDAY

Susanne Bier's new romantic drama *Brødre* (English title to be announced) ensnares Ulrich Thomsen, Nikolaj Lie Kaas and Connie Nielsen in a love triangle, as international events tear a gash in the Danish everyday.

BY EVA NOVRUP REDVALL

Ulrich Thomsen and Nikolaj Lie Kaas are very fittingly seen glaring out from separate monitors, when FILM stops by the Zentropa cutting room to meet with Susanne Bier and discuss her new picture, *Brødre*. In this love triangle drama, the two popular

Danish actors, known from *The Celebration* and *The Idiots*, play two brothers, Michael and Jannik. The older brother Michael, who serves in the Danish military, is being sent to Afghanistan. Jannik has just finished serving a prison term for a botched bank robbery. The third party in the drama is Michael's wife Sarah, played by the Danish Hollywood star Connie Nielsen. Dramatic entanglements ensue. When Michael is reported killed in action in Afghanistan, Sarah becomes close to his younger brother. Their shared grief gives Jannik a chance to prove himself, when, against all odds, the war-traumatized Michael suddenly reappears, setting the

stage for conflict.

In the film, the two brothers vie for Nielsen's favour. In the cutting room, the two actors' performances have the undivided attention of Bier and her longstanding editor Pernille Bech, winner of a Danish Film Academy editing award for her work on Bier's Dogme film *Open Hearts*. A bulletin board in the cutting room, crowded with little, coloured sticky notes marked with scene numbers, manifests the many possibilities for modifying nuances of the film that are otherwise orderly tucked away inside the computer. Four weeks of editing still remain. Although Bier first stresses that she never

likes to discuss a work in progress, one word quickly leads to another as her enthusiasm for the story bubbles over.

CONDITIONS FOR LOVE

Like Bier's last film, *Open Hearts*, *Brødre* was co-written with Anders Thomas Jensen, who also co-wrote the screenplays for the Dogme films *Mifune* and *The King is Alive*. The dramatic intersection of international conflict and Danish everyday life was a major driving force for the story. Moreover, Bier and Jensen were interested in continuing the investigation into contemporary relationships that they opened in *Open Hearts*. As Bier says, she is fascinated by how violence, in big or small ways, operates in the everyday.

"In *Brødre*, international conflicts that we all know about from the papers suddenly and tangibly break into everyday life, causing change. I find it fascinating how the everyday is all of a sudden changed by more or less random events, and how we relate to such violent changes. Portraying the Danish military presence in Afghanistan gives the film a political aspect, but it's mainly a love story about the conditions for love in our contemporary life style. The story is about emotions linked to the events. For me, film is about describing emotions. That's what the film medium can do. Film is not a philosophical medium - it's an emotional medium. But of course, it's important to deal with emotions in an intelligent way."

CHARACTERS BEFORE PLOT

As in Bier's previous films, the characters and their relationships are central. One also recognizes her insistence on showing seriousness and fun existing side by side. Both are central elements of Bier's approach to filmmaking.

"My films start because I'm curious to get to know certain characters and set up dramatic relationships on the screen. I don't like having to fit characters into a predetermined storyline, assigning them a plot function instead of giving them their own reason for being.

"I think one of my main strengths as a director lies in an understanding of people and my ability to bring out that understanding on the screen. I like to immerse myself in people, which is one reason why seriousness and fun are both important in my pictures. Things aren't just tragic, after all. Of course, some things are deeply serious, but there may suddenly be something very funny about them anyway, and it's important to include this duality. I don't think I will ever get around this duality, no matter whether the premise is serious or fun," Bier says. Before *Open Hearts*, Bier was best known for the fun stuff. Her romantic comedy *The One and Only* sold nearly a million tickets in Denmark in 1999, winning both the film industry's Robert award and the film critics' Bodil award for best film of the year.

THE FREEDOM OF DOGME

Made according to the ten commandments of the Dogme 95 Manifesto, *Open Hearts* attracted attention worldwide, including festivals in San Sebastian, Toronto and Sundance. Bier enjoyed working under the ascetic Dogme rules and carried over several aspects of that working method to her new picture.

"*Brødre* has nothing to do with Dogme, but naturally I was influenced coming from a Dogme

picture. At least I have tried to take that feeling of freedom with me. Freedom concerning the actors, but also in terms of the entire apparatus - less lighting, for instance. Though, it's great to break the rules: Using costumes and props while shooting, and in post-production, especially, it's wonderful to have the option of adding music.

"In terms of sound, it also means a lot not to have to follow the rules, but I must confess that I like the rawness of the Dogme film sound. It gives a certain unpolished ambience," Bier says, glancing over at Bech at the editing table who just keeps punching the keys.

THE ART OF PLAYING BROTHERS

Another element Bier carried over from *Open Hearts* was the actor Nikolaj Lie Kaas. Early on in that story, Lie Kaas' character is paralyzed in a car accident and confined to a hospital bed for the rest of the movie. In *Brødre*, he's back in full swing. In fact, already in the writing process Bier was picturing him as the charming, somewhat lost younger brother.

"It varies a lot whether I have someone in mind when the story is taking shape. This time, I had Nikolaj in mind and it's nice to have someone to write for. But it's also nice when there are things you don't have a clear sense of, so you get a lot of surprises underway.

"For me, film is about describing emotions. That's what the film medium can do. Film is not a philosophical medium - it's an emotional medium. But of course, it's important to deal with emotions in an intelligent way".

"I'm very happy with the cast I got for *Brødre*. Everyone is exceptionally skilled and go together well. It was crucial to find two actors you can believe are brothers. With Ulrich Thomsen and Nikolaj Lie Kaas you do, even though they really don't resemble each other physically. The real challenge was casting the woman who comes between them. Connie Nielsen fills the part beautifully and naturally."

Brødre is Connie Nielsen's first Danish film following her international breakthrough in *Gladiator* and *One Hour Photo*. Switching to a small, Danish-language production was largely painless, although, as Bier adds with a smile, Nielsen did have some initial reservations about the script's use of foul language.

"At first, Connie thought there was too much swearing in the dialogue, but that's because the vernacular tone has changed so much in the years she has been out of the country. She quickly got used to the swearing, though. Also there was never any real problem about this production being smaller than she is used to. She had her own trailer, but she didn't spend much time in it because the rest of the crew was running around outside and she quickly became a part of all that."

UNPLEASANT PASSAGES

Brødre contains a number of violent scenes: several powerful, personal clashes in the Danish everyday setting and the brutal acts Michael is subjected to when he is held captive in Afghanistan. The Afghan sequences were filmed in southern Spain with actors from London. Despite an obvious distance to the brutal fictitious events, shooting that part of the story

was gruelling. Bier ducks under her big scarf while describing her feeling of getting up every morning knowing what lay ahead in that day's shooting.

"There is something nasty about shooting nasty scenes. That's just the way it is. Some directors have more distance than others. I found it unpleasant. When I got up in the morning, I dreaded doing them and I couldn't help wishing that the camera would break down, so we would have to postpone the shots. But they had to be done, of course. They are essential to the story and our understanding of the baggage Michael carries home with him."

Those sequences could not be leavened with humour, and Bier is not ruling out that her next projects will feature lighter material. She is planning a new screenplay with Anders Thomas Jensen. She clicks with him and they share laughs in the writing process, no matter whether it is the light or the heavy that ends up on paper.

Moreover, she is eager to sink her teeth into *Next Stop Paradise*, a comedy by *The Full Monty* screenwriter Simon Beaufoy. Beaufoy's screenplay is insanely funny and unusual, Bier says, a touching comedy about people meeting the love of their life, the one they were never able to forget.

While we chat, the score for *Brødre* arrives. It is by the Swedish composer Johan Söderqvist who previously scored Bier's films *Like It Never Was Before*, *Family Matters* and *Freud Leaving Home*. Susanne Bier is understandably curious to hear the first notes and it is time to let her continue the massive task of getting *Brødre* ready for its Danish release on September 3 ■

For further information see reverse section.



Photo: Jan Buus

SUSANNE BIER Born 1960, Denmark. Graduate of the National Film School of Denmark (1987). Academy Award semi-finalist and awardwinner at the Munich Film School Festival for her graduation film. Her feature film debut *Freud Leaving Home* (1990) received numerous international plaudits and in the same year Bier received the Carl Th. Dreyer Award for her direction. This was followed by *Family Matters* (1993), *Like It Never Was Before* (1995), recipient of the Critic's Award at Montreal, and *Credo* (1997); Two years later Bier's feature, a critical success, *The One and Only* (1999) was seen in cinemas by a fifth of the population. She then made her second Swedish film: *Once in a Lifetime* (2000), followed by the Dogme film *Open Hearts*, selected for San Sebastian and Sundance, and which received Special Mention in Toronto. *Brothers* (working title) is her eighth feature film.

Actress-turned-director Paprika Steen was determined to make her first feature highly cinematic. *Aftermath* is a drama about people and loss. “Grief to me is a strange thing. ... As a wise man once said, grief is love you cannot get rid of.”

WHEN WORDS FALL SHORT

BY EVA NOVRUP REDVALL

International moviegoers will recognize Paprika Steen from her part in Thomas Vinterberg’s Dogme film *The Celebration*. In Denmark, she is a popular and respected actress of the stage and the big and small screens. Last year she broke all Danish records by winning two film critics’ Bodil awards and two of the Danish Film Academy’s Robert awards, for best leading actress in Jesper W. Nielsen’s *Okay* and best supporting actress in Susanne Bier’s Dogme film *Open Hearts*.

Though it is tempting to assume that the present culmination of Steen’s acting career emboldened her to seek new challenges as a director, that is actually not the case. The screenplay for her debut film, *Aftermath*, was in play before last season’s awards’ shower and she has been toying with the idea of directing for some time. An outline by the screenwriter Kim Fupz Aakeson (whose credits include *Okay*) spurred Steen, who immediately sensed that he had the germ of a story she wanted to tell. As the delighted Steen told FILM a few days before her movie’s Danish release, she considers the role of director a natural extension of what she has been trying to express as an actress. She simply needs a larger canvas to articulate what is on her mind.

GRIEF IS LOVE YOU CANNOT GET RID OF *Aftermath* is the story of Britt (Sofie Gråbøl) and Claes (Mikael Birkkjær), a married couple who lost their teenage daughter in a traffic accident. They have a difficult time dealing with their grief and fumble around as if paralyzed, out of touch with one other and themselves. Another couple, their friends Niels (Søren Pilmark) and Vivi (Lena Endre), try to help,

but Britt and Claes cannot relate to their surroundings and instead live out their own desperate projects.

Britt, a social worker, gets involved far beyond all professional boundaries with the child of a single mother, while Claes reacts with anger and cynicism, toying with the notion of vengeance.

For Steen, the loss of a child was less central to the story than showing how such an event influences the lives of many different people.

“Grief to me is a strange thing. Offhand, it might sound like it’s about weeping by a tombstone and laying some flowers. But, as a wise man once said, grief is love you cannot get rid of. I think that applies to my film. My film is about love you can’t get rid of, more than it’s about losing a child. I’m not interested in telling a story about people sitting around crying, nor am I interested in showing the accident or ambulances wailing. The story is in the relationships. The icy, frozen state they are in and the people around them who are really in the same state. It’s a film about the state I think our society has become frozen in.

“I wasn’t interested in telling a predictable Bambi story that right away has you thinking, ‘Those poor people!’ and feeling sorry for them for the entire film. Something happens to two ordinary people and you can’t help sympathizing with them, but they react in a disagreeable way. People have many sides to them and part of the truth about a state of grief is that people may act like idiots and treat other people poorly. In part, because people in our culture are unable to talk about their grief. We can’t get rid of it. We are oh so good at communicating, but we are bad at reaching out and asking for help. We talk a lot, but when we have no more words, we have no more tools and that leaves us in a state of coma.”

NO NOODLING

Steen was attracted to the story in part because it describes a state where words do not suffice. Indeed, an important factor of her motivation for directing was to work with the visual aspects. For Steen, it was central to make a highly sensuous and aesthetic movie.

“It was a challenge to be on the other side of the camera. The hardest thing was phrasing exactly what I wanted, in terms of lighting and framing. I had the images in my head, but I had a hard time putting them in words. But eventually I picked up the language and I can now say things like, Gimme a zoom lens!”

“When you work with film, you have every opportunity not to do wall-to-wall dialogue. In theatre you can have pauses, but you can’t have a pause that lasts a minute. I wanted to use the medium. The state, the eyes, the breathing are what matter. It’s not so much the words or whether we’re in Copenhagen or Hamburg.

“I was very focused on what emotions and relationships I was going for. I don’t like noodling. I didn’t want any ‘Are you okay?’ in the movie. It had to be stripped of all those intros and outros. I wanted to get to the core and I didn’t want to have to explain too much to people.

“Then again, it was important for me to put a beautiful frame around the story, to welcome the viewer in. If you put a story in an ugly frame, I think the spectator has to strain too hard. I’d rather gradually entice people than scare them away. Once immersed in the story people become involved and



Mikael Birkkjær and Sofie Gråbøl in *Aftermath*. Photo: Erik Aavatsmark

can't look away. Beautiful frames create a visual desire to sink into the inner, ugly drama."

As an actress, Steen has wide experience working on movie sets and it's a matter of course for her to direct actors and be on a shoot. The challenge of directing especially lay in putting words on the more technical aspects of shooting - though her ready gift of gab makes you wonder that she could ever be at a loss for words.

"I'm used to being around a camera. I was way over the whole problem of intimidation, but of course it was a challenge to be on the other side of the camera. The hardest thing was phrasing exactly what I wanted, in terms of lighting and framing. I had the images in my head, but I had a hard time putting them in words. But eventually I picked up the language and I can now say things like, Gimme a zoom lens!"

I WANT TO BE SEAN PENN

Aftermath has several strong female characters: Sofie Gråbøl as Britt at the centre of the story and around her the Swedish actress Lena Endre as her friend Vivi and Karen-Lise Mynster as the lonely woman who killed Britt's daughter with her car. According to Steen, the female characters can largely be credited to Aakeson, a screenwriter who writes for women a lot. Steen had not expressed intention of creating good parts for women.

"I see all people as equally interesting or uninteresting, instead of focusing on whether someone is a woman or a man. Kim wrote the story, but I honed in on certain things. It was important for me to make supporting characters like Niels and Vivi a major part of the story, even though they themselves have no real problems. That makes them

interesting. If they have no real problems, why is something wrong? Everything shifts between them and all of a sudden there is a vacuum there.

"I don't write myself, and I don't improvise. I believe in the script, in Kim as a screenwriter and in the freedom of the actors to simply relate to what the script says. Sometimes it's a great freedom not to have to improvise and make everything super social-realistic.

"I thought it was great to show some female characters done more the American way. This may sound strange, but I think the European way is to have very young and pretty women or bitchy and dejected women. In American movies I see actresses like Joan Allen and Gena Rowlands who are so multifaceted. They are characters. It was important for me that everyone was a character - even if they sometimes verged on the theatrical. They shouldn't just play themselves. Karen-Lise Mynster, for one, often plays one kind of character and that's very much the American school, which I wildly admire.

"I don't give a lot of thought to the gender distribution of the parts, just as I never think about being a woman in this business. Some directors think about that a lot, but for me it's not an issue."

PAPRIKA STEEN Born 1964, Denmark. Graduate from Odense Theatre's drama academy, 1992. Stage, television and film actress. Has played roles in some 20 Danish feature films since 1988, among them, the children's film *Hannibal & Jerry* (1997), *The Celebration / Festen* 1998), *The Idiots / Idioterne* (1998), *The One and Only / Den eneste ene* (1999), *Okay* (2002) and *Open Hearts / Elsker dig for evig* (2002). Steen's performance in the latter two films was described by critics as "formidable and profound". In 2002 she received a People's Choice Award nomination at the European Film Academy and in 2003 she received the Danish Film Academy Robert award for Best Actress (*Okay*) and Best Supporting actress (*Open Hearts*). *Aftermath / Lad de små børn ...* is Paprika Steen's directorial debut.

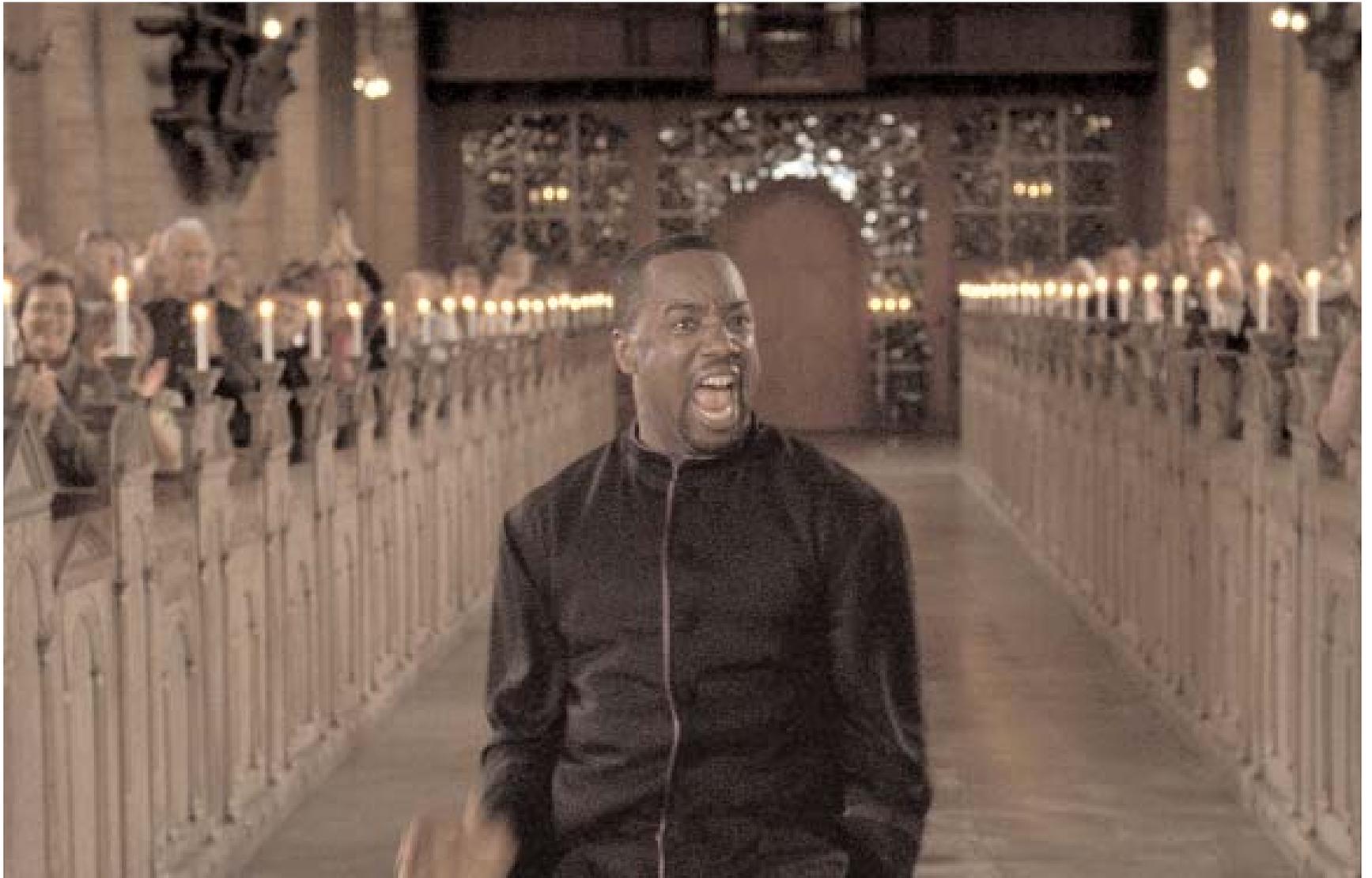
In the future, Paprika Steen expects to combine her acting and her directing - once again, following an American model.

"I want to be Sean Penn! He's my idol. I want to be a director and an actress and excel at both. Same with my film. Because you make a film about a dark subject, you can't leave out humour. Humour will always be a part of people's lives. You can't leave out colours, they are part of the rainbow. That's how I feel about it. It's as natural as breathing" ■

For further information see reverse section.



Photo: Erik Aavatsmark

Malik Yoba in *Oh Happy Day*. Photo: Lars Høgsted

FAITH LOVE AND GOSPEL MUSIC

Hella Joof's romantic drama *Oh Happy Day* brings swinging gospel music to a sleepy Danish backwater - "lifting the mood a bit before we die".

BY EVA NOVRUP REDVALL

"I adore a love story!"

No two ways about it, Hella Joof is an unabashed romance addict. Her first feature, *Shake It All About*, described a love triangle involving two men who find each other across social mores and steady relationships. The film was the biggest box office hit in Denmark in 2001, providing the well-known actress with a solid platform for continuing her directing career. Her next film *Oh Happy Day* is also about love, but for Joof it was important to make it about more than just erotic love between two people. As Joof tells FILM, relationships and friendships between the characters in *Oh Happy Day* have become more important than a conventional love story.

"It's about the things we do for each other in the everyday. The other kind of love is great and important, but here the everyday kind of love is at the centre. The way someone keeps an eye on how you're doing, perhaps touching your arm when you're feeling a bit pressured. This is the love I have tried to bring out through the characters in the story. As the bible says, the last shall be first. Many of the people in this story really are the last, and they need love."

ENERGY AND JOY

Oh Happy Day follows the members of a small church choir in a Danish village. The main character is Hannah (Lotte Andersen), a housewife who cannot find much to be happy about in her everyday life

with a work-aholic husband and a son who will soon be leaving home. One day, Hannah has an accident on her bicycle and this sparking off a series of events: a bus carrying a touring gospel choir has to brake hard to avoid her, injuring the choir's conductor, the Baptist minister Jackson (Malik Yoba), who is forced to stay on in the town for three weeks. Hannah's upbeat friend Grethe (Ditte Gråbøl) persuades Jackson to visit choir practice at the local church and once their initial doubts are behind them, the small-town church and the members of its choir start swinging.

Jackson's arrival also gives rise to discussions about the nature of faith, an important element of the film for Joof. The idea for the story was provided by Lotte Andersen, the leading actress in the film and a close friend of Joof's. The two friends co-wrote the story with Jannik Johansen (director of *Stealing Rembrandt*). Joof describes the film as a true collaboration that was both fruitful and difficult because they all had so many ideas. They all agreed, however, that they wanted to make a film about faith.

"*Oh Happy Day* is an ensemble story and we had a lot of interesting discussions underway about religion and faith. The directly religious aspect of the film now is mainly in the frames. The way light falls from above or the composition of tableaux of a more religious nature. We spent a lot of time discussing the nature of faith and how the film should not just be about having faith in oneself, though that is also an important element of the story.

"We talked a lot about how God simply does not



Hella Joof directing Malik Yoba in *Oh Happy Day*. Photo: Lars Høgstved

care. It may be cool to have a big car, but God does not care. It's nice to be successful, but God does not care. Of course, *you* care whether you are successful or not, but God doesn't. What's important is being human. Human beings are not insignificant. Realizing that, you don't have to be successful. It's hard to get this message out in our society, but the most important thing, I think, is the moment people look at each other, establish eye contact and suddenly get the courage, let's say, to sing out. It may not sound very good, but the joy and the energy are what count."

EVERYONE HAS RESOURCES

While *Shake it All About* was a real Copenhagen movie, *Oh Happy Day* moves out into the Danish provinces. Joof considers the change of environment extremely productive. The story benefited from its unhip setting.

"The message of this story precisely is that it doesn't matter who you are or where you are, and that wouldn't work if the clothes were too sharp or the hair too perfect. I'm trying to show how you should be able to face yourself at your worst. Not just when you're having a bad hair day, but when you're having a bad life day.

"After all, you can identify in all directions. When people watch a movie, they generally like to identify up: 'I could have been Cameron Diaz. Sure, if the lighting was right, I could have been her.' But I think it's more fun to identify in the other direction and think, 'God, I'm like that, too. I can't get it together,

either. I'm also groping around in darkness, trying to make my life work, but it's not.' And I like stories that show that, although you would never believe it, everyone has enormous resources. Every time we open a newspaper, we get confirmation that human beings are puny, that everything is basically terrible and in the end we die. I like it when we try to lift the mood a bit before we die."

"When you listen to or sing gospel, the music triggers certain endorphins: the fact that you keep on singing, always going up half a note. Eventually you get high, and that's when the Holy Spirit comes swooping down"

Oh Happy Day features a string of roof-raising gospel set pieces and a catchy soundtrack by Rick Astley. Researching the film, Joof had the pleasure of getting to know the gospel scene, both in Denmark and abroad, and getting high on the music.

"I always liked gospel, but I never really got into it. It's been fun to go to a lot of performances, both for the music and to just watch people. That's the neat thing about Danish gospel. Who is that person? Maybe she works in a bank or she's a homemaker. All kinds of people sing gospel music. Some do it for religious reasons, but most people just like to sing. I really think it's true that, when you listen to or sing gospel, the music triggers certain endorphins: the fact that you keep on singing, always going up half a

HELLA JOOF Born 1961, Denmark. Graduated in acting from Odense Drama School, 1990. For over a decade she has been a prolific figure on stage, in film, and TV, and gained considerable popularity with critics and audiences alike. She has also co-hosted the children's programme *Bullerfnis* with great success. *Shake It All About / En kort en lang* (2001), her feature film debut, was a hit at the box office (seen by ten percent of the population) as well as a favourite with the critics. *Oh Happy Day / Oh Happy Day* is Joof's second feature film.

note. Eventually you get high, and that's when the Holy Spirit comes swooping down," Joof says, with a wry grin.

UNPLUGGED DIRECTING

The role of the swinging minister Jackson was hard to cast. Joof first looked for an actor in London, but finally had to go all the way to Los Angeles to find Malik Yoba (*Cop Land, Smoke*). At first, she worried about throwing an American star in with her all-Danish cast, but as it turned out that was no problem at all.

"Malik has been in some cool films and he's very musical. It was great to have him come to Denmark to make this film. I was afraid I would get a star who would just sit there looking on, wanting things a certain way, but that didn't happen at all. He was really great to work with".

"*Oh Happy Day* is very different from my first picture, but this one was definitely more fun to make, because I knew a lot more about directing and was more confident taking charge. I knew what I wanted and had more to give. Also, we were very well prepared. I spent a full month before we started shooting going over every scene and frame in detail with the DP (*director of photography, ed*).

"It's a bit like giving birth to your first and second child. I wouldn't say that having your second baby is necessarily more 'fun,' but you know a few things. You don't want them to puncture the amniotic sac this time, because they did that the first time and it didn't speed things up anyway – so let's just do this one unplugged, okay?!"

Hella Joof is definitely acquiring a taste for directing. She still works as an actress, but in a completely different way than before. As she says, smiling broadly, the director in her is probably taking over. On the other hand, it is more fun now to act in other people's projects, because they are not her responsibility.

"Before, I always butted in a lot. I was awful. I was a really annoying actress, always thinking I knew better. Now I'm more like, 'Yes, but you're the director. I'll stand on my mark and I'll make sure to be standing there right after lunch. I'll remember my lines and act to the best of my abilities.' The director loves that, I know that now" ■

For further information see reverse section.

IS GENDER STILL AN ISSUE?

“If you want a commercial hit movie, have a woman direct” (Peter Aalbæk Jensen, Zentropa, in Swedish Aftonbladet). Why are there so many women directors in Danish film? A number of Danish women filmmakers suggest the reasons why.

BY EVA NOVRUP REDVALL

Give all film subsidies to women for the next few years!

Then, the always controversial director Lukas Moodysson (*Lilja 4-ever*, *Show Me Love*) contends, there would be more women in Swedish film. Others, such as Gunnar Bergdahl, the former head of the Gothenburg Film Festival, propose that the Swedish Film Institute hire a special consultant to exclusively fund projects by women filmmakers, whereby at least a third of all Swedish movies would be made by women within a few years.

In Sweden, there is lively debate on the gender

issue. Minister of Culture Marita Ulvskog has instructed the Swedish Film Institute to study the conditions for women in the industry. So far, this has produced a discussion book, *Men, Men, Men and Some Woman*, and a series of seminars, most recently on a possible Swedish version of the English mentor programme, *Directing Change*.

AWARDS AND AUDIENCES

Historically, Denmark has had many successful women movie directors. In the 1950s, Alice O'Fredericks turned out a substantial chunk of the popular film production, including the *Father of Four*

series. In 1966, Annelise Reenberg launched the *My Sister's Children* films, which have been remade in recent years. Astrid Henning Jensen won international acclaim and an Oscar nomination for *Paw* in 1959 and bagged a Silver Bear in Berlin for *Winter-Born* in 1979. In the '80s, Jytte Rex and Helle Ryslinge, among others, made more radical women's movies. Still, there have never been so many different working female feature-film directors as there are today.

In 2002, Annette K. Olesen won Berlin's Blue Angel award for *Minor Mishaps* and the year before Lone Scherfig received Berlin's Silver Bear for *Italian for*



Photo: Robin Skjoldborg

Natasha Arthy, director: *“It’s not about positive discrimination or that women are sharper. In my generation in Denmark we’re all pretty equal. It’s a natural development of our gender roles.”*

Beginners. Films by Danish women directors are winning awards as well as finding audiences and most people would probably say the whole gender issue is resolved. Accordingly, people in Denmark may wonder at the recent flare-up of heated gender-political debate in other countries. Considering the abundance of successful women feature-film directors, including Susanne Bier, Lone Scherfig, Annette K. Olesen, Charlotte Sachs Bostrup, Hella Joof, Jytte Rex, Helle Ryslinge and Lotte Svendsen, and counting Charlotte Sieling, whose TV miniseries *The Chronicle* is a huge hit, plus this year’s first-time directors, Linda Krogsøe-Holmberg (*Count to 100*) and actor-director Paprika Steen (*Aftermath*), a crisis for Danish women directors is hard to spot. As it is, all talk of positive discrimination or gender quotas for public funds is met with scepticism in Denmark. In the general opinion, Danish film has no problems of gender politics in terms of output.

According to Vinca Wiedemann, a former feature-film consultant and currently the head of the Danish Film Institute’s new Talent Development pool, introducing such measures would be outright destructive, both for the film production and women directors.

As she puts it, “It’s to no one’s advantage not to support the *best* movies. Good directors and projects are not easy to find, and of course you should pick the *best*. This also goes for hiring the people who will be distributing the subsidies. It’s to nobody’s advantage not to pick the best people for the job.”

NATURAL DEVELOPMENT

Other countries may naturally wonder why the Danish film industry has so many women directors. As most people in the movie industry see it, there is no single reason why Denmark stands apart. They point to the fact that it is the result of long-term developments on many different levels.

Natasha Arthy, who recently directed the feature *Old, New, Borrowed and Blue* (2003), considers it a natural development that more women have come into the field in recent years.

“It’s not about positive discrimination or that women are sharper. In my generation in Denmark we’re all



Photo: Jan Buus

Annette K. Olesen, director: *“Women may still have a more impassioned relationship to the everyday than men do, and the public has wanted to see these stories. Perhaps the tide will turn in a few years, once the public grows tired of realism.”*

pretty equal. It’s a natural development of our gender roles. But the surge in Danish cinema five years ago has been a decisive factor. It made room for, and increased the focus on, Danish film and, as a natural part of that, more women joined in. Although everyone is always complaining about funding, we have it pretty good compared to our neighbouring countries. Denmark was simply first, I think. Other countries are starting to catch up. For instance, things are starting to happen in Norway, which has been lagging behind for years.”

STORIES AT EYE LEVEL

As Annette K. Olesen (*Minor Mishaps*, 2002 and *In Your Hands*, 2004) points out, everything comes in waves, and many women directors probably thrived in the wake of the Dogme movement’s declared ambition of taking on the everyday.

“Many people ask me why there are so many women directors in Danish film right now. It’s a matter of conjecture, of course, but it may have something to do with the wave of films of the last eight to ten years finding large audiences. These films told stories at eye level about their audience’s everyday, and the connection may simply be, that such stories traditionally have been told by women. Women may still have a more impassioned relationship to the everyday than men do, plus the public has wanted to see these stories. Perhaps the tide will turn in a few years, once the public grows tired of realism. You never know....”

NURTURING TALENT

Lone Scherfig, who is currently preparing to shoot two English-language features in Scotland, is not much inclined to discuss specifically female stories. She focuses on talent, perhaps with a dash of female diligence thrown in. Certainly, it takes both industriousness and stubbornness to get a feature made. As Scherfig sees it, the National Film School of Denmark has probably been an important factor in encouraging women, who may be more hesitant, to plunge into big projects.

“The film school has been important, because it



Photo: Jan Buus

Lone Scherfig, director: *“It takes long-term policies to determine what society will be like, and here such factors as kindergartens and equal distribution of childcare responsibilities between men and women figure in. Otherwise, it would be impossible for women to have a career.”*

has been a place to get training and schooling and be helped along, instead of the law of the jungle reigning supreme. The school has helped ease the way for people with talent. Still, you can point to no single reason for the Danish development. It’s not about any single effort where presto! everything is different. It takes long-term policies to determine what society will be like, and here such factors as kindergartens and equal distribution of childcare responsibilities between men and women count. Otherwise, it would be impossible for women to have a career. Film-wise, it also counts that we have had a good film school for 30 years” ■

This article was previously published in the Danish newspaper Information.

Women in Film and TV (WIFT) Denmark recently published a report, *Køn og arbejde i Film og tv 1992-2002 (Gender and Employment in Film and TV 1992-2002)*, the first study of the gender distribution in the Danish film and television industry. The report (in Danish) is available from WIFT Denmark / wift@wift.dk / www.wift.dk.

STRONG WOMEN 2004

Annette K. Olesen: *Forbrydelser / In Your Hands.* Danish release: 23.01.2004 - 122,888 tickets sold as per March 22, 2004.

Hella Joof: *Oh Happy Day / Shake It All About.* 2001: 583,674 tickets sold.

Linda Krogsøe Holmberg: *Tæl til 100 / Count to 100.* Danish release: 06.02.2004 - 22,105 tickets sold by March 22, 2004.

Paprika Steen: *Lad de små børn / Aftermath.* Danish release: 26.03.2004 - 46,000 tickets sold in first month of release.

Susanne Bier: *Brødre / TBA.* Danish release: 03.09.2004. (*Den eneste ene / The One and Only*, 1999: 843,235 tickets sold in Denmark. *Elsker dig for evigt / Open Hearts*, 2002: 502,236 tickets sold in Denmark.)

Lotte Svendsen: *Rejs jer / TBA.* Danish release: 20.08.2004.

Charlotte Sachs Bostrup: *Familien Gregersen / Lost Generation.* Danish release: 17.12.2004. (*Anja og Viktor / Anja & Viktor*: 572,036 tickets sold in Denmark - the movie stayed among the top five films at the Danish box office for weeks on end. *Anja efter Viktor / Anja After Viktor*: 345,923 tickets sold in Denmark. The TV miniseries *Nikolaj & Julie*: 1.4 million viewers.)

Jytte Rex: *Silkevejen.* Danish release: 10.09.2004.

SIZE MATTERS!

With a huge project, *Asterix and the Vikings*, in production and an edgy little 100% computer-animated feature, *Terkel in Trouble*, just released, wheels big and small are turning at A.Film, Denmark's animation flagship.

BY KIM SKOTTE

The tiny room is thick with concentration and a lack of oxygen. In front of each of four computer monitors sits a young man quietly clicking his mouse, animating cartoon characters. The monitors show a pair of slack-jawed, geeky kids slogging across a schoolyard. They reek of graffiti and apathy and spew a youthful vernacular that is gobbledygook to most adult ears. For sure, it does not look like your average Danish family picture with bright-eyed, sassy kids and sweet, somewhat childish grownups. It is a new style in animation. It looks a bit like the *Wallace & Gromit* claymation cartoons, a bit like the raw style of *South Park* and a bit like *Toy Story*. But mostly it looks like nothing else. The computer whizzes are busy rendering *Terkel in Trouble*, the first Danish, 100% computer-animated feature.

"The monitors show a pair of slack-jawed, geeky kids slogging across a schoolyard. They reek of graffiti and apathy and spew a youthful vernacular that is gobbledygook to most adult ears"

A similar scenario is found behind other doors at A.Film, an Egmont company, discreetly tucked away in one of Copenhagen's more downtrodden outer boroughs. Behind those doors sit more overgrown kids who have been geeking it out in front of their own computers for years and now, thanks to their geekery, have what by all appearances is a creative career in the high-status movie industry. Cool.

Behind another door, there are no computer whizzes to be seen. There, busy people are at work hand-drawing *Asterix* and the rest of the village of indomitable Gauls. The drawings may be small, but the project is huge. *Asterix and the Vikings* has a budget of DKK 160 million, making it the most expensive European animation project to date. It is quite a leap from *Terkel in Trouble*, which, with a budget in the neighbourhood of DKK 10 million and a total production period of six months, can almost be likened to a garage production. An edgy little punk thing. This range, between a big international project and a small, sharp production with little delay between idea and execution, suits A.Film's creative force Stefan Fjeldmark just fine.

ASTERIX AND THE DANES

That A.Film of Denmark won the deal to make *Asterix and the Vikings* is largely thanks to no less illustrious a figure than Uderzo, from whose pen *Asterix* originally sprang. The French television network M6 several years ago decided to make another *Asterix* animated feature. No wonder: the two live-action *Asterix* films sold around 12 million tickets each, in France alone. A cartoon is something else, of course, but there can be no doubt about the continued popularity of the bold Gaul. However, it was hard to find a producer that Uderzo was willing to give the thumbs-up. Only when a French cinema screened A.Film's animated feature *Help! I'm a Fish* did he see something that he really liked. But which *Asterix* album should they pick to animate? There was never really any doubt. It only seemed natural, indeed it would be a terrific joke, to celebrate the French-Danish collaboration by doing *Asterix & The Vikings* (also known as *Asterix & The Normans*). The animators would, so to speak, have the home-field advantage. Meanwhile, Fjeldmark had another equally good reason to pick *Vikings*. The reason was Justforkix, the story's surly, pretentious, scaredy-cat

teenager from the "big city," Lutetia Parisiorum. "Asterix and Obelix are such invincible supermen, so it was essential to have a character for today's teens to identify with. Justforkix is a real inner-city kid," Fjeldmark, one of the picture's two directors, says.

OR NOT?

It is April 2004. *Asterix and the Vikings* is entering a crucial phase. The storyboards and other slow, preliminary manoeuvres have been finished. Now it is time to start animating for real. The planned release in 2006 is still far away, and if A.Film has the opening-night jitters it is because *Terkel in Trouble* is about to open in Denmark. There is much to be excited about. How will Danish moviegoers welcome the first Danish computer-animated picture? To boot, a "family picture" that is both foulmouthed and bloody and whose humour is so coarse that it makes the little monsters from *South Park* look like boy scouts? Certainly, *Terkel in Trouble* does not even vaguely resemble anything you would come across at Disney or Pixar.

The Danes, though, are not unprepared for this material. *Terkel in Trouble* is based on a radio serial by the stand-up comic Anders "The Duck" Matthesen. A cult hit a few years ago with kids and young adults, *Terkel* catapulted "The Duck" to nationwide fame as one of the country's most popular and controversial comics. Within the last few months, he has enjoyed stunning success with his one-man show at a major Copenhagen concert hall, secondly he has had his own (none-too ordinary) TV "advent calendar" running daily on national television in the month of December, and thirdly, on stage, he has played the eccentric hippie billionaire Simon Spies. Like the radio precursor, "The Duck" Matthesen does the voices of all the characters in *Terkel*. Women, men, boys, girls, teachers, juvenile delinquents and the beer-guzzling old salt and trashmouth Uncle Stewart - "The Duck" gives voice to them all.



Terkel in Trouble. Photo: Nordisk Film A/S

Terkel in Trouble is the at once the everyday and bizarre tale of Terkel, who goes to Kastanjevejens School and one day torments Fat Dorit so viciously that she jumps out a window and splatters out in the schoolyard. It may sound gruesome, but it is actually very funny. In an irreverent way. How could it be otherwise, when these spoiled-rotten Danish kids sit around watching *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* on video, while their impoverished peers in Thailand have to bend over in the rice paddies all day and retain that posture all night with fat German sex tourists? At least that is what Gunnar, the after-school teacher with the green panda shirt and guitar in hand, tells his gawking students in his song about Quang from Thailand.

“You know, I wouldn’t be surprised if the Americans come knocking if *Terkel* is a hit in Europe. Precisely because it’s so different from the McDonald movies.”

DOGME BY COMPUTER

“It’s sort of a Dogme cartoon,” Fjeldmark says about *Terkel in Trouble*. “Real Dogme films focus on the actors and the story. For us it’s about focusing on a good story, focusing the energy in the right places. We were good at making the right choices under way. This means people will experience no difference in quality whether they are watching *Terkel* or *Ice Age*,” Fjeldmark claims. He gives credit to the young guys at A.Film for attaining high quality on a low budget. Like trailblazers on the frontiers of computer animation, they made some unorthodox shortcuts. Compared to the expense and labour intensity of a traditional animated feature, *Terkel in Trouble* is like a guerrilla raid. In man-hour expenditure, the ratio is 1:10. In terms of finances, the difference is even more pronounced. However, when you make the right stylistic choices early on in the production process, the result is not a cheap



Kresten V. Andersen, Stefan Fjeldmark and Thorbjørn Christoffersen. Photo: Elisabeth Rønne Kristensen / Nordisk Film

STEFAN FJELDMARK Born 1964, Denmark. Author of the comic-book *The Snow Queen* (1981). Animator on commercials, storyboarder and chief animator on *Valhalla* (1986). Co-founder of A.Film in 1988. International breakthrough on productions by Bluth: animator on *A Troll in Central Park*, sequence director on *Thumbelina* and storyboarder on *Pebble and the Penguin* and for *Kroyer in Los Angeles*, sequence director on *Fern Gully* and *The Last Rain Forest*. Wrote the screenplay for the Academy Award nominated animated short *When Life Departs* (1997). Co-director of *Amazon Jack 1 / Jungledyret* (1993) and *Amazon Jack 2 - The Movie Star / Amazon Jack - The Moviestar* (1996). *Help! I’m a Fish* (2000), award-winner in Chicago, was a hit at the box-office. *Terkel in Trouble / Terkel i knibe* is Fjeldmark’s fourth feature film.

look but, in this case, a film that is “garage-like the cool way,” as Fjeldmark puts it.

“The good thing about *Terkel* is that you relate to his problems and quandaries. I don’t feel that way about *South Park* at all,” Fjeldmark says of the American animation phenomenon, which will likely be the handle many foreign writers will reach for to describe *Terkel in Trouble*. The humour of the Danish pseudo-idyll is equally irreverent. For Fjeldmark, it was important to keep the raw, streetwise tone. It’s a movie that makes no attempt to play by the rules of wholesome family fare.

“Humour that’s twisted and dark when you listen to it on CD is even darker and more twisted when you watch it on film,” Fjeldmark says. “I’ve made

compromises in the past – and I’ll never do it again! In our first production, *Help! I’m a Fish*, we did our best to adapt to good taste. After all, there was the American market to consider. So there we were, trying to please some Americans, who, as it turned out, didn’t want the movie anyway. How much fun is that? I think you go farthest when you don’t try to please anyone. You know, I wouldn’t be surprised if the Americans come knocking if *Terkel* is a hit in Europe. Precisely because it’s so different from the McDonald movies they usually watch” ■

For further information see www.afilm.dk and reverse section.



Photo: Steen Donsby

WE'RE ALL CONNECTED

In his fantasy feature *Strings*, director Anders Rønnow Klarlund has created a world and mythology all his own. The film features an all-marionette cast, while the materials used to make the puppets reflect their inner life, trade and position in society.

BY CHRISTIAN MONGGAARD

"I think it's a fantastic universe," Leif Kjeldsen says. Kjeldsen is the editor on Anders Rønnow Klarlund's new feature *Strings*, which is no less of a rarity than an all-marionette fantasy film. We are in a cutting room in Filmbyen, Avedøre, looking over a few scenes from the movie. I can only agree. It is a fantastic universe. In *Strings*, Rønnow Klarlund has created a world and mythology all his own. The film tells the story of a young prince Hal Tara who sets out to avenge the death of his father, the Emperor of Hebalon. Hal is convinced that the Zeriths, arch-enemies of the Hebalonians, are behind the murder, but he soon realizes that the world is not all black and white and that his father is not as innocent as he thought.

The director got the idea for *Strings*, while watching a commercial shot in Prague using shots from a marionette opera. "It showed a lot of close-ups of the puppets, which had a fascinating character," he says. "I was meditating on it and the first drawing I did was of a marionette looking for its pursuers. The puppet has climbed a tree and looks out at the horizon and there are 10 million strings all around the forest. It was a great image and I thought, I should make that."

Strings, which was made on a budget of DKK 26 million, is clearly an unusual film. Producer Niels Bald and Rønnow Klarlund refuse to label it a puppet film. To them, that has an air of morose, Czech marionettes. *Strings* is a fantasy film. "We don't have puppets, we have characters," Bald says. Rønnow Klarlund stresses that *Strings* is for people of all ages. "Who like *The Lord of the Rings*? Who like *Star Wars*? Our film was made for the fantasy crowd."

The distinctive puppets were designed by Bernd Ogrodnik, a German-Icelandic puppeteer, and the puppeteers had to be

hired abroad because working with the puppets was so demanding. The puppets cannot move their mouth, but they have very expressive gestures and it takes a skilled puppeteer to manipulate them.

Rønnow Klarlund chose to make the fact, that the actors are puppets, a significant element of the film. The materials the puppets are made of reflect their inner life, their trade and their position in the societal hierarchy they inhabit. A doctor has an operating table as a stomach, an anorexic princess has a hole in her stomach, poor people are made of driftwood, rich people of mahogany and gold, while the swamp-dwelling Zeriths weave themselves from rush.

The strings are likewise essential to the life of a puppet. When a string holding one of their body parts is cut, they can replace that body part, but when their head string is cut, they die. The puppets know this, which is why they try to cut each other's head string when they are in battle. "What would it be like to be a marionette? If everyone in the world were a marionette, what would it look like? How do they feel? These are some of the questions we started out with," Bald says.

"There is something poetic and very dramatic about marionettes," Rønnow Klarlund adds. "There is something about them that reflects our own fragility. And of course, the strings are a very powerful symbol of being connected to, or controlled by, others" ■

This is an abbreviated, edited version of an article that was first printed in EKKO, a Danish film and media journal, www.ekkofilm.dk

For further information see reverse section.

ANDERS RØNNOW KLARLUND Born 1971, Denmark. Prior to filmmaking he worked within radio and produced for television. Owner of the film production company Revival ApS., founded in 1999. His directorial debut *The Eighteenth / Den attende* (1996) received awards at the Valencia, Lübeck and Mannheim-Heidelberg festivals, while his second feature *Possessed / Besat* (1999) won major prizes in Brussels and Rome. Has directed four episodes of the popular television series *Taxa* for the national broadcaster DR TV Danish Broadcasting Corporation. *Strings* is his third feature film.

FORGIVENESS

Twice Palmes d'Or winner and Oscar awarded. Bille August is back, this time with Connie Nielsen, Aidan Quinn and Tim Daly in *Return to Sender*. FILM reports from the set.

BY TINA JØHNK CHRISTENSEN

Just across from the Hilton Hotel conference room, where a small congregation is gathered for Sunday prayers, Bille August works at his editing desk. He is editing yesterday's shots taken at Will Rogers High School in south Tulsa. The school is the stand in for a blind school in August's *Return to Sender*. Here, American actors Aidan Quinn and Tim Daly were performing some of the last pivotal scenes and soon the whole film will wrap.

"A great part of the preparation work is understanding a society that wishes revenge on the individual with the death penalty," Bille August explains. "You have to look at the society in a historical perspective. Initially, the country had no laws and people were driven by survival."

Return to Sender takes place in Oklahoma, which is one of the 38 states in the US that impose the death penalty. One of the central characters in *Return to Sender* is defence lawyer Frank Nitzche (Aidan Quinn), who has been engaged in defending several death row cases. In a moment of weakness, the idea to sell the inmates last letters before the execution is something too tempting to resist.

"He gets in trouble and is suspended from practice," explains Quinn. "He then goes into a downward spin road of drinking too much and ends up writing letters to people on death row. He picks cases where he is certain they are guilty so he does not get too involved when they die and he strikes up this pen pal relationship with them. When they die he sells their letter."

One of the inmates that he writes to is a woman, Charlotte Cory (Connie Nielsen) and as an exception to the rule, he visits Charlotte in the Macalester prison. He finds out that she might not be guilty and that he likes her more than he should.

"This time he gets to know someone who is supposed to be

guilty without a doubt. He hears her story and nothing makes sense. Furthermore, she wakes him back to life," says Quinn.

August points out that it is a very plot driven thriller, but also an intense and beautiful love story. "First of all, it is a story about reconciliation and forgiveness in an environment where forgiveness does not exist - precisely on death row," he says.

Danish Connie Nielsen was already a part of the project, before August was involved, so the Danish connection was a coincidence. He has never before worked with Connie Nielsen and had a session watching her films at home. He was very impressed. But not as impressed as he is today.

"I have never seen her as good as in this role. She gives a very truthful and touching portrait of a human being, who is close to dying," says August about his fellow Dane, who has created a solid career in the US following her breakthrough as Lucilla in *Gladiator* (2000).

"It portrays some situations in peoples' lives, which I have never dealt with before. What happens to people when they are so close to being executed?" says August and points out that in the middle of this detached environment, miracles do happen.

Among August's English language films are *The House of the Spirits* (1993) and *Smilla's Sense of Snow* (1997), but *Return to Sender* is August's first Danish English-language production shot in the US.

The subject matter is closely tied to American culture and mentality. Its subject fascinated him; how people become a product of the culture they are brought up in and how death row can be defended.

"Most of the films that I have made were about forgiving," says August referring to his interest in this subject matter. His film based on Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* (1998) was also about the imperfection of human beings and the ability to forgive. He stresses that *Return to Sender* is not a political film like for instance Alan Parker's *The Life of David Gale* (2003).

"It entails the belief in people's ability to improve and the ability to forgive" ■

For further information see reverse section.



Bille August directing Connie Nielsen in *Return to Sender*. Photo: Rolf Konow

BILLE AUGUST Born 1948. Denmark. Trained in photography in Sweden. Graduated from the National Film School of Denmark in 1973. He made his international breakthrough with *Pelle the Conqueror / Pelle Erobreren*, which received the Palme d'Or in Cannes, 1988, and an Oscar in 1989. He received his second Palme d'Or in 1992 for *Best Intentions / Den gode vilje*. His other works include the children and youth films: *Zappa / Zappa* (1983), *The World of Buster / Busters Verden* and *Twist and Shout / Tro, håb og kærlighed* (1984). Among his other titles are *The House of the Spirits / Åndernes hus* (1993), *Jerusalem / Jerusalem* (1996), *Smilla's Sense of Snow / Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* (1997) and *A Song for Martin / En sang for Martin* (2001).

VISIONS OF AMERICA

As maverick Lars von Trier continues his USA trilogy in *Manderlay*, more American stars have lined up to be a part of his controversial vision of the country he has never been in.

LARS VON TRIER Born 1956, Denmark. Graduated from the National Film School of Denmark 1983. The following year he directed *Element of Crime* (1984). Recipient of major international awards, among them Prix Special de Jury in Cannes for *Europa* (1991), Jean d'Arcy Prize in France for the television production *Medea* (1988), and the Grand Prix in Cannes for *Breaking the Waves* (1996). His major breakthrough with the audience was with *The Kingdom / Riget* (1994). Founder of the concept Dogme95 which has inspired filmmakers worldwide. His own tribute to Dogme was *The Idiots / Idioterne* (1998). Trier is also innovator and partner of Zentropa, a multi-faceted and visionary Danish company. *Dancer in the Dark* (2000) won the Palme d'Or. *Dogville* (2003) was selected for the Official Competition, Cannes 2003. *Manderlay* is Trier's tenth feature film.

BY JACOB NEIENDAM

Though *Manderlay* promises to be even more provocative than the acclaimed first installment *Dogville*, renowned US actors like Danny Glover and Willem Dafoe have joined the new leading lady Bryce Dallas Howard, who steps into Nicole Kidman's shoes as Grace.

"Since we replaced Nicole in the lead, Lars didn't feel that he had to stay with any of the same actors in the same roles," says producer Vibeke Windeløv, but as audiences well remember few survived *Dogville* except Grace and her father. While Dafoe replaces James Caan as the gangster boss, a number of *Dogville* actors never-the-less return in new roles. They include Lauren Bacall, Jeremy Davies and Chloë Sevigny as well as Trier regulars Jean-Marc Barr and Udo Kier.

"It has been a difficult film to cast, because Lars didn't want to compromise his choices of actors. He only wanted the ones who were perfect for the parts," adds Windeløv.

"This film has taken a lot of courage for actors to agree to appear in. Lars really puts things on the edge here – for blacks and whites," she says recalling how she after meeting with the acclaimed and politically conscious actor Danny Glover, left him a copy of *Dogville* on a portable DVD player, only to have him call her back early next morning after sitting up all night watching it, missing the crucial last 23 minutes because the batteries went flat.

"The actors have to trust that Lars is doing the right thing,

because it is highly provocative. They have to believe in him 100%, but these actors are strong people, who know what they are doing." Glover, a veteran of films from *The Color Purple* to *Lethal Weapon*, is joined by France's Isaach De Bankóle who plays the male lead opposite Howard. Bankóle originates from the Ivory Coast and has starred in Jim Jarmush's *Night On Earth* and *Ghost Dog*. Other talents include Holland's Rik Launspach and Ruben Brinkman as well as a number of UK stage actors including Mona Hammond, Ginny Holder, Clive Rowe, Llewella Gideon, Emmanuel Idowu, Dona Croll, Javone Prince, Suzette Llewellyn, Joseph Mydell and Nina Sosanya.

The title of Trier's film comes from Daphne du Maurier's novel *Rebecca* (filmed by Alfred Hitchcock), and is named after the country estate central to this story. In Trier's film, *Manderlay* is a plantation in Alabama where Grace and her father arrive after leaving *Dogville*. Here they witness the horrors and the injustice of slavery, which compels Grace to intervene, and she continues her journey towards becoming a woman and a human being.

Manderlay closely follows the style established in its predecessor, and is also shot in the Swedish town of Trollhättan. Here the regional fund Film I Väst transformed an old hangar into a massive studio to house the production.

"We have been looking all over Europe for a place that was big enough, but just couldn't find one," says Windeløv, thrilled about the specially made 30 meters wide, 80 meters long and more than 20 meters high stage.

"It is not all that different, but it symbolizes a Southern plantation, so it is at least twice the size of *Dogville*. We have the same markings on the floor, which this time is white with black markings on, and then we have some huge amazing set pieces. You could say that we are working in very different dimensions."

The crew is made up of Trier regulars like production designer Peter Grant, costume designer Manon Rasmussen, sound designer Per Streit and Peter Hjort will again be in charge of the special effects shots which incorporate some 225 cameras and shows the city from a God-like perspective. Though the filmmaker carries the camera himself, he collaborates closely with cinematographer Anthony Dod Mantle, who won a *European Film Award* for his work on *Dogville* ■

For further information see reverse section.



Bryce Dallas Howard in *Manderlay*. Photo: Astrid Wirth



Thomas Vinterberg directing Jamie Bell. Photo: Astrid Wirth

THOMAS VINTERBERG Born 1969, Denmark. Graduate of the National Film School of Denmark 1993. Has received some 18 awards at international festivals for his short films (Academy Award-nominated *Last Round / Sidste omgang* (1993), and *The Boy Who Walked Backwards / Drengen der gik baglæns* (1993). His feature film debut *The Greatest Heroes / De største helte* (1996) won awards at Rouen and Madrid. *The Celebration / Festen* (1998), his highly acclaimed second feature film, won among others the Special Prize of the Jury at Cannes. *It's All About Love / It's All About Love* was selected for Premieres at Sundance and the Official Selection - Special Screenings Berlin, 2003. *Dear Wendy* is Vinterberg's fourth feature film.

TOUGH & HUMOROUS

It has been almost ten years since Thomas Vinterberg and Lars von Trier conceived the Dogme concept that paved the way for Vinterberg's *The Celebration*. Now, they are resuming their collaboration. Von Trier wrote the screenplay for Vinterberg's *Dear Wendy*, the tough, humorous story of a young American and his obsession with firearms. Von Trier's razor-sharp bird's eye view of the world merges with Vinterberg's vital eye-level realism. Claus Christensen has interviewed some of the film's originators.

MERGING OPPOSING POLES / THOMAS VINTERBERG, DIRECTOR:

"Already before I read the screenplay, the idea of working with a script by Lars von Trier appealed to me. Our collaboration with Dogme was extremely fruitful, perhaps because our approaches to moviemaking ultimately are so different. While Lars views the world from above, with great precision and provocation - just think of *Dogville* - I see the world from the opposing pole: I work intuitively, creating vitality and animation at eye level.

I saw a challenge in merging the two ways of making films. Precisely because we are so different, I had an opportunity to add a new perspective to Lars' screenplay. We discussed that a lot. Instead of viewing the world from above, it would be interesting to bring the perspective down among the characters and tell the story at eye level - with no chalk lines. What would happen if we transformed the screenplay's razor-sharp construction into vital reality? We bring two opposing poles together in the hope that something new will emerge".

RECREATING REALITY / JETTE LEHMANN, ART DIRECTOR:

"To keep costs down and retain Danish control of the film, we shot half the film in Denmark. The scenes in the mine were shot in an abandoned mine in the German Ruhr district.

At Filmbyen in Copenhagen we created a mining town, inspired by abandoned mines in West Virginia, one of the poorest areas of the United States. Ten years ago, these town had maybe 6,000 inhabitants, but now that the mines have been closed, inhabitants of the towns have been reduced to 500 or so. Our location scout found these ghost towns, and working from the photos, the production designer Karl Juliusson did a draft of the set.

The style of the buildings is quite British, small houses with high fronts. At first sight, it all looks really rundown, but there are a few impressive houses among them. We recreated the main street, including a supermarket, a thrift store and a nightclub. In all, we built about 25 houses on a 115x115-metre lot. It is the biggest outdoor movie set in Denmark in recent times. The set was built around existing buildings in Filmbyen, enabling the crew to use rooms of actual buildings for the interior shots".

A SOFT, OLD LOOK / ANTHONY DOD MANTLE, CINEMATOGRAPHER:

"Thomas Vinterberg and I wanted to return to the dynamic, intimate camera style of *The Celebration*, closing in tight on the actors. As standard HD cameras are heavy and cumbersome, I developed a camera system for the film by taking the tape machine off the camera and putting it on a car, connecting it by cable to the camera. In this way, I was able to move freely among the actors, while a steadycam-type device kept the shots from being shaky.

In terms of visual aesthetics, I created a soft, delicate, rather old-fashioned style as a counterpoint to the brutal story of firearms. Edward Curtis, who photographed American Indians a century ago, was a prime source of inspiration. Curtis' pictures are romantic and soft-edged, and recreating an old-style look with modern technology was a big challenge. Lenses today are getting sharper and sharper, so I scrounged up an old lens and mounted it on the HD camera. The result is an aesthetics that lies somewhere between film and video".

For further information see reverse section.



Julie Zangenberg in *The Fakir*. Photo: Jens Juncker-Jensen

SURREAL ADVENTURE

PETER FLINDT Born 1964. Denmark. Graduated from the National Film School of Denmark, 1993, where he made *Requiem* (1992), awarded in Italy and the USA. Assistant director on numerous feature films, making commercials in between. *Eye of the Eagle / Ørnens øje* (1998), his feature film debut, was a hit at the box office for children's cinema, and television viewers surpassed 1 million. His second film was *The Olsen Gang Junior / Olsen Banden Junior*. *The Fakir / Fakiren fra Bilbao* is his third feature film.

An old haunted house, the world's most valuable diamond, two cut-throat villains and a ghost that goes by the name of "The Fakir of Bilbao." Magic and adventure for the whole family is guaranteed with M & M Productions' autumn release of *The Fakir*. Claus Christensen has interviewed some of the film's originators.

The movie is based on a novel by Bjarne Reuter, one of Denmark's most popular authors. Veteran director Peter Flinth and his crew have created a distinctive universe beyond time and space. The humour is contemporary, while the adventure is redolent of classic matinee movies. The budget of DKK 23 million was spent in large part on imaginative set designs and visual effects.

RESPECT FOR CHILDREN / METTE HEENO, SCREENWRITER:

"I read Bjarne Reuter's novel and fell for the story's drive and zany character. The novel possesses a magic that I haven't seen in Danish children's movies in a long time and the challenge lay in transferring that magic to the screen. Likewise, it was a challenge to sustain the story's emotional resonance once the treasure hunt hits full throttle. The hunt is viscerally thrilling. Still, it wouldn't be compelling had we ignored that the film's protagonists are two kids who have lost their father and have to learn to deal with their grief.

It's important to offer positive role models for kids to identify with and look up to. Emma is sensitive and intuitive, Tom more rational, and together they make a formidable team. They, not the grownups, have the sense. They control the story. The funniest character in the film is Lombardo the Fakir. He may not be as smart as he thinks he is, but he helps the kids open up to magic and the good things in life. It's no use crying for the dead. You've got to live".

AWAY FROM REALITY / PETER DE NEERGAARD, PRODUCTION DESIGNER:

"We consciously moved away from reality and put a lot of work into establishing the ghost house, Eye of the Elk, especially the hall with the big staircase. The house has some high, spindly towers and we considered either building the house from the ground up, on location, or rendering it in the computer. Both solutions are costly and instead we opted for a combination, using the bottom floor of a dilapidated house on the island of Langeland for the shoots, then adding the top floor and the high towers in the computer.

I find that adventure pictures are making a comeback in Denmark after a period of Dogme films. Among the films we studied were Hitchcock's *Rebecca* and Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands*. Both films show someone arriving at a house with a gate that is the entrance to a strange, mysterious world. The fakir in our film is from Bilbao, Spain, so we went for a Moorish look. Circus, exotic, eeriness - those were keywords".

A SURPLUS OF IMAGINATION / PETER FLINTH, DIRECTOR:

"*The Fakir* is a classic adventure, but its world is offbeat, near surreal. Having the twins drag around some people they accidentally killed is transgressive, to be sure, but handled with a surplus of good humour and imagination it does not seem offensive.

We have test-screened the movie, but we try not to lose ourselves in target groups and markets. That, I think, is the difference between Danish and American family films. Danish films are less calculating. We pick up signals, but aim to make the movies we would like to see ourselves. The biggest challenge was juggling the many plot lines. There are a lot of side stories, along with loads of gags requiring visual effects and stunts".

For further information see reverse section.

POLITICAL THRILLER

The political thriller is largely uncharted territory in Danish film. "It was liberating to undertake a pioneering project," first-time director Nikolaj Arcel says.

BY CLAUD CHRISTENSEN

Who has the power? Politicians, spin doctors or journalists? Are citizens only fed snatches of what goes on behind closed doors?

King's Game (working title) is a Danish political thriller based on a novel by a former press officer for the Conservative People's Party. The picture tells the story of a young journalist who is whirled into a power struggle behind two politicians. When the journalist realises he is being cynically exploited, he determines to get to the bottom of a larger conspiracy.

King's Game is the first feature by Nikolaj Arcel. The 31-year-old director first made his mark as the screenwriter of *Catch That Girl*, a popular action film for kids, which was recently remade in America as *Catch That Kid*.

"A first feature will always be your calling card for future projects. Awareness of that can be suffocating. It was for me. So it was a great relief to throw myself into what is kind of a pioneering project in Denmark. We're familiar with the genre from the United States and Sweden, but for some reason very few Danish thrillers have been made on the backdrop of sociopolitical reality."

What was the single greatest challenge in transplanting the genre to Denmark?

"Maintaining a swift, 'Undanish' pace. But the actors got it straight away, which helped a lot, and they cranked up the pace and the energy. Likewise, it was a challenge to construct a gripping plot, while maintaining credibility. Any of the events in the picture could happen, have happened or are

happening in Denmark."

You did a lot of research for the film. What was the most surprising discovery you made underway?

"Each day held new surprises. We had the honour of speaking with some prominent figures: politicians, journalists and spin doctors. Many of them had stories to tell that could topple governments. That was the biggest surprise. That they would tell us, but not the people. A hot story is only hot, apparently, if it doesn't do too much damage to your own career."

King's Game above all is about the clubbiness of politicians and journalists.

"Spin doctors are a disease in politics. But they would be insignificant if journalists didn't rely on them to the extent that they do. There are still journalists and politicians out here fighting the good fight. They are the real heroes, because they operate in a highly cynical world. My protagonist Ulrik Torp (Anders W. Berthelsen) is a true hero."

What considerations determined your choice of cinematic style?

"We wanted to get away from heavy realism and do a kind of uber-realism. I prefer to interpret events, and I consciously work with sound and image in subjective ways. There are scenes in the film that are completely silent in order to underscore that the character has withdrawn into himself or that time has stopped. The scenes at the parliament, Christiansborg, are invariably cool, while Ulrik Torp's home is warm and cosy. A cheap trick, but an effective one."

Is King's Game a decidedly Danish film or will it also appeal to an international audience?

"Nobody knows anything about what sells. My main concern is that Danes take to the film. But its issues, I think, are universal, because all of Europe is undergoing a soul-searching process regarding its political life. Power games and spin doctors have become news in their own right. During lunch breaks on the set, we were treated to one horror story after another in the daily papers about spin doctory and questionable political journalism. So the timing is good. The story, in any case, is inspired by events in all of Europe, not just Denmark" ■

For further information see reverse section.

NIKOLAJ ARCEL Born 1972, Denmark. Graduate of the National Film School of Denmark, 2001. His graduation film *Woyzeck's Last Symphony* won the top awards in Munich and Clermond-Ferrand and Arcel himself received the award Most Promising Director at the 9th International Student Festival in Tel Aviv. He has also written the screenplay for the award-winning children's film *Catch That Girl* (2002). *Kings Game / Kongekabale* is Arcel's feature film debut.



Nicolas Bro and Anders W. Berthelsen in *King's Game*. Photo: Per Arnesen



Bjarne Henriksen in *Chinaman*. Photo: Robin Skjoldborg



Asian-American actress Vivian Wu. Photo: Fine & Mellow

A COLOURFUL MEETING IN A DRAB SUBURB

Danish and Chinese culture amalgamates in a suburban grill bar, dishing out spring rolls, divorce and friendship. The director Henrik Ruben Genz is currently making *Chinaman*, his second feature, hot on the heels of two award-winning children's movies, the feature *Someone Like Hodder* and the Oscar-nominated short film *Teis & Nico*.

BY FABIANA GIRALDI

Henrik Ruben Genz is one of the brightest young talents in Danish film. His films sparkle in the detail, and the mood of a scene, or in tiny mind-game nuances. You are invariably gripped by Genz' all-too human stories served up with a subtle, offbeat touch.

Chinaman is a Danish/Chinese melodrama of blossoming romance. Hard-edged dialogue is delivered with a wink. The man behind the screenplay is the ever-productive Kim Fupz Aakeson (*The One and Only* / *Miracle* / *Minor Mishaps* / *Okay* / *Old new, Borrowed and Blue* / *In your Hands* / *Aftermath*).

Fupz and Genz introduce the audience to a timid Dane whose life has gone dead, long before it is over. Then, a splash of colour comes into his drab, seemingly hopeless existence

through a proforma marriage to a Chinese woman, and bleak suburban loneliness blooms into romance.

The Chinese woman is played by the Chinese actress Vivian Wu, known from *The Pillow Book*, *The Last Emperor* and *Blindness*.

As in his other pictures, Genz works with a stylized visual universe. The bleak, lonesome suburb where love and colour are reintroduced was created in close collaboration with the set designer, Niels Sejer.

"You can see the screenplay as a blueprint to be animated – or a template to be filled in," Sejer says, having recently finished the sets for *Chinaman*.

"During the research stage, Genz and I attempted to penetrate the surface of the Chinese community in Denmark. That turned out to be utterly impossible. It's a completely private world, sealed off to outsiders. The Chinese talk to other Chinese and no one else. Here is really a case of failed integration. As the few Chinese people we did get to talk to told us, they don't do much else besides work. They readily work 18 hours a day."

For that reason, Sejer spent a lot of his research time looking through images. Working with images and Chinese objects, he designed the inner and outer visuals that give physical form to the story.

"We tried to expand on the drabness, in the process turning it into something vibrant. We want to lure the viewer into a poetic space with deeper layers underlying the immediately apparent." Accordingly, light Chinese aesthetics, such as recurring floral patterns, are brought into sharp contrast with the surrounding grey suburban housing projects.

A world of contrasts, a world where incapacity, routines and unfulfilled dreams are a jumping-off point for new friendships and love ■

For further information see reverse section.

HENRIK RUBEN GENZ Born 1959, Denmark. Graduate of the National Film School of Denmark, 1995. Best Film & Script Award for his film *Cross Roads* at the Film School Festival in Munich, 1995. Has directed a number of short films and documentaries including the Academy Award nominated and Glass Bear winner at Berlin, the short fiction film, *Teis & Nico* / *Bror, min bror* (1999), which was also a festival hit worldwide. *Someone Like Hodder* / *En som Hodder*, his feature film debut, was honoured with awards in Chicago, London, Poznan and Zlin. Genz is also recipient of the Satyajit Ray Award for 2003. *Chinaman* / *Kinamand* is his second feature film.

“CLOSE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE CREATIVE ARTISTS AND THE PRODUCTION TEAM IS THE KEY”

says the 40-year-old Danish producer Thomas Gammeltoft - a familiar name in Danish film. He became well-known in the 1990s with a string of successful documentaries. On this side of the millennium, his features *Shake It All About* and *Stealing Rembrandt* have been huge box office hits.



Photo: Jan Buus

BY ANNA BRIDGEWATER

Irreplaceable, but invisible - producers are often overlooked in the dazzle and glamour of the movie world. Now, under the heading of Producers on the Move, the European network for film promotion (EFP) aims to change all that, singling out some of Europe's most dynamic and ambitious film producers for special attention.

Thomas Gammeltoft is highly positive about being selected as one of this year's up-and-coming producers: "I have been in the business for a long time, but I'm a relative newcomer to features. Inclusion in Producers on the Move will hopefully bring me together with people I wouldn't otherwise meet."

As Gammeltoft points out, he has many interests in common with his European colleagues, plus everyone benefits from a strong international network and opportunities for getting involved in new projects, "We are all on the lookout for great stories and the funds to produce them."

Gammeltoft hopes that the increased focus on his work in Cannes will benefit the projects he is bringing with him to the festival. Right now he is putting together funding for a dark and ominous thriller, *Murk*, the next feature by Jannik Johansen, director of *Stealing Rembrandt*. He is no stranger to international co-productions, however. He has been successful at finding international funding for the projects of his production company Fine & Mellow: "There's international money in *Stealing Rembrandt* and *Oh Happy Day*, as well as in *Chinaman* which is

currently in production."

Gammeltoft plans to remain a hands-on producer involved in every aspect of the creative process: "I have a talent for financing films and developing them together with my directors. But I don't want our productions to grow too big, internationally. I want to be able to keep creative control without everything drowning in an army of lawyers - the Danish way of producing films is great." One of the things he enjoys about producing in Denmark is the close collaboration between the creative artists and the production team: "At Fine & Mellow, directors, writers and actors are regarded as far more than just employees," he adds.

For Gammeltoft co-producing internationally does not just mean getting hands on money from other countries. It also means using international talent and creativity. Accordingly, his next film, the melodrama *Chinaman*, stars the Asian-American actress Vivian Wu. And the British pop musician Rick Astley wrote the music for *Oh Happy Day*. And if it doesn't mean losing the close contact to the creative team, he considers international co-productions the way to go to produce features in the future.

"We are only five million people in Denmark and that is not a big movie-going public. So of course international productions and audiences are of interest to us. Some of Fine & Mellow's future productions might very well be in English" ■

For further information see reverse section.

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN – THE EMINEM OF HIS DAY

Hans Christian Andersen will be here, there and everywhere in Denmark next year. The Danish film industry is putting in its two cents as well to celebrate the 200th birthday of the beloved fairytale writer.

BY KIM SKOTTE

Denmark will have Hans Christian Andersen written all over it next year. April 2, 2005 is the legendary fairytale writer's 200th birthday and that naturally calls for a celebration. As a Dane, one may quietly dread choking on all the little chimney-sweeps, trouserless emperors and ugly ducklings long before the year is over.

Be that as it may, Andersen's life was an exciting and psychologically complex story in its own right, though the Danish movie industry has been remarkably quiet on the subject. Except for Jannik Hastrup's animation feature *Hans Christian Andersen and the Long Shadow* (1998) there has not been a Danish feature on Andersen's life. It is almost as if the subject were sacrosanct. To date, the Danes have left it to Danny Kaye to portray Denmark's best-loved son in the film *Hans Christian Andersen* (1952).

Rumle Hammerich's feature *Young Andersen* seeks to fill that gap. Zooming in on a slice of the writer's life, *Young Andersen* is not intended to be a dramatised biography, but a dramatic pinpointing of a period when the 18-year-old genius was still restlessly trying to find his path. Edgy with energy and a sense of self-worth, but with no real sense of direction. That is, until 1822, when his trajectory brought him into collision with a cynical control freak, Meisling, headmaster of the Latin school in the provincial Zealand town of Slagelse.

"The film shows Hans Christian Andersen at age 18. At the time, he is kind of a wannabe. All he wants is fame. He's got loads of talent, but he doesn't really know what he wants to be. All he wants is to move up in the world. I picture him

as the rapper Eminem. I think he was like that. So many impressions hitting him in the face. He's bursting, but doesn't know what to do with it. It must be like having an 'Alien' in your belly," Hammerich says. "If Eminem hadn't found music, I think he would have gone crazy or killed someone. Hans Christian Andersen was terrified of losing his sanity. It ran in his family."

"I've been wanting to make this story since 1992," Hammerich says, underscoring that 'Young Andersen' did not come about as part of a tourist-board fairytale package. Still, it is no secret that the outlook to an Andersen year of celebration was what finally secured the financing for the movie. The budget of DKK 39 million will result in a theatrical feature along with a broadcast version of two one-hour episodes.

This particular take on Hans Christian Andersen was originally conceived by another Hans Christian, last name Nørregaard. Nørregaard wrote a 10-chapter breakdown of Andersen's life for the drama department of the Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR). The third chapter floored Hammerich. There was the story he wanted to develop with his partner, the writer Ulf Stark. It is the story of a young man who is sent out of Copenhagen into unfamiliar surroundings, where he clashes with a forbidding opponent, headmaster Meisling. His hard-earned prize is the chance to find himself.

Fighting with Meisling grinds him into the dirt. There, he makes an important discovery. Before, he was an inflated narcissist who only had eyes for himself. Now, Andersen learns empathy. In the film, his newfound compassion is represented by his friendship with Tuk, a much younger, proletarian boy of 10. Tuk used to be Meisling's protégé. The stronger Tuk and Hans Christian's friendship grows, the more draconically Meisling treats poor Tuk. He becomes the prügelnkne by proxy.

"It's a fairytale grounded in documentation, which we elaborated on," the director says, pointing out that all his films have a fairytale dimension. As Rumle Hammerich admits, it is not without some trepidation that he takes on the national heritage. The results of his efforts will be closely scrutinized. Currently, those efforts involve spending each day, from morning to night, on a set dressed like a Danish Latin school in 1822. The film is scheduled for release in spring 2005, just in time for the big birthday bash ■

For further information see reverse section.

RUMLE HAMMERICH Born 1954, Denmark. Studied film in USA and later at the National Film School of Denmark. Has directed several TV dramas and series in Sweden and Denmark. His directorial debut, known as the best Danish children's film of the decade, *Otto is a Rhino / Otto er et næsehorn* (1983), was honoured in Hollywood, London and Gijon. In 1992 he made the Swedish feature *The Premonition / Sort Lucia*, awarded in Montreal for best direction. His short film *Kan du vissla Johanna?* (1994), was chosen as Sweden's Best Children's Film of the year and was awarded at the Golden Globe, Hollywood and Berlin. During the nineties Hammerich was an executive at DRTV, and afterwards appointed CEO at Nordisk Film Productions. *Young Andersen / Unge Andersen* is Hammerich's third feature film.



Photo: Erik Aavatsmark



Lost Generation. Photo: Lars Høgsted

Denmark's most prolific one-man production powerhouse, Regner Grasten, began production in March on his long cherished mammoth adaptation of Danish author Christian Kampmann's four-volume family chronicle about the Gregersen family.

BY JACOB NIEENDAM

With Charlotte Sachs Bostrup in the director's chair, the four-hour feature *Lost Generation* shoots for no less than 12 weeks until June 25, but promises to be ready for a domestic release in December.

Grasten has been developing the project with screenwriter Ib Kastrup for four and a half years since acquiring the rights from publisher Gyldendal for the bestselling Kampmann novels, *Visse Hensyn*, *Faste Forhold*, *Rene Linier* and *Andre Måder*, written between 1973-75.

As author and journalist, Christian Kampmann (1939-88) played a key role in the new realism in Denmark in the 1960's, but it was the taboo breaking Gregersen-saga which gave him his big commercial breakthrough. The books follow an upper-class family's slow but sure decline through three generations, and paint a portrait of life in Denmark from 1954-74. It was a period where things were turned upside down not least because of the experiments with love, sex, partners and families. The five children of the family are in the centre of the drama.

"The five siblings all expect the best from life, and they all end in misery," explains director Charlotte Sachs Bostrup. "There is something like a Danish Bergman to this, a rare seriousness and gravity - an absorption in characters and dialogue. It is very intense. There's no mitigating sentimentality, no redeeming laughter, no languorous violins. This is ruthless drama."

Charlotte Sachs Bostrup (b.1963) is a trained actress and screenwriter from the National Film School of Denmark, but Regner Grasten offered her a feature directing debut with the second installment in the highly popular youth-family series about *Anja & Viktor* in 2001. She followed that success with the third and so far latest film, *Anja After Viktor* and scooped

REVIVING A LOST GENERATION

345.000 admissions last year. The same year she also directed Grasten's low budget musical *Cinder Rock'n Rella* as well as episodes of the EMMY-winning TV-series *Nikolaj & Julie*.

Bostrup has cast a number of young talents in the central roles in *Lost Generation*, including her two stars from the *Anja & Viktor* films, Sophie Lassen-Kahlke and Robert Hansen. They are joined by Thomas Levin (*Rule nr.1*), Kristian Ibler and Laura Drasbæk as well as more experienced actors like Pia Vieth, Kirsten Norholt and Peter Hesse Overgaard.

Grasten has invested his earnings from the *Anja & Viktor* series in the DKR 25,5 million production of *Lost Generation*. It isn't the first time the passionate producer accepts high personal risks to make a film, but his eye for what the audience wants has kept him in the turbulent business since 1987 ■

For further information see reverse section.

CHARLOTTE SACHS BOSTRUP Born 1963, Denmark. Trained as an actor under the supervision of Galina Brenaa 1983-87. During the following three years she acted and directed at the Teater Får302, a company she also co-owned. At the same time she performed on radio and television, and in film. In 1995 she graduated in scriptwriting at the National Film School of Denmark. *Anja & Viktor / Anja & Viktor* (2001), Bostrup's feature film debut, drew a large audience and remained among the top five films at Danish cinemas during the first months of its release. For the same production company Bostrup made *Cinder Rock'n Rella / Askepop* (2003) and *Anja After Viktor / Anja efter Viktor*, also a box-office hit. Her fourth feature film is *Lost Generation / Familien Gregersen*.

NOTES ON DANISH FILMMAKING

Teamwork: a close-knit team of filmmaking perfectionists who complement each other while jointly preventing the film from degenerating into sterile perfectionism as a one-track, introverted, personal idiosyncrasy.

BY AGNETE DORPH STJERNFELT
HEAD OF PRESS & COMMUNICATION / THE DANISH FILM INSTITUTE

“The film background of my generation is the National Film School in the 1980s, at its peak of aestheticism. The school’s ideals were aesthetic to the extreme. This has made us a generation of filmmaking perfectionists and is probably one of the reasons why Dogme originated with our generation. Dogme is a natural digression providing enormous freedom, while emphasising that the craft is not an end in itself.” (Director Lone Scherfig, *Wilbur Wants to Kill Himself & Italian for Beginners*.)

It is worth noting that the new Danish cinema is created by a generation of filmmakers who

1. are perfectionists, demanding a lot in terms of the craft itself
2. are aesthetes and champions of personal expression
3. have learned that neither craft nor personal expression is an end in itself.

TEAMWORK

The National Film School of Denmark places a high priority on the first and second points when selecting new students. Furthermore, the programme hones the demands on perfection and aesthetics, while, just as importantly, teaches students to join forces in teams respecting the technical proficiencies of each team member.

A distinguishing feature of a film like Lars von Trier’s much-debated *Dogville* is that the veteran director – his distinctive cinematic persona aside – works with fellow graduates of the National Film School, such as the well-known cinematographer Anthony Dod Mantle and the sound engineer Per Streit, as well as Vibeke Windeløv who also produced his previous films. They make up a close-knit team of filmmaking perfectionists who complement each other while jointly preventing the film from degenerating into sterile perfectionism as a one-track, introverted, personal idiosyncrasy.

“The official Danish policy of government film subsidies, which puts a priority on continuity, financial stability and, especially, the consultant system, ensures not only a certain volume of films but also the artistic elbowroom in which to make them”

At the other end of the spectrum is last year’s *Reconstruction* by first-time feature director Christoffer Boe which makes it apparent that a consistent tradition is involved. It is noteworthy that the film, despite bearing the distinct brand of the director, is definitely the product of Mr Boe & Co. – a group of filmmakers who banded together as students at the National Film School of Denmark through their mutual admiration of the “perfect frame.” From the outset they were a team – a team with cinematic conviction, from the director, the producer and the cinematographer through to the sound designer.

In between these two extremes are films such as Per Fly’s *Inheritance* (2003), with the same producer (Ib Tardini) who produced Fly’s critically acclaimed *The Bench* and the same editor (Morten Giese), who

edited the film in close cooperation with the director. Giese says: “To make the best film possible, the editor has to give the director qualified feedback and participate creatively in making the film. We often screened the film to others along the way, because you need criticism. If anyone tells you the film is incredibly good, you come to a standstill.”

A BREEDING GROUND

None of this would have sufficed, however, without a breeding ground for filmmakers. The official Danish policy of government film subsidies, which puts a priority on continuity, financial stability and, especially, the consultant system, ensures not only a certain volume of films but also the artistic elbowroom in which to make them. For a few years, a film consultant wields enormous power promulgating his or her personal sense of art.

This is another cornerstone of the ‘Danish film structure.’ The consultant scheme is vulnerable, to be sure, because it is crucial to find the right people with personal integrity, technical cinematic insight and interpersonal skills. However, the consultant scheme makes room for artistic ventures without endless compromising and petty considerations at every turn – so that, under a total government-subsidy budget equal to one average American film, a small country like Denmark is capable of presenting a wide range of personal works of art ■

NOTES

DANISH FILM INSTITUTE

THE DANISH FILM INSTITUTE

is the national agency responsible for supporting and encouraging film and cinema culture, and conserving these in the national interest.

WHO IS IN CHARGE?

A non-executive board appoints a CEO, presently Mr Henning Camre, as well as a Board of Directors, comprising the head of production and development (Lars Feilberg), the head of distribution and marketing (Anders Geertsen), the head of the archive and the cinematheque (Dan Nissen) and the head of administration (Dorthe Tauber Lassen). They are appointed for varying periods of time, typically three to five years (extensions are possible).

CONSULTANT SCHEME

Artistically ambitious films are administered under a consultant system comprising six film consultants, employed for fixed periods of time. The consultants assess incoming support applications and submit proposals to the board of directors of the DFI regarding the allocation of the funds available for film development and production.

60/40 SCHEME

The DFI may subsidise the production of feature films without prior involvement of a consultant. Production subsidies of up to 60 percent of the budget for a film may be granted. In the case of co-productions, subsidies of up to 60 percent of the Danish share of the financing of the film may be granted. Subsidies under this scheme may be granted to film projects that are judged to have a reasonable chance of attracting a large audience.

Prior to any decision to grant production subsidies, a technical, dramaturgical, and financial assessment of the project shall be obtained along with an assessment of the film's distribution potential.

OPERATIONS

Apart from granting selective financial support to film production and development, and ensuring that Danish films are distributed and promoted, operations include ensuring the preservation and restoration of films and film material and establishing research in film. Moreover, the DFI runs a workshop for more experimental film projects, a cinematheque, a centre for children and youth films, a library, a bookshop, a collection of stills and posters, a videotheque and a film archive, as well as a computer based interactive film studio for children and adolescents.

FINANCES

The DFI budget for 2004 is EUR 48m. EUR 26m is allocated to production support and EUR 2.5m to the Talent Development Pool. About EUR 5m is spent on distribution and promotion, while operating costs are EUR 14m.



Photo: Jan Buus

NATIONAL BROADCASTING

There are two nationwide television stations: Danmarks Radio (DR) and TV 2/Danmark. In 2003, a production deal was made between the two broadcasters and the film sector. The financial involvement of the two broadcasters is expected to lead to the production of 16 to 20 feature films annually. A television window is secured, once theatrical, VHS and DVD potentials have been exhausted.

DISTRIBUTION

The DFI supports and promotes awareness of Danish film through distribution and marketing. The DFI supports the theatrical release of new Danish feature films by providing financial support and consulting for actual release campaigns and by supporting the production of film prints. The DFI also promotes short and documentary films, securing their non-commercial distribution in the education sector and at public libraries. The DFI is not affiliated with any national companies in the video or DVD industry. Visit www.dfi.dk for facts & figures, information about the film industry, release dates and film festivals, as well as articles and reference works.

NOTES

NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL OF DENMARK

THE NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL OF DENMARK

is a state school of professional film and television production. The school aims to set high technical, aesthetic and ethical standards for media production. The school meets its goals through seminars, courses and longer programmes. These include a two-year course in screenwriting and the four-year programmes.

The school offers four-year programmes in photography, directing, cutting/editing, sound recording/editing, production, television and animation. Only a few students are admitted every second year to each programme.

BROAD PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AS A BASIS FOR THE COURSES

During the first semester, most of the classes for each programme are integrated. All students attend the same classes and do the same exercises, regardless of their qualifications and goals. The purpose of this general introduction is to establish subsequent collaboration via thorough insight into all fields of activity. Among the subjects covered are dramaturgy, screenwriting and picture and sound as means of expression. Technically-oriented subjects are equally emphasised.

SUBJECT AND PRODUCTION ORIENTATIONS

After the integrated study phase, classes concentrate on individual disciplines as well as on interdisciplinary topics.

The education is production oriented. Students collaborate in all phases of their productions: pre-production, production and post-production.

Production periods vary from a few days to several months. The productions vary in running time from 1 to 25 minutes. As a rule, students take part in one to two productions per term, in addition to shorter discipline-oriented exercises.

JOINT LECTURES

Joint courses are offered on film theory and history, music, philosophy, modern literature, art, etc. A number of feature films are analysed.

TRAINEE PERIODS DURING THE COURSE

During their four years of training, the students may be employed as trainees on professional media productions on a limited scale and especially during the summer months. The film school has close ties to the production environment and takes an active share in making arrangements for trainee periods.

ANIMATION

In the first year of study, basic animation routines are practised. Specific subjects are drawing, storyboards, directing, production planning, animation and computer science. General subjects are dramaturgy, screenwriting, sound as a means of expression, montage theory, film/TV analysis, etc. The last year of study concentrates on production.

Students carry out independent exercises and productions, while acting as assistants on other student productions.

CINEMATOGRAPHY

Major subjects are picture composition, lighting principles, location and studio lighting, film stocks and laboratory processes, film/TV analysis and editing, set design and dramaturgy. Theories are examined and tested through practical exercises, in addition to theoretical lectures.

Students participate in joint production teams as cameramen, assistant cameramen, lighting engineers, grips or still photographers and may also function in other capacities.

DIRECTING

The school balances the various expressive aspects of academic training with technical and financial insight. During the first academic year, workmanship is practised together with students from other study programmes. Editing, in particular, may be developed as a craft later in the course of study. A summary of subjects includes dramaturgy, screenwriting, stage setting, working with actors, picture and sound as means of expression, set design, production planning, montage theory and film/TV analysis.

Students act on different production teams as directors, assistant directors, heads of production, scripts(screenwriters???) or editors and may also function in other capacities.

CUTTING/EDITING

Major subjects are montage theory, cutting techniques, cinematic narrative styles, principles of continuity, film/TV analysis, dramaturgy, expressive possibilities of sound, sound montage, methodology and laboratory processes. In addition to theoretical studies, these subjects are tested in practice and studied via exercises and school productions.

Students act on the different production teams as editors or assistant directors and may also function in other capacities.

SOUND RECORDING/EDITING

The main subjects are sound dramaturgy, sound design, sound technology, acoustics, cutting/editing, music recording and film/TV analysis.

The importance of sound and music as means of expression is studied theoretically and analytically, as well as in connection with practical productions.

The students act on the different production teams as sound directors or sound assistants and may also function in other activities.

PRODUCING

Among the main subjects are dramaturgy, screenplay analysis, production planning and realisation, budgeting, financing, legal and financial topics and all practical situations involved in pre-production, production and post-production, release and distribution.

Students act on joint productions as producers, heads of production, heads of recording or assistant directors and may also function in other capacities.



SHORT FILM CORNER / DANISH FILM INSTITUTE PRESENTS **INVISIBLE & MAX KESTNER BY CHANCE**

INVISIBLE

12 min / 2004 / by Cassandra Wellendorf. The phenomenon of waiting in a public space - where everybody tries to be invisible.

MAX KESTNER BY CHANCE

29 min / 2004 / by Max Kestner. Max's story traces back several generations to sailors, industrialists and Summer of Love hippies ...

Screening: Friday 14 May, 15:30, Short Film Corner, Palais des Festivals, Level 01, Aisle 14

Scandinavian Films welcomes you to the Happy Hour at the Short Film Corner after the screening, Friday May 14, 17:00. Festival contact: Danish Film Institute, Anne Marie Kürstein, cell +4540 41 4697.

DANISH FILM INSTITUTE CONGRATULATES FREDERIKKE ASPÖCK AND NIMBUS FILM / **HAPPY NOW** IN CINÉFONDATION

Happy Now is the bittersweet story of a typical suburban American family that appears to have it all. It is about the desire to stand apart in a world that has consumed you and be seen for who you are.

Happy Now is the Danish filmmaker Frederikke Aspöck's graduate project from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. The film is produced by Nimbus Film, Denmark.



Invisible. Photo: Erik Molberg Hansen



Max Kestner by Chance

CIFF

BY FABIANA GIRALDI

In an office in central Copenhagen, festival director Janne Giese and programme director Lone Korslund are putting together the festival programme, including the jury, parties, hotel bookings and the many other tasks involved in mounting the Copenhagen International Film Festival (CIFF).

"As a new festival, we need to establish ourselves and prove that we have something to offer moviegoers and the film industry," festival director Giese says. "Our goal is to give our audience experiences they cannot get elsewhere. We have decided to focus on European film, because European film is underexposed in Danish cinemas. European films usually make up only 9% of what is shown in Danish cinemas and many people – especially the young – have no significant awareness of European films and filmmakers. Young people are more aware of American movies, even

"American movies have given us Europeans impressions of Americans of all stripes and their culture. European film should do the same"

though we Europeans share the same cultural background and are alike in many ways. Nevertheless, national stereotypes thrive. CIFF would like to change that. We want to offer a cinematic snapshot of what goes on inside a young Italian or an elderly Spaniard. American movies have given us Europeans impressions of Americans of all stripes and their culture. European film should do the same. Then, film would function as culture bearer".

PROFESSIONAL DAYS

"Another main goal for CIFF is marketing Danish film," programme director Korslund says. "CIFF should be an

event for Danish film people to meet one another and international film contacts, a place to become acquainted with the Danish film scene.

"Moreover, there are many emerging Danish talents," Giese says. "It's only fitting that they have a window at CIFF. The Danish film industry had a big presence at last year's festival. If there is anything you want from Danish film, CIFF should be the place to go."

Another new move to promote Danish film at this summer's festival is *Professional Days*. "The Professional Days will fall in the middle of the ten-day festival. The aim is to present new Danish films, both completed films and works in progress. Over two to three days, we will get industry professionals together and give them an experience of Danish film, in particular, and the Danish cultural scene, in general. We want to accentuate the social aspect (for instance, via tours of Zentropa and the new opera house) and bond together festival-goers."

GOOD COMPETITION PROGRAM

Another move by CIFF's management is building a durable structure for the festival programme. "Experience shows us that the programme needs to be more audience-friendly and manageable than last year," Korslund says. "For that reason we are dividing the films into four or five main categories, each with a solid helping of selling points. Moreover, we will be showing a wider selection of films than last year in order to reach out to a larger audience." Giese adds, "You might say that we are putting our money on many different horses. We are striving to create an international film festival with a good competition programme. Moreover, we want to present new currents and the most popular films from other festivals, while putting the focus on European film and promoting awareness of Danish film" ■

COPENHAGEN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL:

August 19-28, 2004.

Competition programme (Golden Swan Award).

75% of the programme consists of European films.

2004: Focus on animated films from the National Film School of Denmark.

Screenplay competition Award: EUR 70,000.

Screenwriting seminar.

www.copenhagenfilmfestival.com

SPOTLIGHT ON EUROPEAN FILM

SALE OF THE DANISH FILM STUDIO / DET DANSKE FILMSTUDIE

THE DANISH STATE AND THE INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATION *DET DANSKE FILMSTUDIE* INTEND TO SELL ALL THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ORGANIZATION INCLUDING THE RELATED PROPERTY OWNED BY THE STATE (*DET DANSKE FILMSTUDIE*).

CANDIDATES, WHO WISH TO BE CONSIDERED AS TENDERERS, ARE INVITED TO HAND IN A REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE TO THE DANISH MINISTRY OF CULTURE NO LATER THAN 24 JUNE 2004 AT 12 AM.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OF THE SALE AND OF *DET DANSKE FILMSTUDIE* AS WELL AS THE TENDER PROCEDURE, INCLUDING REQUIREMENTS FOR INFORMATION REGARDING THE CANDIDATES, WHO REQUEST TO BE CONSIDERED AS TENDERERS, PLEASE SEE WWW.KUM.DK/SW321.ASP.

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Copenhagen
International
Children's Film Festival

13. - 19. Sept. 2004

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children and youth film business**

Film submission deadline: June 10, 2004

Accreditation deadline: August 5, 2004

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The largest film event in Denmark

International Awards | April 2004|

Audience and Distribution Award (26.600 euro):

'Metallica - Some Kind of Monster' by Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky

Critic's Award (3.360 euro):

'Four Shades of Brown' by Tomas Alfredson

National Awards | April 2004|

Best Feature Film (3.360 euro): Mette Heino

Best Short Film (3.360 Euro): Mette Louise Foldager

The Filmland Prize: Christoffer Boe

The 16th edition of NatFilm Festival opens April 1st 2005

www.natfilm.dk

ODENSE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL AUGUST 9-15 2004

THE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM, COMPILED IN THE SPIRIT OF HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN, PRESENTS SHORT FILMS OF SINGULAR IMAGINATION, INVENTION OR FREAKINESS.

THE DANISH PROGRAM SELECTS THE YEAR'S BEST DOMESTIC SHORTS AND DOCUMENTARIES.

ODENSE IS THE HOME TOWN OF HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN. THE 2005 FESTIVAL CELEBRATES THE AUTHOR'S 200TH BIRTHDAY IN FILMS BASED ON HIS FAIRYTALES.

WWW.FILMEFESTIVAL.DK

CPH:DOX



The New Documentary Festival
of Copenhagen

International Awards | November 2003|

Golden Ox Award (5.000 euro): 'Denis, Green & Denis' by José de Puñer

Audience Award (5.000 euro): 'Blue 128' by José Padilla

Special Mention: 'Screaming Men' by Mikko Koskunen

Special Mention: 'Balance - Cuban Rafters' by José María Domínguez

National Award | November 2003|

The Rose Award (3.360 euro): Anne Rejzbyr Vindel

The 2nd edition of cph:dox opens November 5th 2004

www.cph:dox.dk