

## IDFA AMSTERDAM SPECIAL ISSUE

*Flyweight*, *The City of Bees*, and *Louise and Papaya* in KIDS & DOCS, *Max by Chance* in FIRST APPEARANCE, *Get a Life* and *Prostitution behind the Veil* in SILVER WOLF COMPETITION and *The German Secret* and *The Swenkas* in JORIS IVENS COMPETITION.

## THE UNSAID

"We've got to get better at telling stories". Veteran film editor Niels Pagh Andersen has been thundering this message for years. Then, while cutting Honkasalo's *The Three Rooms of Melancholia*, a new door opened.

PAGE 9-11

## JORIS IVENS COMPETITION

*The German Secret*, a dramatic story of war, romance and captivity, and *The Swenkas*, a powerful portrait of a group of men in post-apartheid South Africa, who take great pride in parading their flashy attire.

PAGE 3-8

# FILM

# # 39

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**FILM #39** er et engelsk særnummer i anledning af IDFA International Documentary Film Festival 2004 i Amsterdam.



*The Swenkas*

# INSIDE

**Eight Danish documentary films have been selected for the official programme of IDFA International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam 2004. Although Danish cinema is represented annually at IDFA, this year is exceptional with five films in competition programmes and three films in Kids & Docs. Four films are to be pitched at Forum.**

**JORIS IVENS COMPETITION**

Selected for the JORIS IVENS COMPETITION is Lars Johansson and Final Cut's *The German Secret*, a documentation which follows a Danish woman, who was born in an American prison camp in Germany in 1946. As she traces her origins, she discovers the truth about her mother, and a dramatic story of war, romance and captivity unfolds. **Page 3-5**

Jeppe Rønne and Cosmo Doc's *The Swenkas*, also chosen for the JORIS IVENS COMPETITION, is a powerful portrait of a group of men in post-apartheid South Africa, who take great pride in parading their flashy attire. **Page 6-8**

**SILVER WOLF COMPETITION**

Running in the SILVER WOLF COMPETITION are two films: *Prostitution Behind the Veil* by Iranian born Swedish director Nahid Persson and Cosmo Doc, about two young women who live as prostitutes in Teheran and the hypocrisy that prevails in the society in which they live. **Page 12-13**

The second film is by Michael Klint and Zentropa Real entitled *Get A Life*, a compelling film dealing with the fatal disease Noma, and bringing into the discussion prime-time TV, journalism and ethical dilemmas. **Page 14-15**

**FIRST APPEARANCE**

Screening in FIRST APPEARANCE is Max Kestner and Barok Film's *Max by Chance*, about the director's own life and ancestry, although here there is more at stake, as he grapples, not without wit, about family patterns, genetics and destiny. **Page 16-17**

**KIDS & DOCS**

KIDS & DOCS have selected three films: Jannik Splidsboel and Radiator Film's *Louise & Papaya*, about eight-year old Louise who has discovered an imaginary friend with whom she plays and dances flamenco. A film with food for thought for the young as well as for grown-ups. **Page 18**

The second film is *City of the Bees* directed by Laila Hodell and Bertel Torne Olsen, and produced by Frejas Børn. The film is about six-year-old Oliver and his friends, who together with a bee-keeper discuss the life of bees, while the camera allows an insight into the complex life of these insects. **Page 19**

The third film is *Flyweight*, directed by Anders Gustafsson and produced by Koncern TV & Filmproduktion: Julius Gottlieb is 14 years old and has one great passion - boxing. We join him in the boxing gym, where he vents his energy and aggressions, in school, where he sends long looks after those enigmatic girls, and we join him at the boxing meets, where he wins in style. **Page 20**

**FORUM**

Danish documentaries at FORUM include Final Cut's *Voices of the World*, Haslund Film's *Afghan Muscles*, Zentropa Real's *Becoming a Guerilla Girl* and *It Used to be a Great Flag*. **Page 21-22**



*Prostitution Behind the Veil*



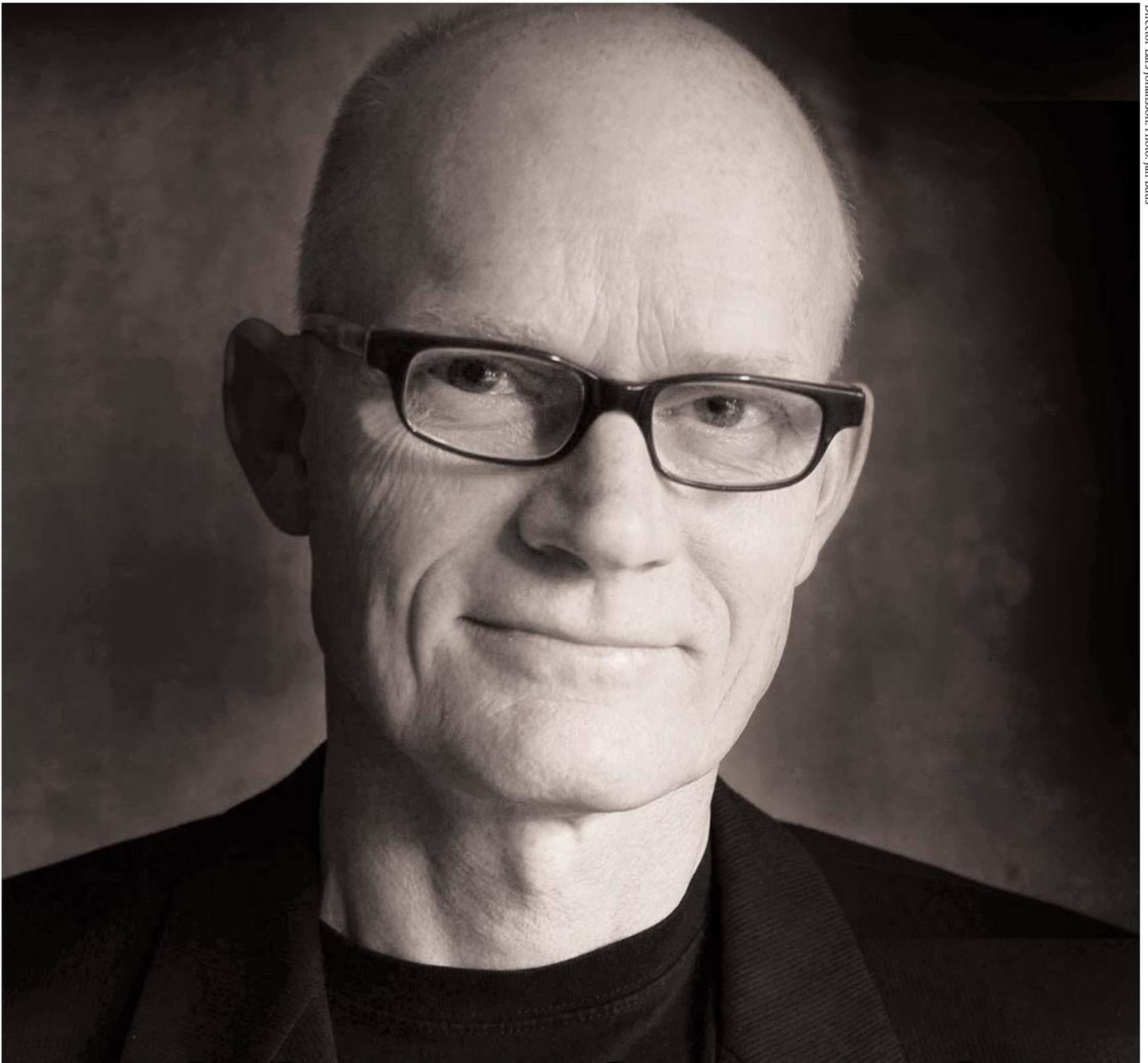
*Louise and Papaya*



*The City of Bees*



*Afghan Muscles*



Director Lars Johansson. Photo: Jan Bruns

# BECOMING WHOLE

It is a good story - so good a story that no screenwriter could have made it any more captivating, dramatic, or so alive with delightful details and twists. But the story is also full of black holes and surprises, both pleasant and unpleasant. And none of it is made up. In his new documentary, *The German Secret*, Lars Johansson takes the audience on an epic journey through the history of post-war Europe.

BY LARS MOVIN

*The German Secret* is the story of two strong women, mother and daughter. The central character is the daughter, Kirsten Blohm, who was born in 1946 in

an American internment camp in Germany. She was raised by her maternal grandparents in provincial Skanderborg, in western Denmark, a few hours' drive from the German border.

At an early age, Kirsten became aware that her

mother had brought her to Denmark in 1948, when she was a year and a half, and left her with her grandparents. Who her father was, why she had been born in captivity, and why her mother could not, or would not, take care of her was never clear

to her. Mother and daughter only got closer late in life, on Kirsten's stubborn initiative.

Although Kirsten's mother, in the autumn of her years, eventually relented and provided answers to some of the many questions Kirsten had been struggling with for decades, long passages of her mother's life were still obscured by shadows of dark hints.

The film's other, far more enigmatic character, Kirsten's mother, Signe Gondrup, died at age 80 in 1998. The film follows Kirsten as she sets out to investigate the circumstances that caused her mother to abandon her. The journey leads through Denmark to Germany and the former Czechoslovakia, back to the landscape of her childhood and the chaotic years around the end of World War II. In the process Kirsten discovers more about her mother. However, via archives, documents and surviving witnesses, she picks up the thread of an even greater story, her shared fate with so many of her generation, mainly Germans, but other Europeans as well, who got caught in the post-war reckoning with Nazism.

*When did you realize there was a film in Kirsten's story?*

"I had been familiar with fragments of the story since we first met in the late seventies. Already then, I understood that it was a very emotional story. But, of course, I only heard fragments of the story, since Kirsten barely knew it herself. In 1986, we discovered that Signe was living in Wales, and over the next several years Kirsten periodically visited her. I went along on some of the trips and in 1997 I brought a video camera, which I guess marked the start of the film - even though Signe at the time was still very much on guard when discussing her past.

"Another problem was that Signe had burned practically every document and picture that could have shed some light on her life - and, in turn, Kirsten's story. Also, Kirsten wasn't sure she could trust the things Signe told her, as she kept changing key points of her story over the years. Still, most of it turned out to be more or less true once we started checking the facts. But our research also unearthed a lot of things Signe hadn't told us."

*Signe fell in love with a German, which put her in a very difficult position. It was her choice to be very secretive about her life. Did you ever doubt your right to 'reveal' all her secrets?*

"That was a big issue, especially for me. Kirsten, for her part, didn't feel she owed her mother anything. All she left her was her story. As the film shows, Kirsten was not even mentioned in her mother's will, although they had become closer to one another in the last years of her mother's life. So, even though Kirsten certainly had some misgivings about her right to dig up her mother's past, she kept coming to the conclusion that it was her story, as well. As it were, I feel fairly certain that, had Signe been alive to see the result, she would have considered it well done. She was an expansive person, a woman of the world, and I'm convinced she would have respected Kirsten's persistence. It's interesting how mother and daughter - despite their significant differences - resemble one another in certain ways. Had Kirsten not had a certain understanding for her mother, as a woman, she would never have been able to carry out such an emotionally demanding project. In that respect, the mother, in her own brutal way, passed her strength on to her daughter."



*The German Secret* is the story of two strong women, mother and daughter.

**“Perhaps it’s about the importance of knowing you’re loved - especially by those who put you in the world. It’s at the moment you feel loved and wanted that you really feel that other people see you, that you become a person. That’s a major motivation in every story about finding your roots or finding your parents. It’s about becoming a whole person.”**

#### **THE JOURNEY, NOT THE DESTINATION**

*In recent years there has been an abundance of films and TV shows about finding lost family members, revealing family secrets, searching for your roots. Why do you, as a documentarian, think it’s important to tell such stories?*

“When people are under extreme pressure, when the upholstery is torn off, we can learn something about what people are capable of, our strength and will to survive. This shows up in times of adversity, in the things we humans are capable of doing to one another - and for one another. That’s what I have been dealing with in most of my films. Our goals, after all, are not so interesting - they are generally pretty trite and common to most people - it’s the road we travel to pursue our goals and desires that is interesting.”

As Johansson notes, his interest in life in all its naked and simple forms is a main reason why his past films, including *Traveller’s Tale* (1994) and *Seasons of Blood and Hope* (2001), have dealt with European history, especially Eastern European history. He feels that the very substance, or essence, of life is more pronounced there than in the West. Moreover, his new film, as he sees it, is in large part fed by his fascination with strong, capable women, a theme he took up before in his unusually self-invested film, *Simona* (1998), a portrait of a Rumanian actress he met - and fell in love with? - while shooting *Traveller’s Tale*.

“*The German Secret*, in a way, is closer to home than any of my past films, including *Simona* - so close, in fact, that I immediately sensed that I had to excuse myself from the frame. This decision was further confirmed by how I mainly wanted to tell a story this time. In my past films, I was probably aiming more to describe a state of mind, a mood, or my own presence at a certain time, but this time I was fully aware that I was on to a highly complex story, which I did not wish to complicate further by including myself as a character. I also realized that it was a story with potentially broad audience appeal, and I wanted to stay true to that.”

*You carry this out with such consistency that you do not even mention that you are actually married to the central character...*

“That was, of course, a major issue in the process. I decided not to mention it, because I felt that, once I had opened up that side of the story, I would have to properly account for it. The point of view would have shifted a bit, which would simply have distracted from Kirsten and the story. Moreover, I screened different versions of the film to a test audience that was not familiar with Kirsten’s and my relationship, and no one gave any thought to the filmmaker’s identity. I think that issue is interesting mostly to people in the business - regular audiences seem to accept the fact that the central character and the filmmaker are travelling together and in the process develop a confidential and intimate relationship. In any case, I wanted to avoid the pitfall of saying: Now, let me tell you about our relationship. It would have been a meta-layer: a film about making a film about your wife, which does not belong in this story.”

*Did Kirsten and you make any arrangements beforehand, some kind of deal, to manage your dual role as husband and documentarian?*

“The only thing I told Kirsten was that she should

be prepared to be filmed all the time and any time. If I thought it necessary to crawl under the covers to make a point, that is how it had to be. Those were the conditions. Once that is said, neither of us could know in advance where we might end up. Because Kirsten’s mother had been so secretive about her life, we didn’t know what we might find when we went to Germany. We were fairly certain there were some skeletons in the closet, but what they looked like, or where we would find them, we could not know. I tried preparing Kirsten for the fact that it could be rough going, since, as soon as we got started and had financing from different sources, we would also be obligated to deliver a film at some point.”

*What’s the hardest thing about making a film about someone who is so close to you?*

“You are in it 24 hours a day. You cannot go home to your wife and say, “*Christ, my subject is so stupid. I’m so sick of her ...*” You are in it all the time, and because it is Kirsten’s own story, she was turning it over in her mind all day long. Keep in mind, this went on over a period of years, and at times it was very exhausting. The most important thing in that regard, I think, is that we are both of a certain age and have known each other a long time. Had I been 25, had this been my first film, it would have never worked out, but fortunately I have some experience making personal documentaries, and we both have a lot to contribute and are used to being straight about things. Of course, it also required that Kirsten, incredible as it may seem, was able to accept me as director - in the true sense of the word.

“Also, you should not be blind to the fact that Kirsten also got something out of it. That it was a film project definitely made it easier for her to carry out her investigation, because it opened a lot of doors and enabled us to consult experts and historians, get access to archives, travel, and so on. Clearly, that was not Kirsten’s only motivation for being in the film, but on some level, obviously, both parties should profit.”

*You have described it as a film about two strong women. But isn’t it also a film about the importance of knowing your roots - knowing where you come from?*

“Let me put it this way: perhaps it’s about the importance of knowing you’re loved - especially by those who put you in the world. It’s at the moment you feel loved and wanted that you really feel that other people see you, that you become a person. That’s a major motivation in every story about finding your roots or finding your parents. It’s about becoming a whole person.” ■

*For further information see reverse section*

**LARS JOHANSSON** Born 1949. Graduate from the National Film School of Denmark, 1982. During the eighties he worked as a photographer on a number of Danish short films and documentaries. His most important works are *Firemen* (1986), awarded the Special Prize at the Danish Short Film Festival, *Anholt - The Place*, *The Journey* (1988), awarded First Prize at the Danish Short Film Festival, *Traveller’s Tale* (1994), *Højholt* (1997) and *Simona* (1998).



Photo: Lars Skree

# A SLOW FOX- TROT BETWEEN FICTION AND REALITY

For the second time, a work by young Danish filmmaker Jeppe Rønne, has been selected for IDFA. Last year, his film *Jerusalem My Love* was chosen for First Appearance and now Rønne is competing in the Joris Ivens Competition with *The Swenkas*, a film about a curious cultural phenomenon in Johannesburg, known as 'swanking'. *Jerusalem My Love* and *The Swenkas* are the first and second parts of his trilogy entitled *Faith, Hope and Love*.



Director Jeppe Rønde. Photo: Jan Buus

BY NANNA MILTHERS

Amidst the grit and crime of Johannesburg, poor black South Africans play out a ritual known as swanking. Swanking is about looking good, finding the finest clothes, and wearing it with swagger.

The film follows a group of Zulu men who, with great enthusiasm and pride, organise contests for the title of best-dressed man. The contestants' backgrounds are not important: swanking is about style. Every Saturday night, the Swenkas lay aside their soiled work-clothes, carefully groom themselves, and dress up in expensive suits – then they become *somebody*.

The Swenkas get a lot of respect. Most are believers and do not drink, but of course there are always exceptions to the rule.

“Swanking is a philosophy for being in a world that is very hard to be in,” Jeppe Rønde says.

The film follows a young man, Sabelo, at a tumultuous time in his life. His father died a week before Sabelo's wedding. Sabelo not only lost his father, but his father was also the leader of the Swenkas, and Sabelo and the group now find themselves in an uncertain situation that calls for serious contemplation. Sabelo is thinking about his future as a swanker, and wondering who will become the new leader of the Swenkas. Everyone encourages Sabelo to continue, and the other Swenkas support him like a family.

“I originally intended to do an entirely different film, but then Sabelo's father died in the middle of

the shooting and all of a sudden it was another story,” Rønde says. The Danish documentarian spent a year and a half in Johannesburg gathering material for the film.

“It isn't the first time I've had to pursue reality and hang on with all I've got. In fact, I can hardly imagine making a film without such a turning point. I chose to go with Sabelo as the main character; through his doubt, the film unfolds its theme of hope on different levels.”

#### DANCING A SLOW FOXTROT

Jeppe Rønde likes to work with sharp contrasts. In *Jerusalem My Love*, he interacts directly with the people he has involved in his project. In *The Swenkas*, he has left the frame entirely, unfolding the film as a series of linked stories in a mix of fiction and documentary.

“I chose fiction – that is, a fictitious narrator and fictional effects – because *The Swenkas*, after all, are performers on a stage and because the contrast is so startling: during the week they are nobody, but come Saturday night they step into a kind of fiction and become somebody. So I thought: Let's really *tell* the story, let's tell it as a fairytale. And why not shoot in Scope? Let's go for the gusto, use dolly shots and aerials (the Jerusalem film was handheld).

“Then there's the music, old tunes from the thirties, forties, and sixties. The Swenkas actually don't perform to music, but they told me that they always have a song in their head when they perform. They dream that they are dancing a slow foxtrot.

Adding music, as I do, I somehow anchor the fiction in reality. That's important: real life must necessarily be the starting point, the point from which the reflections and the storytelling strategies – the fiction, if you will – all radiate.”

#### STORIES FROM THE VAGABOND'S MOUTH

The film is narrated by a fictitious storyteller, a vagabond who is completely bowled over by the Swenkas. “The vagabond's love for the Swenkas matches my own admiration and fascination,” Rønde says.

“I'm interested in stories we tell and pass on. *The Swenkas* is a chain of stories. Using many kinds of stories was a guiding element in the film. It's fascinating how the typical African storyteller can assume various guises in a story. Starting out as himself, he may become a woman, an animal, and so on. “Correspondingly, I played with the idea of having a recurrent narrator at the start of the picture, the vagabond, who indirectly stands in for me, the filmmaker. However, Sabelo's mother also becomes a narrator, and a minister becomes a third type of narrator. Yet they are one and the same, because their tales intertwine. Furthermore, the first time we meet Mr. Zulu, a.k.a. Mr. Dangerous, he mentions this guy he has to help out, Sabelo. And when we meet Sabelo, he tells us about his brother in prison he has to help out. In that way, the film becomes a long string of mythical stories, as in the classic African storytelling tradition.

“At one point, the vagabond breaks the fictional



No one knows for sure when swanking first began, though it seems to have been around 50-100 years ago. Nor does anyone know why swanking is particular to the Zulu. In all, 18 Zulu men swank in Johannesburg. There is a similar cult in Congo, only there they are called Les Sapeurs. To swank means to brag or show off. The Zulu word for it is Oswenka. Photo: Lars Skree



frame by talking with the Swenkas, being present in their space. It was important for me to encourage debate about whether there really is such a big difference between fiction and the documentary, because I don't think there is. It's still seeing reality through a creative lens, as Grierson put it.

"I find it far more interesting to challenge the narrow concept of what a documentary is. What perhaps separates fiction from the documentary is the viewer's role and expectations. We watch a documentary with a different mindset than we watch fiction, but it's important not to expect a documentary to look a certain way.

"In *The Swenkas*, I wanted to make a film that matches the African storytelling mode, while also playing around with the form. What I'm doing is not new in fiction film, of course, but I want to push the edge of how the documentary genre is perceived. I want to move the earth beneath the feet of the spectator. In my view, documentary and fiction films are equally valid in a debate about reality - if such a debate even takes place in film. The Swenkas live in Johannesburg, on Saturday night they meet to compete - and apart from that they have problems like you and I. If you acknowledge that, you should also acknowledge that there must be a little more than 99 ways of telling their story."

#### HOPE IS ABOUT NOT LOSING FAITH

"My films are not directly political. Politics don't tell me why I have to get up in the morning, the essential things do - things that have to do with

faith, hope, and love, and which have nothing to do with politics.

"We know there was apartheid in South Africa. We know Johannesburg is a city full of oppression, violence, and poverty among the black population. That awareness is with us as a kind of backdrop to the film. I briefly touch on these problems in the film, for instance, when we hear that Sabelo's brother is in prison on some gun-related charge. Then, we get a sense that something is wrong, but I did not wish to pursue it further and have to explain a social system that in many ways still discriminates. The film could essentially have been made in another city, but of course there's a reason why I chose Johannesburg, and before it Jerusalem. Both cities present a backdrop that enhances the film's theme. Politics and religion have pushed existence to an extreme. Both cities have seen occupying forces and oppression, and it's interesting to see what happens to faith, hope, and love under those conditions. Some interesting parallels emerge when you start peeling off the layers.

"The trilogy's overall theme is the schism of *Faith, Hope and Love*. My questions are: What is the connection between the three? Which is the greater love? Love between God and man (*Jerusalem My Love*)? Between father and son (*The Swenkas*)? Or is it love between lovers, the theme of the third and final picture? That may be a rather banal way of putting it, of course, but for me it's about exploring these three significant values.

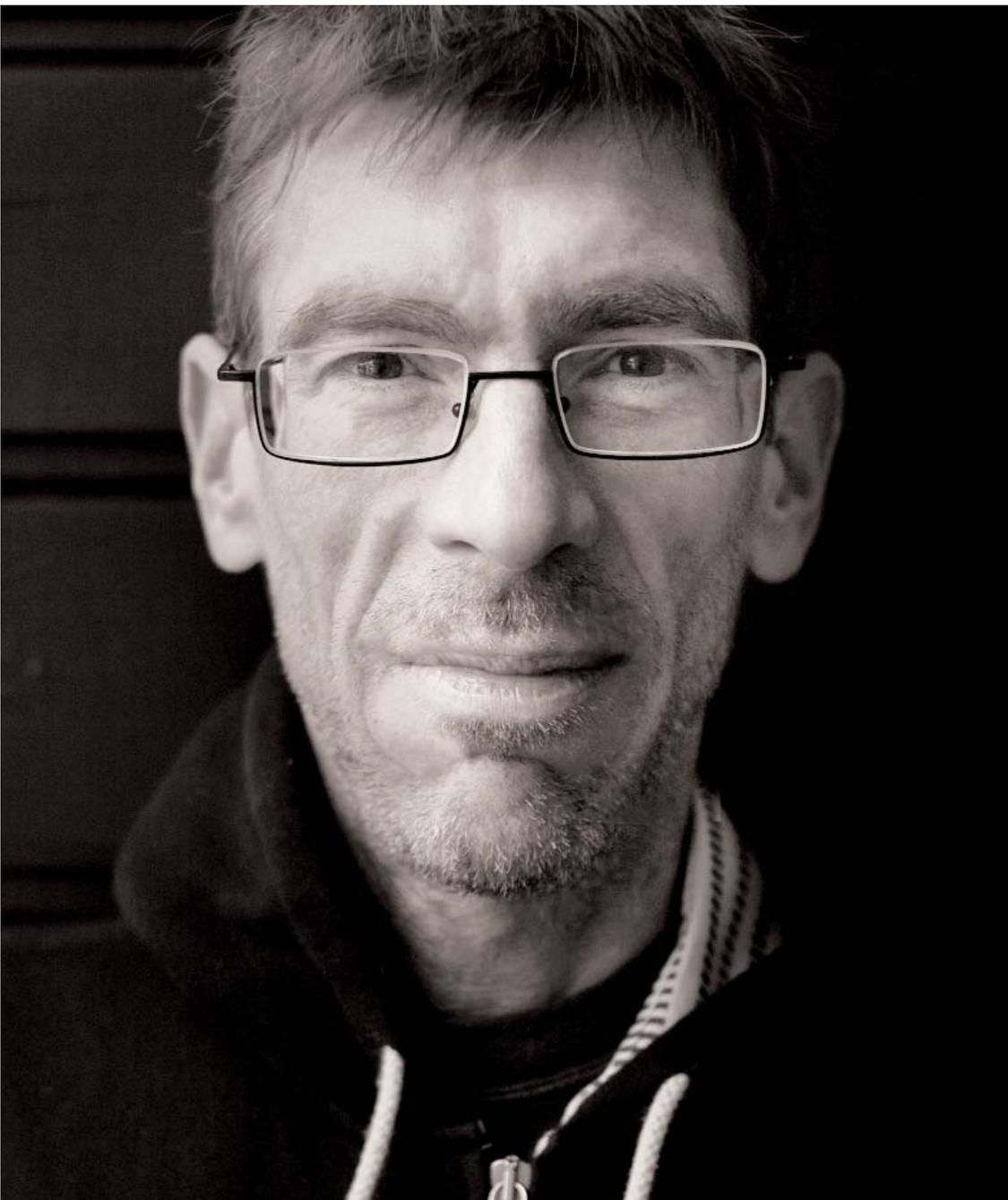
"I think the last film will be unusually difficult to

do. But once it's done, the trilogy will hopefully add up to something more than the sum of its parts. I see parallels between the first two films, which, at least to me, seem to indicate that faith and hope and love are expressed in ways that are universal, and that they are interdependent entities. There is an almost identical quote in both films, 'Hope is about not losing faith,' which I find really beautiful and inspiring" ■

*For further information see reverse section*

**JEPPE RØNDE** Born 1973. Director, cinematographer, composer. Rønede is a BA in Film Science and Art History from the University of Copenhagen. Jeppe Rønede competed in last year's IDFA with his feature length debut film, *Jerusalem My Love*, the first part of a trilogy of documentaries entitled *Faith, Hope and Love*. The film has played at a number of festivals. Most recently, in September of this year, the film won the Audience Award at the Nordisk Panorama festival in Iceland, where it also received the jury's Special Mention Award. One month later the film won a Golden Dove at Leipzig for "an excellent documentary film, made by a young visionary and story full filmmaker".

# THE UNSAID **D**



Editor Niels Pagh Andersen has cut more than 200 films. Photo: Jan Buus

Improving storytelling in documentary filmmaking has been a fundamental principle for Niels Pagh Andersen, one of Denmark's most important editors. However, since cutting Pirjo Honkasalo's *The Three Rooms of Melancholia* - a film with no central character, no story and very few words - he is faced with a new challenge. Pagh Andersen, who edited the Oscar-nominated Norwegian feature film *Pathfinder* (1987), is also the editor on Lars Johansson's *The German Secret* and Nahid Persson's *Prostitution Behind the Veil*.

BY CLAUD CHRISTENSEN

"You have to be careful of your strengths. They also contain your weaknesses," Niels Pagh Andersen says, crouching in front of the CD storage unit in his apartment.

"I was always good at creating characters and finding stories in a large volume of documentary material, but I need to be wary of dramaturgy. That's just the clockwork. Everything we put into the story, the poetry and the pauses, is what's important. I long for the storyless story. I look at life and it's full of chaos and pauses and repetition, and I ask myself whether a story is the best way to describe life."

Running his finger across the CDs, he stops at the countertenor Gavin Bryers' *Vita Nova*.

"Film is an emotional stream akin to music," he says, feeding the CD into the player. "We used this piece as masking music while editing *The Three Rooms of Melancholia*. Bryers' high pitched voice has a fragility similar to the boys in the film. He's a musician who knows how to use a pause and hold a lot of emotions back. He does not let it all hang out. Neither do we in film. We create an expectation of

**"You have to be careful of your strengths. They also contain your weaknesses"**

what's to come, a pulse, a forward movement, and then we hold back. We postpone."



*The Three Rooms of Melancholia*. "I was faced with a film that had no central character, no story, and only very few words".

Pagh Andersen pauses for a moment himself, raising his arm.

"Listen ... here's a pause that I made twice as long in the scene of the children leaving the war-torn city. I looped it to add some extra power to fire up the engine right after the pause."

### WORLD'S EVIL - VIEWERS' SHAME

Someone else might be tempted to recline on his mid-career laurels, but not the 46-year-old film editor sitting across from me. He is in the middle of an artistic evolution, triggered in large part by his encounter with Pirjo Honkasalo.

"I try to maintain a certain virginity," Pagh Andersen says, gesturing vigorously. "When I start a new picture, I always tell myself: 'This is the first film you are editing.' That purifies and enables me to start the new journey without prejudice - a journey not only into the movie, but into the director as well, because I have to know the director well to unfold that person's vision."

*The Three Rooms of Melancholia* is a beautiful and painful visual poem about the children of war. Set against Russia's war against Chechnya, the film has three parts, or chapters - *Longing*, *Breathing* and *Remembering* - composing a sort of triptych, with each individual part reflecting and commenting on the others.

The first part shows how traumatised orphans at a military academy in Kronstadt, an island near St. Petersburg, are trained to become cold-blooded soldiers and taught that the Chechens are the enemy.

The second part of the film, which was filmed partly with a hidden camera in black and white, takes us on a drive through Chechnya's bombed, impoverished capital of Grozny, where young and old struggle for survival on a day-to-day existence in the shadow of war. The final part is set in a border town giving the viewer an insight to the Chechen way of life. We meet children who lost their parents in the war and were saved from the wartime ravages by a kind-hearted woman currently raising 63 orphans.

"We see less violence and destruction than in the average TV news show, but the film is much more shocking because it all takes place in the viewer's head," Pagh Andersen says. "By showing the Russians as damaged, innocent children, Pirjo avoids pointing out a villain to blame for the evils being committed. We have to ask ourselves: 'Why do we do such things?' Each viewer is left with the world's evil on his or her shoulders. Pirjo has said that she made the film because she was ashamed. This shame we have tried to pass on to the viewer."

### THE ESSENCE IN JUST FOUR LINES

Pagh Andersen learned the editing craft by assisting on feature films. When he started editing documentaries, he discovered that many documentary filmmakers were poor storytellers. They didn't know the ABCs of drama.

"'You have to learn how to tell a story properly and respect your audience,' I have thundered again and again, but Pirjo's film forced me to confront that challenge myself. I had just finished editing Lars

Johansson's *The German Secret*, which to me represents some of the finest qualities of linear storytelling. Now I was faced with a film that had no central character, no story, and only very few words. But the footage Pirjo presented me with made a deep impression on me - especially the contrast between the drills at the military academy and the vulnerability of the childish faces - and I couldn't refuse the challenge."

Apart from the middle part, Honkasalo shot *The Three Rooms of Melancholia* entirely by herself. For a documentary, it is unique that she shot only five

***"It's an enormous privilege to work with directors from different countries and to be able to question how the world works. I think I'm a much better editor today than I was 20 years ago. Life has kicked me around and I have learned humility. The world is not black and white. In the last 15 years, I have been pretty much set on the linear narrative, but maybe I'm moving into a new kind of narrative now. Working with Pirjo opened a new door."***

times as much material as was needed for the film.

"With many documentaries, my job as an editor involves locating the story in hundreds of hours of material. Editing is a process of getting away from a chaotic reality and creating a new reality instead. I reduce, I simplify. I once saw some sketches of a bull by Picasso. His first sketch was almost photorealistic,



*The Three Rooms of Melancholia*. "We never say that in all likelihood, the orphans in the Kronstadt camp will one day be fighting the orphans in Chechnya. It remains unsaid, a conclusion the audience itself must draw".

the second drawing had fewer details, and the final picture had just four lines. It was the soul of the bull, its essence. The editing process is like that: I have to find the four lines that are common to all humanity, what is universal.

"In that sense, as well, *The Three Rooms of Melancholia* was a very different process, since Pirjo had already made a whole series of choices while she was shooting. When she films the lesson at the military academy, she doesn't cover her bases with an establishing shot of the classroom and close-ups of the teacher, as one might typically do. She's not interested in the specific classroom situation at all. She has already decided that the scene is going to be about what goes on in these boys' minds. We cross-cut between two boys - one has a faraway look in his eyes, the other is struggling not to fall asleep - and because we just told their hard-luck life-stories, the viewer will invariably read a lot of feelings and thoughts into the images - without us saying a single word."

#### **SHE MADE IT UGLY**

Honkasalo and Pagh Andersen's communication was largely nonverbal, as well. It was just the two of them alone on a farm in the Finnish outback, editing the film on separate computers.

"As an editor I do not leave a strong fingerprint," Pagh Andersen says. "You cannot tell from looking at a certain film that I cut it. My strength lies in my ability to read the director and interpret her vision. I know when to challenge the director and when to

avoid all conflict. Like most artists, Pirjo is a demanding person. She isn't liberal with her praise, but I never doubted that things would work out. I have a facility for spooning with my director."

Then again, the director and the editor should never be too alike, either, Pagh Andersen says. Any creative collaboration has to have some friction, as Pirjo and Niels' did.

"While I am not afraid to be sentimental, Pirjo is almost anti-sentimental. For her, sentimentality is rape. I also discovered that my desire for harmony and beauty was a problem. When Pirjo gave me back a scene that I had edited, I was shocked. Her re-edit was so ugly! But by and by, I saw that this ugliness was exactly what was needed to keep the film from becoming schmaltzy.

"Once again, it's a matter of being wary of your strengths, because they are also your weaknesses. I'm good at creating clarity, but *The Three Rooms of Melancholia* already had clarity in Pirjo's footage, so I had to do the opposite of what I usually do. Not reduce, but mystify. Make the material more ethereal and leave a lot up to the viewer. For instance, we never say that in all likelihood, the orphans in the Kronstadt camp will one day be fighting the orphans in Chechnya. It remains unsaid, a conclusion the audience itself must draw."

Niels Pagh Andersen is an editor in great demand. His calendar booked more or less solid for the next several years. For much of 2005, he will be working on *Women and I*, an ambitious film project based on nearly 1,000 hours of footage by the award-winning

American documentarian Jennifer Fox (*Beirut: The Last Home Movie*).

"It's an enormous privilege to work with directors from different countries and to be able to question how the world works. I think I'm a much better editor today than I was 20 years ago. Life has kicked me around and I have learned humility. The world is not black and white. In the last 15 to 16 years, I have been pretty much set on the linear narrative, but maybe I'm moving into a new kind of narrative now. Working with Pirjo opened a new door" ■

**NIELS PAGH ANDERSEN** is one of the most experienced editors in Danish film. For nearly 25 years, he has cut more than 200 features, documentaries, TV shows, commercials - any kind of film, really (except porn). At age 16, he became an assistant to his legendary mentor Christian Hartkopp, who made editing an art form in Denmark. Early on, Pagh Andersen worked as an assistant editor for directors such as Henning Carlsen, Erik Clausen, and Morten Arnfred.

Pagh Andersen edited the Oscar-nominated Norwegian film *Pathfinder* (1987), and in 1990 he tagged along with the film's director, Nils Gaup, to Hollywood for a stint on the Disney production *Shipwrecked*. Since then, he has mainly concentrated on Scandinavian documentaries - Dola Bonfils' institutional portraits (Denmark), Fredrik von Krusenstjerna's psycho-political *Betrayal* (Sweden), and Pirjo Honkasalo's lyrical antiwar movie *The Three Rooms of Melancholia* (Finland), which took home two prestigious awards from this year's Venice Film Festival.

He is also the editor on Lars Johansson's just-released *The German Secret* about a woman who follows in her deceased mother's footsteps through Germany to gain closure with the mother who abandoned her and crack the riddle of a tragic World War II love story (see page 3-5), as well as *Prostitution Behind the Veil* (see page 12-13).



# MARRIED FOR A DAY



***Prostitution Behind the Veil* is the intriguing story of two young women in modern-day Teheran. Cosmo Doc presents the film.**

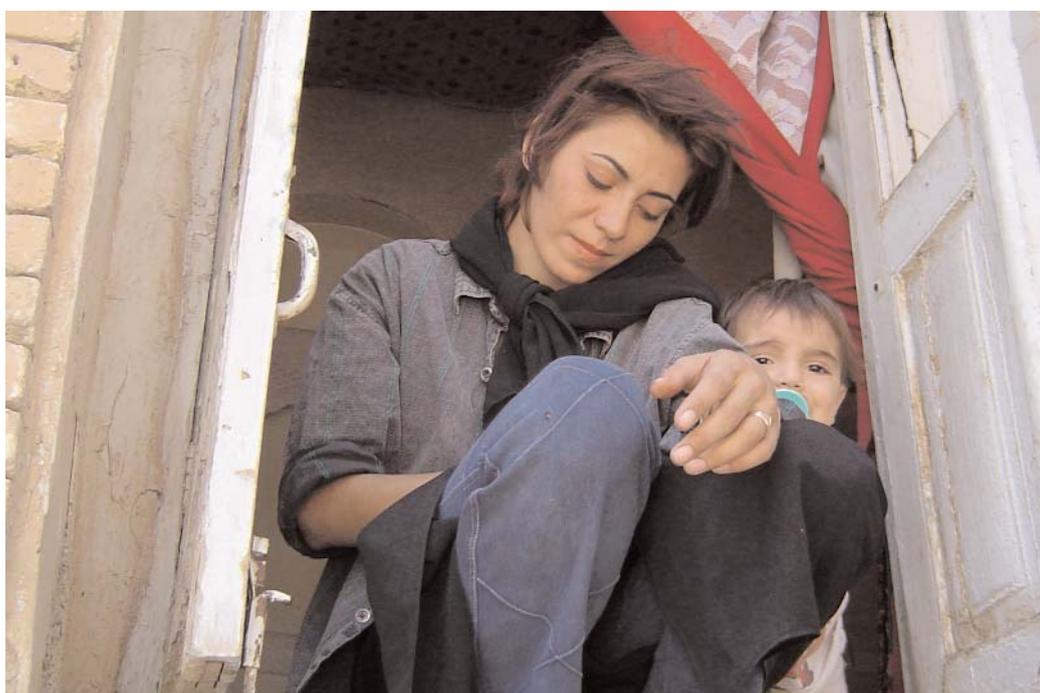
Minna and Fariba are neighbours and good friends. They support one another. Both have to live under the pervasive curtailment of women's rights and the double standards of today's Iranian society. They make a living walking the streets looking for men. They have a choice between leaving their small children at home alone or bringing them along when they have sex with men.

The film is a sympathetic portrait of the two women, exploring their day-to-day life and the workings of prostitution in a country that bans it and prosecutes adulterers, sometimes with the penalty of capital punishment.

Many of the clients find a way to buy sex and still comply with Muslim law: they marry the women in what is called "Sighe," a temporary marriage sanctioned in Shia Islam. Sighe can last from two hours up to 99 years. Both Minna and Fariba enter into Sighe with clients, and Fariba is in a Sighe marriage with a neighbour, Habib, that lasts six months. Giving his perspective on temporary marriage, Habib says that Sighe is a way to help poor women, it is an act of mercy in the name of Allah.

The film follows the two women for more than a year. It describes their middle-class backgrounds and their submission to treacherous men and drugs. We see how Fariba manages to quit drugs and prostitution, only to find herself temporarily married to a man who will not let her leave the house.

The film is narrated by the director, Nahid Persson, who fled Iran 20 years ago. Her commentary adds her perspective and contextual information to the film's events. An element of the film is the difficulties faced by a female director shooting a film. Filming prostitution in the street was hard and dangerous, as is evident in the film. The director has to submit to the same restraints as the film's two women in a ludicrously patriarchal society marked by religious restrictions, oppression of women, and social decline. The story of Minna and Fariba mirrors the greater story of Iranian society.



*Prostitution Behind the Veil*. Photo: Nahid Persson

*For further information see reverse section*

# DOGGED BY THE SECURITY POLICY

**In an e-mail interview with FILM the Swedish-Iranian director Nahid Persson discusses the background for *Prostitution Behind the Veil* and the difficulties of shooting in Iran.**

“When I left Iran years ago, it was a country in chaos. When I returned after 17 years of exile in Sweden, I was shocked by the state of affairs. That people have a hard time is well known, but it was very depressing and upsetting to see how bad it really was. The most obvious problems I saw were widespread prostitution and a huge drug problem. Most people in the western world have no idea what it is like. Despite severe punishments, drugs are almost everywhere. When the Islamic government took power, alcohol was banned, but drugs took its place.

“The authorities have lost control of the situation. Maybe they act this way knowingly. Drug addicts are passive. They do not protest social injustice.

“I know that I won’t be able to return to Iran for many years because of this film. The most important thing for me is making the sad state of Iranian society known worldwide.”

*What was it like to shoot in Iran?*

“I met Fariba by chance. Downtown, I met a man who sold prophecies. He had a couple of birds pull cards out of a box for him. I was fascinated and decided to make a film about him and his birds. We filmed him (Habib) for a few days. One day we followed him back to his place, and there I met the two women that I eventually became close with. At first, they were afraid to open up to me, of course, but after a few days it got out that they were prostitutes and drug addicts. They let me film them in all kinds of situations, even when they were with a client.

“As long as we were shooting inside the house, everything was fine, but there was always trouble when we went out in the streets. Once the security police picked us up. They wanted the tapes. With some sleight of hand, I managed to put the tapes in my pants pocket, and instead I gave them some old tapes I had brought from Sweden. Iran is a Muslim nation and men are not allowed to search women, so they led us to the police station where female officers would pat us down. When we got there, they went inside, leaving me in the car. I got the tapes out of my pocket and hid them under the car seat. A short while later, they returned. They told us that the female officers had gone home for the day. So now I had to

get the tapes out again and put them back in my pocket. It wasn’t easy, but it turned out okay. I was politically active before and after the revolution and I know how to deal with stupid police.

“The reason I continued shooting even though we were stopped so often by the police was that I had been abroad for so long and didn’t understand how dangerous it really was. The two women with me wanted to leave on several occasions, but stuck around because they were curious to see how I handled the situation. There were several funny moments. Once, the police ordered us to turn off the camera. I switched off the display and told them the camera was off, but kept right on shooting (it’s in the film). When the police talked to me, I turned the camera on them. They were right in the frame, but they didn’t get it.”

*You shot and directed the film yourself?*

“I did most of the camerawork, but I always brought along two other people: a man as driver and bodyguard and someone with an extra camera. Often there was so much going on, it was good to have two of us shooting.”

*What effect would you like the film to have?*

“When I was in the revolution along with so many other young people, we wanted to change the world, but now I am at an age where I would be content to change just one thing. But I need to get close to the people in my film. I feel for them. They are not just characters in my film – they are my friends, my sisters.

“When I got to know Mina and Fariba, I felt a big responsibility. Mina is the same age as my own daughter. I had maternal feelings for both of them. And once in a while, I felt guilty that I was in the revolution but fled to a safe country, and now I had to say goodbye to them. Everyday I said goodbye to them was terrible.

“It is my hope that this film will make the world respond to the situation in Iran. Human rights are nonexistent there. People don’t matter in Iran. They have no hope left.

“More than half the population are children and young people who have never known what freedom or a normal life is like.

“My film should not just show how Iran changed after the revolution. The film will be shown in a number of countries and I hope the world will respond, not just watch” ■



Director Nahid Persson

**NAHID PERSSON** Born 1960, Iran. Studied micro biology in Sweden and founded a local radio station during this period of time. Started studies at Film- och TV Skolan in 1993 and attended master class education in 2003-2004. Her previous films include: *Me and My Cousin* (2003), *The Last Days of Life* (2002) and *End of Exile* (2000). Has won several prizes – among others for her most recent film, *Prostitution Behind the Veil*, which won first prize at Marseille Festival International du Documentaire.

**MICHAEL KLINT** Founder of KLINT FILM, an independent film and tv production company. Production is limited to only one or two productions per year - mainly on contract with the national Danish Broadcasting Corporation, DR1. Michael Klint has since 1987 made about 50 documentary films for Danish and international TV. Many of these films are prize-nominated. In 1995 Michael Klint was awarded the Danish TV Oscar, and in 1997 the Cavling-prize (the yearly award from the Danish Union of Journalists).



Photo: Claus Bie

# CRUCIAL DILEMMAS

**Michael Klint made his shocking, self-reflective documentary *Get a Life* according to the special set of rules known as “Dogumentary.”**

In 2001, Lars von Trier issued a set of rules for making documentaries along the lines of the familiar Dogme manifesto for fiction films. The same year, the production company Zentropa Real, in collaboration with the Danish Film Institute and the Danish Broadcasting Corporation, asked six Scandinavian filmmakers to make films according to the so-called Dogumentary code. The intention was to return the documentary to real life.

“Dogumentarism relives the pure, the objective and the credible. It brings us back to the core, back to the essence of our existence. The documentary and television reality that has become more and more manipulated and filtered by camera people, editors and directors must now be buried,” the manifesto says.

The six films premiered at the cph:dox festival in early November.

## **ZENTROPA REAL PRESENTS THE FILM:**

*Get a Life* is a film about disease and misery in the Third World, as well as a self-critical meta-film about journalism’s dilemmas and the role of the media in covering this type of story.

Two filmmakers discover a deadly disease affecting children in remote parts of Africa. In dusty villages on the edge of the Sahara, they find victims of this horrible illness.

The filmmakers assume they will simply portray reality professionally, as they usually do. Instead, they are personally

drawn into the struggle to save the children. During the shooting, they are forced to take a stand on crucial dilemmas: Third World poverty, the exploitation of the weakest and sickest people in developing countries, and, ultimately, death. Moreover, it is a film about the ethics of filmmakers.

The disease is called Noma. It strikes the weakest, the poorest, especially in the countries of southern Sahara. Every year the disease strikes thousands of malnourished children with weakened immune systems. When the immune system is compromised, ordinary bacteria we all have in our mouths suddenly grow at an alarming rate. Starting with a small brown dot on the cheek or by the mouth, rotteness rapidly spreads, literally eating up the face. Within a week, large pieces of the face are gone, usually causing the child to die. Some survive, but with horrible facial deformities.

The film discusses the gap between rich and poor, and the differences between how and where a life is lived. For some of us life comes as a gift, and we should probably appreciate it more than we generally do. “Get a life,” we sometimes tell those who complain unduly about life’s petty problems here in the rich part of the world. There are people with “real” problems out there. People for whom life is not a given, but a curse. It all boils down to where on the planet we were born ■

*For further information see reverse section.*

# DROP THAT FILM!

**Get a Life is a Dogme documentary about our guilty conscience, as filmmakers and as people. The director Michael Klint writes about encountering one of the world's most horrific diseases - and his own and the world's unwillingness to confront the true face of poverty.**

BY MICHAEL KLINT

It is hot as hell. It is dry as hell. And there is one hell of a disease out there. There may be worse places to be in Africa, but Nigeria surely ranks among the top five. Although we lived and worked in a children's hospital - protected by guards and with plenty to eat and drink - every day was tainted by the misery and lawlessness in this hellhole. There were constant power failures, shortages of medicine, and periods with no clean water. The region is largely without agriculture, industry, or business: there is nothing there of any economic interest. Apart from the children's hospital, aid organisations and national health authorities are nowhere in sight. Disease, abject poverty, and hunger are the order of the day in these northern Nigerian bush villages bordering the Sahara - ideal conditions for the strange, deadly children's disease known as Noma.

## THE TRUE FACE OF POVERTY

I wanted my film to be about Noma. Had it been up to anyone else - an editor at a TV station or a producer at a film company - I would probably never have been able to make it about Noma. The message was clear: drop that film. It only happened because the film was a special project - a Dogme-project, where the director alone gets to choose the subject. I had first heard about Noma about 10 years earlier while interviewing a Swiss doctor for a film that was critical of the World Health Organisation (WHO). The doctor complained bitterly that WHO was not interested in Noma at all. He showed me pictures of sick and dead children. The disease is the "true face of poverty," he said. Malnourishment and a deficient immune system, he explained, cause bacteria literally to eat up a child's face within a matter of weeks. It is a horrible, painful death that could be avoided with inexpensive antibiotics. Noma afflicts 400,000 children a year, he said. The children starve and die out of sight. It was horrifying.

The subject got a few minutes in my WHO film, but now I had the chance to do an entire film about it. Again, I was warned: no one would show the film. Sick, black Africans, destitution, and misery - who needs it? But I thought: at least *Get a Life* would be a shot at making a difference for somebody.

## BEHIND CALLOUSNESS

As this kind of endeavour might easily end up being pathetic, I also wanted the film to be about our common, and my personal, perception of the Third World, our film gaze on the problems of hunger and disease in Africa. And my own guilty conscience, when I travel and make films in the Third World or when I am confronted with these problems in other ways.

Because why are we basically not interested in such horrible diseases and disasters? In fact, we tend to become practically immune, even as we stand right in the middle of misery, filming away. Sure it means something, I tell myself and faithfully indulge ever so often in collections for the Red Cross or Save the Children. But deep down, I do not want to deal with it, and by and by I have grown callous. I wanted to get behind this callousness, my own and my cameraman's shield. I wanted to get behind the smugness, the complacency, and the self-righteousness.

My cameraman Claus Bie and I had both travelled extensively in destitute parts of Africa (Congo, Kenya, Cameroon). We do our job efficiently and politically-correctly. We have addressed the problems critically and professionally. We have interviewed ineffective, lethargic aid workers as well as corrupt rulers. We think of ourselves as true documentarists: we record the world around us as it is and leave it for others to change. But frankly, I don't know how that attitude or all that footage has helped anyone in Africa - not much, probably.

## IT HAS TO BE HARD

Actually, it was a gift to make this film under the Dogme code. As it were, I had helped take the initiative for the rules and wrote a first draft for von Trier. He then tightened the draft a few extra notches, making the director's job even harder. That is good. "We choose to go to the moon," Kennedy said, "not because it's easy, but because it's hard." When he made that speech, the prospects of putting a man on the moon still looked pretty hopeless, but vision and dreams thrive against tough odds. It has to be hard, even if the intentions of the Dogme rules are sometimes lost in a lot of academic fussiness about form.

I stuck quite closely to the rules, except with the soundtrack where I broke the rules with music and sound-editing overlaps. But that is of no great concern to me. We should not be orthodox or even too dogmatic. We should play with the medium. And we only answer to our own conscience as filmmakers: it is an illusion to think films are not manipulation. But the chains - and, after all, that is what such rules are - unfortunately also force filmmakers to rule out a lot of subjects for films, including historical subjects or more classic, critical journalism. "Dogumentary" is probably best for reportage and simple, definable stories.

Is this a good film? I am too involved in it right now to make that call. I know that no TV station will ever show it in primetime. Curiously, it has been nominated for a Silver Wolf at IDFA, but - and this is the question I was always asked, both by patients at the children's hospital in Nigeria and doctors in Denmark after we came back and started editing - will the film make a difference for Noma victims? That is one hell of a good question.

Sick, black Africans, destitution, and misery - who needs it? But I thought: at least *Get a Life* would be a shot at making a difference for somebody ■

## THE CODE FOR 'DOGUMENTARISM'

1. All the locations in the film must be revealed. (This is to be done by text being inserted in the image. This constitutes an exception to rule number 5. All text must be legible.)
2. The beginning of the film must outline the goals and ideas of the director. (This must be shown to the film's participants and technicians before filming begins.)
3. The end of the film must consist of two minutes of free speaking time by the film's "victim." This "victim" alone shall advise regarding the content and must approve this part of the finished film. If there is no opposition by any of the collaborators, there will be no "victim" or "victims." To explain this, text will be inserted at the end of the film.
4. All clips must be marked by 6-12 frames of black. (Unless it is a clip in real time, that is, a direct clip in a multi-camera filming situation.)
5. Manipulation of the sound and/or images must not take place. Filtering, creative lighting and/or optical effects are strictly forbidden.
6. The sound must never be produced exclusive of the original filming or vice versa. That is, extra soundtracks like music or dialogue must not be mixed in later.
7. Reconstruction of the concept or the directing of the actors is not acceptable. Adding elements, as with scenography, are forbidden.
8. All use of hidden cameras is forbidden.
9. Archived images or footage produced for other programs must never be used.

Lars von Trier, *Zentropa Real*, May 2001



# THE HUMAN COMEDY



**“There are no stories, only languages,” Max Kestner says. The filmmaker is following up his debut documentary *Blue Collar - White Christmas* with a quirky self-portrait.**

BY LARS MOVIN

“Coincidence is that which has no order. But you never know if there is order in something until you see it. There might be order in anything. And if that is the case, there is no coincidence.”

So runs the argument roughly halfway through the voiceover in Max Kestner’s offbeat self-portrait, *Max by Chance* (2004). Recent years have seen a glut of films dealing with subjects intimately related to the filmmakers’ personal lives – films about searching for parents or roots, about chasing down explanations for your own identity – often cracking a door open to the innermost sanctum of privacy. That is not the case with Kestner. He leaves the door to his private sanctum demonstratively shut. Instead, the filmmaker, at breakneck pace, lays out a series of elements from his life and reflections on his life, his joys and sorrows, details and the big picture – from seemingly insignificant memory glimpses to meditations on the origin of the universe and the coherence of all things. Riding this runaway train of thought, the narrator unravels his family history – from snapshots of his eight great-grandparents, adrift in the twilight zone between fact and family myth, to glimpses of his own childhood in a seventies home-environment marked by the period’s peculiar politicizing and lifestyle experiments. The tone is quirky, the volume of information massive, and the animated images an indiscreet hint that the documentary concept of truth is set inside loud quotation marks.

“If you ask me what motivated this film, I must say I draw a complete blank,” Kestner confesses, with

disarming candour. “Specifically, the film came about in response to a call from the start-up company Barok Film, which was looking for potential projects. I sat down and wrote a treatment which really became a kind of road map – but as for where the idea came from, I have no clue.”

*Did it come about as a reaction to today’s many autobiographical films, or to counter those among your generation who have been less forgiving of their parents’ generation?*

“No, not at all. It was really conceived more as a pseudo-scientific study of coincidence. That was a kind of header for me. Sure, there are some private things in the film, but I like a sober form, stripped of nostalgia and sentimentality, where you simply get a story – without being told what to feel. A guiding principle for me was to treat all of the film’s many elements the same, whether it was an old sweater or a person dying.”



*That is radical in itself, isn’t it?*

“I don’t know. I think a person is basically the sum total of all the images and stories and smells and tastes inside that person. Some of the images may be true and some may be false, some are positive and some are negative, some are old, handed down through countless generations and lost in the darkness of time, and some you experienced just

yesterday – but they can all be equally significant, if they stick. That’s what I wanted to get across: what would you see if you lifted the lid a bit and looked into the chaos that constitutes a person? You would never be able to see everything, because a person is practically bottomless, but you would probably see all sorts of things jumbled in together. Sometimes you would see a sneaker for some reason taking up more space than something that by normal standards of morality ought to be grand and important.”

## LANGUAGE

Max Kestner (b. 1969) graduated from the National Film School of Denmark in 1997, completing the (then) two-year TV programme. Before film school, he was at university for a stint, trying philosophy on for size, then attended the Danish School of Journalism where he lasted just one semester.

“After journalism school it was a relief to start the TV programme at the Film School. Journalism school started with everyone having to learn the same narrative model, which didn’t work for me at all. Only later on in the course, you might possibly be



allowed to work more freely. In film school, it was the other way around. Instead of learning a language that others had made up, you were encouraged right away to find your own. It wasn’t about craft, but about listening to something coming from inside yourself. Once you had found your own language, it would be the starting point for everything else, including craft.”

“Film school cemented my belief that people, not ideas, are what matter, that no story can be separated from the language in which it is told. It’s such a misconception in our business that stories are something that exist out in reality, which you can simply go out and find and then tell in some medium. I don’t think it’s like that at all. Stories come



out of those who tell them, out of language. It makes no sense to say that something is a good story, but poorly told. If that is the case, it really is a bad story – because the two cannot be separated.”

In 2002, five years after graduating film school, Kestner burst onto the Danish documentary scene with the TV series *Blue Collar White Christmas*, a stylized, but very lively documentary look at the day-to-day life of a group of employees at a factory in Esbjerg on Denmark's west coast. The series was a smash hit and in 2004 the material was made into a theatrical documentary.



“From the outset, I saw the project as a comedy. Not in the sense that it would necessarily be funny, more that it was okay if the characters seemed one-dimensional and didn't change much over the series. That was our thesis: that the essence of comedy is characters that fail to evolve. You know, like the cop in Chaplin who is always just mad and chases him around and never becomes anything else. Each individual should *be* his part – as grounded in reality, of course. We chose this form in part because it matches my view of life well. We struggle with more or less the same problems our entire lives, and that's why I think life is more like comedy than drama – at least my life is.”

“Then there was the question of form. Including



*Max by Chance*, I have mostly worked with full shots, tableaux – with people entering and doing something or saying a few lines, then exiting. We thought this form was a good fit for comedy – instead of close-ups, going way in on someone's face where you immediately start thinking about psychology, the inner life, that kind of thing. I like it when there is a certain distance. That's why I shoot things head on, at a 90-degree angle on the background, so there is no perspective. I simply place people against a flat plane, so that individual scenes almost become little stage plays.”

Considering the high degree of staging, both in *Blue Collar White Christmas* and *Max by Chance*, it seems reasonable to wonder whether you are even interested in the documentary?

“It probably has to do with my temperament. I don't like chasing after people and capturing what happens. That's an enormously exhausting method, because if you don't know in advance what kind of story you want to tell, anything might potentially be extremely important. Also, staging things is economical, both financially and in terms of expression. While we were shooting *Blue Collar White Christmas*, we hardly did any scenes that didn't make it into the finished movie. Of course, you could picture situations where this would not be the right way of working, but by and large it's a form that matches my aesthetic sense of order.”

One might object that truth should outweigh order in the documentary?

“In my opinion, that's a delusion in our business. If you talk theory with people about it, no one would say they believe in objective truth, but in practice many still work from that premise. My opinion is, like I said before: there are no stories out there until they are told. All stories are someone's *interpretation* of reality – which also goes for TV news. That's also why I chose to use animation in *Max by Chance* – to

clearly show that every single image is an expression of an interpretation. Every single image is constructed, so that you, the viewer, can see it's not reality, but a filmmaker's experience or conception of reality.”

Would you say that you operate in the borderzone between documentaries and fiction?

“Let me put it this way: to get a good documentary scene you have to work with a high degree of control and a low degree of anarchy at one time. Both factors need room simultaneously. You have to find ways to set up situations where what happens can become a scene in the film you are making. In other words, you should give people their motivation, not the plot. You can set up situations that you know will produce a sense of reality. That pretty much goes for fiction, too, and in that sense I don't think the two genres are essentially very different. Of course, there are differences in how you work with each, but we still only have the same language for telling stories: big pictures, little pictures, light, darkness, various sounds, speech, etc. We only have the language” ■

For further information see reverse section.

**MAX KESTNER** Born 1969. Graduated from the Danish School of Journalism (1994) and in TV and documentary at the National Film School of Denmark (1997). He has since worked for DR TV, where he has made a number of documentaries, among others *The Party* (2000), a youth series, and *Supergeil* (1997-1998), also for young people. In 2000 he made *Eurotopia*, a documentary programme for the BBC, and in 2003 he directed the documentary *Blue Collar - White Christmas*.





Photo: Charlotte Haslund-Christensen

# LOUISE'S WORLD

***Louise and Papaya* is a thoughtful children's film about the inner life of a child.**

Louise is eight years old. She lives with her parents and her two younger siblings in a little wooden house with an old garden. She spends a lot of time on her own, disappearing into a fantasy-world of painting, drawing, and fantastic stories.

One day, on her way home from school, Louise makes up an invisible friend she calls Papaya. They play together every day. They pretend that they travel to the planet of Miraiko to collect little bugs and stardust or go to Spain to dance the flamenco in the warm night. Apart from Amalie from school, Papaya is Louise's best friend.

But Papaya is invisible and having an invisible friend is not always easy. Her mom and her dad and her little sister cannot see Papaya. And Amalie sometimes gets a little jealous, even

though she does not actually believe Papaya is real. Still, does the fact that Louise made Papaya up make her any less real?

**DIRECTOR JANNIK SPLIDSBOEL:**

"When I first talked to Louise about Papaya she happily told me that she 'made Papaya up.' That is, Louise was, and is, perfectly aware that Papaya exists only as a figment of her imagination. As a director I would like to demystify the invisible friends that many children have. Now, in front of me, was an eight-year-old girl telling me that she had known all along that Papaya wasn't real - no mystification, just frankness and common sense.

"I was struck by Louise's honesty: She is an ordinary, socially competent girl. She just started the third grade and is not afraid to admit that she does not like being alone. But, as she herself puts it, her imagination is so rich that she has to give herself a 'vent' to ease the pressure. That's why she made up Papaya.

"Most invisible friends are 'forgotten' as the children grow up and no longer need secret, fantastic worlds. But maybe we could all use an invisible friend now and then, when we feel a little lost and need comfort in this huge world where everything rushes by at such a pace. A chance to dream away time, if only for a moment? Perhaps it would be healthy for us to use our imagination again - that is, if we have any left.

"Perhaps we should consider what Louise (and a lot of children like her) think about the grownup world: that it seems to be a pretty boring place where people easily forget that they were once children. To me, that's what this documentary is about" ■

*For further information see reverse section*

**JANNIK SPLIDSBOEL** Born 1964, Denmark. Resides in Rome. Studied film and art in Copenhagen and Rome. Assistant director and head of productions on a number of international productions. Has directed the documentaries *The Machine of Freedom* (2002) and *Codes - Makers and Breakers* (Italy, 2001).



Photo: Casper Høyberg

# TO BEE

## Charming children's film takes a close look at the life of the honeybee.

*City of the Bees* tells the story of the amazing life of the honeybees, from their secret home life inside the dark hive to their working life outside among the flowers. Bees are also livestock. Six-year-old Oliver and his friends join the beekeeper to follow a colony of bees over the course of a year. We watch as the colony's queen bee ventures out alone for the only time in her life. It is to mate, and then she can lay egg after egg after egg. At very close range, we follow the metamorphosis from larva to flying honey-maker.

Bees do not eat other animals. They feed on the sweet nectar and pollen of flowers. They gather water and medicine, and only fly out from their secretive darkness when the weather is mild. As they gather nectar and pollen, they also pollinate the flowers so they can make seeds and fruit. They have to visit a thousand flowers to carry just one tiny drop back to the colony. That is how it has been for untold millions of years.

### LAILA HODELL:

We want to show a small slice of the amazing life of bees. We follow a year in the life of the bees, from their work outdoors among flowers to their secret life inside the dark hive.

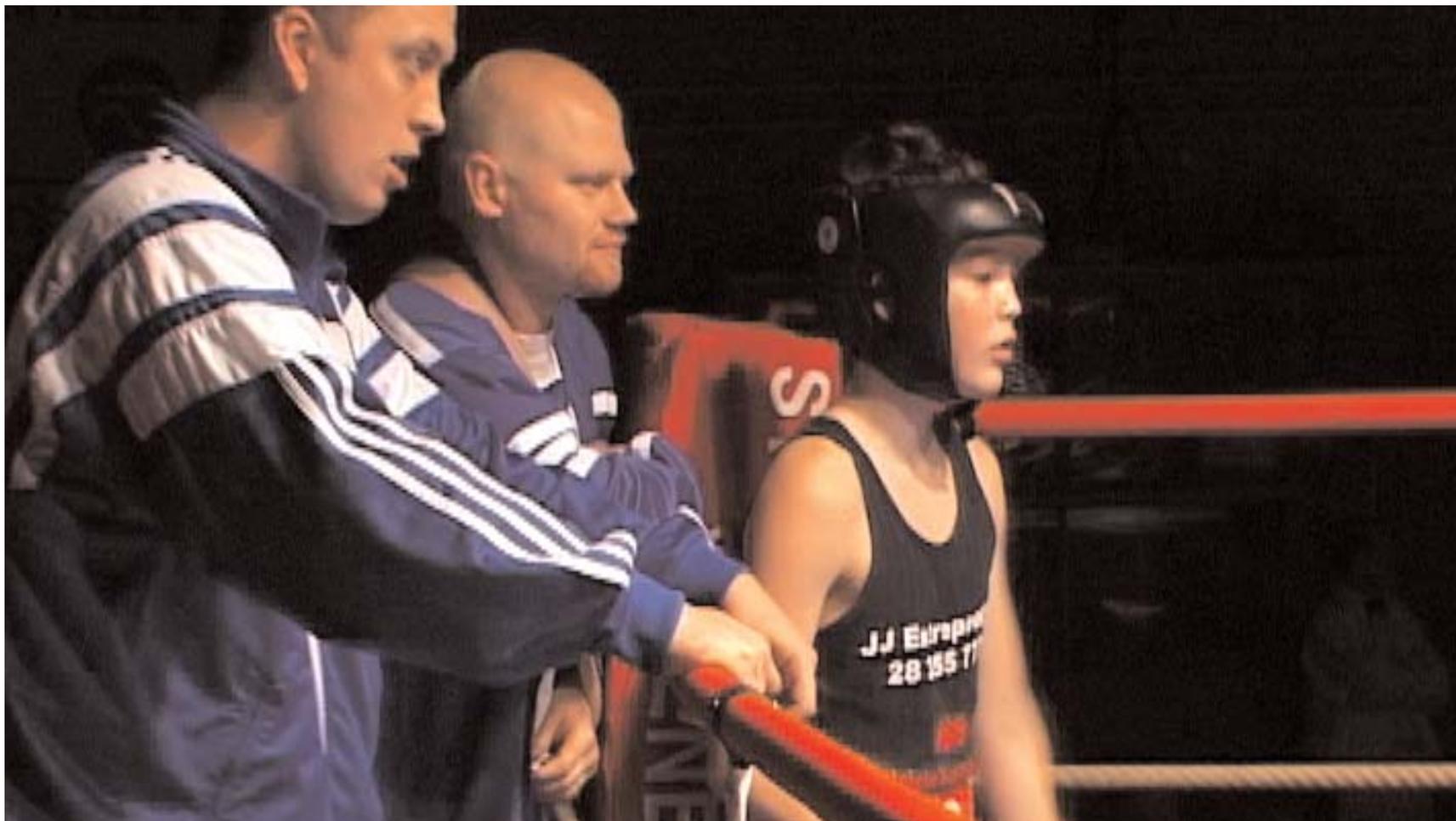
"We have filmed, at very close range, their life from eggs to airborne honey-makers. We were helped by experts who have studied the life of bees for years, and we got to use their expertise and equipment. This enabled us to film details in extreme close-up. We show both the life inside the hive, with its highly specialised division of labour, and outside, in the open air, as the bees search across more than 6000 acres at speeds of up to 40 kilometres per hour with the sun as their guide.

"Our story is about the life of the bees, not about the work of beekeeping. The work of the bees is essential for pollination and the growth of seeds and fruits. And, of course, there is wonderful honey!" ■

*For further information see reverse section*

**LAILA HODELL** Born 1944, Sweden. Attended courses in art at University. Worked with film since 1975. Founded the production company Frejas Børn, 1979. Director of the first Danish feature-length puppet film *The Ballad of Holger the Dane* (1997), which won First Prize for Best Animation Fiction at Montevideo. Other works: *The Workshop of Patience* (1997), *City of The Bees* (2004).

**BERTEL TORNE** Born 1942, Denmark. Has worked as a director in theatre since 1962, and for a period as directing assistant at the Royal Danish Theatre. Attended Yale Drama School in 1966. In 1967 he formed Group Theatres Kimære and Actors Theatre. Has organized guest performances with progressive theatre from the United States and Sweden. In 1979 he commenced studies at the Danish University of Agriculture and has been a beekeeper since 1984.



Framegrab

**ANDERS GUSTAFSSON** Born 1967 in Sweden. Has been living in Denmark for seven years. Graduate of the National Film School of Denmark. His graduation film *Svensk Roulette* (1997) won the Nordic Short Film Award 1997 at Nordisk Panorama. *The Man with the Tuba* (1999), *Tom Merrit* (1999), *The Boys from Olsemagle* (1998), *I nat går jorden under* (1993) and *The Soccer Boy* (2000).

# BOX BOX

**Julius Gottlieb is 14 years old. At 153 centimetres, he is the smallest boy in his class. But his self-confidence is intact, because not only is Julius a lightweight boxer, he is also the ruling Danish junior champion in his weight class.**

*Flyweight* follows Julius through one year, focusing on his one great passion – boxing. We join him in the boxing gym, where Julius vents his energy and aggressions. In school, where he sends longing looks after those enigmatic girls, and we join him at the boxing tournaments, where he wins in style.

Julius will soon be 15 years old, and he is slowly starting to rethink his devotion to boxing. It is a tough sport, and Julius is afraid of his brain being damaged and becoming stupid – like so many professional boxers. Thoughts of his future are beginning to crowd his mind, and as time goes by, he starts having serious doubts about as to whether boxing should continue to be as important in his life as it is now.

#### **DIRECTOR ANDERS GUSTAFSSON:**

“I have always been fascinated by boxing. Something about this sport sets it apart from most other sports. Perhaps it has to do with the boxer’s vulnerability in the ring. Say that you lose a soccer match 10-0 – that’s annoying, even embarrassing. But if you are equally inferior in a boxing match – then you really get a beating so you feel it. In many ways you can see this as a ‘life or death’ struggle. Not literally, of course, but you will feel how the consequences have an effect on your body.

“Julius is a boy who is as far from the cliché image of a boxer as you can possibly get. He has the security of a good home and a loving family. He is intelligent and has no problems at school. He has good friends and generally feels okay about his life.

“Why does he want to box? Why doesn’t he play badminton or soccer? Something less extreme, something more ordinary?

These were some of the questions I wanted to find the answers to in this documentary.

“I also wanted to describe the life of a high-level amateur boxer – including training, boxing events, and important finals in the major Danish championships.

“But most importantly, I wanted to get close to my main character, a 14-year-old boy, and hear his thoughts on life, school, girls, self-esteem, the future, victories, and defeats” ■

*For further information see reverse section*

## DANISH DOCUMENTARIES AT FORUM



*Voices of the World*

# VOICES OF THE WORLD

**Linguists calculate that planet earth is losing one language every two weeks - and with each one that vanishes, a means of communication, a method of expression and a way of looking at the world disappears. This documentary special tells the compelling story of the world's cultural and linguistic diversity.**

The peoples of the world speak over 6,500 separate languages. Each language employs a vocabulary and a grammar that is unique to the communities that use them and each reflects a culture that is equally unique, rich in folklore, history and humanity. In a time of globalization and the telecommunications revolution that is accompanying it, most of those languages have come under threat. Many are in terminal decline. A surprisingly large number, about 50%, will probably not survive the century.

### THE VOICES ... -STAFF PRESENT THEIR PROJECT

"Voices ... will be drawn from the unique archive that will be created as our teams travel the world, recording examples of that quintessentially human activity - speaking.

We will see how linguists and anthropologists, engaged in the race to chart the world's most endangered languages, venture into the remotest regions of the planet to identify and capture those last fleeting utterances. We will show how climate and terrain

can shape the way in which we express ourselves and how, in turn, our languages may shape the ways in which we think.

We will meet many who regret - and perhaps resent - the gradual erosion of their own language, culture and identity.

We will also meet many who regard the emergence of a single global language as an inevitability - and who welcome that possible eventuality.

And we will listen. Always, we will listen. Whether we are hearing the last surviving speaker of a remote and endangered language, or whether we are hearing kids inventing new forms of their mother tongue in the playground, this documentary will offer the audience to listen with fresh ears to the *Voices of the World*".

*The documentary Voices ... originates from the international project Voices of the World - an initiative of UNESCO's Goodwill Ambassador for Languages Mrs. Vigdis Finnbogadottir, based on an original idea by Janus Billeskov Jansen, supported by the Danish Government, the UN and by leading linguists from all over the world. It aims to build popular awareness of the diversity of mankind. The film Voices ... will be part of a high profile tv-event in October 2005 to celebrate the 60th birthday of the UN.*

**DIRECTOR** Janus Billeskov Jansen **PRODUCER** Thomas Stenderup **CREATIVE CONSULTANT** Chris Haws **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Final Cut Productions [www.final-cut.dk](http://www.final-cut.dk)

# AFGHAN MUSCLES

**The young men of Afghanistan have discovered the art of bodybuilding. In a country ravaged by war, these men still hold on to their dreams; dreams of muscle, honour and fame - absolute control of the body in a world of chaos.**

### DIRECTOR ANDREAS DALSGAARD'S COMMENTS ON HIS AFGHAN MUSCLES

"Afghanistan is not just a mirror of the afghan people; it is a reflection of the world. Many afghan scholars have uttered this sentence, and it is epitomized in Afghan bodybuilding.

This is where the east meets the west, and where tradition meets modernity. It is a violent crossroad between cultures, and it has been since the time of Alexander the Great and before.

The story of bodybuilding is intriguing, because it is a great opportunity to describe a fascinating country in a surprising ways. This story will be dealing with burkhas, terrorists, conservative turbans, the mujahideen, and the destruction and poverty - but Afghanistan is so much more than that, and bodybuilding is a great way to present this visually in a character driven story.

The Afghans are people with strong personalities, great temperament and plenty of humour. They are victims of

difficult circumstances, but they are not victims in their own life. In this story we will meet a colourful variety of characters, each of them trying to define a meaningful way of life in a tormented country.

The story begins a year ago, when we followed Hamid and Noor during the national competition. Years of hard work finally paid off, when they became national champions and were selected for the national team.

Afterwards we go back to ordinary life, as it unfolds in Kabul during the following year. Together with an intense training schedule, we are introduced to the life of two young men: Hanging out with friends, going to work and university, partying at weddings, going on picnics, and at home with their families. Slowly the intensity increases, as the competitions come closer, and the training intensifies.

We will continuously create close references to the political development in society, the violence and instability, the corruption, the landscape of local commercials on the radio and television, and the upcoming elections.

We are portraying a society and it's structure, which is clearly reflected in the subject of bodybuilding."

**DIRECTOR** Andreas Dalsgaard **PRODUCER** Michael Haslund-Christensen **PRODUCTION** Haslund Film / [www.haslund.org](http://www.haslund.org)



*Afghan Muscles*



Becoming a Guerrilla Girl

# BECOMING A GUERRILLA GIRL

**Becoming a Guerrilla Girl is a film about images of terror and enemies - but even more, a humane story from a foreign world. A story about a young middle-class girl from the big city, who enlists in the guerrilla movement in Colombia's jungle and goes through three months of basic training.**

This film starts with a young girl's arrival at a guerrilla camp. She has come to enlist.

Upon arrival, she is interrogated by an officer. He wants to know why she wants to join and he will try to talk her out of it. She must convince the officer that she has enough will to adapt to the tough jungle life. The officer will also ask about her family. Whether her parents know she is there and what they think of it.

Along with a couple of others, she is taken through the jungle to the camp where her training will start. Here she is appointed a partner and put in a group of roughly 10 new recruits. She is handed two uniforms and a pair of rubber boots. She is also given a new name. Along with her classmates she must learn to follow orders, drill, dig trenches, and function in a camp where everything is primitive. She has to get used to less sleep and bad food.

For a middleclass girl from the city, this is a radical change. The training is tough, both physically and psychologically. She is pressured to the point where she may not longer know who she is.

At a certain point she has completed her basic training. Then she is given a

weapon. From now on she must carry it at all times, also at night. It is heavy and only makes the marches harder. How long it will take her to be considered fully trained and which tasks she will be assigned to as a soldier depends on her skills.

## DIRECTORS STATEMENT

"This film is about a young girl who enters FARC - Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. and her training to become a guerrilla soldier. It describes the transformation this young city-girl undertakes, when having to adapt to strict military training and primitive conditions of life.

It's about a girl who is at a turning point in her life. It is the classic tale of losing ones innocence. She grows up fast in a world full of lurking dangers. By sticking closely to the girls' story, this is a film with

a surgical incision in a complex conflict of international importance.

Colombia is a very chaotic but also beautiful country. People are very vivid and expressive. The camera has captured this reality of chaos and horror with a cool calmness.

It's a cinematic story. It is the girl's universe we are entering in a scenic form. We will create a feeling of suspense and dark atmosphere.

We are there with the girl. We see her through steady images. There have been clear guidelines for the photographing. We have banned camera movement, and only filmed static shots on tripods."

**DIRECTOR** Frank Piasecki Poulsen **PRODUCER** PRODUCTION Zentropa Real / [www.zentropareal.com](http://www.zentropareal.com)

# IT USED TO BE A GREAT FLAG

**When we are talking about anti-semitism what are we really talking about? Is there a real problem? Or is it a political game played by the right wing Israeli government, supported by some Jewish communities?**

## ZENTROPA REAL PRESENTS THE PROJECT

"This film is a personal journey through anti-semitism in Europe made by award winning director Yoav Shamir (*Checkpoint*, Joris Ivens Award at IDFA 2003, HOTDOCS 2004). It will be a Sociological, philosophical and cultural journey through the heart of anti-semitism.

Yoav Shamir's project, *It Used to be a Great Flag*, investigates the concept of contemporary anti-semitism, and aims to bring the discussion of the justification of anti-semitism into light.

All over Europe the growth of anti-semitism is felt and noticed. On one side we see the anti-Jewish actions that are present in the media, and on the other, the exaggerated allegations of anti-semitism from the Jewish communities - and in the middle of it all, a major identity crisis among European Jews. The director Yoav Shamir is a non-practising Jew and Israeli. He lives in the middle of the

chaos that ever intrigues the media, and is broadcasted to us on a daily basis.

Has the new outbreak of anti-semitism developed because all criticism of Israel is labelled anti-semitism and is used by the Israeli government as protection of itself?

Is it about Israeli historical self-understanding, and the *us against them* mentality? Or is it a frightening new tendency, which makes way for anti-semitic opinions because other minority groups of modern society feel pressured? Or maybe simple, old-fashioned xenophobia is modern Europe's main problem? All these questions are the aim of Yoav Shamir in *It Used to be a Great Flag*.

The film has its origin of shooting in Israel, but is looking for answers and interpretations all over Europe. Yoav Shamir will in his search, go to France - where anti-semitism is growing faster at the moment than in any other country, Germany, and the new EU countries, to investigate the scale and nature of anti-semitism today. It will be a personal journey into a complex but ever present issue where his own identity is in question, along with the identity of all Jews today."

**DIRECTOR** Yoav Shamir **PRODUCER** Karoline Leth **PRODUCTION** Zentropa Real / [www.zentropareal.com](http://www.zentropareal.com)



Director of *It Used to be a Great Flag* Yoav Shamir

The documentary genre has received a publicity boost in recent years. First, there was the buzz in Europe's documentary circle over Nicholas Philibert's masterpiece *Etre et Avoir*, which was seen by nearly two million people in France. And today, Michael Moore is the name on everyone's lips. The astounding success of *Fahrenheit 9/11* in theatres worldwide has turned the documentary community's customary frown upside down.



Photo: Jan Buus

# PESSIMISM IS GETTING HARDER BY THE MINUTE!

BY TUE STEEN MÜLLER, DIRECTOR OF THE EUROPEAN DOCUMENTARY NETWORK (EDN)

The facts are clear: Cinemas are now showing more documentaries, the media are treating theatrical documentaries on a par with theatrical features, documentary festivals are popping up everywhere, and the genre is appreciated as a home for personal expression.

## REVOLT AGAINST FUNDING AND TV-STANDARDS

This upswing has been termed the *Michael Moore Effect* and there's no arguing that Moore's political messages have given the genre a much needed shot in the arm. What used to be obvious only to documentarians has now reached a broader public: documentaries can be one-sided and opinionated, and strong and aggressive messages can come in a humorous wrapper.

*The Return of the Political Film* is the subtitle of the *Michael Moore Effect*. There is tremendous energy among young filmmakers in Europe. With no funding worth mention and paying no mind to television's increasingly standardised format requirements, filmmakers are producing films that find an audience among young people in the anti-consumerism and anti-globalisation movement. Witness how Denmark's latest Danish hit festival, *cph:dox*, is promoting its programme.

Clearly, these are political times, and clearly there's a desire to describe and interpret the sad state of the world.

## JUST DO IT

It's always like that. The world is going to hell in a handbasket, and we need to document this. Realism is back in features; documentaries are the real thing. This is not news, nor does Michael Moore add anything new to the documentary genre, historically speaking. Before him, Emile de Antonio launched barbed satirical assaults at targets including Richard Nixon.

But Moore is a role model for a new generation that masters the technique and appears to have given up on television and public film-funding. They just go ahead and do it, and in terms of aesthetics there is nothing to complain about. Last summer, the number of young Italians applying to for the EDN workshop *Documentary in Europe* doubled. They all had something to say, they had scrounged up some money from local funds or NGOs, they put up their own salary, and their appeal to the rest of Europe went: Give us a place to show our films! Films with a message – welcome back to the 1960s and 1970s!

## TV IS FOR LATER

Of course, many of these documentary films and reports never reach wide audiences, but they do get an active

response at festivals and in political manifestations.

Then again, large audiences will be exposed to films such as *3 Rooms of Melancholia* by Pirjo Honkasalo of Finland. I recently met the film's distributor, Heino Deckert, who was hard put to contain his enthusiasm. When the film opened at the Venice Film Festival, distributors from France, Germany and Italy were lining up to secure the theatrical rights for their respective countries. Deckert could pick and choose among attractive offers for theatrical release of a film which, just a few years ago, would have been a multiple festival award-winner ending up in a late-night slot on a public TV channel. The Finnish distributor hasn't even approached the networks. No need for that now, that is for later.

## DIRECTLY TO THE SILVER SCREEN

I mention this film – incidentally, congratulations are also due to the Danish Film Institute, which co-produced it – to emphasise that not only easy-reader, entertaining documentary attacks on George W. and American gun-worship do well theatrically. An artistically convincing essay such as Honkasalo's has an international theatrical life, too, although no doubt less so than *Etre et Avoir*.

The marriage between documentary

and cinemas is becoming reality on an international scale. Of course, mainly big feature-length documentaries ever make it to the big screen, but there is an expressed ambition for more. The EU MEDIA Programme has supported the launch of the so-called EU *DocuZone* Project that cinemas in eight countries across Europe. November 2004 is the official opening of this programme of documentaries to be screened either from a DVD or in downloaded versions beamed via satellite from a server in Germany. This European initiative deserves all the credit and support it can get.

## AFTER MIDNIGHT

Back to television. Surely, there must be something to be pessimistic about, and of course there is. Of course, documentaries suitable for the darkness of the theatre remain the tip of the iceberg. The rest will go out in non-theatrical distribution or on TV. In most European countries, the latter remains the only realistic option. Television broadcasts a lot of documentaries, but most are shown in primetime and deal exclusively with domestic issues. Films about other cultures and films with a personal imprint are usually broadcast late in the evening or after midnight, if they are broadcast at all, or they are left to digital niche-channels.

So, there's still room for a little pessimism! ■



Photo: Hassan Reza Rezaii

BY LARS MOVIN

Farzane and Reyhane are two six-year-old cousins growing up in an Afghan refugee camp in eastern Iran, near the Afghan border.

Through the barbed-wire fence there is a view of the mountains separating Afghanistan and Iran. As Farzane and Reyhane's grandfather explains, the family has been living in the camp for 22 years – most of them have never known any other place than this “Refugee Camp Land,” as they call it. It is a “land” that, over time, has evolved into a small community with a school, clinic and bazaar. It is also a place that provides a certain safety. As the girls say, “Maybe we cannot get out, but thieves cannot get in either!”

*Behind the Mountains* follows the two girls in the months leading up to their first day of school. A big event in any child's life, whether the child lives in Denmark, Afghanistan – or Refugee Camp Land. This blend of the strange and familiar, specific and universal, is the film's engine and chief attraction. When the two girls make kites out of plastic bags, roll old bicycle tires like hoops, kiss the Koran, or crack pistachio nuts to pay for their school supplies, children in the privileged, western hemisphere will feel the distance. But when the girls simply goof off or share their excitement on the way to their first day of school, distance evaporates like dew in the desert.

For the girls and their families, school represents the dream of a better future. Farzane and Reyhane are already fantasizing about high school. But first they have to learn how to write. The first day of school starts with the first letter of the Persian alphabet: *Alef* – a vertical line that the children practice over and over until it is second nature to them. After school, they go home and play, and behave like kids again.

#### **TWO WOMEN IN 50°C HEAT AND VEILS**

*Behind the Mountains* is the last in a long series of films about vulnerable existences that Sfinx Film/TV has put out over the last 16 years from its modest alley house in Copenhagen – films marked by

**“We were staying in a house in the actual camp, we had no car, and four times a day we had to lug the equipment a mile and back in 50°C heat – dressed in overcoats, headscarves, the works, like the Muslim women there. It enabled us to film some very intimate situations.”**

personal engagement, a visual surplus, and solid craftsmanship. Many of the films have touched on themes of immigrants and refugees.

Annette Mari Olsen and Katia Forbert Petersen are the two creative forces behind Sfinx Film/TV. They are interested in telling stories about a world where people become expatriates and cultures mix.

“We are both of mixed culture,” Forbert Petersen says. “For the last 20 years, we have had a keen interest in multicultural Denmark. In the beginning, we were practically the only people here making films about these subjects. Back then, many people thought it was a strange thing to do.”

Katia Forbert Petersen, who was born and raised in Poland, arrived in Denmark as a political refugee in 1969. She is from a family that has worked in film

# DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKERS IN VEILS

***Behind the Mountains* is a children's documentary about two young girls' lives in an Afghan refugee camp in Iran. Since 1988, Sfinx Film/TV, a small Danish production company, has been turning out a long string of films about the reality of people being shuffled around the map and cultures mixing. Behind the company and the films are two veteran woman filmmakers who embody a mix of cultures themselves: Katia Forbert Petersen is Polish-Danish and Annette Mari Olsen is Danish-Iranian-Polish-Lithuanian-English. Meet the two filmmakers who went undercover, in veils.**

for three generations. In 1995, she made *Man with a Camera*, a film about her father, Wladyslaw Forbert, who served as a photographer for a Polish fraction of the Red Army in World War II. In general, many of her films have been about people caught between the teeth of Eastern European history.

Annette Mari Olsen was born in Denmark, but grew up in England and Iran, where her Danish engineer father helped build the trans-Iranian railroad. Her mother belonged to the Polish minority in Lithuania and was deported by the Russians to a prison camp in Siberia. From there, she was sent to Iran as a refugee in 1942. It was she who inspired her daughter to go to Poland in 1968 to study direction at the famous film school in Lodz.

There, she met Forbert Petersen who was in the school's photography programme. They made one film together before losing touch when Forbert Petersen had to flee Poland. Olsen ended up staying 10 more years in Poland, directing three features, as well as a line of short films and episodes of TV-shows, before "returning" to Denmark in 1978.

A chance meeting on Copenhagen's main drag, Strøget, soon reunited the two film-school buddies. Over the next few years they gradually resumed their collaboration, which led to the establishment of Sfinx Film/TV in 1988. They have worked together as co-directors, directed separately, and served on each other's projects in a variety of capacities.

*Do you have a distribution of tasks when you co-direct?*

KFP: "It depends on the project. Of course, we both have our hobbyhorses and opinions, but in general we supplement each other amazingly well, so at this point it's hard to say who comes up with what. When you have worked together this many years, you don't have to talk so much during a shoot. We both agree to keep it unpretentious when we do a documentary. That's why we started working with video early on, because it's easier for the subjects to forget about the equipment that way."

AMO: "In this film, as well, we found that when one lets go, the other picks up. For instance, when we were shooting in Iran, I was the one who knew the language. I balked at one point, when it turned out that it would be okay for us to keep filming the children, but the grownups didn't want to be in the movie. Then Katia pushed me and said I should go still down with them the Iranian way and talk them into being in the movie."

KFP: "We have a common goal, of course, which is making movies. And we know how hard it is to get close to people, to get under the skin of ordinary people. You've got to remember that, even though these are illiterate people from small villages in Afghanistan, they have a lot of wisdom and dignity, and trying to manipulate them gets you nowhere."

AMO: "I think we gained their confidence and respect by being there for so long and living like them. We were staying in a house in the actual camp, we had no car, and four times a day we had to lug the equipment a mile and back in 50°C heat - dressed in overcoats, headscarves, the works, like the Muslim women there. It enabled us to film some very intimate situations."

KFP: "We agree completely that, in this type of film, you should walk softly and not step on anyone's toes. We stay in the background and we are modest. A fantastic thing about the new equipment is that we can do the sound ourselves, just the two of us."

### BUSTED BY THE SECURITY POLICE

The idea for *Behind the Mountains* emerged during a research trip they made to Iran in 2001 on a completely different project. In the Torbatejam refugee camp near the Afghan border, Olsen and Forbert Petersen met a few of the two million Afghan refugees who have been living in Iran for more than 20 years.

AMO: "The children we met there were simply wonderful. They were born and raised in the camp and had never known any other life. We thought we could use them to show how alike children from

***"It was our intention that children who see the film would want to be friends with two girls, who come from a strange country and play other games, who wear plastic shoes and speak a strange language. If children who see the film want to make friends with these two girls, then we have succeeded."***

anywhere in the world are, despite cultural and all other kinds of differences."

Although, as far as is known, no one had ever been allowed to film in the camp unsupervised, the two Danish filmmakers were able to move around freely during the two months of shooting. Still, they could not help feeling the intangible, non-stop pressure from the Iranian authorities:

AMO: "It's hard to explain; it's a very special mentality. Katia and I have talked about how it reminded us of communist Poland. As a woman, you are quite safe walking the streets. In Teheran, for instance, it was okay to walk home alone at one o'clock at night after visiting someone. As long as you don't get involved in politics, you can basically do as you please. But let me illustrate how the system works: after the bombing of Afghanistan began, we did an interview with a man in Teheran, who made some pretty innocuous statements about how the Iranians didn't want war. We screwed up and the security police stopped us, because we were driving around near where the American embassy used to be, while interviewing the man. Luckily, they didn't find the tape. If they had, the man would definitely have been in trouble, even if he really didn't say anything. When these things happen, you realize there is no such thing as human rights there."

KFP: "As a filmmaker from the West, you have to be very careful not to abuse those who show you confidence. You are responsible for the people you film."

*Do you have any special thoughts about form and narrative method in terms of making documentaries for children?*

KFP: "Kids of eight, nine or ten understand more than you think. They just don't understand politics, so they don't make political connections. But they will understand the world of these two girls. It was our intention that children who see the film would want to be friends with two girls, who come from a strange country and play other games, who wear plastic shoes and speak a strange language. If children who see the film want to make friends with these two girls, then we have succeeded" ■



Photo: Katia Forbert Petersen

**KATIA FORBERT PETERSEN** Graduate cinematographer from the Polish Film School. Resident in Denmark since 1969. She has shot some 150 films, including a number of features and worked on camera for German television (ZDF) and the Canadian Film Board. Among others, she has received the Annual Prize from the Association of Danish Cinematographers in 1992; and in 1997 and 1999 received the Special Prize at the ITVA-festival in Copenhagen. Has directed and photographed the following documentaries among many others: *My Sweet Child* (1987), *Planned Child* (1990), *Two Women on a River* (1996), and *Von Trier's 100 Eyes* (2000).

**ANNETTE MARI OLSEN** Born in Denmark, grew up in Iran and England. Film director, Master of Arts from the Polish Film School, Lodz, 1973. Until 1977 worked as a director in Poland. Has been a resident of Denmark since. Lectured at the National Film School of Denmark, 1983-84. Media consultant for Danish Refugee Council, 1986-88. Member of the board of 'Producenterne', the Danish film and tv producers association. Several periods as an interpreter (English, Farsi ("Persian"), Polish, French, and Danish), work which provided the basis for a range of award-winning films about ethnic minorities in Denmark. Set up Sfinx Film/TV in 1988. Writes most of her own scripts and she has edited many of her own films.

# CONFRONTING A KILLER

One August morning in 1943, three young Danish Nazis liquidated the newspaper editor Carl Henrik Clemmensen. Sixty years later, Søren Fauli, a filmmaker and Clemmensen's grandson, called on one of his grandfather's killers, the former SS officer Søren Kam, rapidly declining in his German exile.

BY NIELS LIND LARSEN

Trusting other people is a big challenge, Søren Fauli says. He recently finished his most personal film to date, in close collaboration with director Mikala Krogh and editor Theis Schmidt.

Søren Kam, the Nazi who murdered Fauli's grandfather, continues to be wanted by the Danish authorities on charges of war crimes, and to many Danes it is an outrage that Kam is allowed to live in peace among his German neighbours who refuse to extradite him. Still, *My Granddad's Murderer* is more than a call for justice. It is a project of forgiveness that goes beyond the film. Fauli wanted to meet Kam to forgive him his past sins in an attempt to heal the open wound that has been a particular torment for Fauli's mother Mona.

It is an uncommonly personal film, even for Fauli who has never shied away from exhibiting and exploiting his own persona. In his short films, features, and many of the commercials that have made him one of Denmark's most sought-after directors in advertising, Fauli gladly jumps in front of the camera. This is even more pronounced in his documentaries. Nevertheless, his trilogy of autobiographical shorts, *Supermaterialism*, *Obsession* and *Rejection* was a lot more earnest and revealed more of himself than most people probably realized.

*My Granddad's Murderer* intensifies the documentary self-reflection of those three films, but Fauli's most personal film, paradoxically, is not his alone. It is the product of a close collaboration with the director Mikala Krogh and the editor Theis Schmidt at the small, collective film company Tju Bang Film. Perhaps that is why the film succeeds in moving so close to what is a very personal project.

## MANAGING THE PROCESS

Theis Schmidt (TS): Søren and I had been discussing the idea for the film for a while and we asked Mikala if she wanted to join us, because we knew it would be such a personal film. We wanted Søren to be a character in his own film without having to always be thinking, "We're making a film", every time we shot a scene.

Mikala Krogh (MK): We quickly realized that Søren couldn't be too conscious of the filming or he wouldn't be convincing. Instead, we planned everything together, what shots we wanted to do. Then Søren let go and followed his project, and it was up to me to make sure that it worked on film. Theis and I cut it underway, then Søren would see it and comment on it.

*It is a highly process-oriented film. It starts by legitimising its subject, writing Søren Kam into Danish history and into Søren Fauli's family's history. Then the film becomes more and more about Mona and what her father's murder means to her, and finally it goes into Søren's personal need to forgive and have his existence recognized by Søren Kam. Did you plan it that way or did the film simply move in that direction?*

MK: It moved in that direction. Because it was a process film, it was important for us pretty quickly to find out how the material worked instead of shooting 300 hours of video and then going, "Well, where's the movie at?"

TS: Mikala and I were always trying to triangulate where the film was going, but we never discussed it with Søren. I think we had a clearer sense of where Søren wanted to end up than he did himself, as we were making the film - but without putting it into words, because as soon as you do that, you are also trying to control where the film is headed.

Søren Fauli (SF): There was also an element of just leaping into things without knowing where we might end up. We didn't write an outline, for instance, and it ended up as a process film in part because it was a process of discovery for us as well.

*Clarifying the process also makes the film more engaging, the closer it gets to you personally...*

SF: Yes, but there is also the aspect to it that people know me as a public person, an actor, and now they are getting the private me. There's a clash between someone playing a chocolate turtle in a commercial and a real-life Nazi-story. The story obviously matters a great deal to me, but the murder is also part of Danish history.

*How do you feel about exposing yourself like that on camera?*

SF: I couldn't care less. I have no boundaries in that

respect. This film's boundaries probably had more to do with how the other two ruled out some pretty goofy stuff I wanted to do, perhaps because I was trying to hide the private aspects. The moment those shots had been cut, it was obvious that they had to go.

*Did being on camera make the whole thing easier for you? Would you have met with Kam if you hadn't been making a film?*

SF: No way I would have done it. I never would have dared to, if Mikala hadn't been there. I originally wanted Mikala in the picture because I felt safe around her, and I was convinced that Mona would feel safe around her, too. Later, I was pleasantly surprised by her cinematic style and the whole poetic aspect she brought to the film.

*And dramaturgical aspects, too, right? There is a clear dramatic arc in the film, peaking at the encounter with Kam ...*

SF: Yes, it wasn't actually until we came to Germany that we realized that, once we had been there, the whole thing was more or less over. We would show the film to Mona and shoot some follow-up, but the energy had definitely drained from the shooting. It was like we had already done everything.

MK: But that was also what was so cool about it, what made it an honest project that's more than a film: we got closure. We tried shooting a few extra things later on. We thought we needed some scenes with Mona for the start of the movie, dealing with her childhood. But Mona didn't want to talk about it and Søren wasn't really all that interested. Compared to the authentic scenes we already had of Søren and Mona, the new stuff seemed awfully boring and contrived. That was actually a super nice feeling, because we could see how authentic the first scenes were - and how the project actually gave Mona closure.

*The film ends on an elegant note with Mona's letter adding some perspective to the project. Was this ending handed to you or had you ordered it?*

SF: I guess 'ordered' is accurate.

MK: We showed Mona the film, when we knew we had no real ending and couldn't think of one. Søren suggested we film her as she watched the



Photo: Archive, The Museum of Danish Resistance 1940-1945

movie, but we had already been filming her so much that I figured we should simply let her watch it in peace. Instead we suggested that she write a letter.

SF: It's also an acknowledgement that she is the one with the real emotional investment in the film. I may be the central character, but Mona has been torn up over this story her whole life.

*That leaves us with Søren Kam who probably never even realizes he is in a film...*

SF: He had no idea. We're going to send him a copy of the film now, and we're fucking nervous about it. After all, he has no interest in us making this film about him. But we're going ahead anyway, after giving it a lot of thought. In principle, it's not morally defensible to involve someone in something they don't want to be in. That's a major issue in documentaries, how far you have the right to go with people. I'm left with the schism that, although Kam wants peace in his old age, that is not what he is getting with this film, of course. Nevertheless, we think it's justifiable. At no point do I call him a mean murderer, or pillory him. I actually think we treat him fairly.

*Some would say you are almost too kind to him...*

SF: Sure, but that's because this is a project of forgiveness.

MK: It's about the whole aspect of forgiveness, which I think is an enormously interesting dimension of the project. Confrontational encounters are quite *du jour*, but it's not a simple thing. A victim or his relatives may get peace of mind, but does forgiveness suffice to excuse society from punishing the guilty party? That's a discussion we would like to have ■

**SØREN FAULI** Born 1963, Denmark. Writer-director. Known for his satirical comedy in numerous short fiction films and other works extending from commercials and music videos over documentary films, television and radio productions to stage drama. *Count Axel* (2001) was his feature film debut. Other productions include *Supermaterialism* (1995), *The Cable Club* (1999) and *Polle Fiction* (2002).

**MIKALA KROGH** Born 1973. Graduated as a documentary director from the National Film School of Denmark, 2001. Productions include *Fish Out of Water* (2000) and *Detour to Freedom* (2001).



Mikala Krogh, Søren Fauli and Theis Schmidt. Photo: Jan Buus



# THE FIVE OBSTRUCTIONS COMPETES FOR AN OSCAR NOMINATION

Jørgen Leth's and Lars von Trier's film, *The Five Obstructions*, is selected as the Danish entrant for the Academy Award Nominations in the category of Best Foreign Language Film following the decision by representatives from the Danish film industry.

The unique and original documentary, *The Five Obstructions*, deals with filmmaker Jørgen Leth recreating one of his first films, *The Perfect Human* from 1967. Trier has described the film as a 'little masterpiece'. In their new challenging creation *The Five Obstructions*, Leth must produce five remakes of his original film, all while Trier sets his obstructions placing limitations and prohibitions on Leth's filmmaking. Leth elegantly evades the traps Trier sets. *The Five Obstructions* has been received enthusiastically worldwide; in 2003 the film competed at Venice, was selected for the Toronto International Film Festival, selected for Amsterdam's IDFA, and later received a European Film Academy nomination. Early 2004, *The Five Obstructions* was screened at Sundance Film Festival. In August this year, the film received a Grand Prix at Odense International Film Festival.

**DIRECTORS** Jørgen Leth, Lars von Trier **PRODUCER** Carsten Holst **PRODUCTION** Zentropa Real / [www.zentropareal.com](http://www.zentropareal.com)

## PRAISE FOR THE FIVE OBSTRUCTIONS

"Watching *The Five Obstructions* is at once like witnessing two chess masters playing dominoes and like spying on a series of therapy sessions... It is amusing and rather gratifying to watch (Von Trier) fail, since his restless provocations are in the end no match for Mr. Leth's implacably passive-aggressive reserve."  
- A.O. Scott, *New York Times*

"Fascinating! Might be dismissed by many as a movie for movie snobs. Well, movie snobs deserve to have fun too!" - Glenn Kenny, *Premiere*

"A spellbinding mind teaser, the ultimate game for movie buffs! Leth is hypnotically unstoppable." - Peter Travers, *Rolling Stone*

"No matter how few films you see in a year, this impish motion picture should be one of them. That's how remarkable, how truly original it is." - Kenneth Turan, *Los Angeles Times*

"Remarkably absorbing! A creative high-wire act. As challenging as it is entertaining... already the finest of the year: the sheer euphoria of watching the old man win." - *Time Out New York*

"One of the summer's top 10 movies" - *Time Out New York*

"An exhilarating, art-affirming documentary that may well leave you breathless. Leth leaves the viewer both exhilarated and maybe even optimistic about the capacity of human intelligence and creativity." - John Anderson, *Newsday*

"Delicious!" - *Sight & Sound*

"Top Ten List. Best Movies Of The Year" - *Time Magazine*

"A sensational oddity... a hybrid of documentary, reality TV and game show. Malicious fun! A work of humor and creative ecstasy!" - Jami Bernard, *Daily News*

"As Leth bests each challenge with irrepressible good humor, steadily driving his taskmaster nuts, a picture of their teasing friendship begins to emerge, with von Trier revealing more insecurity and warmth than he has ever allowed himself. It's the 8 1/2 of buddy movies, a film for the ages". - Joshua Rotkopf, *Time Out Venice*

# CPH:DOX



Trolleywood

**cph:dox is Denmark's first international documentary film festival. Inaugurated in November 2003, the festival is rapidly becoming one of Scandinavia's biggest documentary film events, making Copenhagen the documentary gateway to Scandinavia.**

## PROFILE

cph:dox aims to break away from the mainstream and present new and innovative documentary films. The emphasis is on topical, spontaneous, political, and personal stories and experiments from filmmakers and artists looking in new directions. The festival hosts three competitions: the CPH:DOX Award, the Amnesty Award, and the New Vision Award, of 5,000 euro each. Each new cph:dox festival also features a number of thematic sidebars, featuring documentaries on important current issues.

cph:dox is based on wide, international, cross-cultural collaboration involving a range of lectures and debates. Aiming to prolong the lives of documentary films and create a dynamic platform for international debate, the festival recently joined forces with Lettre Internationale. In 2004, debate nights with Loretta Napoleoni, Tariq Ali, and Gianni Vattimo have taken up such topics as terror financing, fanaticism, and Europe as Utopia.

## FILM, MEDIA ART, PERFORMANCE, CLUBS, BUSES, PRISONS

cph:dox looks to artists and institutions integrating diverse artistic expressions, including art films, electronic music, media art, and live performances. In 2004, the festival has been proud to present the acclaimed filmmaker Peter Mettler in a live performance, as well as a special sidebar curated by Transmediale, the Berlin-based media art festival, alongside experimental documentaries, media art, and electronic club nights.

One of cph:dox's hopes for the future is taking the cinema of the real to the real world. In 2004, the festival has already been screening documentaries in prisons, buses, nightclubs, and abandoned factories.

## SEMINAR

cph:dox puts a premium on being a filmmaker's festival. This year's festival hosted four days of seminars, master classes, and work-in-progress sessions, introducing Lars von Trier's "dogumentary" concept, the work of Peter Mettler, a case study on *The Corporation* (Canada), and two new Danish projects in development. Highlighting content and form over fundraising and sales pitching, the festival centred on new tendencies in documentary filmmaking, ethics, and aesthetics, as well as discussions of the world documented.

Documentaries today are breaking new ground and cph:dox deals with various kinds of prejudice against the documentary film, challenging moviegoers as well as professionals to think along new lines: the serious and political, the weird and unexpected, the provocative and artistic - all are welcome at cph:dox.

Visit the festival at [www.cphdox.dk](http://www.cphdox.dk) and be sure to submit your entry by 30 June 2005.

## PROGRAMME 2004/ OFFICIAL SELECTION

*Darwin's Nightmare*  
*Three Rooms of Melancholia*  
*Tarnation*  
*Trolleywood*  
*The Agronomist*  
*Justice*  
*A Social Genocide*  
*Wall*  
*Clean Thursday*  
*I Love You All*  
*Original Child Bomb*  
*Arseny Tarkovsky*

## THEMATIC SIDE PROGRAMMES

### DIY (DO-IT-YOURSELF)

*The Take*  
*The Yes Men*  
*Surplus*  
*Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping*  
*Peace One Day*  
and more

### NEW URBAN ORDER

*Writers*  
*Stoked: The Rise and Fall of Gator*  
*Brave New York*  
*Sneakers*  
*Mix*  
and more

### USRebel

*Guerilla: The Taking of Patty Hearst*  
*Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism*  
*The Hunting of the President*  
*Los Angeles Plays Itself*  
and more ...

**In 2004, cph:dox screened 140 films.**

*Head of Programme:*  
Tine Fischer: +45 2091 7025  
*Programmer & Head of Seminar:*  
Tine Mosegaard: +45 2329 4870

# NEXT STOP BERGEN!

The 16th edition of Nordisk Panorama Event continues its nomadic journey throughout the Nordic landscape, next year taking a gigantic step from Iceland's geysirs and glaciers to the magnificent and rugged Norwegian landscape of Bergen, whose dynamic young film community is increasingly making their mark on the Nordic scene!

During its first ten formative years, Nordisk Panorama focused on establishing itself as the main professional meeting place for the Nordic short film and documentary community. The obvious next step was to open up the event, to expose and brand Nordisk Panorama both towards the general audience and the international community. Especially the last two years' results have certainly rewarded this effort.

The days are over when Nordisk Panorama was strictly an internal affair. Since 2002 both the audience attendance and the number of

international delegates have doubled. The three wings of the event - Film Festival, Film Market and Co-financing Forum - span across all professional focus areas from development and financing to distribution and exhibition, this year attracting more than 500 accredited professionals from 24 countries.

The growing success of Nordisk Panorama naturally increases the expectations and professional demands to the event and preparations are already under way. In Bergen, the Nordisk Panorama festival screenings will take place in the city's newest

state-of-the-art cinema, the Nordisk Panorama Market will be upgraded both in terms of capacity and technical facilities and Nordisk Forum for Co-financing of Documentaries will continue to invite a non-Nordic region to promote the crossborder ties between with other European regions.

So make sure to reserve 23 - 28 September 2005 for a week of the very best short films and documentaries - and magnificent landscapes - that the Nordic region has to offer!

Karolina Lidin  
Director, Filmkontakt Nord

## NORDISK PANORAMA 2004

**Nordisk Panorama - 5 Cities Film Festival:**  
120 short films & documentaries, 433 accredited professionals

**Nordisk Panorama Market:**  
306 new Nordic short films & documentaries  
42 attending professionals  
950 screenings by festivals, buyers, distributors and other professionals

**Nordisk Forum for Co-financing of Documentaries:**  
25 new documentary projects pitched  
248 pre-booked individual meetings  
179 accredited professionals

**AWARDS:**  
**THE NORDIC SHORT FILM AWARD: ISK 500.000 prize awarded by Northern Lights Communications (NLC).** *The Last Farm/* Rúnar Rúnarsson, Iceland

**Special Mention:**  
*Fragile/* Jens Jonsson Sweden  
*Nightshift/* Simo Koivunen, Sampa Kukkonen and Sara Wahl, Finland

**THE NORDIC DOCUMENTARY AWARD: ISK 500.000 prize awarded by the Icelandic Ministry for Education, Science and Culture.**

**Tiered prize:**  
*Father to Son/* Visa Koiso-Kanttila, Finland  
*Rocket Brothers/* Kasper Torsting, Denmark

**Special Mention:**  
*Jerusalem My Love/* Jeppe Rønde, Denmark

**AUDIENCE PRIZE: ISK 200.000 prize awarded by RUV, The Icelandic National Broadcasting Service.**  
*Jerusalem My Love/* Jeppe Rønde, Denmark

**CANAL+ PRIZE:** The prize consists of a purchase of the winning film for a one year broadcasting period, on Canal+ France and Africa.  
*The Last Words of Hreggvithur/* Grímur Hákonarson, Iceland

**THE NORDISK PANORAMA EVENT** is organised by Filmkontakt Nord in collaboration with the alternating Host Cities, Reykjavik (2004), Bergen (2005), Århus (2006), Oulu (2007) and Malmö (2008), and supported by the Nordic film institutes and Nordic Film & TV Fund. Nordisk Panorama 2004 was generously supported by the Icelandic Film Centre and the MEDIA Programme of the European Union.

**FILMKONTAKT NORD** was established in 1991 by the Nordic short and documentary filmmakers. Filmkontakt Nord promotes and markets Nordic short films and documentaries at festivals and international markets, hosts Nordic Producers' Stands and maintains a Video Library of more than 3000 Nordic films open to festival programmers and buyers. Moreover, Filmkontakt Nord is chief organizer of *Nordisk Panorama - 5 Cities Film Festival*, *Nordisk Panorama Market* and *Nordisk Forum for Co-financing of Documentaries*. As a new feature Filmkontakt Nord has launched the *Nordic Portal for short films and documentaries* with a.o. a new improved film database: [www.filmkontakt.com](http://www.filmkontakt.com).

**DIRECTOR** Karolina Lidin **INFORMATION & MARKETING** Katrine Kilgaard, **ADMINISTRATION & NORDISK FORUM** Heidi Elise Christensen

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*Jerusalem My Love* by Danish Jeppe Rønde was awarded Special Mention as well as the Audience Prize at Nordisk Panorama 2004. Photo: Nadav Neuhaus

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