

## VINTERBERG RETURNS TO REALISM

The director of *Festen/The Celebration*, Thomas Vinterberg brings his latest film *Submarino* to the Berlinale Competition. A story about two estranged brothers marked by an early tragedy.

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## FAMILY ENTANGLEMENTS

Berlin winner for *A Soap*, Pernille Fischer Christensen is back competing at the Berlinale with *A Family*. At the heart of the story about family ties is the relationship between a father and his daughter.

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## ADMIRATION FOR THE OUTSIDER

This tagline could well describe the spirit of the stories in the five films chosen by Berlinale's Generation: Birger Larsen's *Super Brother* and four short films, *Megaheavy*, *Out of Love*, *Sun Shine* and *Whistleless*.

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# FILM

# #68

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**SUBMARINO / BERLINALE COMPETITION**  
**A FAMILY / BERLINALE COMPETITION**  
**SUPER BROTHER / BERLINALE GENERATION**  
**MEGAHEAVY / OUT OF LOVE / SUN SHINE / WHISTLELESS / GENERATION SHORT FILMS**

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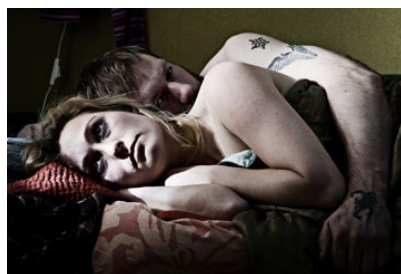
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**DANISH FILM INSTITUTE**  
 GOTHERSGADE 55  
 DK-1123 COPENHAGEN K, DENMARK  
 T +45 3374 3400  
 susanna@dfi.dk

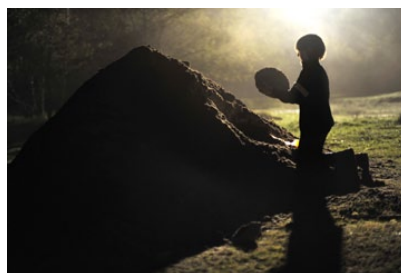
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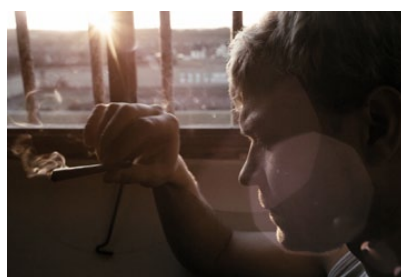
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A Family Photo: Rolf Konow



Super Brother Photo: Erik Aavatsmark



R Photo: Magnus Nordenhof Jønck



Megaheavy Photo: Framegraab



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Two estranged brothers (Peter Plaugborg and Jakob Cedergren) beside their father's coffin. *Submarino* Photo: Per Arnesen

# ESSENTIAL BONDS

***Submarino*, a stark drama about life at the bottom of society, sees the 40-year-old Thomas Vinterberg, director of *Festen/Celebration* returning to his starting point in realism. *Submarino* is based on a novel by Danish writer Jonas T. Bengtsson.**

BY MORTEN PIIL

It's hard to think of another Danish director whose career has such extremes as Thomas Vinterberg's. When he made his Dogme film *Festen/The Celebration* (1998), he and Lars von Trier were spearheading a movement of lasting film-historic significance. No other Danish-language film in recent times ever found a bigger audience or

warmer international recognition than *Festen/The Celebration*. To his credit, Vinterberg subsequently did everything he could to avoid repeating himself. Though it's easy to find recurring themes in his work, his post-*Celebration* films struck out in directions, far different from the more straightforward realistic style that was his original and natural form of expression.

Accordingly, the simplicity of Vinterberg's new film, *Submarino*, may come as a surprise to some after the restless style explorations of his last films, *It's All about Love* (2003) and *Dear Wendy* (2005 – from a screenplay by von Trier).

## DARKER STORIES

Insistent and muted, *Submarino* is a straight-up,

intense look at two brothers burdened with such heavy social baggage that they inevitably sink to the bottom of society. The film tells an uncompromising story of failure and isolation, abuse and loneliness. Watching the film and discussing it with Vinterberg, you get a strong sense that his return to a simpler character-centred form of expression has set him free artistically.

*How would you place Submarino in terms of your other films?*

"I've returned to where I began 10-15 years ago, when I went into darker stories that all in some pretty direct ways were about confronting death. But *Submarino* is probably a shade darker than any of my past films and probably tougher than the others, too. The film's environment is alien to me,

Jakob Cedergren and Peter Plaugborg in *Submarino*. Photo: Per Arnesen

*“I was going into this project with a sense of purity and nakedness. I didn’t have any bells and whistles or mannerisms to lean on, and that was a good feeling. I felt a bit like I did back in the day when we dressed down with the Dogme rules.”*

Thomas Vinterberg

but the story’s grounding in parental guilt is very close to home. The film’s theme – that we should take good care of our children – is universal, and I personally felt very strongly about it when I was making the film. I had just gone through a divorce and was alone with my kids for the first time.

“That’s the main reason why the novel affected me as much as it did and why I felt so close to its story. I may never have lived in a shelter or collected empty bottles to scrounge up cash, like these characters do, but generally we all try to do right by each other and our children. Where that’s concerned, it doesn’t matter where we live.”

*Would you say that in making *Submarino* you are somehow wiping the slate clean and starting over as a director?*

“That might not be so far from the truth. There’s a definite connection between this film and my first films, and on this production I did have a wonderful sense of starting over again. The cast includes a number of actors making their big-screen debuts and the crew in several key positions has young people I never worked with before. My DP, Charlotte Bruus Christensen, who went to the London Film School, never shot a feature before, and my co-writer, Tobias Lindholm, recently graduated from the National Film School of Denmark and this is his first feature, too.”

“I had to face the fact that I’m the old boy on the team now. But that actually gave me a new, and much needed, eagerness, enthusiasm, crispness and fighting spirit – all the things I’d begun to miss a bit. Moreover, I was going into this project with a sense of purity and nakedness. I didn’t have any bells and whistles or mannerisms to lean on, and that was a good feeling. I felt a bit like I did back in the day when we dressed down with the Dogme rules.”

#### **THREW THE NOVEL ACROSS THE ROOM**

*How closely do you stick to the Jonas T. Bengtsson novel you’re adapting?*

“Pretty closely. Birgitte Hald, a Nimbus Film

*“The film’s environment is alien to me, but the story’s grounding in parental guilt is very close to home. The film’s theme – that we should take good care of our children – is universal, and I personally felt very strongly about it when I was making the film.”*

Thomas Vinterberg

co-owner, sent me the book and, frankly, I’d had enough after the first 100 pages and threw it across the room. I called her up and said, What the hell did you want me to read that shit for? As it turned out, she’d had more or less the same reaction. But when you read on and make it through the first half, a greater meaning unfurls and you’re as compelled by the book as you were first repelled. Consequently, I felt no great need to depart from the book and its structure or elaborate on it. In the book, the story about the children is spread out in flashbacks. We preferred to put it in the beginning and progress more or less linearly from there.”

*Because the scenes with the children come first, we never doubt that they are carrying some heavy baggage. It stays with us for the remainder of the film. Perhaps it gives us a basis of sympathy for them, too?*

“Yes, that’s probably how it works. And we need that, because once he’s grown up, Nick, the older brother, is the kind of bastard it’s hard to feel any sympathy for. Probably, that’s why we both had a problem with the first 100 pages of the novel. Mainly we were striving for great simplicity – partly inspired by films like *Control* and the Coen brothers’ *No Country for Old Men* that strip the story of all frills. Every time my co-writer, Tobias Lindholm, and I began to noodle, it didn’t work.”

*To me, the opening – with the boys, the baby, the christening, etc. – feels a lot like the core of the film, along with those scenes that most recall the tenderness and warmth of some of your other films when your characters carve out a world for themselves in the darkness. Novel or no novel, the christening is very much a Vinterberg scene.*

“I guess so, though I never analysed it like that. For me it was about employing dramatic tools to get to the innermost layers of the characters. The two brothers have a kind of alliance. The film’s dramatic engine, I suppose, is how the two brothers reach out to each other but always come up short. They are trying to get back to what they shared when they were kids. If they had found each other in time, they would have been able to help each other out.”

#### **UNCOMMONLY TRUE TO LIFE**

*The film is told in short declarative sentences.*

“Yes. I usually like to meander, so that way the film is clearly different from anything I did before. It is

Jakob Cedergren in *Submarino* Photo: Per ArnesenPeter Plaugborg in *Submarino* Photo: Per ArnesenPatricia Schumann & Jakob Cedergren in *Submarino* Photo: Per Arnesen

far less whimsical than my other films. We were aiming for that from the outset. I never made a film before that I think works best when it just shows a man sitting in an empty room staring at the wall! I must admit that I don't quite understand why that is, based on normal dramatic criteria, but inside we felt that's how it had to be.

"It may have something to do with locating some violent events in the beginning, saddling the characters with some really heavy baggage. Then, when the film becomes tranquil later on, there is room to include that resonance. The book was amazing to work with, because it was a little bit like adapting a slice of reality. The book is thoroughly researched - to the point where I felt was dealing with a document of reality. That gave a natural respect and a special desire to be loyal to the book. Dramatically, it didn't look like much, at least not Nick's story, but there was a substance, a universal something, to it."

*After the dramatic prologue the film quite thoroughly and consistently depicts Nick's eventless everyday life. Why this change of gear?*

"We needed it to make the viewer feel present in this man's life. Hopefully, people won't be bored but feel a sense of presence, in spite of everything. We needed that gravity, since the film is about being at the absolute bottom of life and society."

*To me, the nerve to take a chance on such 'eventless' sequences is a sign of maturity. It's not seen very often, at least not in Danish cinema.*

"I wouldn't have risked it just five years ago, being that ascetic. We had to reach the bottom of this person's experience of life, really make the viewer feel his isolation and his lack of desire to communicate with the world around him. We had to get into his head and into his rhythm. The action in this sequence is constantly almost approaching zero. But only almost."

#### A KIND OF ARROGANCE

*Jakob Cedergren is arguably one of Denmark's best actors. As Nick, he manages to sustain a constant intensity.*

"Yes, he completely masters the minimalist expression we were going for. Once or twice times on the shoot I would urge him to make a stronger statement, but he generally nailed it with his more

restrained version. Like everyone else on the team, he had to go through a process of eliminating the distance between *us* and *them*, trying to overcome the obstacles of our being relatively well-adjusted, youngish people with decent incomes who imagine that we have something to say about life in a really tough, socio-economically deprived environment.

"There is a kind of arrogance and audacity in that, which we had to get over in the rehearsals. Cedergren spent several weeks in the kind of environment we're portraying. Morten Rose, who plays fat Ivan, got into costume and started collecting empty bottles on the streets. And I went to the shelter where Nick is staying, because I'd vowed to spend a night there. I didn't. The shelter's managers told me, 'You really want to take someone's bed? You think that's fair, just so you can be lying there with your film project? Would you really do that?' It may sound romantic, but we somehow had to erase the difference between us and them. And I think Jakob Cedergren pulled that off with distinction."

*How much research did you do?*

"Not as much as someone like Per Fly, who derives the story from the research, would do. I already had my story, and my co-writer and I went to the locations where we would be shooting, places he knows really well because he's been living there his whole life. Also, I have a friend, a former classmate, who did heroin after we left school more than 20 years ago. He's clean now, but he gave us some acute insight into what it's like.

"That gave us a good sense of these environments. It's not like I have to live there for six months or change my identity or anything drastic like that. Research can be overrated. What counts, after all, is the cinematic representation of reality. For example, when I did *The Celebration*, I had never attended a bourgeois dinner party like that before.

"I work best when I let my curiosity rule and try to navigate by listening and observing. You have to be on your toes all the time when you do that. In that sense, I really prefer to be on thin ice rather than on too safe ground." ■

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



Director Thomas Vinterberg Photo: Jan Buus

#### THOMAS VINTERBERG

Born 1969, Denmark. Graduate of the National Film School of Denmark, 1993. Has received a score of awards at international festivals, Student Academy Award nominee for *Last Round* (1993) and *The Boy Who Walked Backwards* (1993). His international breakthrough came with *Festen/The Celebration* (1998), the first film adhering to the Dogme concept, and recipient of Special Prize of the Jury, Cannes. Two English-language films, *It's All About Love* (2003) and *Dear Wendy* (2005) followed and were selected for Sundance. Vinterberg's latest film *Submarino* (2010) is selected for Berlinale's Competition.

#### NIMBUS FILM

Founded 1993 by Birgitte Hald and Bo Ehrhardt. Celebrated for several Dogme films, including Cannes winner *Festen/The Celebration* (Thomas Vinterberg, 1998), and *Mifune* (Søren Kragh-Jacobsen, 1999), triple winner at Berlinale. Other films: *Dark Horse* (2005), selected for Cannes' Un Certain regard; *A Soap* (2006), double-winner at Berlin. *Flame & Citron* (2008), greatest Danish boxoffice success in recent years. 2009-2010: *Valhalla Rising* (Nicolas Winding Refn), *Submarino* (Thomas Vinterberg), and the feature film debuts *The Experiment* (Louise N.D. Friedberg), and *Above the Street Below the Water* (Charlotte Sieling). Nimbus have two films competing at Berlinale 2010: *Submarino* by Thomas Vinterberg, selected for the Competition, and *Sun Shine* by Alice de Champfleury, running in Generation Kplus. More about Nimbus Film at [www.nimbusfilm.dk](http://www.nimbusfilm.dk)



# FAMILY

## ENTANGLEMENTS

**Vibrancy and exploration were key to Pernille Fischer Christensen's work on her third feature, *A Family*, now competing for the Golden Bear in Berlin. No newcomer to the Berlinale, Christensen's feature film debut *A Soap* swept up Berlin's Silver Bear and Best First Feature Award in 2006.**

BY LISELOTTE MICHELSEN

Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans, John Lennon sang. It could be the tagline for *A Family*, one of the two Danish features screening in the main competition at the Berlin Film Festival. The film is directed by Pernille

Fischer Christensen, who won the Silver Bear as well as the Best First Feature Film Award in Berlin in 2006 for her first feature, *A Soap*.

Now Christensen is back with a story that shows the same kind of intimacy as *A Soap* in investigating the emotional bonds between people. While *A Soap* and *Dancers* (2008), her second feature, focused

on two erotically entangled people, *A Family* is a portrait of tangled family ties.

At the heart of the story is the relationship between thirty-something Ditte and her father, Rikard Rheinwald, owner of the well-established Rheinwald's Bakery which has been in the family for three generations. Much of the family's identity rests on the story of the German baker who came to Denmark carrying a bag of grain, his son who made the business successful, and finally Rikard under whose stewardship the bakery has become Purveyor to the Royal Danish Court. With quality-consciousness and pride, Rikard has steadily steered the bakery, securing the continued success of the family business.

*"We approached it like an investigation – an investigation carried by desire. That's how I like to work. I'm not very goal oriented. I like the process."*

*Pernille Fischer Christensen*

When we first meet the family, Ditte, a gallery owner, has just received an offer for a job in New York. She is ecstatic at the prospect, and so is her boyfriend, but fate soon crosses their path. Ditte discovers she is pregnant, a poor fit for a job with lots of travel, and she is feeling the pressure to choose between a family and a career.

Then Rikard falls seriously ill, testing his relationship to his favourite daughter, Ditte, and putting his three other children and his second wife, Sanne, through the wringer so thoroughly that they emerge changed.

Identity is a central theme in *A Family*, as it was in *A Soap* and *Dancers*. Headstrong Rikard wants Ditte to take over the bakery and carry on the Rheinwald brand. Ditte loves her father and has tremendous loyalty to the family business, but she is deeply torn. It's a long way from a gallery to a bakery.

#### LIVING PEOPLE – NOT CHARACTERS

Ditte is a contemporary woman facing classic quandaries, and she is part of a contemporary blended family with young half-siblings and a stepmother who's not much older than herself. Christensen takes hand of all these supporting characters, painting vividly detailed portraits of the other family members and showing them as fully rounded people with likable and unlikable qualities, who act wisely or unwisely but love each other at heart. This unconditional love, a powerful undercurrent running through the film, makes the story essentially life affirming even at its dark moments.

The director found it particularly interesting to explore the surprising idiosyncrasies of her characters, their shortcomings and many loose ends.

"I like it if the characters seem a bit ambiguous and can be interpreted in different ways – that there's no ultimate answer. It's really important to allow the audience to add to the story themselves and have different opinions about these people and why they act the way they do. We listen to what they are saying, we observe their body language and

facial expressions. But how much do we ever really show of what's going on inside? I find it exciting to focus on the unspoken, underlying things that appear in glimpses and cracks."

Intuition and investigation carried by desire were always key to Christensen's work on *A Family*. The film grew out of some journal-like texts she wrote some years ago. Though the film isn't autobiographical, it builds on personal material she recovered through the notes.

"I approached the whole thing in a really disorderly way. I dove head first into the material and tried to get a feel for what was interesting," the director says. "Then Kim Fupz Aakeson, the

loved ones without even noticing. We get the sense that they are warm people and we get to like them, even as we witness the effects of their occasional, unintentionally brutal acts on the people in their lives, Ditte's boyfriend, Rikard's young wife, Ditte's sister and others around them. With tremendous precision and expressive power, Pilou Asbæk, Anne Louise Hassing and Line Kruse, respectively, bring these characters to life as living, breathing people.

The director and the actors spent a long time in rehearsals before the shoot, trying to get a handle on the characters, creating a past for them and picturing earth-shattering events in their characters' lives. As the actors collaborated on improvising their



The Rheinwald patriarch (Jesper Christensen) gives a toast to the newly weds in *A Family*. Photo: Rolf Konow

screenwriter, joined the process and we wrote a number of scenes guided solely by what we would like to see ourselves. We wanted to do a film that's open-ended and affectionate and kind of gives you a hug. It hinges on the feeling that 'We have to want to be there.' We worked with the material for a long time like that, without a plot and making no decisions about who the main character would be and so on. We approached it like an investigation – an investigation carried by desire. That's how I like to work. I'm not very goal oriented. I like the process."

#### INTUITIVE SEARCH

Intuition and investigation also guided Christensen in her work with the actors. Jesper Christensen (*The Bench*, *Manslaughter*) and Lene Maria Christensen (*Terribly Happy*) play the father and daughter (none of the three Christensens are related in real life).

Uncompromising dedication is clearly an attribute that Jesper Christensen shares with his character: to illustrate Rikard's physical decline, the actor lost 16 kilos over six weeks of shooting. We never for a moment doubt that he is Rikard. Lene Maria Christensen plays Ditte in a convincing blend of sensitivity and inner fortitude, reflecting the stubborn willpower that is a central attribute of Jesper Christensen's Rikard. We never doubt the kinship of father and daughter. Both confront life's challenges unsentimentally and with huge integrity – to the point that they sometimes steamroll right over their

characters, Christensen observed their interaction to get a feel for the exciting stories and themes were, then "condensed all that into a stock cube to melt into the script," as she puts it. The thorough preparation created a comfort level between the actors and the director, enabling them to accept the loss of control that Christensen's methods sometimes entail.

"The filming is also marked by a certain amount of intuitive searching, but the direction we're going gets increasingly precise," the director says. "The players don't improvise during the shooting and we know what we want to say in the individual scenes. I try to shoot in sequence as far as possible. In this film there was a practical reason for it, because Jesper Christensen lost weight over the six weeks of shooting. But shooting in sequence also has the advantage for me that I can rewrite upcoming scenes on set. I like to keep working on the script and leaving the doors open. My crew jokes that my motto is, 'We'll see what happens.' But that's how I am. If it rains we need red, and if the sun shines we need blue. We'll figure that out when we get to it."

#### DOCUMENTARY FEEL IN 'SCOPE

*A Family* is shot by Jakob Ihre, a Swedish DP with a background in documentaries. Christensen was impressed by Ihre's work on *Reprise* (2006), a Norwegian feature directed by Joachim Trier, and saw a visual intuition and fragility there that she wanted for her story about the Rheinwald family.

Lene Maria Christensen and Jesper Christensen in *A Family* Photo: Rolf Konow

*“We wanted to do a film that’s open-ended and affectionate and kind of gives you a hug.”*

*Pernille Fischer Christensen*

She considers it a huge quality that *lhre* has worked in the documentary genre.

“Documentary DPs are good at staying on their toes and paying attention. They are nimble, flexible and know how to seize the moment, which is important when you work the way I do,” Christensen says. “I never storyboard. Instead, I spend a lot of time talking with the DP, watching films, building up common references and discussing the things we like.”

While its visual style is naturalistic and documentary inspired, *A Family* is a well-orchestrated feature in widescreen ‘scope. It’s Christensen’s first time working in the format. “We chose widescreen because we wanted room to include the whole family in the frame. We wanted this to enhance the feeling that the characters are tied together and don’t stand apart. Specifically, if someone is in close-up, say, we also see other characters in the frame or hear their voices. Doing this creates a sense of intensity and intimacy about their relations,” she says.

For the director, it was essential to have the film look full of life. For that reason, too, she decided to make it a summer film.

“There is sun, heat, light shimmering and reflecting, moving up and down. We worked with organic materials like suede, leather and textured fabrics. We painted with a big palette, representing Copenhagen as a city full of history and Rheinwald’s house as a warm, safe place, a family cave. Everything is vibrant, everything breathes. It’s all part of what makes *A Family* such a life-affirming story,” Christensen says ■

For further information on *A Family*, see reverse section.



Director Pernille Fischer Christensen Photo: Erik Molberg Hansen

#### PERNILLE FISCHER CHRISTENSEN

Born 1969, Denmark. Graduated in direction from the National Film School of Denmark, 1999. Fischer Christensen’s feature film debut *A Soap* (2006) had its world premiere at the Berlin film festival where it was awarded a Silver Bear – the Jury Grand Prix and the Best Debut Film Award. The film also won the Danish Film Critics Award (Bodil) for Best Film in 2007. Her second feature, the critically acclaimed *Dancers* is followed by *A Family*, selected for Berlinale’s Competition 2010.

#### ZENTROPA

Founded 1992 by director Lars von Trier and producer Peter Aalbæk Jensen. Known for reinvigorated the industry with Dogme 95. Their international breakthrough came with Lars von Trier’s *Breaking the Waves* (1996). Renown continued with Lone Scherfig’s Berlin winner *Italian for Beginners* (2000). Lars von Trier’s *Dancer in the Dark* (2000) received the Palme d’Or. Launched several films by Oscar nominee Susanne Bier, Per Fly and Annette K. Olesen. Company catalogue includes Niels Arden Oplev’s Crystal Bear winner *We Shall Overcome* (2006), and Rotterdam and Göteborg winner Omar Shargawi’s *Go with Peace Jamil\** (2008). Films 2009-2011 (see catalogue reverse section): Jørgen Leth’s *The Erotic Human*, Susanne Bier’s *The Revenge*, Per Fly’s *The Woman Who Dreamt of a Man*, Kristian Levring’s *Manden der ikke ville glemme*, Tublén & Brøndsted’s *Original*, Nikolaj Arcel’s *Sandheden om mænd*, Mikkel Munch-Fals’ *Nothing’s All Bad*, Morten Giese’s *Love & Rage*, and Pernille Fischer Christensen’s *A Family*, the latter selected for Berlinale’s Competition. More about Zentropa at [www.zentropa.dk](http://www.zentropa.dk)

## SCREENWRITER KIM FUPZ AAKESON

Pernille Fischer Christensen co-wrote *A Family* with Kim Fupz Aakeson, one of today’s most productive and in-demand Danish screenwriters. Two films from his hand are competing for the Golden Bear at this year’s Berlin Film Festival. In addition to *A Family*, he penned *En ganske snill mann*, a Norwegian film directed by Hans Petter Moland and starring Stellan Skarsgård.

Aakeson and Christensen have a long-standing collaboration. He also co-wrote the director’s first two features, *A Soap* and *Dancers*. Aakeson describes their collaboration:

“Her work aspires to cut to the bone. If you’re looking for a slam-dunk, a walk in the park, you shouldn’t work with Pernille. She always has a critical eye on the material, constantly examining it to see if something could be done differently and better. Working with her is liberating and interesting. It’s tough in a good way, because you get to do things you didn’t know you had in you.”

Coming from a background as a writer and illustrator, Aakeson is a graduate of the screenwriting programme at the National Film School of Denmark. He has written a string of awardwinning and popular features.

## NEW DANISH PRODUCER DUO

Two producers are bringing us *A Family*: Vinca Wiedemann and Sisse Graum Jørgensen. They have formed a new partnership, with Jørgensen overseeing financial and organisational matters – from financing through production, promotion and sales – and Wiedemann handling the creative aspects, including a dialogue with the director about the creative consequences of technical, financial and organisational decisions. Wiedemann also serves as a sounding board for the director regarding concept development, writing and casting.

Wiedemann previously worked with Pernille Fischer Christensen on the director’s first feature, *A Soap*. Christensen describes their collaboration,

“When Kim Fupz Aakeson and I write a screenplay, we start in what we call the ‘Stupid Room.’ It’s a place where we work intuitively according to what we like and where we deliberately try to avoid doing the dramaturgical math. We want to stay in that room for as long as we can. But, of course, there comes a time when we need to have a plot, a narrative structure, etc. Vinca Wiedemann is our reader outside the ‘Stupid Room.’ She’s the editor. She is in from the beginning, when we talk about things like, Does the story have substance, is it exciting enough for us to stick with for two years? Gradually, turning points and structures emerge and we try out different plot options until the cinematic narrative is in place.”



# POTENTIAL IS WHAT COUNTS

BY LISELOTTE MICHELSEN

**Birger Larsen was immediately drawn to the story of the two brothers Anton and Buller, and the technical challenge it implied, when he heard the idea for *Super Brother* one day when he picked up the phone. At the other end of the line was the screenwriter and producer Åke Sandgren, describing his story.**

Anton, 10, is saddled with way too much responsibility for his family's wellbeing and especially for his older brother, Buller, who has autism. Anton secretly dreams of having a different kind of brother, a strong, assertive brother who could help him stand up to the bullies at school and in general just make life more of a party.

Buller, too, is unhappy about their situation and reacts by fantasising himself into distant galaxies. And he might actually be onto something! One day a mysterious meteor crashes near their house. The meteor turns out to hold unknown powers, and life suddenly takes a radical turn for the two boys and the world around them.

## GENRE HYBRID

As the plot summary implies, *Super Brother* mixes up realism, adventure and science fiction. The opportunities in the screenplay for playing around with different genres was definitely fun, Larsen says, "We set out to operate in the intersection between Ken Loach's *Kess* and Kubrick's and Spielberg's science fiction films. To visualise that, we located the boys' house near an airport runway. The planes roaring over the house mirror the trains that always used to pass right by someone's house or apartment in an old social-realist film. Yet, having a runway literally in your backyard is not particularly realistic, so we immediately establish a universe that looks like it might exist but still belongs to the world of cinema.

"Social realism is enormously important to this film," Larsen says. "Because of this element of





*Super Brother has raised some eyebrows for taking up a subject like autism. In a time, when so many children's films mainly want to entertain with hijinks and thrills, Super Brother stands out as a film that has something on its mind.*

Anton and Buller (played by Lucas Odin Clorius and Victor Kruse Palshøj) watch as powerful forces are unleashed in *Super Brother* **Photo:** Erik Aavatsmark



*Super Brother* **Photo:** Erik Aavatsmark

social realism, the meteor landing seems not so much magic as real. The meteor exists right there, in the kids' dreary and not very fun everyday life. We specifically did not want to make a kind of Harry Potter world where a miracle waits around every corner. Life is not like that for Anton and Buller - these kids are really fighting an uphill battle."

#### **RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY**

*Super Brother* has raised some eyebrows for taking up a subject like autism. In a time, when so many children's films mainly want to entertain with hijinks and thrills, *Super Brother* stands out as a film that has something on its mind.

"I thought it was high time to come out with something meaningful," Larsen says, mentioning some Danish children's and teen films that successfully combine entertainment with a shot of vitamins, among them *Gummi-Tarzan*, *Buster's World*, *Miracle*, *Karla's World* and *Fighter*, as well as two Swedish films, *Let the Right One In* and *Flickan* and from the US, *E.T.*, and *Up*.

"I want to tell a story the whole family can get

together and talk about afterwards,” Larsen says. As mentioned, the theme of two brothers immediately hooked him. “My older brother and I are semi-twins – that is, we’re almost the same age – and we fought a lot, but we also had a lot fun together. My own boys are nine and 13, and I thought this was a story I would like to give my kids, to say, You may fight and hate each other, but don’t make it more serious than it is. Respect each other as siblings and be friends and help each other out. It’s okay to argue – but be constructive about it. The way I see it, *Super Brother* is not so much about disorders or impairment as about differences – about respecting each other’s differences and seeing the potential in each other.”

Another central point of the film is how the boy’s mother lays way too much responsibility on Anton, Larsen says.

“You can defend the mother in *Super Brother* by saying she is in a really tough situation. But, we’re all in tough situations one way or another. Maybe Mother is upset about something, but that doesn’t mean the kids should put up with it. She has no right to expect her youngest son to help out so much with his big brother. She shouldn’t expect the kid brother to step in and be the man in the family. A child isn’t your partner. The adult should lead the way and bear the responsibility of parenting. Anything else is just excuses.”

#### WORKING WITH KIDS

The director is acutely aware of bearing the responsibility for his young actors. His two leads are very convincingly played by first-time actors Lucas Clorius and Victor Kruse Palshøj, 11 and 14. As Larsen sees it, the big difference between working with kids and grownups is in the casting. “I spend a huge amount of time selecting the children. It’s a tough process. If we start principal photography and the kids don’t feel they can deliver what’s asked of them – plus a bit more – they will be enormously sorry and feel they’re not living up

to what they should be living up to. So before we get to that point, we do a ton of rehearsals where they have to be present the whole day and act with other people, including grownup actors. We have to see if the kids can take a break without forgetting their lines – or, when they think they’ve forgotten their lines, if they can go back and remember them again. What happens if they suddenly have to do something differently from before? Do they have the discipline it takes? If not, they will feel really lousy once we start the actual shooting.”

“Also, I’m very attentive to their parent situation,” Larsen says. “Are the parents divorced or not? We need parents who will back the child up. It’s not just the child who’s going to work, it’s the whole family. Sometimes the kids will have done a scene that’s really tough, maybe they had to cry. Then I contact the parents and tell them what happened, that there might be reaction, so they can talk about it. And they can call me anytime.

“What child actors are thrown into is so unique, especially once the film opens. Suddenly they are famous, everyone recognises them – and then, just as suddenly, they’re not famous anymore. Very few kids can handle that rollercoaster ride. I help as much as I can, both the kids and their parents, with the experience I have from directing other children’s films and having been a child actor myself. The rollercoaster ride is just something you have to go through. There are fun things and bad things about it – hopefully, more fun things than bad. But there comes a time when most of the fun is over. Then there’s a new film out with new kids who become famous. So, throughout the whole process, from casting to long after the film opens, it’s enormously important that the kids get the support they need from the grownups in their lives.” ■

For further information on *Super Brother*, see catalogue in reverse section.



Director Birger Larsen Photo: Erik Aavatsmark

#### BIRGER LARSEN

Born 1961, Denmark. Director and screenwriter. Made his feature film debut with the successful and critically acclaimed *Dance of the Polar Bears* (1990), winner UNICEF Special Mention at Berlinale’s Generation in 1991. *The Big Dipper* (1992), Larsen’s second feature film. Oscar nominee for the short fiction »Sweathearts« (1996). Contributed episodes to TV-series, including the Emmy Awarded *Nikolaj & Julie* (2003). Fourth feature film »*Super Brother*« (2009), selected for Berlinale’s Generation Kplus.

#### NORDISK FILM

Founded 1906. Produced high quality films for a worldwide market during the silent era. Today part of the Egmont media group. Co-owner of A.Film and from 2008 co-owner of Zentropa. Producers of the popular *Olsen Gang*-series (1960-to present day) and Oscar winner *Babette’s Feast* (Gabriel Axel, 1987). Their catalogue from 2000 onwards embraces works by Nils Malmros, Paprika Steen, Christoffer Boe, Jacob Thuesen, Asger Leth, Niels Arden Oplev and Birger Larsen whose *Super Brother* (2009) is selected for Berlinale’s Generation. Releases 2010: *Karla and Jonas* (Charlotte Sachs Bostrup), *Therapy* (Kenneth Kainz), *Olsen Gang Gets Polished* (Jørgen Lerdam) and *R* (Michael Noer & Tobias Lindholm), the latter selected for Rotterdam and Göteborg 2010. About these films, see the catalogue in reverse section. More about Nordisk Film at [www.nordiskfilm.com](http://www.nordiskfilm.com)

## DANISH CHILDREN & YOUTH FILMS / BERLINALE GENERATION



“There’s always something you are good at. You’ve got to find out what it is.” *Rubber Tarzan*

Ivan (Alex Svanbjerg), the anti-hero of *Rubber Tarzan* Photo: John Johansen

Audiences and juries of Berlinale’s Generation have had a keen eye for Danish films for children and young people over the decades. Here are the Danish winners:

- 2009 Max Embarrassing, Lotte Svendsen
- 2007 Having a Brother, Esben Toft Jacobsen (short film)
- 2006 We Shall Overcome, Niels Arden Oplev
- 2003 The Boy who Wanted to be a Bear, Jannik Hastrup
- 2003 Wallah Be, Pia Bovin
- 2002 Send More Candy, Cæcilia Holbek Trier
- 2002 Catch That Girl, Hans Fabian Wullenweber
- 2000 Going Back Home, Michael W. Horsten (short film)
- 1999 Teis & Nico, Henrik Ruben Genz (short film)
- 1998 Hands Up! Morten Henriksen (short film)
- 1996 The Flyer, Aage Rais
- 1992 The Hideaway, Nils Gråbøl
- 1991 Dance of the Polar Bears, Birger Larsen
- 1990 Me and Mama Mia, Erik Clausen
- 1990 A World of Difference, Leif Magnusson
- 1989 Shower of Gold, Søren Kragh-Jacobsen
- 1985 The World of Buster, Bille August
- 1984 The Boy Who Disappeared, Ebbe Nyvold
- 1981 Rubber Tarzan, Søren Kragh-Jacobsen

**DOING  
TIME  
AIN'T  
COOL**



**No Birdman of Alcatraz or evil prison guard made it into the Danish prison film *R* – capital R, as in Realism. Kim Skotte talks to the director duo Michael Noer and Tobias Lindholm about their debuting feature film *R*.**

BY KIM SKOTTE

Only when the first door behind you is securely shut, the next door is opened.

That's what it's like to move through a prison. This claustrophobic feeling – like being inside a flood lock, enclosed by steel doors at either end – was a touchstone for the two filmmakers Michael Noer and Tobias Lindholm when they set out to make a prison film that would look like no other. *R* would be a prison film without the genre's usual clichés, with a dramatic core encapsulating the experience of what it's *really* like to be behind bars, to be deprived of your freedom for months and years.

A vital documentary wave has been washing through Danish cinema in recent years and Michael Noer is one of the movement's most thrilling young filmmakers. In *R*, he and his co-director, screenwriter Tobias Lindholm, endeavour to transfer the energy of documentaries and their interest in real life to the world of cinema.

"We're both extremely fascinated by real life and much less fascinated by lies and entertainment," they say.

The two filmmakers met when Noer was working on *Hawaii*, a film set far from any holiday paradise, in Copenhagen's oldest porn theatre, Hawaii Bio. Hitting a block, Noer remembered hearing about a young writer said to be both skilled and pleasant. His collaboration with Lindholm turned out to be so successful that they decided to resume their partnership once Lindholm graduated from the National Film School of Denmark, and *R* is the result.

#### DOGMA RULES BEHIND BARS

"We were burning to do a film about the criminal underworld, a film that observed without romanticising like gangster films do," the director duo says. "A Tarantino gangster is exciting, but it's never long before a real gangster on the street starts mimicking either him, or Scarface. Like so many criminals, people who imitate Scarface are full of clichés. We wanted to do something with a more cynical eye, a film saying, No, it's not particularly great to be a strong prisoner or a weak prisoner. Doing time isn't cool. And this is what it's like."

To create a consistent documentary fiction, Noer and Lindholm laid down some Dogme-like rules. Everything had to be as lifelike as possible. And so, when the gloomy old state prison in Horsens was abandoned and the prisoners transferred to a new hi-tech penal facility, the film crew moved into the old prison, where so many prisoners have served time since 1872.

Moreover, they decided to set the entire film inside the prison. The production itself would literally be contained, which jived well with the film's tight financial restrictions. *R* was made under New Danish Screen, the DFI fund whose two pillars are innovation and small budgets.

#### AMBASSADOR OF CRIME

The initial germ for the concept sprang from a correspondence Lindholm was having.

"A friend of mine was convicted on drug charges and sentenced to four to five years in prison," Lindholm says. "We started corresponding while he was held at Police Headquarters, the toughest solitary confinement facility in Denmark."

"I started thinking about what Danish prison films had been made before and I couldn't really come up with a lot. Then I heard that Horsens State Prison was being closed down and I thought, *Shit!* There's a whole empty prison sitting around! Shouldn't we do something?"

Through a mutual friend, Lindholm met Roland Møller, a real tough guy who had done time in Horsens. Lindholm's graduation project at the National Film School was a prison story, a rough sketch for the project that has now become *R*. Møller ended up playing a character in the film, a strong con known as The Mason, while also serving as the two filmmakers' 'expert consultant' on prison life.

"He became so to speak an ambassador of crime," the director duo says. "He could tell us what someone would do or not do. He was always pointing out what the criminal logic dictated."

Noer has worked in both fiction films and documentaries, but no matter the genre, the potential of real life is what grabs him. That's where the two filmmakers come together.

"Tobias is a pretty atypical screenwriter," Noer says. "He's not content to sit in his garret nursing his fantasies. He wants to go into the real world. As a documentary filmmaker I'm always restricted by real-life conditions, and Tobias looks at things the same way. We're interested in the documentary conditions as a framework. We would rather listen than ask questions and we're both observers. We strive to be servants of reality."

#### SIX KINDER EGGS IN YOUR RECTUM IS WORTH MORE THAN 10 TIRED CLICHÉS

*R*'s story about a new arrival, a weak convict caught between two groups of strong prisoners, comes off as remarkably authentic down to the smallest detail. "We watched a lot of prison films, and there were

so many things we wanted to do differently. We had to have a showdown with the clichés," the director duo says.

In *R* you will look in vain for the Birdman, the Evil Prison Guard and other stock characters of prison films.

"A big part of the story is inspired by stories Roland Møller told us or stories we heard from other ex-cons from Horsens, strong and weak prisoners alike," the director duo says.

"When we did the story of someone smuggling in hashish in the plastic capsules from hollow Kinder Surprise chocolate eggs, stuffing them in condoms and sending them down the toilet waste pipe, that really happened. It was shown and demonstrated to our actors by people who used to do that."

*Isn't it too constricting to deal with real life as rigidly as you do? Normally, you would be paying attention to what the narrative arc, and not just authenticity, demands of a story?*

"You might think so, but I actually think it was a

*"We're both extremely fascinated by real life and much less fascinated by lies and entertainment."*

*The director duo Noer and Lindholm*

gift," Lindholm says. When the two directors started writing the screenplay, their central character wasn't even a person but 'The Castle,' the old prison that still towers over the town of Horsens.

"Plus, it gave us an endless universe of details. People in prison have a lot of time to think, so everything has been thought through. I'm convinced my own ideas would not have been nearly as good," Lindholm says.

"For example, it is unlikely Tobias would have thought a prisoner had room up his rectum for six Kinder eggs – Kinder eggs, no less, the kind kids love! Plastic eggs with a surprise toy inside, filled with hash instead and stuffed up your rectum. That may not be very exotic, but, all in all, real life is still pretty weird!



Two inmates (Dulfi Al-Jabouri and Pilou Asbæk) in *R* Photo: Magnus Nordenhof Jønck



The director duo Michael Noer & Tobias Lindholm Photo: Kenneth Nguyen

**MICHAEL NOER**

Born 1978, Denmark. Graduated from the National Film School of Denmark, 2003. Has several awardwinning documentary films to his credit. *Vesterbro* (2007): screened at numerous international festivals including CPH:DOX, where it won a Special Mention. *Doxwise Diary* (2008 – www.doxwise.dk) stirred international media attention when it was released on MySpaceTV. *The Wild Hearts* (2008) was selected for the Dox Award competition at CPH:DOX. Co-director of *R* (2010), a feature film debut selected for competition at Rotterdam and Göteborg 2010.

**TOBIAS LINDHOLM**

Born 1977, Denmark. Screenwriter graduate from the National Film School of Denmark, 2007. Wrote the screenplay for the short film *Hawaii* (2006), directed by Michael Noer. Written episodes for the DR TV-series' *Sommer* (2007) and *Borgen* (2009/2010). Lindholm wrote the screenplay for Thomas Vinterberg's *Submarino* (2010, Berlinale Competition) and is writing a new Vinterberg film. *R* is a writer-director collaboration between Tobias Lindholm and Michael Noer and marks their feature film debut as directors of fiction.

**NORDISK FILM** See page 11

“Then it would have been a different kind of film than the one we wanted to make. There is a lot of talk in politics these days about tougher prison sentences. But how many people really know what serving time in prison is like? People may read somewhere that it’s a farmhouse holiday with people sitting around smoking hash all day. But when you get entry into this universe, you realise prison is anything but a farmhouse holiday. It looks vicious. And it is.”

**CLAUSTROPHOBIA MAKES FOR GOOD ECONOMY**

“When we discussed the story, we were always going, Is the motive powerful enough? Do we have the necessary sympathy for a character? Is this scene dramatic enough? Those are constructive things to discuss.”

“We very quickly decided to have the entire film take place in prison. We didn’t have a lot of money, but doing so also stoked the claustrophobia.” Shooting entirely inside the prison became the film’s production concept.

*Has Danish film accumulated experience from Dogme 95 that makes it possible to think creatively with limited funds instead of just thinking, low budgets suck?*

“Yes, you could say that,” the director duo says. “A lot of Danish filmmakers have lost the inspiration from Dogme 95, but we really wanted to stand on the shoulders of the production sensibility of the first Dogme films. If your production concept is good, you can tell a good story with very simple means. It can give you a clarity of vision that’s a lot like making a documentary.”

Apart from Pilou Asbæk, who delivers a powerful performance in the lead, the film features a cast of non-actors. Most are ex-cons and prison guards

from the area, and of course they come cheaper than hiring big stars. The budget was so small that they simply could not afford to move a lot of people from Copenhagen to Horsens, in Jutland. So they had to find interesting non-actors who lived close enough that they could bike to the prison. Or who thought being in the film was so interesting that they were willing to pay their own way. A crowd of more than 200 people showed up for the casting call. Roughly 70 of them turned out to have a past on one side or the other of the bars at Horsens State Prison. In one stroke, a substantial measure of authenticity fleshed out the film’s universe.

**TURNING FILM PRODUCTION UPSIDE DOWN**

“If we had had more money, we might not have known what to use it for, in a sense. We didn’t want to work with a bigger crew. We could have made five features like this for what it costs to make one regular Danish film. Working with a production concept like ours is pretty much virgin soil,” Lindholm says.

While the film was still on the drawing board, it had a minimum budget of 25,000 euros. That’s what Lindholm would get if he sold his coop apartment. If they hadn’t received a production subsidy, they would have made the film with the money from the apartment. Noer and Lindholm had two plans: one with money and one without.

“The point is that we *could* have done it the other way. It wouldn’t have looked like the film we have now, but we could have pulled it off,” the filmmakers say ■

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



*“We wanted to do something with a more cynical eye, a film saying, No, it’s not particularly great to be a strong prisoner or a weak prisoner. Doing time isn’t cool. And this is what it’s like.”* The director duo Michael Noer and Tobias Lindholm

The protagonist and inmate (Pilou Asbæk) of *R* Photo: Magnus Nordenhof Jønc



Telling his story of loss, fear and hope is one of the youths of Pristina in *Out of Love* Photo: Marek Septimus Wieser

# SHARED MEMORIES

***Out of Love*, the first documentary by award-winning fiction director Birgitte Stærmosé, is about the lives of Kosovar-Albanian street kids in Pristina. Roaming the richly atmospheric locations of Stærmosé's Pristina, they recite monologues about their lives, memories and the challenges they face.**

In partnership with a local filmmaker Kaltrina Krasniqi, Stærmosé made interviews with 11 street kids. The interviews were based on a far-ranging list of questions about the kids' every day concerns, as well as their memories about war. "The stories that are in the film are the stories they told us. Precisely because they are kids, their memories are really interesting. Children tend to notice other things than grownups do. They don't have the same filters. They just see something and register it. Their memories were a way to get some images of a war I hadn't experienced. Also, it was a way to get other more interesting images, than we usually get from the news media," says Stærmosé.

"I didn't want the film to be about the children's personal situations, and I definitely did not want to make it about feeling sorry for them. This process involved finding ways to go against the sense of pity these kids initially evoke in you. Pity is one way of relating to them - it's a way of protecting yourself. Of course, you feel sorry for them and they are victims, but I didn't see the point in making a film about that. I wanted the film to deal with the human aspects of what was going on inside of them."

"The monologues also help shatter the impression that the children were telling their own private stories. I was never interested in presenting any one child's personal experience in the film. What I was interested in was their shared experience and their shared situation. Everyone is telling everyone's story. They have a shared history, and their stories have a lot of characteristics in common."

*The above quotes are excerpts from the article Observation to Construction, by Eva Novrup Redvall,*

*in the DFI-magazine FILM #67 Amsterdam [www.dfi.dk/english/film-magazine](http://www.dfi.dk/english/film-magazine)*

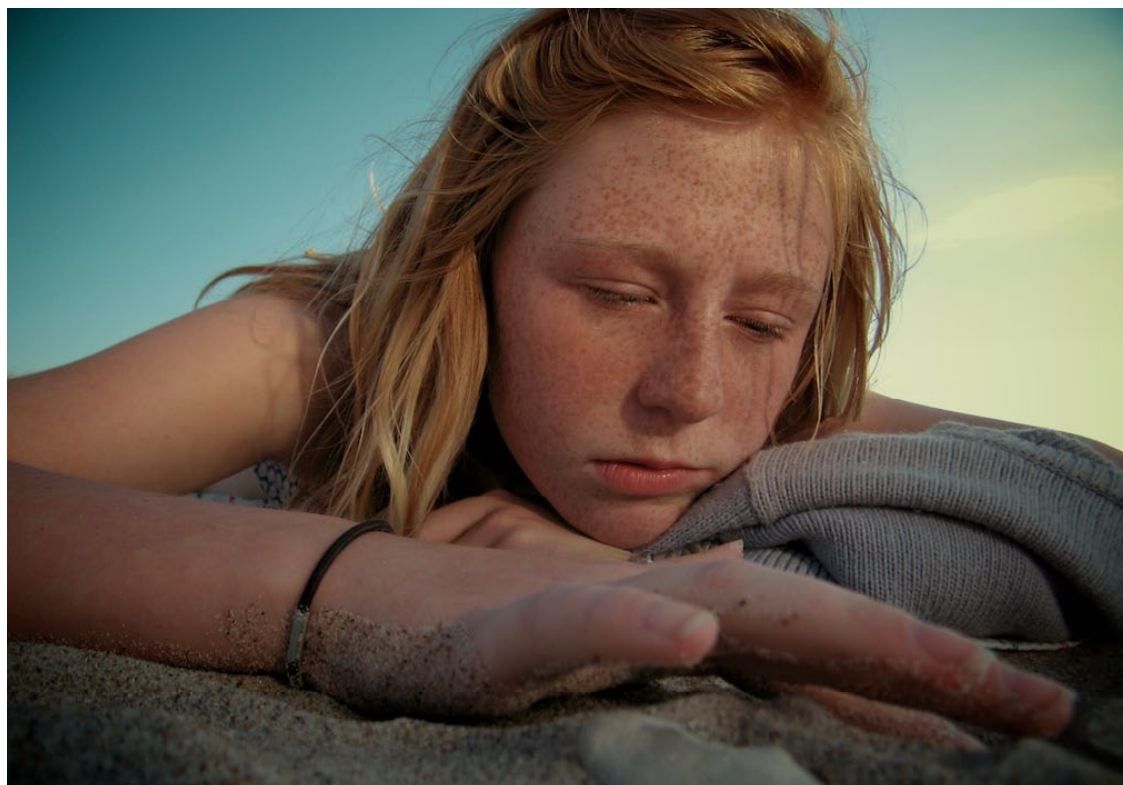
*For more information on Ønskebørn/Out of Love, refer to catalogue in reverse section.*



Photo: Jan Buus

## **BIRGITTE STÆRMOSÉ**

Born 1963, Denmark. M.F.A. in Film and Media Arts from Temple University in Philadelphia. Her previous work includes the award-winning short films *Now, Look at Me* (2001), *Small Avalanches* (2003), *Letters from Denmark* (2006), *Principles of Attraction* (2006) and *Sophie* (2006). *Small Avalanches* was nominated for the UIP Prize for Best European Short at the European Film Awards. *Sophie* was screened in competition at Sundance, selected for New Directors/New Films and awarded the ARTE Prize. Stærmosé's documentary *Out of Love* won the UIP Prize at Rotterdam and is selected for the Berlinale Generation. 2010: in production with her feature film debut *Dagen derpå/The Morning After*.



13-year-old Nadja (Gabriella Søndergaard) drawing in the sand and feeling alone in *Sun Shine* Photo: Marek Septimus Wieser

# ADOLESCENT LONELINESS

**Adolescence is not an easy time, as legs grow long and hormones rage, even less so if you're like Nadja, the 13-year-old protagonist of Alice de Champfleury's *Sun Shine*, all by yourself on a beach full of happy families and you miss having a dad.**

BY FREJA DAM

In Alice de Champfleury's *Sun Shine*, Nadja, who is 13, whiles away her summer vacation lazing on the beach. Fascinated by a small, perfect-looking family, she starts spying on them. A boy she meets, Eskild, and she lets him in on her voyeuristic project, which gradually grows more extreme.

"It's a story of longing and loneliness in adolescence," the director says. "In puberty, we go through a huge mental and physical transformation, triggering many new and unfamiliar feelings that are hard to share with others. "Adolescence is an age of huge paradoxes. You're in a no man's land between childhood and adulthood. Maybe your legs suddenly grow really long and your body is out of whack in a way that feels inhibiting. Your feelings come out as impulses, veering from one extreme to another. It's this imbalance I wanted to describe in *Sun Shine*," de Champfleury says.

## PALE AND VULNERABLE

*Sun Shine* takes place during summer vacation – a wonderful time of year for most people, the director says, but especially hard to endure for someone like Nadja who is already having a hard time.

"Summer vacation is when families spend time together and you're expected to have a good time. Feeling bad is worse when the sun is shining and everyone else is having fun," de Champfleury says. The director also chose summer as a frame for the story to underscore the peculiar vulnerability of adolescents.

"In summer you're physically exposed, because you walk around without a lot of clothes on. You're in touch with your body and your senses in an entirely different way than in winter. I deliberately did not have my young actors be tanned but chose to keep their skin pale, flush and translucent, in contrast to the strong sun and lush woods, to highlight their sensuality and vulnerability."

## DEPICTING A STATE OF FLUX

As de Champfleury sees it, summer vacation, like adolescence, is a temporary state where the everyday is left behind, time ceases to exist and a void emerges. Depicting that state was important to the director.

"When you're 13, full of longing and loss, it can seem like a very lonely and confining state to be in. I have a crystal clear memory of that state from my own adolescence. The story springs from that state, that feeling – they are the main things I wanted to express. My films always hinge on the characters' emotional development. In *Sun Shine* I wanted to try and do something with mental states by depicting an isolated 13-year-old girl, longing and fantasizing."

## YEARNING FOR A FAMILY

*Sun Shine* shows Nadja missing a father. Her mother she keeps at arm's length, while imagining that a father is the piece that's missing from her life. To de Champfleury, adolescence is the opening of the great search for identity.

"You get a new consciousness and start defining yourself in a new way. It's the time when you first start distancing yourself from your parents and seek an independent identity, while you more than ever need to feel your parents' support. It can be hard for a teenager to create the necessary distance, if there is no one to distance herself from," the director says.

"The film is also a lot about being in or out of contact. Nadja has no real contact with her mother, the world around her or even herself. She comes in contact with a boy but fails to keep it. The film does not end on an up-note, though she does manage to poke a tiny hole in her shell. There's a small opening and a chance that she will grow."

## CHILDHOOD – SOMETHING YOU CARRY INSIDE

De Champfleury previously made *Ernst*, an animated film about a small boy and his mother. Her last short, *The Caravan*, is about a nine-year-old boy. But she does not consider her films to be actual children's films.

"I'm not out to make films for children but films about childhood and, in this case, the grey zone beyond it. I'm happy if my films speak to children, but it's not something I think about when I write. I immerse myself in my characters, whether they are 5, 13 or 20 years old, and always work from my own personal material. Childhood is an exciting field, because it's something you carry inside your whole life. It's when the first cornerstones of your personality are laid, and the first unforgettable steps and losses are experienced." ■

For further information on *Sun Shine*, refer to catalogue in reverse section.



Photo: Fritz Best

## ALICE DE CHAMPFLUERY

Born 1967, French Guyana. Resident of Denmark since 1980. Illustrator for magazines and children's books. Graduated as animation director at the National Film School of Denmark, 1998. Her film credits include the TV-series »Ernst« and several short films, all revolving around the theme of childhood. Awards include Bratislava's Prix Danube, 1999, and Montevideo Divercine's Mencion.

NIMBUS FILM See page 5





*“You get a new consciousness and start defining yourself in a new way. It’s the time when you first start distancing yourself from your parents (...), while you more than ever need to feel your parents’ support. It can be hard for a teenager to create the necessary distance, if there is no one to distance herself from.”* Alice de Champfleury on adolescence



*“In Megaheavy my own background as an immigrant has been transformed into a nerd girl with glasses, from Bornholm. Through the character of Jolly I have been able to tell of my own childhood, my own sexuality and relationship to my parents and friends without having it be about skin colour or race.” Fenar Ahmad*

# THE FIRST TIME

**After three films that drew on his own experiences as a refugee in Denmark, Fenar Ahmad thought it was time for something different. Even so, the emerging director's new film – about a 13-year-old girl in love – is less of a stretch for him than it might appear.**

BY LOUISE SKOV ANDERSEN

“At least now no one can accuse me of ignoring my background,” Fenar Ahmad says. That’s more or less what the talented young director thought when his third film, *The Perfect Muslim*, was ready to meet its audience in 2009. A sociological study of how Muslims are expected to behave to be considered perfect in Danish eyes, this documentary chronicles the director’s encounter with a culture he is now part of himself, having arrived in Denmark at age five as an Iraqi refugee. He previously explored the same theme in two award-winning films, *Nice to Meet You* and *Mesopotamia*. Now it was time to try something different.

“At the time I felt I had had my catharsis. I had picked these things up, turned them over and now felt I had moved on. Looking inside doesn’t stay interesting,” Ahmad says.

## AN OUTSIDER'S STORY

For a filmmaker who is a former refugee named Ahmad, it seems like a no-brainer to make political films. The 28-year-old director has understandably been wary of being slapped with the ‘political filmmaker’ label.

“Of course,” he says. “I have a pretty distinct story. I’m a refugee and my name alone is enough to imply a political angle. So I felt like holding back on my own story a bit.”

Even so, Ahmad’s personal history isn’t entirely out of the picture. He may not be a bespectacled teenage girl or come from the tiny Baltic island of Bornholm, like *Megaheavy*’s protagonist, but he can easily relate to the story of growing up an outsider.

“In *Megaheavy* my own background as an immigrant has been transformed into a nerd girl with glasses, from Bornholm,” he says. “Through the character of Jolly I have been able to tell of my own childhood, my own sexuality and relationship to my parents and friends without having it be about skin colour or race.”

## AESTHETIC CHOICES

*Megaheavy* is set on a Polaroid-hued Bornholm in the early 1980s. If you’re over 25 you’ll have no trouble recognising the ‘ugly decade.’ Jolly listens to heavy metal tapes on her Walkman. Her mother has a hand-

rolled cigarette between her lips and a chunk of shrimp cocktail at the end of her fork. The young man next door, who helps Jolly lose her virginity, scoots around the island on a classic Puch VZ50 moped. Nothing is left to chance, visually or story-wise.

“Aesthetics is incredibly important to me. There’s a point to every shot, everything is analysable. Or, of course, you can just enjoy the view,” the director says.

The story of Jolly and her first love is Ahmad’s midway film at Copenhagen’s alternative Super16 film school, which has been turning out directing and producing talent for the Danish film industry since 1999. Before Super16, Ahmad picked up some skills at the DFI’s Film Workshop, and he is among the budding stars who have received grants from the New Danish Screen talent-development fund. He acknowledges his debt to the availability of talent-development programmes in Denmark.

“I would never have been able to start making films without them,” he says. “The National Film School seemed like a distant planet to me. In my head it was just as hard to become a film director as an astronaut. It’s meant everything to me that someone was there to help me get started.” ■

*For further information about Megaheavy, see catalogue in the reverse section.*



Photo: Tobias Selnaes Markussen

## FENAR AHMAD

Born 1981, Czechoslovakia. Ahmad came to Denmark in 1986 as an Iraqi refugee. In 2004 he began making documentaries, and in 2007 he joined the film collective Super16. Ahmad’s film *Mesopotamia* (2008) won the First Prize Official Short Competition at the Gulf Film Festival. His documentary *Nice to Meet You* (2006) was an awardwinner at the Danish film festival Salaam.dk. *Megaheavy* (2010) is selected for Berlinale’s Generation 14plus.

## BEOFILM

Founded 2002 by Morten Revsgaard Frederiksen and Peter Hyldahl. Titles: *Squat 69*, selected for CPH:DOX, is the company’s first feature-length production. Short fiction: *Arabesque to a Record by Gainsbourg* (2006), the documentary *Nice to Meet You* (2006), awardwinner at Salaam DK.

## SHOUTING COW PRODUCTIONS

Founded 2003 by producer Thomas Yong in 2003. Produces feature films, shorts & documentaries and music videos. Titles include *Basic Emotions* (20004), *Color of Doubt* (2005), *You are Best* (2008). Feature film: US production of *Tie a Yellow Ribbon* (2007) won over 4 international awards for Best Film.

Megaheavy Photo: Thomas Yong

# MUSIC FROM THE SOUL

Siri Melchior's *Whistleless*, a short animated film for pre-schoolers, is a colourful fable bursting with music and joy – about a poor little bird who can't whistle, but learns how once he stops listening to everyone's well-meant advice.



Billedtekst Titel Photo: Fotograf

BY FREJA DAM

A songbird that can't whistle? No way! But sure enough, try as he might, Fløjteløs the eponymous avian hero of Siri Melchior's animated short, just can't figure out how to whistle. Flittering around a vibrantly colourful city alive with music, the little bird tries to learn how from a small girl, a man in the shower, a tiger, even a policeman with his whistle. All to no avail, until finally, Fløjteløs flies high up into the sky, fills his lungs with air and, lo and behold, a beautiful tune comes out his beak.

The frustration of not being able to do something everyone else masters – whether it's whistling or riding a bicycle – is a feeling most children will recognise, the director says.

"When everyone else is able to do something you can't do, you feel left out. Maybe your big brother knows how to do something and is always trying to teach you how. That can be so annoying. The film's message is: if you stick with it, eventually you'll learn," she says.

## LEARNING IN YOUR OWN WAY

Fløjteløs does learn how to whistle, but only after he stops listening to everyone's advice and finds the melody within.

"In the end, he decides to believe in himself. He just takes an enormous breath and belts it out. At last he is able to whistle – because he's doing it in his own way," Melchior says.

"Before he gets there, he tries to cheat by stealing a policeman's whistle – it's tempting to cheat when you have to learn something that's a bit difficult. But then he realises that's not the way to go. Stealing a whistle isn't the same as really whistling."

## MUSIC, JOY & POTATO PRINTS

Even though the little bird is sad that he can't whistle, Melchior says her film is mainly about music and joy, giving kids a chance to enjoy music, colour and fun characters.

"It's a story for two-to-four-year-olds. It's a colourful and joyful film about music and beauty. When the bird learns how to whistle, it sounds really beautiful," Melchior says. "The film is a lot about just enjoying the music. When my own daughter, who is two and a half, watches the film, she tries to move like the policeman. When she looks at the bird, she blows air out her mouth and tries to whistle. She laughs at things like when the man in the shower falls down.

*"When everyone else is able to do something you can't do, you feel left out. (...) That can be so annoying. The film's message is: if you stick with it, eventually you'll learn."* Siri Melchior

Small children love the simple things.

"Apart from that, I hope kids will think that, if the bird can learn how to whistle, they too can learn to do whatever they want."

Melchior created the film's naïve style by scanning potato prints into the computer and drawing on top of them in Flash.

"I made many different prints of the same characters to make them more animate" Melchior says. "There's a limit to how advanced the animation can be when you use potato prints. The style is very graphic and a little 1950's inspired." ■

For further information about *Whistleless*, see catalogue in reverse section.



## SIRI MELCHIOR

Born 1971, Copenhagen. Graduate in animation from the Royal College of Art, London, 1999, in graphic design from Danmarks Designskole, 1995 and received her B.A. in Art History from Copenhagen University, 1991. Melchior is noted for her award-winning animated films: *The Dog Who was a Cat Inside* (2002) and *Passport* (1999), both were in the running for a Cartoon d'Or. Together with two colleagues from the Royal College, she created the animation company Trunk Studio, producing works for Channel 4, BBC Scotland, MTV, Domino Records and Virgin. Melchior's short animation *Whistleless* is selected for Berlinale's Generation.

## DANSK TEGNEFILM

Denmark's grand master of animation Jannik Hastrup founded the company Dansk Tegnefilm in 1976. Producer Marie Bro joined him in 1985. Their successful collaboration led to a partnership in 1996. Throughout the years the company has maintained its financial independency. It is both the aim and the strength of the company to produce original, stories, giving wings to fantasy and creating pictures of the unreal found in the real world. The main focus is on animated quality films for children and the films include many critical acclaimed and award-winning features, such as *Samson & Sally* (1984), *War of the Birds* (1990), *Cirkeline – Mice and Romance* (2000), *The Boy who wanted to be a Bear* (2003).



With the very best intentions, Gert (Ellen Hillingsø), the Danish matron of the children's home in Greenland, keeps a tight grip on one of her children in *The Experiment* Photo: Christian Geisnæs

# THE ANGUISH OF LOOKING BACK

Louise Friedberg's debut feature *The Experiment* (working title) shines a light on a dark chapter of Danish history. Denmark, today a small, relatively peaceful country with an international reputation as a climate-friendly nation of bicyclists, until 1953 was a colonial power wielding its might to commit state-sanctioned abuse against Greenlandic children.

BY SOPHIE ENGBERG SONNE

In the late 1940s, Greenland was impoverished and ravaged by disease. During World War II, the Allies had exploited Greenland's strategic location in the mid-Atlantic, and now



The Experiment Photo: Christian Geisnæs

the United States and the UN were pressuring Denmark to whip Greenland into shape and transform it from an underdeveloped society of hunters and fishers into a functioning welfare state.

One result of this was that Denmark in the early 1950s enrolled 22 Greenlandic children in a pilot project. The children were taken from their homes and shipped to Denmark where they stayed with Danish foster families for a year to be ‘Danified,’ before they were once again returned to their homeland. The idea was that they would serve as well-educated elite children and role models in the ‘new Greenland.’ When the children returned home, however, they had lost their language, their culture and their family. The project was a failure and the children were the losers.

It is their story the Danish director Louise Friedberg is telling in her first feature, *The Experiment*.

#### THE CONCEPT OF THE ‘STRANGER’ HASN’T CHANGED

Friedberg graduated from the National Film School of Denmark in 2005 with her graduation film *The Departure*, which shortly after won the Nordic Presentation competition. Before film school, Friedberg had worked as a scripter and an assistant director on several film and TV productions, including the Danish Broadcasting Corporation’s successful drama series *The Eagle*.

Friedberg’s first non-student production in her own name was *Blood Sisters* (2006), a short film about two seven-year-old girls in a bloody struggle to save their friendship. *Blood Sisters* was selected for the Berlin Film Festival’s Generation section and went on to win awards in Rome, Sydney, Melbourne, Sao Paulo and Odense. Choosing a group of Greenlandic children as the subject of her first feature is no coincidence, as Friedberg sees it,

“I’ve always worked in the subject of children and grownups, both in my graduation film and my short film. In this case, I was floored by the story’s inherent abuse,” Friedberg says. The story is more than a relic from a distant past, she adds.

“To me, there are clear parallels to how we treat people today who are different. The whole way of thinking the concept of ‘stranger’ hasn’t changed in all those years. We mirror ourselves in ‘Others,’ and we want them to be like us instead of protecting and preserving the differences that make them what they are,” she says.

“Behind the ‘great Danification’ of the fifties was a belief that it was possible to introduce Danish conditions to a country as fundamentally different from ours as Greenland. It’s not hard to draw parallels to the thinking behind the current war in Afghanistan.”

#### CHARACTER-BASED STORYTELLING

Friedberg had heard about these Greenlandic children over the years, but it wasn’t until she read the book *I den bedste mening* (The Best Intentions) by Tine Bryld—social welfare worker and radio icon who graced Danish youth for three generations—that the full impact of the story really hit her.

“It’s crazy that we know so little about this story in Denmark. We are so quick to pass judgement on other countries for their mistakes and shortcomings, while our own past is really pretty dark, too,” the director says. Bryld assisted on the screenplay, which Friedberg wrote with the screenwriter Rikke de Fine Licht. Choosing among the many different stories within the story was a challenge.

“That was actually the hardest thing,” Friedberg says. “We did a huge number of rewrites, because our material had so many good stories, big and small. Gradually we got to the point where we realised that we wanted to tell the big story through the little story. That is, stick to a few central characters and focus on life at the children’s home round about the time when the children come back to Greenland, when it becomes very clear that they are different because they have they lost their language.”

The two writers decided to condense their story around nurse Gert (played by Ellen Hillingsø), the Danish matron of the children’s home in Greenland.

*“To me, there are clear parallels to how we treat people today who are different. The whole way of thinking the concept of ‘stranger’ hasn’t changed in all those years. We mirror ourselves in ‘Others,’ and we want them to be like us instead of protecting and preserving the differences that make them what they are.”*

Louise N. D. Friedberg



Photo: Robin Skjoldborg

**LOUISE N.D. FRIEDBERG**

Born 1973, Denmark. Graduated in direction from the National Film School of Denmark, 2005. Has worked as a scripter and assistant director since 1995. *Blood Sisters*, Friedberg's debut as a director, was selected for Berlin's Generation programme and went on to win awards at Rome, Sydney, Melbourne, Sao Paulo and Odense festivals. *The Experiment* is Friedberg's feature film debut.

**NIMBUS FILM** See page 5

"I wanted to tell the story through Danish eyes, because that approach is obviously most available to me. So we made the Danish matron the central character in the film. She is a woman who believes in the experiment and acts with the best of intentions," Friedberg says.

Focusing on the matron, *The Experiment* is a character-driven film that uses its protagonist as a prism to refract the story's development.

"The film is a historical drama based on real-life events, but I treated it like a character-based film, because that's how I work. The film's drama comes out of locating the main character in a greater social context. It's in those situations that people face their greatest challenges," Friedberg says.

**THE BEST INTENTIONS**

The matron truly believes she is improving the lives of the Greenlandic children, but she's carried away by her ambitions, her feelings and, especially, her identification with a small Greenlandic girl, Karen, who hesitantly resumes her relationship with her mother back in Nuuk. Karen becomes the film's collective image of the 22 children who all, in a very fundamental way, are alienated from their parents. "I don't understand what you're saying, mummy," Karen says. Losing their mother tongue was a central problem for the children.

When the project began, the children felt chosen, maybe they even looked forward to getting away from their arduous life, but they returned to Greenland with a huge sense of loss about their

families, their language and their identities. In turn, as the children failed to live up to the expectations that had been created for them, all good will surrounding the project evaporated.

The big question posed by the film is whether Denmark was aware of the injustice it was committing and the dramatic effects of 'Danification' on these Greenlandic children. "The title of Tine Bryld's book of interviews is 'The Best Intentions,' and it's a good title because I think it's very true," Friedberg says. "It's my impression that the whole thing happened in an oops sort of way on the part of Denmark. Denmark was forced to shape up under pressure from the UN and the US. Something had to be done, and fast. The experiment was conducted with the best intentions, but it certainly had not been thought through. Plus, the whole thing was conceived in the colonialist mentality of 'They don't know what's best for them.'" Even so, *The Experiment* is not meant to be an indictment.

"In the research phase, I thoroughly acquainted myself with the case, and the more I read, the less black and white it seemed," Friedberg says. "The real crime is that, even today, no one talks about this case or has an opinion on it, even though we now recognise that a mistake was made. As recently as last summer, the Danish government refused to reopen the case, probably out of concern that a possible apology could lead to demands for financial restitution. So, if I *am* making an accusation, it's that we're afraid to look back and admit that we made a mistake. Why is that so hard to do? ■



The Experiment Photo: Christian Geisnæs

# WHAT STORY ARE YOU IN?



Everything Will Be Fine Photo: Max Stirner



BY JONAS VARSTED KIRKEGAARD

**Everything Will Be Fine is the fourth feature by Christoffer Boe, whose Reconstruction won the Camera d'Or at Cannes 2003. Now the genre-savvy Danish director, 35, is taking political thrillers and all their paranoid trappings for a spin.**

*Everything Will Be Fine* is about a down-on-his-luck director-slash-screenwriter who is whirled into a crisis of a different magnitude, involving Denmark's ongoing participation in foreign wars. The film marks a new phase in Christoffer Boe's continuing investigation of the creative process and the importance of narratives in giving us a sense of control over life.

How did you get the idea for *Everything Will Be Fine*?

"My friend, the documentary filmmaker Christoffer Guldbrandsen, was involved in a film about the war in Afghanistan and he told me some amazing stories that almost seemed too good to be true. They could not be used in a documentary or a journalistic piece because they were hard to verify – but luckily I don't have that problem. So I used some of these – unverified facts – to make a story that deals with idealism and the system's corruption."

Your films tend to be about the creative process and storytelling themselves. Did you have any misgivings about marrying that theme to the real armed conflicts Denmark is participating in?

"Huge misgivings. But I was having trouble getting under the skin of the war, because I don't

know anything about it. I'm not indignant on behalf of anyone, but I get the impression that the war doesn't really interest us Danes. It has never really played any significant political role in the public debate. At some basic level we just don't really care that much about the war. And that became part of the story. How one man becomes involved in the war – because it becomes part of his own story."

"Essentially, all my films are about how we try to navigate an existence that is supposed to be so great and wonderful but presents so many challenges. As I see it, the creative process mirrors the basic things: Who are you? What do you believe in? Where are you going? What story are you in? We all write our own story in our heads, and we all need a story we can understand ourselves in. Existential questions can be hard to talk about, but they become pretty concrete when you make films about the creative process itself."

Has making films made you a happier person?

"Yes. And that's my biggest artistic problem, because happiness makes for poor drama. Misfortune is no doubt a better starting point for art. But 'sadly' I'm in a place where I'm happy both privately and professionally. I have my own company and I get to do the films I want to do. So, in a sense, I try to construct misfortune."

Did that make it hard for you to direct Jens Albinus in the lead as a man who is cracking up mentally?

"Well, I have had my problems, fortunately, so I have those memories to draw on. Moreover, I'm good at putting myself in other people's shoes. Empathy I guess you'd call it. But ultimately Jens would have to answer that question, whether I was

so happy it was hard for him to take me seriously!"

*Everything Will Be Fine* features some spectacular visual effects – in one case you make certain familiar, quite monumental structures look like miniatures. How did you do that?

"I won't say how we pulled it off technically – that's our secret! Like a magician, I don't give away my tricks. But I can reveal why we did it. It was to clarify the idea that we play leading roles in our own lives but supporting roles in other people's lives. Plus, we're often controlled by other people's intentions and desires. I'm obsessed with the idea of people as game pieces. The last great taboo in our highly individualistic lives is that we don't have absolute control of our own lives. What happens to us, then, when we're confronted with the thing we have no control over?"

Do you see yourself as a lone wolf in Danish film?

"I am less resistant to Danish film now than when I first started out almost 10 years ago, but of course I'm part of it now. Basically, I don't think I have that much in common with other Danish filmmakers and I always try to dribble around the usual methods, cinematic styles and themes. I'm probably a lone wolf who's been hit by the Stockholm syndrome. I've begun to sympathise with my hostage-takers."

*Everything Will Be Fine* has a strong hint of political thriller. How do you feel about that genre?

"Generally speaking, genres are the vital nerve of film, the primordial ooze from which we create. They can capture life in different ways. Though cinema is entertainment at heart, it is also able to give us insight into the kind of life we are not otherwise privy to. It offers a kind of VIP seat to the





Everything Will Be Fine Photo: Max Stirner



Everything Will Be Fine Photo: Max Stirner

backstage of life. It's where you experience your first love, sorrow and death, maybe even before you encounter them in real life, without risking anything but the price of admission."

"I've previously taken off from the romance and science fiction genres. What the political thriller can do is create paranoia, the feeling that we can't trust our surroundings. The archetypical thriller form is that something has shifted and someone's to blame. Who's to blame and why did they do what they did? Are some of the people closest to me in cahoots with them? While you're talking with your loved one, you suddenly get the sense that she has a secret agenda. Thrillers have this wonderful elemental power of suspicion, like I said before, where it's seriously difficult to discern what kind of story you are in."

*Which genres have given you the greatest experiences?*

"Comedies and thrillers. There have been many truly masterful comedies but very few sublime thrillers. Films like David Fincher's *The Game* and Alan J. Pakula's *The Parallax View*. And of course the films of Alfred Hitchcock, notably *Vertigo*, which is all about reconstructing your own story."

*Can you lift the veil on your future projects?*

"I'm doing a project titled *Beast*, an intense psychodrama that's my attempt to marry *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and *Alien*. ■

For further information on Everything Will Be Fine, see catalogue in reverse section.

*"We play leading roles in our own lives but supporting roles in other people's lives. Plus, we're often controlled by other people's intentions and desires. I'm obsessed with the idea of people as game pieces. The last great taboo in our highly individualistic lives is that we don't have absolute control of our own lives. What happens to us, then, when we're confronted with the thing we have no control over?"*

Christoffer Boe



Christoffer Boe Photo: Helene Hasen & Paul Wilson (rawformat.dk)

#### CHRISTOFFER BOE

Born 1974, Denmark. Graduated in film and media at the University of Copenhagen, 1996, and in direction at the National Film School of Denmark, 2001. His feature film debut *Reconstruction* (2003) received the prestigious Camera d'Or and the Critics' Week Youth Jury Award at Cannes in 2003. The same year he was recipient of FIPRESCI's Director of the Year. His second feature *Allegro*, chosen for Venice Days and Toronto, and won the Prix du Jury Jeunes. His third feature *Offscreen* followed in 2006, winning the Fantastic Jury Award in Austin and the Altre Visioni Award in Venice.

#### ALPHAVILLE PICTURES COPENHAGEN

Founded 2003 by director Christoffer Boe and producer Tine Grew Pfeiffer. Prior to this they produced their first feature *Reconstruction* (2003, produced by Nordisk Film), winner of Cannes Camera d'Or. Company's first film: *Allegro* (Christoffer Boe, 2005), and the experimental, low-budget film project entitled *OffScreen* (2006), an odd marriage of fiction and reality about a man filming himself for a whole year in a quest for invisibility. The film won the Altre Visioni Award in Venice. Titles 2009/2010: the documentary *Out of Love* by Birgitte Stærmosse, chosen for Berlinale's Generation, the feature films *Everything Will be Fine* and *Beast* by directed by Christoffer Boe.

# COPENHAGEN BOMBAY

## GOES INTERNATIONAL



Image from *The Apple & The Worm* by Anders Morgenthaler **Photo:** Framegrab

**Film agents sell films. TV agents sell TV shows. Toy dealers sell dolls. And telecoms sell mobile content. But what if your concepts and stories aren't tied to any one medium?**

Instead of selling their products through a series of different channels, Copenhagen Bombay, the production company of Anders Morgenthaler and Sarita Christensen, is opting to handle their own international sales.

Malene Iversen, head of sales for this recent initiative, sees clear advantages in handling sales in-house.

"It's easier for us now to cooperate directly with the distributors in making complete concepts available. This way we can all focus on getting the stories out to our main audience, kids and teens. Any concept open to a multi-platform

universe starts with a story, and we have strong cross-media ambitions to make full use of each concept," Iversen says. "That's why you'll find our different characters in toy stores as dolls, in books, games, on the web and on your cell phone."

"Our goal is to entertain children in a meaningful way and it is important for us that parents feel completely safe to let their kids watch a film, play a game or play with toys," Iversen continues. "We know that children love to review and retell their favourite stories over and over again."

Read about Copenhagen Bombay's current productions *Æblet & Ormen/The Apple & The Worm* and *Den kæmpestore bjørn/The Great Bear* in the catalogue in reverse section. [www.copenhagenbombay.com](http://www.copenhagenbombay.com) ■



Image from *The Temptation of St. Tony* by Estonian director Veiko Õunpuu. **Photo:** Kaarel Nurk

# LEVELK

## - NEW INTERNATIONAL SALES AGENT

**Copenhagen-based, Tine Klint – former Head of Sales at Nordisk Film (now TrustNordisk) – launched in the autumn of 2009 a new international sales and distribution agency.**

"I'm looking for new and experienced talents. New talents that I can follow and create an international platform for. Experienced directors that can deliver quality entertainment for all media," Klint explains.

Though recently started, Klint expects the catalogue of LevelK to reach 30 titles by the end of the year, including features, documentaries and television series. Currently the catalogue mainly contains Scandinavian and Baltic productions, including the Danish films *Storm* by Giacomo Campeotto, *Prostitution*

*Behind the Veil* by Nahid Persson, *Prophecy* by Johan Melin and the TV Series *Anna Pihl* and *Laerkevej*.

Moreover the company represents *Vegas* by Norwegian director Gunnar Vikene and *The Temptation of St. Tony* by Estonian director Veiko Õunpuu, and selected for Rotterdam, Sundance and Göteborg.

Klint promotes her fare at the Buyers Lounge & Screening Room at [www.levelk.dk](http://www.levelk.dk), accessible to professionals only. This site allows business professionals to download marketing materials, promos and trailers, and, when authorized, to stream entire movies whenever and where ever they want – and at the same time know which territories are still available," says Klint ■

More information can be found on the company's website [www.levelk.dk](http://www.levelk.dk)

# DANISH FOOTPRINT ON FESTIVALS 2009

**Danish films left their footprint on the international scene in 2009. Practically every film festival, large and small, selected Danish films for its programme. In all, Danish films brought home an impressive 118 awards and honours.**

Anders Østergaard and Magic Hour Film's documentary – a Joris Ivens winner and Oscar nomination contender – *Burma VJ* performed extraordinarily, selected for CPH:DOX and Sundance, the film has won over 40 international awards. The Berlinale saw Annette K. Olesen's *Little Soldier* in the main competition and Lotte Svendsen's *Max Embarrassing* took a bow in Generation with a Special Mention. Debuting Heidi Maria Faisst's *The Blessing* was selected for Rotterdam, while Lars von Trier's *Antichrist* won Cannes' Best Actress Award for Charlotte Gainsbourg. Only weeks went by and Danish actress Paprika Steen

swept up the same award at Karlovy Vary for her acclaimed performance in *Applause*.

Nicolas Winding Refn carried on the honours with his *Valhalla Rising*, which embellished Venice' Midnight Screening. And Toronto this year selected all of five Danish features, including Ole Bornedal's *Deliver us from Evil* in which we see human nature driven beserk. Rome invited Nicolo Donato's debut *Brotherhood*, which took home the festival's top award and another award to boot. In November Amsterdam took on a record selection of Danish films, 11 in all, including Miki Mistrati & Nagieb Khaja's *Accidental Terrorist*. Andreas Koefoed's *Albert's Winter* and Katrine Philp's *Book of Miri* – these three were nominated in awards programmes ■

See complete overview at [www.dfi.dk/english](http://www.dfi.dk/english)



Image from *Burma VJ* by Anders Østergaard, produced by Lise Lense-Møller for Magic Hour Films **Photo:** Framegrab

# NUUMMIOQ

## PORTRAIT OF GREENLAND



Malik (...), the protagonist of *Nuummioq*, on a hunt. Photo: 3900 Pictures

**Film lovers the world over know Greenland as a compelling backdrop of high skies, wildlife and endless snow. But Greenland is much more than just a scenic location. *Nuummioq*, the first professional Greenlandic feature film ever, shows us the country as it is today. The film was recently selected for Sundance 2010. FILM talks to producer Mikisoq H. Lyngé about *Nuummioq*.**

BY LOUISE SKOV ANDERSEN

Stereotypical perceptions of Greenland abound. Snow-white landscapes as far as the eye can see. Primitive living. People in sealskin trousers, catching their own food – when they are not drinking themselves to death in cheap booze, that is.

Of course, the Western – particularly the Danish – view of the country in the high north is seriously warped. Now *Nuummioq*, the first

Greenlandic feature film production ever, tells the story of a nation that in countless ways is as modern as its big brother in the Danish Commonwealth.

“We’re ordinary people who live and die, take the bus to work, pick the kids up from kindergarten, shop at the supermarket and go to the movies on the weekend – just like everyone else. We live ordinary lives. And that, we think, is something that has been missing from the general perception of Greenland,” the film’s producer Mikisoq H. Lyngé tells FILM when we catch him on the mobile in Greenland’s capital Nuuk.

### RESPECT FOR NATURE

It is these modern Greenlanders *Nuummioq* portrays. Malik, a construction worker, lives a normal, rather lonely, urban life in Nuuk, when he falls head over heels in love with gorgeous Nivi. But just as their love begins to bloom, Malik is diagnosed with incurable cancer. He now faces a choice: go to Denmark for treatment, and perhaps extend his

life a few years, or stay in Greenland and die within a few months.

“*Nuummioq* is about love, but it’s also about death and how we should enjoy life while we have it,” Lyngé says. Their relationship to death may be exactly what separates the average Greenlandic from the average Dane and other Europeans, he adds.

“Death is close to us Greenlanders, because we live in an extreme nature that claims its victims every year. We were raised to respect the nature we live in.

“A lot of people think of Greenland as an amazing backdrop for a film. All you have to do is turn the camera and you’ll be filming something beautiful. But for us it’s normal, and we’re a bit tired of just being a location. *Nuummioq* doesn’t romanticise the nature we live in,” Lyngé says.

### SOMETHING’S BREWING

Greenland’s film industry is vanishingly small. And because the country’s few filmmakers don’t qualify for subsidies from the Danish Film Institute, it has been impossible

until now to raise the funds to make a professional feature. *Nuummioq* was only possible because Lyngé sold a 49 percent share in his company, 3900 Films, to a Greenlandic investment company. The rest of the 560,000 euro budget was provided by a slew of sponsors, including Carlsberg and Royal Arctic.

“It’s been an uphill climb. Making a film is expensive,” Lyngé concedes, though he predicts that the job of filmmaker will be far more common in Greenland from this point on. “No doubt, something is brewing. More and more people are taking a chance on making a living in film, and no doubt *Nuummioq* is a spearhead. Hopefully, a lot of young people will see the film and go, ‘I want to do that.’” ■

### FACTS ABOUT NUUMMIOQ

*Nuummioq*, which had its world premiere in Nuuk in October 2009, was selected for the Sundance Film Festival World Cinema Competition, 2010. Director: Otto Rosing and Torben Bech. Producer: Mikisoq H. Lyngé. Production: 3900 Pictures ApS. www.nuummioqthemovie