

DFI-FILM BERLIN ISSUE 2014

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NYMPHOMANIAC

Lars von Trier's story supervisor, actors, marketing people and critics tell the tale of the controversial director and his erotic epic.

SOMEONE YOU LOVE

Pernille Fischer Christensen is the uncrowned queen of the intimate, interpersonal drama.

THE CONTEST

Martin Mische-Renard turns the concept of the "stranger" on its head.

CATHEDRALS OF CULTURE

What is a building's soul?

BEYOND BEYOND

Come down the rabbit hole.

SON

A tale of puppies and men.

FILM is the Danish Film Institute's international festival magazine, issued prior to the festivals in Berlin, Cannes and Amsterdam. **FILM** includes a comprehensive catalogue in the reverse section.

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FILM Digital Issue: www.dfi.dk/film

The Danish Film Institute is the national agency that supports and encourages Danish film and cinema culture.



20 VIEWS ON NYMPHOMANIAC

Six months after his infamous press conference in Cannes, Lars von Trier stopped making public statements. "I have realised that I do not possess the skills to express myself unequivocally," the director said, adding that he would now dedicate himself fully to his films. Consequently we give the floor to von Trier's story supervisor, actors, marketing people and critics to let them tell the tale of the director and his erotic epic *Nymphomaniac*.



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WHY PUBLIC FILM FUNDING?

The Film Act sets the overall guidelines for the work of the Danish Film Institute. A new film policy accord will be made this year, identifying priorities and objectives for public film funding over the next four years. Now that the preparatory work is underway, it seems like a good moment to reflect on why we even have a film policy. Taxpayers pay a lot of money to Danish Cinema. What does it get us? When you prioritize resources for culture in a time of crisis, it has to make sense. It must add value to society.

Danes are clearly showing tremendous interest in their local films. Is it a good thing that citizens are interested in the visual culture of their own country? Should a small country go into film production? The answer, of course, is yes. It is a strength to have such diversity in the range of films that most of our citizens are able to find cinematic narratives that speak to them.

Another argument involves quality. We wouldn't be able to make films of such high quality without public funding. A certain number of films could be produced on the market's terms, but nowhere near the same standard without state backing for funding, education and schemes to help ensure that we have an able film business.

The Danish Film Act is a law for supporting the arts. But obviously, ensuring Danes a wide range of high-quality films takes a sustainable film business. This is where economics comes in. And that's the challenge we are most focused on right now. How do we continue the positive trend when the economy is tightening up and changes towards digital selling have yet to prove viable?

The Danish Film Institute is currently exploring opportunities for new forms of financing and new business models. Digitisation offers both challenges and opportunities, but it is definitely not simple. We do believe, however, that the film industry as a whole will mobilise the courage necessary to try new things. For Danish cinema to continue its artistic success, it takes courage by artists, merchants and the administrators of what many consider the best film act in the world.

This year's line-up in Berlin of Danish filmmakers, who are once again demonstrating the courage to go new ways, gives us reason to be optimistic, and with three Danish films competing at the Oscars we have every incentive to find new solutions.

Henrik Bo Nielsen, CEO

NEWS & NOTES



A Second Chance Photo: Henrik Petit

NEW BIER DRAMA

IN THE PIPELINE. Nikolaj Coster-Waldau stars in Susanne Bier's new drama *A Second Chance*.

Playing the fiendish Jaime Lannister in HBO's *Game of Thrones* was an international breakthrough for Nikolaj Coster-Waldau who will soon be appearing in Susanne Bier's new drama *A Second Chance*, his first leading role in a Danish film in over a decade.

Coster-Waldau plays a detective, Andreas, who has settled down with his wife and son, while his partner and best friend Simon, recently divorced, spends most of

his waking hours getting drunk at the local strip club. All that changes when they respond to a domestic disturbance involving a junkie married couple. When Andreas discovers the couple's infant son crying in a closet, the usually so composed cop finds himself confronting his own powerlessness.

Susanne Bier continues her longstanding partnership with screenwriter Anders Thomas Jensen, which began in 2002 with the Dogme film *Open Hearts* and culminated in 2010 with the Oscar-winning *In a Better World*.

Ulrich Thomsen plays Simon. The cast also features Nikolaj Lie Kaas, Maria Bonnevie and Lykke May Andersen.

Zentropa is producing, with expected release in September. *AH*



Flow: Framegrab

FLOW

Fenar Ahmad is making his debut as a feature film director with *Flow*, a story about a young man, Michael, who grows up in a housing project and dreams of becoming a rapper.

Produced by Beofilm, *Flow* is made with support from the Danish Film Institute's talent scheme New Danish Screen, with a release in 2014. Ahmad had his short film *Megaheavy*, about a young girl and her first love, selected for Berlinale's Generation. Born in 1981, Ahmad came to Denmark in 1986 as an Iraqi refugee.

Photo: Rolf Konow



BACK TO HIS ROOTS

IN THE PIPELINE. *Silent Heart* has Bille August returning to the kind of intense drama that first won him international acclaim.

A director of literary adaptations like *The House of the Spirits*, *Smilla's*

Sense of Snow and *Les Misérables* since the early '90s, Bille August is now returning to a Scandinavian film tradition with echoes of Bergman and chamber plays.

Silent Heart is about a family that gathers for an unusual weekend at the home of the matriarch, who has been diagnosed with an incurable disease. She has asked her dear ones home to bid her a final farewell as wife, mother, mother-in-law and friend. In fact, she has decided to end her own life when the weekend

is over. The atmosphere grows increasingly, almost unbearably tense as the weekend progresses and old conflicts bubble up to the surface.

"It's their absolutely last chance to speak their piece and make up. Because the human drama is so acute, there is room to depict intimate relationships and take a close-up look at the psychological mechanisms that arise on the way," August says.

The film marks the Danish director's return to the intimate human drama of his Palme d'Or winners *Pelle the Conqueror* and *The Best Intentions*, the latter from a screenplay by Ingmar Bergman, his Selma Lagerlöf adaptation *Jerusalem*, and *A Song for Martin*, about mature love's bitter struggle with Alzheimer's.

The central role as the mother in *Silent Heart* is played by Ghita Nørby, the grande dame of Danish theatre, who also appeared in *The Best Intentions*. The cast includes Morten Grunwald, Paprika Steen, Danica Curcic and Pilou Asbæk. Jesper Morthorst is producing for SF Film Production, with a release set for late 2014. *AH*

Photo of Bille August (fourth from right) and his cast for *Silent Heart*.

BITTERSWEET ADULTHOOD

NEW FILM. In Niels Arden Oplev's new drama *Racewalking*, Sidse Babet Knudsen is worlds apart from her stylish prime minister in *Borgen*.

Set in the same universe as the director's Berlin winner *We Shall Overcome* from 2006 – quirky, provincial Denmark in the mid-seventies – Niels Arden Oplev's *Racewalking* follows young Martin who struggles to find his footing on the shaky ground of adolescence. As he is getting ready for his communion, his mother suddenly dies, her tragic death triggering a chain of events that affect everyone in the small community.

Sidse Babet Knudsen plays Lizzi, an old friend of Martin's mother who brings comfort to Martin and to his dad. Knudsen is joined on the cast by Pilou Asbæk, who played Birgitte Nyborg's media adviser in the *Borgen* series, and Anders W. Berthelsen, a regular in Arden Oplev's Danish films.

Racewalking Photo: Bjørn Berthoussen



Racewalking is an adaptation of a novel by Morten Kirkskov. Bo Hr. Hansen, who scripted the film, also wrote *The Art of Crying*, set in the same quirky surroundings in the age of bellbottoms and polyester.

Niels Arden Oplev had his international breakthrough with the original Swedish adaptation of *The*

Girl with the Dragon Tattoo. He helmed the 2013 Hollywood production *Dead Man Down*, also starring Noomi Rapace, as well as the pilot of *Under the Dome* and three episodes of *Unforgettable*. Nordisk Film has produced *Racewalking*, with a release set for October. *AH*

FILMS & PEOPLE

■ After a 10-year hiatus as director, **Anders Thomas Jensen** is back with a grotesque comedy, *Men & Chicken*, starring Mads Mikkelsen and produced by M&M Productions. In recent years, Jensen has been racking up high-profile credits as a screenwriter, including Susanne Bier's Oscar-winning *In a Better World* and Kristian Levring's 2014 release *The Salvation*. *Men & Chicken* opens in 2015.

■ Director and scriptwriter **Tobias Lindholm** is concluding his trilogy of "desperate men in small rooms" with *The War*, about a military action in Afghanistan. Like Lindholm's *R* and *A Hijacking*, the new film stars Danish actor Pilou Asbæk (also known from *Borgen*). *The War*, produced by Nordisk Film, starts shooting in 2014.

■ **Michael Noer**, Tobias Lindholm's co-director on the prison drama *R*, has started shooting his third feature, *Nøgle Hus Spejl* (Danish title). Ghita Nørby stars in the central role of Lily who moves to a nursing home with her husband because of his illness. Amidst all the turmoil, Lily meets the last love of her life, The Pilot, played by Sven Wollter. Nordisk Film is producing the film. Release in 2015.

■ After the feature *Go with Peace Jamil and 1/2 Revolution*, a documentary about the Egyptian revolution, Danish filmmaker **Omar Shargawi** is bringing out his next film project, *Medina*, about a Danish-Egyptian who inadvertently causes the death of a beggar boy in a tragic accident. Nordisk Film is producing the film, with release scheduled for 2015.

■ In 2009, with a bit of creative thinking and some helpful contacts, filmmaker **Andreas Johnsen** got hold of Ai Weiwei's cell phone number, determined to do a documentary about the Chinese artist. *Ai Weiwei The Fake Case*, nominated for the Cinema for Peace Justice Award during the Berlinale 2014, premiered at the IDFA doc fest in November. Produced by Danish Documentary Production and Rosforth Films.

■ The American actress Kim Basinger is starring in Zentropa and **Anders Morgenthaler's** (*Princess*) English-language drama *I'm Here*. Basinger is Maria, a career woman who has everything except a child. When she learns that she is infertile, she embarks on a desperate pursuit to make her dream come true. Release in 2014.



Photos: Anders Heinrichsen, Lasse Frank, Eie Kyllingmark and Knut Kovisto

THE GIRL WHO SEES SHAME

IN THE PIPELINE. Kenneth Kainz is directing an adaptation of Danish author Lene Kaaberbøl's best-selling fantasy novel *The Shamer's Daughter*, adapted for the big screen by Anders Thomas Jensen.

Dina is a girl who has inherited her mother's supernatural ability to elicit shamed confessions simply by looking someone in the eye. For Dina, her power is not a gift but a curse. But when Dina's mother is called to reveal the truth about a bloody triple murder, Dina must come to terms with her powers or see her mother fall prey to the vicious dragons of Dunark.

That's how the story goes in *The Shamer's Daughter*, based on the first book in Lene Kaaberbøl's highly popular fantasy series *The Shamer Chronicles*. The four books in the series have been published in more than 25 countries worldwide.

Kenneth Kainz (*Pure Hearts*) is directing *The Shamer's Daughter*, while Anders Thomas Jensen, longstanding writing partner of Susanne Bier, adapted the book for the big screen.

The all-Scandinavian cast includes Peter Plaugborg, Jakob Oftebro, Søren Malling, Maria Bonnevie, Stina Ekblad and Allan Hyde. *The Shamer's Daughter* is produced by Nepenthe Film, with a release set for spring 2015. *AH*

Photo collage of actors in *The Shamer's Daughter*: Jakob Oftebro, Søren Malling, Maria Bonnevie, Stine Ekblad, Peter Plaugborg and Allan Hyde.



10 YEARS

10 Years with New Danish Screen is the title of a special online publication celebrating the anniversary of the New Danish Screen talent scheme. Available from your smartphone, tablet or laptop, the publication gives access to more than 50 films made over the past ten years, films by directors such as Mikala Krogh, Daniel Borgman, Daniel Dencik and Martin Pieter Zandvliet, and brings views on the talent scheme that mentors emerging film talents and supports innovative projects of fiction, documentary, series and trans-media. New Danish Screen is founded on a partnership between broadcasters DR and TV 2 and the Danish Film Institute. Find your copy at dfi.dk/nds10years



The Idealist Photo: Christian Geisnæs

COLD WAR IN GREENLAND

IN THE PIPELINE. In *The Idealist*, Christina Rosendahl delves into one of the most hushed-up chapters of Danish Cold War history.

Christina Rosendahl, who has a string of documentaries, short fiction and the youth drama *Triple Dare* to her credit, is making her second feature with the political thriller *The Idealist*, based on true events.

In 1968, an American B-52 bomber carrying four armed hydrogen bombs crashes on the sea ice near the American military base in Thule, Greenland. The Danish and the American authorities announce that the accident is under control, and hundreds of workers are recruited for a massive clean-up operation.

Eighteen years later, in 1986, a young radio reporter, Poul Brink, gets a visit from a former Thule worker, Marius Schmidt, who claims the clean-up is causing a colleague's mysterious skin ailments. As it turns out, Thule workers all over the country are suffering from similar ailments and

are dying from cancer. Brink pursues the story, but he and Schmidt soon realise they are sitting on a highly explosive case that has ties to the most powerful men in the country and even to the White House.

The Idealist is the first feature film from Toolbox Film, founded in 2011 by producers Morten Kaufmann and Signe Leick Jensen. Jonas Frederiksen and Leick Jensen are producing. Danish actors Peter Plaugborg, Søren Malling, Thomas Bo Larsen and Jens Albinus are accompanied by a large international cast in connection with the shoot in the US. Danish release is set for March 2015. *NØ*

A SONG FOR IBEN

IN THE PIPELINE. Ole Christian Madsen is in production with *Itsi Bitsi*, a film based on the true story about beat poet Eik Skaløe, lead singer for Danish rock group Steppeulvene, and the great love of his life, Iben.

Itsi Bitsi was Eik Skaløe's nickname for Iben as well as the title of a legendary song on the Steppeulvene's trailblazing record from 1967, *Hip*, considered today a milestone in Danish music history. The story of *Itsi Bitsi* begins in

1962, when Eik Skaløe meets Iben and falls head over heels in love. Unfolding over the next six years in Denmark, France, Spain, North Africa, Greece, Iraq, Nepal, Pakistan and India, the film follows Skaløe and his beatnik friends exploring and challenging the world so insistently that he becomes an icon for the emerging hippie movement in Denmark.

Itsi Bitsi features two newcomers, Joachim Fjelstrup and Marie Tourell Søderberg, as Skaløe and Rasmussen. Ole Christian Madsen (*Superclásico*, *Flame & Citron*) wrote the script with Bo Hr. Hansen, and Nimbus Film is producing. The film will be released in 2015. *NØ*



Itsi Bitsi Photo: Per Amesen

THE ABSENT ONE

A cold case involving two young twins who were found brutally murdered in a summer cottage back in 1994 lands on detective Carl Mørck's desk in Mikkel Nørgaard's *The Absent One*. The film is the second installment in Zentropa's darkly tinged thriller series based on Jussi Adler-Olsen's Department Q novels. Nikolaj Arcel and Rasmus Heisterberg wrote the script, and Nikolaj Lie Kaas and Fares Fares resume their starring roles as investigator Carl and his assistant Assad. Expected release in October.



The Absent One Photo: Christian Geisnæs

BETLES AND BEES

NEW FILM. The experienced animators Jannik Hastrup and Flemming Quist Møller have teamed up once again to make a second animated film centring on Quist Møller's timeless Danish children's book *A Tale of Two Mozzies* from 1967.

Their new collaboration, *Mini and the Mozzies*, is a story about the mini beetle Mini who works in a flea circus together with Egon the Cycling Mosquito and Dagmar the Dancing

Mosquito. One day Mini runs away from the circus and embarks on an adventure which involves a gang of robbers led by Basse the Beetle and the bee princesses who find him cute and adopt him as their pet.

Flemming Quist Møller and Jannik Hastrup have put their thumbprints all over Danish animation for close to a lifetime now. The two friends made the classic *Benny's Bathtub* in 1971, about a boy who discovers a magical world at the bottom of his bathtub. The film has been designated by the Ministry of Culture as one of the most important Danish films ever made.

Mini and the Mozzies is produced by Dansk Tegnefilm. The film is expected to release in summer 2014. *NØ*



Mini and the Mozzies: Framergab

MY FILMS GROW OUT OF MY CHARACTERS

Berlinale Special Gala

Since winning a Silver Bear in 2006 for her first feature *A Soap*, Pernille Fischer Christensen has kept refining the intimate interpersonal story. So too in her new film, *Someone You Love*, which uses soulful rock to portray a successful musician whose notions of freedom and love are rattled to the core.

In *Someone You Love*, Fischer Christensen is back with a new intimate drama co-written with her writing and romantic partner, Kim Fupz Aakeson. The story is about a world-famous rock musician, played by Mikael Persbrandt, who returns from the US and grudgingly has to take care of his grown daughter and her young son. Dyrholm is back, too, playing the musician's Danish producer. While the two-room flats have given way to a castle and the ordinary Danish characters have been joined by a star, *Someone You Love* is still a classic Fischer Christensen film – an intimate story between a small handful of people.

Where did you get the idea for a film about a rock star who returns home?

“A lot of my films grow out of the characters and my wish to work with a certain actor. This time, my love fell on Mikael Persbrandt.

“Apart from that, I wanted to work with music. Music means a lot to me in my life. We were always listening to music when I was a kid, and I played music, too. I don't know how to play anything anymore, but I wanted to work with making original music from scratch.

“To me, the film is about a person who believes in Freedom with a capital F.”

“For some of my other films I did extended improvisation sessions and spent a long time finding the character. In this film I wanted to work with a process of developing the music in parallel with the character and the screenplay to make a cohesive, but also fraught, whole. To me, the film is about a person who believes in Freedom with a capital F. He has tried to free himself from everything. He has freed himself from his background, his parents, his religious and musical upbringing. He has freed himself from his country – he is Swedish but has lived in the States for years. He has freed himself from women – he just got out of a marriage. He has freed himself from the future – in the sense that he has nothing to do with his daughter – and he is free of his addiction. So he's living in a self-made exile of freedom. The film challenges that, and the music helps tell that story.”

He has freed himself, but he isn't free. He's like a child who can't do anything himself.

“His idea of freedom has become a prison and a bankruptcy of the soul. He thinks he's steering his life in one direction, but he's actually moving in a completely different direction.”

Is there an exploration of parenthood in this, too? The character does everything a parent shouldn't do. “He's certainly not very loving, even to himself. In terms of parenthood, the film is about what I call

By Per Juul Carlsen

In fact, her inclination to make intimate stories goes back to before her feature debut *A Soap*. Ever since her first short film, *Habibti My Love*, from 2002, Pernille Fischer Christensen has been the uncrowned queen of emotional dramas exploring interpersonal relationships, generally between just two people, in intimate, intense stories. But she never planned to become *that* kind of director.

“When I started film school I had never worked with actors before. I wasn't particularly interested in acting, either. Where I was coming from was more visual and I was more into cinematic experimentation. So, in the beginning I wasn't very good at directing actors and I was pretty nervous about the whole thing, too.”

That quickly, and completely, changed. *A Soap* from 2006 centres on the relationship between a recently singled young woman and her transsexual downstairs neighbour. Over the film's 104 minutes, the director's camera barely strays from the two actors, Trine Dyrholm and David Dencik, or the tiny Copenhagen apartments where the film was shot. Her intimate depiction was rewarded with both the Silver Bear and Best Debut Film in Berlin that year.

“It might have something to do with my interest in people in miniature. The ‘big things’ in life happen between you and me – letdown, despair, love,” the director muses.

Stepping outside the four walls of small flats, her 2008 film *Dancers* looked at two people dancing around each other in a story of a dance studio owner who falls in love with an ex-con electrician. This time, Dyrholm played opposite Anders W. Berthelsen. In *A Family* from 2010, the drama unfolds as a small family watches their father get sick and die of cancer.





Someone You Love Photo: Rolf Konow



Someone You Love Photo: Rolf Konow

AGAINST THE ODDS. Returning from the US to record a new album in Denmark, famous musician Thomas Jacob reluctantly develops strong feelings for his grandson in Pernille Fischer Christensen's fourth feature film.

as an actor – the opposite is also true. It's a bit like his character in the film. Mikael is really hard-core. One day he shows up looking like a biker, the next day he's all adorable looking, like a ballet dancer. If you suggest something to him, you never know if he's going to go 'I love you' or just give you a look that says, 'That's the most ridiculous thing I ever heard.' It keeps you on your toes, being around him. You can't take anything for granted. He's always challenging you. When we started shooting the scenes, he never went for the obvious or facile."

"I was looking for an actor who has a lot of masculine power but also something delicate and sensitive about him. That's the paradox of Mikael's character."

Who was the model for Thomas Jacob?

"He is a big mishmash of everything I think is exciting and cool, both personality wise and music wise. We talked about Leonard Cohen a lot, the soulfulness and spirituality of his lyrics. And Nick Cave, too, for sure. His ballads are some of the finest songs I know. I have listened, and cried, to them a lot. They always have a strong melody, beauty, but also something devilish about them. That's what I'm always looking for in my characters, the clash between beauty and cruelty."

The songs and lyrics in the film are written by the Danish singer-songwriter Tina Dickow, working from your notes. Was it a conscious choice to give the songs a feminine twist?

"It's hugely interesting to me that this character has such a feminine and sensual side to him. What happens when a man sings something that was written by a woman? Mikael and I talked about that a lot. He said things like, 'A man would never write that he's taking his clothes off.' But why the hell not? That's so awesome! How many paintings haven't I seen of women undressing and stepping into the bath? We're turning the tables now, I told him. Women will love to hear you sing about being present in the moment, in the now."

How did Persbrandt feel about singing?

"He'd never tried it before, so it was a huge challenge. For both of us. Fortunately, Mikael has a beautiful voice. But of course, something happens to you when you sing. It triggers something in you, which can be a pretty powerful thing, because you sing with your body. It opens up feelings. That was a big thing for him. He conquered himself by doing it" ■

Someone You Love, selected for Berlinale Special (Gala screening), is produced by Sisse Graum Jørgensen and Vinca Wiedemann for Zentropa. For more information, see reverse section.

Pernille Fischer Christensen

Director, born 1969. Pernille Fischer Christensen's international breakthrough came with her debut feature *A Soap* which won the Jury Grand Prix and Best Debut Feature at the Berlin film festival in 2006. In 2008 came *Dancers*, followed by *A Family* in 2010, which was selected for competition at Berlin and won the FIPRESCI Prize in 2010. *Someone You Love* is Fischer Christensen's fourth feature film. Her next project is a film about the Swedish writer Astrid Lindgren. Fischer Christensen is a direction graduate of the National Film School of Denmark, 1999.



Photo: Casper Sejersen

REUNITED. Trine Dyrholm and Mikael Persbrandt play together for the first time since Susanne Bier's Oscar winner *In a Better World*.

'cleaning house.' As parents, we are all responsible for cleaning up our 'shit' and making sure we don't pass it on to the next generation. This is one of the things the character comes to realise. He thinks his freedom is about letting go of responsibility, when in fact there's just as much freedom in taking responsibility for your life and your actions, and not play the victim. He's still stuck in how he talks about his own father and his face-off with him."

Why did you cast Mikael Persbrandt as Thomas Jacob the rock star?

"With Mikael, I knew I didn't have to do a lot of research. It's no secret that Mikael has had a wild life. He brought a lot to the table. His fierceness in the film isn't something he has to search for very long. Plus, I was looking for an actor who has a lot of masculine power but also something delicate and sensitive about him. That's the paradox or contrast of Mikael's character. On one hand, he's callous and standoffish. On the other hand, he makes the most delicate poetry about love in his songs.

"Mikael is a wild man, probably the wildest person I ever met. Anything you say about him – including

TRINE DYRHOLM ACTRESS

She's all you could ask for in a movie star, a sexy and romantic leading lady with serious acting chops who shines in any kind of role. No wonder **Trine Dyrholm**, 41, who is serving as member of the international jury at Berlin 2014, holds a key position in Danish cinema. Catch her in Pernille Fischer Christensen's new film *Someone You Love*.

By Morten Piil



Spring Tide (1990) ↑
At just 17, Trine Dyrholm starred in this low-key drama about first, hesitant love. Lacing delicacy with brashness and swagger, she proved herself to be a born actress. Her performance earned her the first of her five Bodils, the highest Danish acting honour – more than any other Danish actor in history.



The Celebration (1998) ↑
As the faithful girlfriend of the tortured protagonist, Dyrholm gives Thomas Vinterberg's classic, acidic family drama a welcome shot of feminine sweetness and sensuality. Since her debut in 1990, Dyrholm had graduated from theatre school and was starring in a popular TV series, but on screen she was still largely stuck playing off her blond youthfulness and charm. While more demanding parts were still in the future, she was a perfect fit for the ensemble of Vinterberg's virtuosic Dogme drama.



In Your Hands (2004) ↓
Landing another extreme role as Kate, a jailed child murderer in Annette K. Olesen's Dogme drama, Dyrholm once and for all overwrites her image as a fresh-faced, wholesome blonde. Unapproachable and reclusive, Dyrholm makes Kate a tragically isolated figure, who may or may not have clairvoyant, healing powers. Her cool, steady gaze masks a pain that does not quite manage, however, to extinguish the joy of tender new love. An eloquent, masterful performance.



Gemini (2003) ←
In Hans Fabian Wullenweber's severe drama of insane love and personality disintegration, Dyrholm plays Julie who, crazy with grief after losing her boyfriend, casts a young naive admirer as the "twin" of her lost love. Delivering a raw, intense performance as a desperate woman realising a project of mad love, Dyrholm definitively puts the uncomplicated ingénues behind her.



A Soap (2006) ←
Trine Dyrholm cemented her name with a soulful portrayal of a frustrated single woman, Charlotte, who finds tender, new love where she least expects it. While fiercely independent, she is increasingly drawn into the life of her transsexual upstairs neighbour, played by David Dencik. With enormous sensitivity, Dyrholm brings out Charlotte's uncompromising, painful longing for truth in an erotic relationship. The characters grew out of extended improvisation in close collaboration with the director, Pernille Fischer Christensen.



Flies on the Wall (2005) ↘
Dyrholm conquered new territory in her sure-handed portrayal of a career woman, the TV reporter My Larsen. In Åke Sandgren's political, media-critical satire, she makes her way in the world as a self-centred investigative reporter wielding two cameras – only one is visible, though, the other she keeps up her sleeve. While My is racing up the career ladder, her private videos reveal that she is closing in on a nervous breakdown. Behind her professional veneer of icy cynicism, she is utterly lost.



In a Better World & Love Is All You Need (2010 & 2012) ↑ ↘
Two hit films by Susanne Bier – one is a high-tension drama, the other a romantic comedy, but Dyrholm's roles have a lot in common. Both are portrayals of impulsive, emotional women in the throes of crisis. And in both she masterfully balances vulnerability and strength. Stripping herself bare, Dyrholm brings to life two mature women who are continually overwhelmed by emotions they struggle to hold back. Acting on instinct more than reflection, Dyrholm's characters bubble over with life and drama.



Trine Dyrholm / Selected Films

- Someone You Love** (2014)
Pernille Fischer Christensen
- The Shooter** (2013)
Annette K. Olesen
- Love Is All You Need** (2012)
Susanne Bier
- A Royal Affair** (2012)
Nikolaj Arcel
- In a Better World** (2010)
Susanne Bier
- Little Soldier** (2008)
Annette K. Olesen
- Dancers** (2008)
Pernille Fischer Christensen
- Daisy Diamond** (2007)
Simon Staho
- A Soap** (2006)
Pernille Fischer Christensen
- Flies on the Wall** (2005)
Åke Sandgren
- In Your Hands** (2004)
Annette K. Olesen
- Gemini** (2003)
Hans Fabian Wullenweber
- Bungalow** (Germany, 2002)
Ulrich Köhler
- P.O.V. – Point of View** (2001)
Tómas Gislason
- The Celebration** (1998)
Thomas Vinterberg
- The Greatest Heroes** (1996)
Thomas Vinterberg
- Spring Tide** (1990)
Eddie Thomas Petersen



The Contest. Photo: Kaïna Tengberg

DIFFERENT BUT BEST FRIENDS

Berlin Generation Kplus

Sawsan is a Danish-Turkish girl in a multicultural inner-city neighbourhood. Karl was raised as a Christian in a fishing hamlet far from the big city. Children see differences as natural and have an eye for the similarities that tie them together – in real life and in *The Contest*, director Martin Miehe-Renard says.

By Dorte Hygum Sørensen

The evening prayer is Christian. Supper is often freshly caught fish. The beach and the sea are the nearest playground. Everyone in town is an "ethnic Dane."

That's life in the village of Hvide Sande on the windswept West Coast of the Jutland peninsula. Karl was born and raised there, before moving with his mother to the Copenhagen neighbourhood of Nørrebro in the opening of Martin Miehe-Renard's children's film *The Contest*.

Nørrebro is a crowded area where people of all ethnicities, cultural habits and religions live next door to each other. In his new school, it's Karl who sticks out, with his broad West-Jutland dialect and unfamiliar jargon, and he's soon planning an escape back to his grandparents in Jutland. Then he makes friends with a Turkish girl, Sawsan, and they soon realise they have a lot in common.

When Sawsan is picked for a nationwide TV song contest for kids, she and Karl have to find a way for her to compete even though her Muslim father is against it. He can't accept the thought of his daughter singing on TV, while Sawsan can't see what's wrong about participating in something as harmless as a song contest.

Similarities, Not Differences

Neither Sawsan's parents nor the grownups in Karl's family are ready to deal with their child being best friends with someone from a different culture and religion, who is not of the same gender and has another way of speaking.

While the children in the film know where their parents stand, they can't understand or accept it uncritically. Their friendship and their mission are natural to them. Only their parents have reservations about either.

It's like that in real life, director Martin Miehe-Renard says.

"It so happens we live in a multiethnic world. Children accept that without a second thought, which is the film's underpinning. As *The Contest* affirms, where there's a will, there's a way."

"Karl's Christian grandfather and Sawsan's Muslim father have their guard up at first, but when they finally get a chance to talk, they actually see eye to eye on a lot of things."

Miehe-Renard has directed some of the most popular Danish children's films over the years. Based on a children's book by Gitte Løkkegaard, *The Contest* uses joy and humour instead of politically correct lessons to show how a lot of prejudices and concerns about cultural and religious differences are really pretty ridiculous, and how it's the grownups who make them up. Unlike so many media stories about integration, *The Contest* focuses not on the obstacles but the opportunities.

"Children see more similarities than differences. Karl's Christian grandfather and Sawsan's Muslim father have their guard up at first, but when they finally get a chance to talk, they actually see eye to eye on a lot of things," Miehe-Renard says.

The Children Made a Real Contribution

Some of the scenes were shot at a school in Nørrebro, Copenhagen, where the students, like the kids in the film, have no trouble getting along despite their ethnic differences, Miehe-Renard says. Another location was the tiny fishing hamlet of Hvide Sande, where the Spanish/Pakistani/Turkish/Croatian/Danish cast were welcomed with open arms. Focusing on a simple friendship between kids and



The Contest. Photo: Kaïna Tengberg

not on their problems is central to *The Contest's* appeal, the producer, Marcella L. Dichmann, says.

"We are getting a lot of international interest in the story of Sawsan and Karl, and we want to get the film out to a lot of countries. We're proud of having made a film that, aside from its theme of cultural differences, centres on friendship and isn't preachy."

Miehe-Renard, too, thinks *The Contest* has the potential of reaching an international audience.

"The issue is a global one. The story could be set in any number of countries. It's relevant almost anywhere. Also, the children in the film act so naturally and have such a feel for what is and isn't real among children. Their contribution was invaluable in getting the tone of the film right" ■

The Contest, screening in the Berlinale's Generation Kplus section, is produced by Marcella L. Dichmann and Henrik Møller-Sørensen for ASA Film Production. For more information, see reverse section.

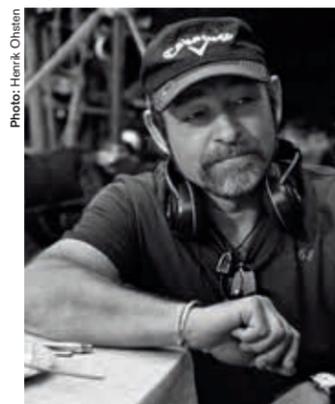


Photo: Henrik Ohlsten

Martin Miehe-Renard

Director, born 1956. Martin Miehe-Renard has a background in theatre as an actor and director. He has directed several television series and feature films for children, including three installments of the popular Danish film franchise *My Sister's Kids* featuring Uncle Erik, a professor of child psychology, and his unruly handful of nieces and nephews.

THE CONTEST IN DANISH THEATRES

The Contest was released theatrically in March 2013 and sold roughly 100,000 tickets. In Denmark that's an excellent number for a children's film that isn't already a familiar brand. Critics highlighted the acting between Sylvester Byder and Malika Sia Graff in the leads as Karl and Sawsan, the film's unpretentious mood, plus the effective storytelling device of turning the concept of the "stranger" on its head.



Actress Danica Curcic Photo: Isak Hoffmeyer

NO ORDINARY DANE

Danica Curcic's radiant beauty is igniting Danish cinema. In 2014, the Serbian-born actress is starring in no less than four features, including Christian E. Christiansen's *On the Edge*, as a woman who comes between two men, and Bille August's family drama *Silent Heart*.

Shooting Star 2014

By Morten Pii

"She's the kind of person who instantly occupies any room she enters," the director Christian E. Christiansen says about his leading lady in *On the Edge*, which premiered at the Rotterdam Film Festival in January. "She has so much presence that I actually had to tone it down a bit to get the proper balance in the scenes."

Overnight sensation hardly seems to cut it when describing 28-year-old Danica Curcic's sudden rise to fame.

"She has so much presence that I actually had to tone it down a bit to get the proper balance in the scenes."

Christian E. Christiansen, director

With her dark beauty and flowing black mane, the tall, commanding Curcic in many ways is a new type of young woman in Danish films.

Serbian born and bilingual, she came to Denmark with her Serbian family at age one and has been living here ever since, though without ever becoming Danish all the way through.

"I'm probably a bit Balkan, both in my body language and temperament and in my desire to get to the meat of things. It can be a little weird to feel

Danica Curcic

Actress, born 1985 in Belgrade. In 2014, she has major roles in no less than four Danish films: *On the Edge* by Christian E. Christiansen, *The Absent One* by Mikkel Nørgaard, *Silent Heart* by Bille August and *Malta All Inclusive* by Hella Joof. Curcic has appeared in several big stage productions and TV series, including *Those Who Kill*, *Wallander* and *The Bridge II*.



On the Edge Photo: Christian Celentano

GIRL IN THE MIDDLE. Danica Curcic comes between two friends in Christian E. Christiansen's *On the Edge*.

neither 100 percent Danish nor 100 percent Serbian. But I always tried to look at it as an advantage more than as some kind of rootlessness," says Danica Curcic, whose given name actually means "from Denmark."

Stage and Screen Success

By the time she graduated from the Danish National School of Performing Arts in 2012, Curcic had already played three roles on the national stage, including a critically lauded performance in the demanding, erotic title role of Frank Wedekind's classic *Lulu*.

This year, she is starring in four Danish films, including Bille August's intimate family drama *Silent Heart* and *The Absent One*, the sequel to last year's noir blockbuster *The Keeper of Lost Causes*.

Powerful Sensuality

Curcic was just 21 when she got her BA in film and media studies at the University of Copenhagen. She then spent the next year at the Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre in California.

Having seen the world, Curcic is now devoting herself to an acting career in Denmark. While movie-going audiences are only now getting to see her in big, demanding roles, we have been treated to flashes of her temper and powerful sensuality in the TV series *The Bridge II* (2013), where she plays

a teacher who has an illicit affair with a female student, and in Laurits Munch-Petersen's horror film *Over the Edge* (2012), where she is the other woman – all exotic, enigmatic allure opposite the heroine's blond normality. In the film, she even got a chance to show off her chops at the piano, playing Erik Satie's classic *Gnossienne No. 4* – a recording that actually made it into the film.

"It can be a little weird to feel neither 100 percent Danish nor 100 percent Serbian. But I always tried to look at it as an advantage more than as some kind of rootlessness."

Now, in Christian E. Christiansen's *On the Edge*, about a group of young speed-obsessed amateur race car drivers, Curcic stands out as a university student who is significantly smarter than the male protagonists.

All that presence and exotic allure ■

Danica Curcic has been selected as one of the 10 European Shooting Stars 2014 to be presented at the Berlin Film Festival. For more on Christian E. Christiansen's *On the Edge*, see on page 18.

TURBO-CHARGED REALISM

Christian E. Christiansen has a career in both Hollywood and Denmark. *On the Edge* sees the director returning to his Danish roots and the raw realism that comes most natural to him.

By Morten Pii

Christian E. Christiansen's 2011 horror film *The Roommate* made him the first Dane ever to direct a Hollywood movie that topped the American box-office charts.

Alongside Ole Bornedal (*Nightwatch*), Christiansen is the Danish filmmaker who has had the greatest commercial success in Hollywood. In Denmark, he is known for films of an entirely different cast – realistic, near-documentary dramas with powerfully authentic settings and characters.

"Directors in Denmark, as a matter of course, have an artistic freedom that you have to fight for years to get in Hollywood," Christiansen says.

"In the US, I have taken a craftsman's approach to directing, because anything else simply wasn't possible. It was exciting to work in a completely different way than I was used to. But my more personal films I have made in Denmark."

Troubled Youth

Christiansen has mainly been telling stories about young people on the margins of the well-regulated Danish society.

His new film, *On the Edge*, centres on a group of adrenaline-addicted car fanatics who organise races on closed roads. But they also take it to the streets of Copenhagen, hitting and killing a young girl.

Martin, a young auto mechanic, is convicted of manslaughter, while Nikolaj, his rival in their deadly sport, goes free. Nikolaj is also Martin's best friend. But how far will he go to help his friend out of his financial and psychological crisis as he watches him fall apart after the accident?

The film opens with a seemingly sympathetic insider's depiction of the flashy, fast-talking racing scene.

"It's important for me to communicate the rush and seduction of speed and fast cars. You have to feel the adrenaline. Also because I really don't want to moralise and point fingers," Christiansen says.

"To feel the consequences of the group's actions strongly enough, you have to have a basic empathy. After all, I'm mainly interested in the consequences, though there are a lot of racing scenes, like in an action film."

Actors Front and Centre

Christiansen has a unique gift for nailing the tone and jargon of a particular youth scene.

That was apparent back in 2006 when he made his critically acclaimed first feature *Life Hits*, an unembellished account of teenage girls in ultraviolent skirmishes, manically acting out a kind of suburban gangster fantasy, like in a low-budget Scorsese picture.

"It's important for me to communicate the rush and seduction of speed and fast cars. You have to feel the adrenaline."

"My scripts are basically written like most other scripts," Christiansen says about his method. "But I give my actors room to improvise. Already at the audition, they have to show that they have a sense of their character – not by acting out scenes from the script but by improvising to my specifications.

"When I'm shooting, I fully flesh out the scenes with the actors. Only then does the photographer come in with his handheld, mobile camera. Often, it's a matter of playing around until, say, something funny happens. That's hard to write down in advance."

On the Edge introduces Danica Curcic, a talented young actress in her first leading role. She's Martin's dream girl, but Nikolaj, his best friend, falls in love with her, too. Cyron Melville, who also starred in Christiansen's first feature, *Life Hits*, is back as Nikolaj, while Martin is played by Jakob Oftebro. Both Curcic and Oftebro are in the



Photo: Martin Dam Christiansen

Christian E. Christiansen

Director, born 1972. Christiansen's Hollywood debut, *The Roommate* (2011), was the first ever film directed by a Dane to go straight to number one on the American box-office charts. His second Hollywood film, *Where the Devil Hides*, is opening later this year. Christiansen graduated in production from the National Film School of Denmark in 2001 and worked as a producer on several Danish productions before making his directorial debut in 2006 with *Life Hits*. He was nominated for an Oscar for his short film *At Night* (2007), which he developed into the feature *Crying for Love* (2008). *On the Edge* is Christiansen's seventh film as a director.

spotlight at this year's Berlinale as two out of the 10 European acting talents promoted under the Shooting Star initiative.

Love of Realism

Several of the talented young actresses Christiansen worked with in *Life Hits* also appeared in his next feature, *Crying for Love* (2008), which was based on his Oscar-nominated short film *At Night* (2007).

Both films are about three seriously ill young women in a cancer ward at Christmas and New Year's. In 40 compact minutes the short film concentrates on their life at the hospital, while the feature film expands the story in flashbacks.

"The short film had the biggest impact, I think, because it made the audience fill in the blanks of the three girls' lives," Christiansen says.

On the Edge, his seventh feature, sees the director returning to the raw realism of his first film eight years ago that seems like his most personal form of expression.

"Sure, I've tried somewhat different directions since then," he says, "but realism probably comes most natural to me. I like all sorts of different films when I go to the movies, but British realism-films like Andrea Arnold's *Fish Tank* and Ken Loach's *Sweet Sixteen* really grab me.

"I'm currently planning to mix the raw, realistic style with a classic whodunit. Some of my ideas develop into Danish films, others are more mainstream and become English-language films," the Danish director says. His second Hollywood film, *Where the Devil Hides*, is due out later this year ■

On the Edge, which had its world premiere at the Rotterdam International Film Festival, is produced by Louise Vesth, Senia Dremstrup and Jakob Balslev for Zentropa. For more information, see reverse section. Read profile of Danica Curcic on page 16.



On the Edge Photo: Christian Geisnæs



VIEWS ON NYMPHOMANIAC

Six months after the infamous press conference in Cannes, 2011, Lars von Trier stopped making public statements. "I have realised that I do not possess the skills to express myself unequivocally," the director said, adding that he would now dedicate himself fully to his films. On the following pages, we let von Trier's story supervisor, actors, marketing people and critics tell the tale of the controversial director and his erotic epic *Nymphomaniac*.

"It is never boring and does provoke and stimulate, although not as a turn-on, not remotely. At its core the film represents an intellectual male artist's arduous, wayward, idiocentric, blunt, naughty-boy attempt to address Freud's famous question: 'What does a woman want?'"

Todd McCarthy,
The Hollywood Reporter

NYMPHOMANIAC / REVIEWS AND FACTS

International critics are generally intrigued by Lars von Trier's four-hour opus combining the story of Joe, a self-proclaimed nymphomaniac, with reflections on fly fishing, organ playing, world literature and so much more. Here are some excerpts from the first round of international reviews:

Berlin Official Programme Out of Competition

"PERPLEXING, PREPOSTEROUS AND UTTERLY FASCINATING"

"World cinema's enfant terrible Lars von Trier re-emerges as its dirty-old-man terrible, delivering a dense, career-encompassing work designed to shock, provoke and ultimately enlighten a public he considers altogether too prudish."

Peter Debruge, Variety

"Forget the headline-grabbing exploitation-based marketing images that have been gleefully circulated online. The slimline version of Lars von Trier's digressive, character-driven odyssey may show a lot of naked fun times, but it is more deeply concerned with loneliness, self-loathing and what becomes of a person whose behaviour takes them beyond the limits of polite society."

Sophie Monks Kaufman,
Little White Lies

"Nymphomaniac is indeed a major work that tries and, to a large extent, succeeds to organically synthesize the world, ideas and filmmaking savvy of von Trier in one sprawling and ambitious cinematic fable."

Boyd van Hoeij, Indiewire

"Chaotic and not especially pretty, the film has more of the punkish, radical spirit of von Trier's The Idiots or Dogville than the gloss or contained drama of Melancholia or Antichrist. (...) [The film displays] a sort of narrative playfulness that keeps you close and keeps you guessing – even if it also stops von Trier from doing anything as conservative or reassuring as offering a clear opinion or coherent perspective via his teasing scrapbook of sexual adventure."

Dave Calhoun, Time Out

"It is perplexing, preposterous and utterly fascinating. (...) Personally I found this a bruising, gruelling experience and yet the film has stayed with me. It is so laden with highly charged set pieces, so dappled with haunting ideas and bold flights of fancy that it finally achieves a kind of slow-burn transcendence. Nymphomaniac annoys me, repels me, and I think I might love it. It's an abusive relationship; I need to see it again."

Xan Brooks, The Guardian

"It's easily von Trier's funniest picture since The Idiots. (...) It's typical of von Trier to turn erotics into maths and vice versa, but wait until you see how the Fibonacci business pays off, and what it has to do with Bach's organ music, and why both help to explain Joe's seemingly unquenchable longing for multiple partners."

Tim Robey, The Telegraph

"Yes it is provocative, funny, smart, wry and challenging (though never sexy) but it is also a remarkable project brimming with bold and often thoughtful performances. It is Lars von Trier at his best and his most frustrating at the same time, but is always watchable and intriguing."

Mark Adams, Screen Daily

FACTS

■ *Nymphomaniac* charts the development of a woman's sexuality from childhood to middle age. When we first meet the protagonist, Joe, she is found beaten in a dark alley by a bookish bachelor, Seligman. He takes her home and tends to her wounds, while she takes inventory of her extreme sex life. Spanning eight chapters, the film recounts Joe's experiences in a story rich in associations and interspersed events.

■ *Nymphomaniac* is the final film of what von Trier has called his "Trilogy of Depression." The two other films are *Antichrist* and *Melancholia*. All three star Charlotte Gainsbourg.

■ In an interview with Dave Calhoun in Time Out in October 2011, before von Trier stopped making public statements, he said that *Nymphomaniac* would be "extremely long, extremely boring and extremely philosophical."

■ The film is supported by the Danish Film Institute, as were most of von Trier's past films.

■ Long-time members of von Trier's film family behind the camera include assistant director Anders Refn, editor Molly Malene Stensgaard, visual effects supervisor Peter Hjort, sound designer Kristian Eidnes Andersen, production designer Simone Grau and costume designer Manon Rasmussen. Since *Melancholia*, the film family has expanded to include director of photography Manuel Alberto Claro, screenwriter Vinca Wiedemann and producer Louise Vesth.

■ *Nymphomaniac* is available in two versions: a four-hour version and a five-and-a-half-hour version. Both versions are distributed in two parts, Volume 1 and 2.

■ The four-hour version opened in Denmark and in Spain on 25 December and will open in the UK on 7 March and in numerous other European countries over the following months. In the US, the film's two volumes are being released separately: Volume 1 is out on VOD on 6 March and in theatres on 21 March, Volume 2 opens on VOD on 3 April and in theatres on 18 April.

■ The long version of *Nymphomaniac* Volume 1 is selected for the official programme Out of Competition at the Berlin film festival 2014.

**CHARLOTTE GAINSBOURG:
TAKE THE FILM AND SEE
WHAT IT DOES TO YOU**

About *Nymphomaniac*

For me, the character Joe is Lars, so it's hard to think of her as a woman. In my mind, he has put himself in both Seligman and Joe. You couldn't find two more opposite characters, and that's who he is.

I think you should take the film and see what it does to you. That's it. You don't need to have explanations for everything. I mean, I don't need that, anyway. Try and go through the film and live it. I think that's the only thing you should do.

I know people have said that Lars doesn't like women, but I don't see how you can portray characters with so much depth and not feel for them. I think he loves women.

Working with von Trier

The unexpected is the best part. Starting a scene, you don't know where you are going. He doesn't give you any indication. Of course, the scene is written, but you can take it anyplace. It's quite scary. You have to dare being ridiculous and being bad – and you are quite bad at first. And then he comes in and helps you. He doesn't do that on purpose to make you uncomfortable. He needs to see it to be able to articulate and explore with you.

An orgasm is an orgasm, but when you have someone say "Surprise me," you really don't know what to do.

He has this compulsive need to show every dark aspect of himself, but with humour. He is generous in that sense, that he's willing to show it all. And he does not make any compromises.

Sometimes I have a feeling that I'm part of his family, and sometimes not. He's very unpredictable. I'm just very happy that I was able to do those three films. And for him to take me to really different places each time. I think I would agree to do any film with him.

He understands every wink you make. It's like having someone read you better than you read yourself.

**STACY MARTIN:
A CELEBRATION OF
FEMALE EMPOWERMENT**

About *Nymphomaniac*

Joe is such a great character, and as an actress that's what appeals to me. The nakedness and the sexual content obviously are part of her, but that's not all that she is. To play her was an opportunity I couldn't say no to.



Nymphomaniac Photo: Christian Geisnæs

A groundbreaking picture-maker with a reputation as cinema's enfant terrible, Lars von Trier is a magnet for international stars. At the heart of *Nymphomaniac*, revolving around Joe who relates her extreme sex life to a bookish bachelor, Seligman, are three actors: Charlotte Gainsbourg as Joe, Stacy Martin as young Joe, and Stellan Skarsgaard as Seligman. Here they discuss their work on the film.

THE ACTORS

Charlotte Gainsbourg

Born 1971 in London. Daughter of English actress Jane Birkin and French singer and songwriter Serge Gainsbourg. She has acted in von Trier's last three films, *Antichrist*, *Melancholia* and *Nymphomaniac*.

Stacy Martin

Born 1990. Model and actress. *Nymphomaniac* is Stacy Martin's debut film.

Stellan Skarsgaard

Born 1951 in Gothenburg. A Lars von Trier veteran, Stellan Skarsgaard has appeared in, among others, *Breaking the Waves*, *Melancholia*, *Dogville* and *Dancer in the Dark*.

She's very self-driven and she's happy to stay on her own. Quite lonely, in that way. She's also not afraid of not pleasing others and from that carelessness she has around people, she becomes her own person and builds upon that.

I didn't particularly relate to her. I admired her determination, because as a woman it is very important to stand up for yourself, and I think she has a lot of that. I did relate to her being young and discovering her sexuality. We've all had these first experiences. It might have been good or bad, but we've all gone there.

In the beginning, Lars wanted to cast someone who looked completely different from Charlotte [Gainsbourg, ed.] The fact that I look kind of like her is a coincidence. What Lars is saying is that all women have a sexuality. It's a common desire. That's how we live. That's how we manage to survive.

It's a celebration of female sexuality but also a celebration of female empowerment.

Working with von Trier

Normally, you don't get to work with the people you admire so early on in your career, if you ever get the chance. So to actually do that in my first movie is just a big stroke of luck.

Lars gave me a lot of freedom when he was directing me. He didn't really say, "Do this, do that, it has to be like this." The only direction he gave me was, "You have to give a bad blowjob, Stacy."

I don't have a list of people I want to be working with. As soon as you start making lists, that's when nothing happens.



Nymphomaniac Photo: Zentropa

**STELLAN SKARSGAARD:
PAIN IS A PART OF LIFE**

About *Nymphomaniac*

Some people will get upset without even having seen the film. As they tend to. But to me that just makes it more necessary to do. Any society that starts forbidding certain words or expressions from being said, that's a society you should be very wary about, whether it's the KGB doing it or it's the social consensus of a puritan society. I develop a kind of Tourette's when I'm not allowed to say certain things.

Pain is a part of life and if you protect yourself too much, you miss out on the only opportunity you have to experience life.

In his earlier films, Lars was always much tighter to the narrative. If this film had been tighter to the narrative, it would of course have been a lot shorter and it might have come out in one version, but it wouldn't have been so pleasant to watch.

The Cannes Incident

It was such an awful incident. And I understand why he's keeping quiet now. He was sitting in a room with people he thought were his friends, and they all knew him. They all knew he isn't a Nazi. And the next day it was all over the world. His children were walking to school and the headlines proclaimed, "Lars von Trier is a Nazi."

He was badly hurt. I just got angry. He's a man who is always forthright and honest. If he can't be forthright and honest to journalists, he can't talk to them. It's sad.

The Seligman in him was too innocent to understand that you can't say that because somebody – even if it's a lie – will use it to sell papers.

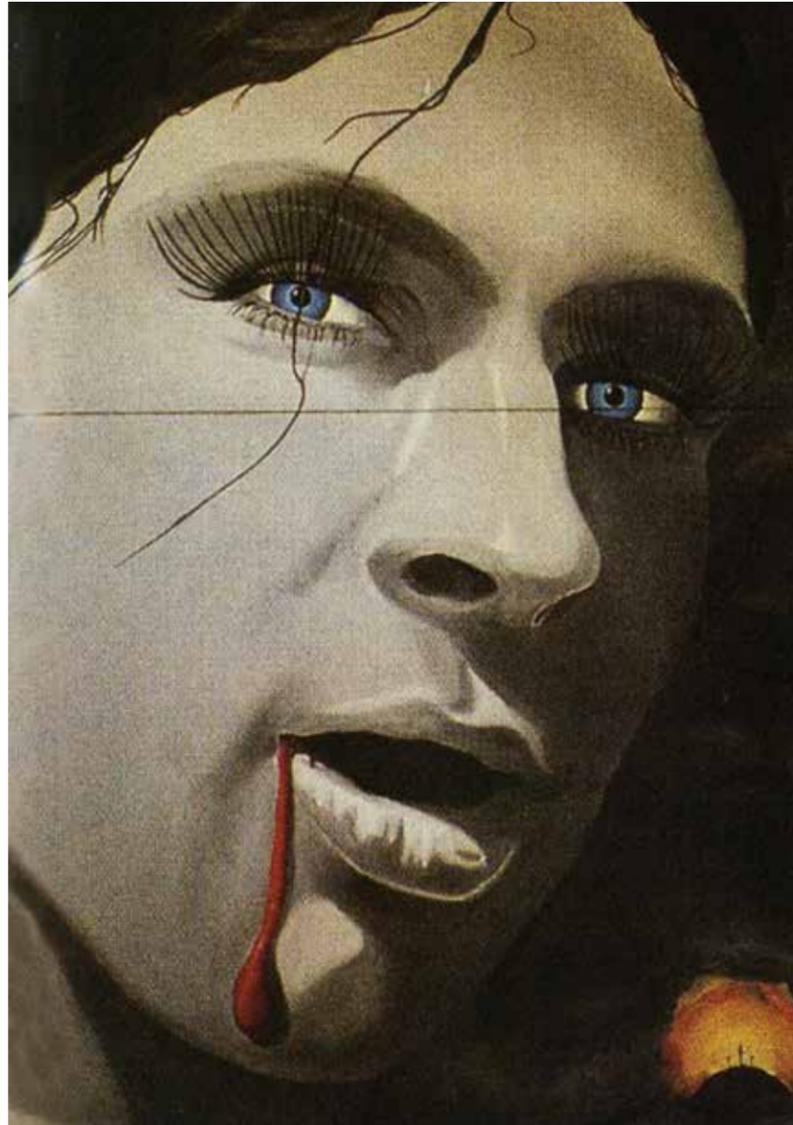
Working with von Trier

Before he started writing the scripts, he called me and said, "Stellan, my next film will be a porno film and I want you to play the main lead in it. But you won't get to fuck. But you will show your dick in the end and it's going to be very floppy." And I said, "Yeah, Lars, I'm in."

The main pleasure of working with Lars is that you feel absolutely free and safe. You can't fail. If you fuck up, it's considered good. You tried something.

I don't even consider it work. We're just two kids playing ■

Quotes from press meeting in Copenhagen, December 2013. Edited by Nynne Østergaard.



[6] Self-portrait of the artist as a young man

Nymphomaniac, like all of Lars von Trier's work, is created within a freedom of expression that has a long tradition in Danish social and cultural life.

LARS VON TRIER AND CULTURAL LIBERALISM

By Peter Schepeleern

Nymphomaniac is Lars von Trier's new provocative work. It stands out by its narrative style, a style of digressions, but in particular by the themes it presents: female sexuality, humiliation, revenge. It is a cinema of cruelty, a cinema of punishment – and self-punishment. Forget about love, as the tagline says.

In the months to come, a lot of critics and commentators will undoubtedly be analysing the film. Von Trier, with his complex and ambiguous films, has a unique talent for keeping the interpretation industry occupied. His satirical wit and intellectual energy challenge us with allegories and symbolic acts that call for interpretation – much like the inkblots of psychology's Rorschach Test.

The following is not an interpretation of *Nymphomaniac* but a brief presentation of certain tendencies and traditions in Danish culture and society that constitute the background of von Trier and his career and may explain some aspects of his new film.

Modernity and Freethinking

Denmark has a history of what usually translates as Cultural Liberalism. In Denmark we call it Cultural Radicalism, which makes it sound more revolutionary than it actually is. It refers to an intellectual trend of modernity and enlightenment that started in the late 19th century as an action against conventionality and hypocrisy and was typically, but not exclusively, left wing, pro-free speech, anti-church and anti-nationalist.

The founder and dominant figure of this tradition was Georg Brandes (1842-1927) [1], a Danish-Jewish critic who was behind what we call the Modern Breakthrough of the 1870s, which brought realism, social and psychological modernity, secular and Darwinist thinking, not only into Danish literature but generally into European culture in the fin-de-siècle era. Brandes, who became an icon of autonomy, freethinking and free love, had a wide international network and was in close contact with Ibsen, Strindberg and Nietzsche, whom he brought to the world's attention.

When Brandes died in 1927, the role of fearless scold of his times was taken over by Poul Henningsen (1894-1967) [2], a Danish architect, designer – his lamps are famous – writer, debater and, on one outstanding occasion, also filmmaker. In Henningsen, liberated, anti-bourgeois modernity found its most significant voice in the '30s, '40s and '50s. He represented liberal-minded and secular views on art, politics, parenting and sexuality that influenced younger intellectuals, in particular.

This brings us to von Trier. His parents, who were young in the 1930s, belonged to this segment.

Growing Up without Any Rules

Trier, who invented his "von" as a sarcastic joke in his youth, grew up in an affluent neighbourhood north of Copenhagen in a typical "cultural liberal" home. His parents, both academics and civil servants working at ministries, were left wing: a Jewish but non-religious father (who, it later turned out, was not his biological father) and a communist mother who took part in the resistance movement during the German occupation of Denmark (1940-45). Two of the most important Danish communist writers of the period, Hans Kirk and Hans Scherfig, would visit von Trier's childhood home, and his mother worshiped Bertolt Brecht (whose influence on von Trier's *Dogville* is obvious).

Von Trier had a childhood in which the child – in accordance with the new ideas about parenting – was respected as a creative individual with full integrity. Perhaps paradoxically, von Trier has pointed to this freedom, his upbringing without any rules, as the main cause of the anxiety attacks he has struggled with throughout his life.

Mad, Suffering Artists

The young Lars Trier was fascinated by European fin-de-siècle culture, with its decadence, death drive and misogyny. Nietzsche [3] and Strindberg [4], in particular, were important inspirations for him, pointing back to the heritage from Brandes.

They remain important inspirations for the not-so-young von Trier. This is evident in *Antichrist*, the result of a Strindbergian "inferno crisis" (the title, of course, came from Nietzsche), and in *Nymphomaniac*. Compare the Uma Thurman scene with Strindberg's one-act play, *The Stronger*.

As a child, von Trier acted in a children's TV series, while he made his first public statement as an adult in 1976, at 19, with an article in a local newspaper [5]. The photo shows a young man who is already consciously constructing his artistic persona. The article is about Strindberg and his madness, and Edvard Munch, the painter, and his madness. Von Trier liked the idea of mad, suffering artists. The self-portrait of the artist as a young man, with a vampire-like drop of blood and Calvary in the background, shows how he saw, or imagined, himself [6], contrary to the nice young man in the photo taken from around the same time (c. 1975) [7].

Freedom and Pornography

Danish culture and society in the years when von Trier grew up were marked by a political decision that could be seen as a sensational triumph for cultural liberalism, though it was mainly the product of a right-wing government. Denmark was the first country in the world to abolish laws against pornography – text in 1967 and images in 1969. Moreover, in 1969, Denmark was the first country to abolish film censorship for the grownup population

(in 1997 all film censorship was abolished). Scandinavian cinema had already acquired an international reputation for daring sexual frankness in the years before – the Danish film *A Stranger Knocks* and the Swedish films *The Silence* (by Ingmar Bergman) and *I am Curious* were sensations abroad.

In Denmark, the legalization of pornography was, perhaps somewhat naively, seen as a victory for freedom of expression – in line with the new spirit of liberation that washed over the Western world in the 1960s. This new freedom, however, did not result in an explosion of pornography in Danish films. Instead a number of light erotic comedies were put out that in often bizarre ways combined sexual elements with the traditional Danish folk comedy. One example, *Agent 69 Jensen in the Sign of Sagittarius* (1978), shows us the legendary Danish King Christian IV among hedonistic activities in a weird hospital – a grotesque mixture of hardcore sex, hospital farce and flag-waving [8].

While the Danish pornographic film business faded out relatively quickly – puritanical America very soon took over and established an adult film industry even bigger than Hollywood – the myth of Scandinavia as a haven of pornography lives on to this day, and von Trier's new film *Nymphomaniac* will very likely add to the myth. Certainly, sexuality has always been an important element of fascination in von Trier's work, though he does not connect to the jovial, humorous Danish tradition but rather, as in Bergman's oeuvre, presents sexuality as a field of torment, obsession and depravity. Not only did von Trier read Nietzsche, Strindberg and Freud as a young man, he was also fascinated by Pauline Réage's *The Story of O* and Marquis de Sade's *Justine*, as well as films like Cavani's *The Night Porter* and Pasolini's *Salò*, which he later re-imported for distribution in Denmark.

Chains and Whips Revisited

Von Trier's fascination with sexuality as a dark, demonic force is quite evident in the first two films he made during his student years in the late '70s. Privately financed, *The Orchid Gardener* [9] and *Menthe la bienheureuse* [10] (freely adapted from *The Story of O*) with their chains and whips and lustful punishment clearly anticipate both *Antichrist* and *Nymphomaniac*.

Von Trier has largely kept these films out of view for the last 35 years, but a few years ago – when he



[1] Danish critic Georg Brandes



[3] German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche

[2] Architect, designer and debater Poul Henningsen and his famous lamps





[4] Swedish playwright and novelist August Strindberg

[5] Lars von Trier's first public statement



was still making public statements – he said “that *Antichrist* quite well referred back to the first film I made, *The Orchid Gardener* – with the masculine and the feminine.”

Sexuality also haunts his first feature, *The Element of Crime* (1984), with its sexual serial killings of little girls and a detective who tries to solve the case through a sadistic relationship with a prostitute. *Breaking the Waves*, his international breakthrough, daringly mixes sexual abuse and religious self-sacrifice. *The Idiots*, his *Dogma* film, includes a group sex scene (with professional porn actors lending authenticity). It is perhaps significant that when, as an exception, he made a film, *Dancer in the Dark*, that had no sexual theme at all, he won the Golden Palm in Cannes. *Dogville* is about sexual molestation and humiliation, while in *Antichrist* the sexual theme is pursued with maximum attention, as now again in *Nymphomaniac*.

Both *Antichrist* and *Nymphomaniac* can be seen as heroic attempts to take explicit and transgressive sexuality back from the adult film industry. Sexuality is far too serious an issue to be left to the porn industry.

Scorn, Mockery and Ridicule

Two other significant examples should be mentioned – one older, the other quite recent – illustrating the Danish tradition of freedom of expression and the controversies it can create.

In 2005, the right-wing daily *Jyllands-Posten*, seeking to challenge self-censorship in the Danish media, asked a number of cartoonists to portray the

prophet Muhammad, an offence against the traditional Muslim ban on representing the prophet. The newspaper made the argument that “In a society with democracy and freedom of speech one should be prepared to endure scorn, mockery and ridicule.” As is well known, rather large groups of the world’s population were not prepared to endure this.

More than 30 years earlier there had been a somewhat parallel case. In 1973 a screenplay by the Danish painter, filmmaker and happening-artist Jens Jørgen Thorsen was recommended for state support under the Film Commissioner Programme of the newly established Danish Film Institute. The screenplay, *The Many Faces of Jesus*, presents Jesus as a modern, very sexually active terrorist [11]. A scandal soon erupted. Over the next couple of years, thousands of protest letters poured in from all over the world. The Pope condemned Denmark as “the pigsty of the world.” After heavy political pressure, both national and international, state support was withdrawn. The motivation was that the film would offend the moral rights of the evangelists. There was, it turned out, a limit to the Danish freedom of speech after all.

Thorsen, who had himself photographed crucified and nude, appealed the decision and 11 years later, the decision was ruled to be illegal. But the film was never made. Numerous artists had voiced their support for the anarchist and hedonistic dissident, including the young von Trier.

Scandalous Sarcasm

It is this Danish tradition of intellectual protest, of controversial statements about sex, religion and conventional humanistic values, that forms the background for von Trier’s work.

He is a specialist of sorts in tweaking conventional, politically correct issues and opinions. His Hitler remarks in Cannes 2011 were heard around the world. The incident, in some ways, paralleled the cartoon controversy. In both cases, expressions that are acceptable in the Danish tradition of “scorn, mockery and ridicule” appear scandalous when made in an international forum. Hitler and the Holocaust are not issues to be treated with sarcastic detachment (though isn’t that exactly what Tarantino did with *Inglourious Basterds* at the same festival?)

A more local example of von Trier’s sarcasm goes back to 2003. That year, a Danish political activist, to protest against Denmark’s participation in the Iraq War, faked his way into the Danish parliament in Copenhagen and threw red paint in the face of Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen [12]. During the run-up to the election two years later, von Trier made himself up in the same way, with paint/blood on his face, and released the photo to the press with a statement against the right-wing government, in particular the nationalist party that guaranteed the government its majority in parliament: “Dear Anders Fogh ... your parliamentary basis is still filthy!” [13]

Von Trier’s films are full of provocative views. In *Dogville*, the massacre of the innocent – and the not so innocent – seems to be justified. In *Manderlay*, slavery seems to be justified, which insulted many American critics. And in *Antichrist*, the nameless woman, seemingly representing womanhood, is linked to the evil of nature and, of course, feminist commentators generally hated the film.

However, we can’t necessarily deduce von Trier’s personal opinions from his films. With typically evasive irony, he once said, “One of my techniques is to defend an idea or a view that is not mine” (The Observer).



What about Male Sexuality?

Nymphomaniac is the latest work in which von Trier controversially presents a vision of woman, a new variation of the *femme fatale*. After all of these haunting explorations into the dangerous wilderness of female sexuality, which continues to loom as a dark, mysterious enigma, one might ask, What about male sexuality?

In fact, there is a von Trier film on the subject, a commercial, often called *Sauna*, that he made in 1986 for the Copenhagen tabloid *Ekstra Bladet* (search for *Ekstra Bladet pub* on YouTube). The camera roves in a men’s sauna, where a young man discovers that a vent in the wall lets him peek into the women’s sauna. A stern matronly attendant on the other side notices the eyes behind the vent and angrily lines up all the men in order to find the culprit. There he stands, hiding his erect member under a newspaper. The punch line goes, “What would we do without *Ekstra Bladet*?” Here we get von Trier’s judgment on male sexuality. It’s a very simple thing: no death or a demonic fall into darkness – just desire, with a visual angle [14].

You will note that, while von Trier has investigated female sexuality over several hours in several films, it takes a lot less time to present male sexuality. The *Ekstra Bladet* commercial is male sexuality and Danish cultural liberalism – in 45 short seconds ■

[13] Lars von Trier's press statement in February 2005

Peter Schepelern

Peter Schepelern is Associate Professor at University of Copenhagen where Lars von Trier was a student in 1976-79, before he was accepted at the National Film School of Denmark. Schepelern has published books on von Trier (in Danish) as well as a number of articles on von Trier, on *Dogme 95*, and on contemporary Danish cinema. His article on *Dogme 95* and its effect on Danish cinema can be found at kosmorama.org.



[11] The Many Faces of Jesus by Jens Jørgen Thorsen

[10] Lars von Trier's *Menthe la bienheureuse* (see ubuweb.com)

[12] Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen with red paint in 2003

[14] *Sauna*, commercial film for the tabloid *Ekstra Bladet*, by Lars von Trier



The first poster for the film, which went around the world in May 2013, shows a closed set of parentheses with the words "FORGET ABOUT LOVE. NYMPHOMANIAC. COMING SOON." The parentheses were von Trier's idea and elsewhere replace the O in the title. The symbolism is unmistakable.



THE CAMPAIGN

For months before its premiere, Lars von Trier's *Nymphomaniac* was trending on social media and news sites the world over – thanks in large part to a remarkable 10-month publicity campaign. FILM looks behind the campaign that introduced the world to 14 O-faced orgasm posters and a suggestive pair of parentheses.

By Nynne Østergaard

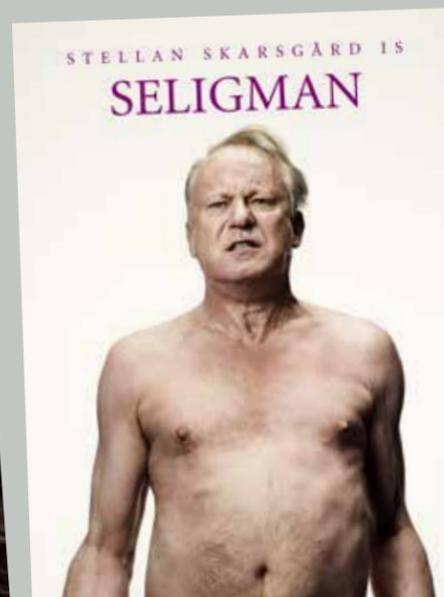


Photo: Anna Winthling-Laurson

Apart from teasing and tantalising, the orgasm posters stand out because they don't mirror the film's look, unlike so many other movie posters these days. And they definitely stood out in Copenhagen's urban spaces, as the campaign was rolled out in the streets, in the metro stations, on billboards and on bus stands during the film's Danish cinema release over Christmas.



Photo: Clear Channel

"If you ever had sex, this film may be for you," Philip Einstein Lipski says. As the Einstein Couple, he and his wife and business partner Maria Einstein Biilmann are behind the eye-catching campaign for *Nymphomaniac*. The basic idea of merging the high-culture phenomenon of "Lars von Trier" with the low-culture phenomenon of porno – or, at least, explicit sex – was a tenet for the Einsteins in developing a campaign to make von Trier accessible to wider audiences.

Previously, the custom was to launch von Trier's films with a premiere at Cannes, as was the case with *Melancholia* and *Antichrist*. But *Nymphomaniac*, an epic undertaking with a 298-page script, would never be ready in time for that. Also, the relationship between von Trier and Cannes had changed since his press conference in 2011. Producer Louise Vesth wanted to try something brand new, so she got in touch with the Einsteins, whom she had previously worked with on films like *Klown*, *A Royal Affair* and *The Keeper of Lost Causes*, and after meeting with von Trier, they got the job.

Postponing the world premiere until Christmas Day 2013 presented the Einstein Couple and Louise Vesth with a whole new set of opportunities to put the time to good use. The first still from the film was released during last year's Berlinale in February and shows Charlotte Gainsbourg as Joe the nymphomaniac lying on the ground, beaten, in a dark back alley. The next still, which was released a few days later, really broadcast the theme of the film. The picture shows an undressed Charlotte Gainsbourg standing between two equally nude black men.

Ever since, an expectant audience has been fed little teasers in the form of posters and clips from the film, slowly but surely building buzz around *Nymphomaniac*.

The *Nymphomaniac* campaign has had an especially active life on social media, with people the world over sharing and commenting on the carefully meted-out titbits from the film. This is especially true for the 14 character posters showing the actors with parted lips, closed eyes and tousled hair in moments of ecstasy, making their so-called O-faces.

Eight times, the Einsteins and a small crew, including the photographer Casper Sejersen, flew to Cologne where the film was being shot, to capture the different actors during breaks in the shooting. They didn't see much of von Trier, who had announced that he would not be available during the shoot. He wanted to keep his role as filmmaker pure in relation to his actors.

So the Einsteins directed the campaign themselves. As it turned out, the actors had very different ways of approaching the task, Einstein Lipski says. The Swedish actor Stellan Skarsgaard, who plays Seligman, a charming bachelor to whom Joe the nymphomaniac tells her life story, showed up on the set, took off all his clothes and said in a relaxed manner, "So, what do you want me to do?" Others were more modest. In general, Einstein Lipski says, the photo shoots revealed major cultural differences between the Americans and the Europeans in their perception and approach to sex.



Nymphomaniac's character posters have definitely had a life of their own. Danish film critics even spoofed the posters on the invite to their annual Bodil awards ceremony with the words, "They are coming to the Bodils. Are you?" In January their Polish colleagues followed in their footsteps with a set of orgasmic posters meant to heat things up on the occasion of Poland's premiere of *Nymphomaniac*.

The Einstein Couple

The Einstein Couple are Philip Einstein Lipski and Maria Einstein Biilmann, who both have a past as creatives in worldwide and local advertising agencies in Copenhagen. Working in movie marketing since 2008, they have created campaigns for films such as *The Girl with The Dragon Tattoo*, *Klown*, *A Royal Affair*, *The Keeper of Lost Causes* and, now, *Nymphomaniac*. Philip is also the founder and director of Animation Film Studio, Einstein Film. Entire campaign: nymphomaniacthemovie.com

Vinca Wiedemann combined the roles of scribe, inspiration and editor when she and Lars von Trier co-wrote the 298-page script for *Nymphomaniac*, the director's stab at a novel in film form.

MORNINGS WITH VON TRIER



As told to Per Juul Carlsen

What was your role in developing the screenplay for *Nymphomaniac*?

My role was to sit with Lars von Trier during the whole screenplay development phase, that is, the phase when you figure out the story and the details and get it written down, so you have a script, a working document, you can use to give to the investors and to tell the film crew and the cast about the film and your thoughts behind it. During that process, I sat with von Trier every day over a very long period. I sat at the computer and wrote while Lars told the story and we talked.

"When von Trier first hired me, he did so with the words, "I don't want a writer. I just want you to ghost for me!"

I think it's such a wild story! It's Lars von Trier's story 100 percent. I just helped him get it down on paper. It's a fantasy that's completely unique.

Concretely, what happened was we sat together from 10 to 12 o'clock every morning and wrote and talked. It was very business-like that way.

Why do you think von Trier picked you for the job?

Well, I've been used to working with screenplays with a lot of directors. He and I also worked together years ago when I wrote the screenplay for *The Lady of Hamre*, which was the first thing I ever wrote. So we know each other from back then.

I saw *Antichrist* when it premiered at Cannes in 2009. It was amazing to see the film before anyone had told you what it was about or what to think about it. Just like you can start off on the wrong foot, as they say, you can also start a film off on the right foot. I felt like I understood it 100 percent and I lost myself in it. I thought it was amazing. I told him so afterwards. Soon after, he asked me if I would like to write *Melancholia* with him, or more exactly, sit with him while he wrote ... We can all use a compliment. Maybe that's all there is to it.

Couldn't von Trier simply have written *Nymphomaniac* down himself?

No, because then I'm pretty sure he would have done it. On *Melancholia*, we did roughly the same process, except he did a write-through himself in the final phase, when more dialogue had to be added. But on *Nymphomaniac*, he decided he didn't want to sit with it alone, so I ended up sitting there with him the whole time.

I think it's about – well, you know what it's like – having these thoughts you think are really good, but the moment you sit down at the computer, a self-censoring mechanism kicks in. You're having a dialogue with yourself and the computer screen. When you see what you have written, you immediately start editing.

Von Trier is insanely ambitious and demanding of himself and his ideas, and I think it's a relief for him not to have to sit there and look at the "shit"

he makes up [laughs] but can just speak it. When he just tells it to me, it disappears in a way. Then he doesn't have to focus on it. Then he can just focus on the thoughts, ideas and visions he has, and he can use me as a sounding board when there's something he isn't sure about, or he just wants to talk himself warm about a setup. But he doesn't have to deal with the editing part of the process. I handle that.

But don't you also become a sort of censoring authority or editor? Don't you risk ruining von Trier's ideas as they come pouring out of him?

Yes, it's the greatest Buddhist exercise I ever got myself into, writing with von Trier, because it's most definitely not about what I think, or the ideas and opinions and visions I have. It's always about getting into what he wants.

When von Trier first hired me, he did so with the words, "I don't want a writer. I just want you to ghost for me!" I most definitely would not be having a distinguished or creative function. It would be a subordinate function.

"It's the greatest Buddhist exercise I ever got myself into, writing with von Trier, because it's most definitely not about what I think. It's always about getting into what he wants."

He also told me, "You have to be an intelligent claqueur!" Which means, he said, that "When I come up with an idea, you have to encourage me and say, 'What a great idea! How fun! That's brilliant!'" But I also want to be able to tell by your voice a little bit that you really think it's great but maybe it could be a little better. You have to encourage me and cheer me on, so I feel like outdoing myself, so I can make the joke even funnier or come up with something even more inventive. That's your assignment."

Von Trier is a person, an artist, who is always trying to outwit himself or take himself by surprise. He loves to construct, but constructing can also become too perfect. A perfect construction without flaws or flukes does not let a lot pass through. It's in those flaws, and in the places where things suddenly take a strange turn, that real life emerges. I think you see that in all art, including cinema. And von Trier likes what happens when things aren't too perfect. That also fed the idea of doing something that was so big that we couldn't see the whole thing in advance.

What words did you use when you talked about *Nymphomaniac* and the kind of film it should be?

We were consumed by the same literary classics and we talked about them a lot as we went along. We

both read Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*. I doubt that either of us would have got through it if we hadn't had each other to compete with [laughs]. Giving up would have been too irritating. We often interrogated each other about how far we had come. It was really annoying in those periods when he was ahead of me.

We have also both read Dostoyevsky and Thomas Mann, those big, fat novels. The way of telling a story, and the richness and complexity that all three writers have in their novels, was a big inspiration in terms of form.

I think Lars really wanted to make a novel in film. Not a film that was like a novel, but still his



way of doing a novel. When you work in film and you then read a novel, it's annoying to see how much more can be included in a novel than in a film. Then, film can suddenly seem like a very feeble and primitive medium, because thoughts are so hard to express.

Another very important issue, of course, was, What is sexuality in relation to human existence? How do our instincts interact with what we might call free will? Is it possible to consider instinct and free will as non-opposites? Instincts are what we have in common with animals. Do animals have free will? Sexuality is a fantastic jumping-off point for portraying people ■

Vinca Wiedemann is taking over as head of the National Film School of Denmark on 1 March. Read more on page 32.

This article is an edited version of a radio interview broadcast on the Danish national broadcaster DR.

“THE COLLABORATIVE COMES OUT OF

The soon-to-be head of the National Film School of Denmark is a well-liked and experienced person in the Danish film industry. **Vinca Wiedemann** points to the school as a foundation for the success of Danish cinema.



Director Lars von Trier Photo: Zentropa



Vinca Wiedemann Photo: Susette Bornlein

TRADITION THE FILM SCHOOL”

Vinca Wiedemann

Vinca Wiedemann, 54, trained as a film editor at the National Film School of Denmark and later taught there (1990-95). Wiedemann joined the Danish Film Institute in 1999 as Feature Film Commissioner. In 2003, she established the New Danish Screen talent development programme at the DFI and served as its first artistic director.

From 2007, Wiedemann worked as an independent script consultant, producer and writer. In 2010, she joined Zentropa as creative producer, signing such films as Susanne Bier's Oscar winner *In a Better World* and Pernille Fischer Christensen's *A Family and Someone You Love*. As story supervisor, Wiedemann is behind such titles as Thomas Vinterberg's *The Hunt* and Susanne Bier's *Love Is All You Need*. She worked closely with Lars von Trier on his screenplays for *Melancholia* and *Nymphomaniac*.

The National Film School of Denmark

A state school funded by the Danish Ministry of Culture, the National Film School offers programmes in film, TV, scriptwriting and animation directing. Total enrolment is around 100. All lines of study are four-year programmes, except for the two-year scriptwriting programme. Founded in 1966 by Theodor Christensen, the school is located on the islet of Frederiksholm in Copenhagen Harbour.

By Peter Nicolai Gudme

Vinca Wiedemann is participating in the 2014 Berlinale as the producer of Pernille Fischer Christensen's *Someone You Love*. Wiedemann also co-wrote Lars von Trier's screenplay for *Nymphomaniac*. In years past, she served as script consultant on films by directors like Thomas Vinterberg and Susanne Bier.

On 1 March, Wiedemann will be assuming her new position as head of the National Film School of Denmark. Then she will no longer be collaborating directly with established Danish film directors but prompting future filmmakers to find their own voices and their own stories. The appointment has met with wide approval in the Danish film community, as leading directors and producers point out her eye for good art, her ability to draw out talent, her multidisciplinary knowledge of the

craft of filmmaking and her excellent national and international network.

“It gives me a huge boost to know that people are supporting my appointment at the Film School. It signals how much importance people in the business place on the school and how much they attribute their own success to it,” Wiedemann says.

The National Film School, she says, is more central to the local film industry than film schools in other countries. An industry school, she calls it. Not because the industry exerts pressure on the school, but on the contrary, because the school has such a big influence on the look of Danish films.

As an example, Wiedemann mentions the Dogme wave and its ideals of filmmakers challenging themselves through creative obstacles. Such methods were familiar to many of the people involved from their time at the school. “There is a lot of respect around what the Film School can

STORY SUPERVISOR. Vinca Wiedemann sat with Lars von Trier during the script development phase of *Nymphomaniac* and *Melancholia*. Photo shows von Trier and his actors on the set of *Nymphomaniac*.

do,” Wiedemann says. “Most filmmakers are eager to teach there. There is a lot of curiosity about the students at the school, a lot of whom go straight to jobs in the industry after graduation.”

Teamwork Is Key

Wiedemann points out the National Film School's ideal of teamwork as a unique thing.

All programmes offered at the Film School are of equal length and all disciplines are considered equal. Editors are involved already during the screenwriting stage and sound design isn't sidelined at a technical school somewhere else in town.

“We think of sound design as art and not as a question of the number of tracks. It's important that everyone is involved as storytellers or at least co-tellers of the story. Instead of hunkering down in a profession or hierarchy, everyone contributes to the team,” Wiedemann says.

“The collaborative tradition has honed our ability to think of low budgets as a tool for the imagination and come up with inventive solutions instead of getting frustrated. It's a strong tradition because it's founded in the Film School. That makes the school unique compared to most other schools in the world.”

Wiedemann is looking forward to continuing the tradition, though she also thinks it's important not to let the legacy weigh down future filmmakers.

“The public is always hungering for the next von Trier, but it's far from certain that anyone would even want to be compared to him. If nothing else, it makes it harder for the new generations to define themselves. We should create a free space where people don't have to compare themselves to today's big hitters” ■

Vinca Wiedemann takes over as head of the National Film School on 1 March. She is replacing Poul Nesgaard, who has held the position since 1992.



HALDEN PRISON. The facility has been called “the world’s most humane prison.” The idea is that having art on the walls and a panoramic view of nature, instead of barred windows, etc., has a positive influence on inmates. The prison is the subject of Michael Madsen’s film.

Berlinale Special

WHAT IS THE SOUL OF ARCHITECTURE?

Six acclaimed directors, among them Wim Wenders, Robert Redford and Michael Madsen, present their takes on architectural space in the grand-scale 3D documentary project *Cathedrals of Culture*. FILM talks to Danish co-producers Final Cut for Real.

Buildings are more than bricks and mortar. They speak of who we are, and who we would like to be. Each of the six directors in *Cathedrals of Culture* contributed a film that uses a 3D vocabulary to explore a culturally significant building, making you feel like you’re almost there. That was part of

the ambition, producer Anne Köhncke of Final Cut for Real tells FILM.

How did the project get started?

Wim Wenders, who is famous for his 3D dance documentary *Pina*, is the initiator and executive producer of the series. It all began when he made a 3D film for the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2010, *If Buildings Could Talk*, and got the idea to bring together some of the world’s most acclaimed directors to explore 3D as a cinematic vocabulary around the subject of architecture and people. That’s how the idea emerged for a series of films in which the buildings would be the central characters looking at us people, and not the other way around.

How did Final Cut for Real enter the picture?

One of Wim Wender’s producers introduced me to the idea at a workshop in 2011 organised by the

producers’ network EAVE, and my colleague Signe Byrge Sørensen and I quickly realised that this was something we would like to try our hand at and that Michael Madsen was the most obvious Danish director for the job. Apart from Wenders, Michael is the only director in the series who had worked in

“The buildings would be the central characters looking at us people, and not the other way around.”

3D before, when he made *The Average of the Average* in 2011. His contribution to *Cathedrals of Culture* is about the Halden prison in Norway, which has been called “the world’s most humane prison.”

What does the 3D vocabulary add?

The idea is to explore, try out and show new and more numerous aspects of 3D as a cinematic vocabulary. The link between architecture and 3D is obvious. 3D makes it possible to understand and really get the feel of a building without being there yourself. In the case of the building we worked with, the Halden prison, it’s also a matter of getting into a place that very few people will ever get a chance to experience, since, after all, it is a high-security prison.

Why is architecture so important?

Architecture says so much about who we are, who we would like to be and the values we believe should determine the physical framework around our lives and our society – a physical framework that becomes a psychological framework, with opportunities and limitations. Architecture also says something about time. The time we are living in now, the time before and the time to come ■

Cathedrals of Culture is selected for Berlinale Special. Anne Köhncke and Signe Byrge Sørensen are producing Michael Madsen’s film for Final Cut for Real and are co-producing the other five films with main producer Neue Road Movies. More at neueroadmovies.com. Read about Final Cut for Real (*The Act of Killing*) on page 42.

CATHEDRALS OF CULTURE

Each of the six directors contributing to *Cathedrals of Culture* presents his or her vision of a culturally significant building: **Wim Wenders** (Berlin Philharmonic), **Michael Glawogger** (National Library of Russia), **Michael Madsen** (Halden Prison, Norway), **Robert Redford** (Salk Institute, California), **Margreth Olin** (Oslo Opera House), and **Karim Ainouz** (Centre Pompidou, Paris).

A PRISON REPRESENTS THE FLIPSIDE OF SOCIETY

Says director Michael Madsen

The Danish director ventured into Norway’s Halden Prison to make his contribution to *Cathedrals of Culture*, six films exploring the psychology of spaces:

“It has been said about ancient Rome and its barbarous taste for gladiators fighting to the death that a society can be defined by how it entertains itself. Another fault line in society is how it deals with those who break the law.

“Architecture is psychology as space. Nowhere is this more visible than in the social engineering of prisons – that is, the question of whether citizens are taken away for the satisfaction of the surrounding society – revenge – or for re-socialisation.

“A prison represents the flipside of society. It is a state-sponsored fortress meant to contain that which is judged unacceptable. A prison is the place where tolerance ends and society struggles for survival by simply taking away individuals whose actions – sometimes only in thought – threaten moral values, other people’s security or even the state itself.

“The French philosopher Michel Foucault, in his seminal work *Discipline and Punish*, shows that the objective of citizen rehabilitation is a reflection of the ideals of any society. The architecture of a prison is an expression of the self-understanding of, in this case, the Scandinavian welfare state. A prison, in other words, is a vessel for preserving – or even creating – a certain type of humans, a certain type of culture.

“A prime present-day example is Halden Prison, built in 2010. My choice of Halden Prison gives me the opportunity to ask how a society chooses to represent itself and how this becomes manifest in the public buildings it creates.”

Michael Madsen

Director, born 1971. In his acclaimed *Into Eternity* (2010), Michael Madsen went underground to examine the world’s first permanent nuclear waste repository in Finland. Madsen experimented with the 3D format in *The Average of the Average* (2011), a philosophical look at life in Denmark. Alongside the film on Halden Prison, Madsen has been working on *The Visit* with Magic Hour Films, to be released in 2014.

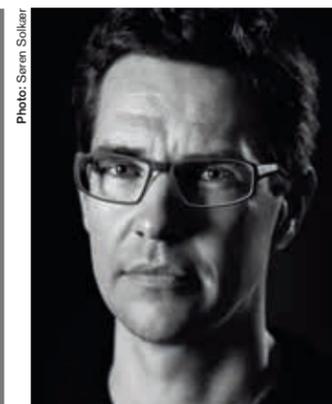


Photo: Søren Søgaard

Son Photo: Martin Munch



Berlin Generation 14plus

OF PUPPIES AND MEN

Kristoffer Kiørboe has made a low-key rites-of-passage story about self-absorbed grownups and a boy who is saddled with more responsibility than he can bear. **Son** draws on the director's own experiences of growing up with divorce.

By Peter Nicolai Gudme

Son is a short film about August, a 13-year-old boy, whose father gives him a puppy. August's parents are divorced and the wounds from the breakup are still fresh, especially for August's mother who won't let him keep the puppy. For August, his father's gift morphs into something more than a fuzzy pet. It becomes a complex and conflicted package of guilt, anger, divided loyalties and affection, bringing out the emotions that are already weighing down a heavy situation.

"The film is a snapshot of a crucial phase in August's life. His mother is so unhappy and

humiliated after the divorce that she can't see beyond her own grief, and August is asked to carry an emotional responsibility that he is way too young to handle," director Kristoffer Kiørboe says.

"Children shouldn't be responsible for anything else besides being children. Parents get back what they give, for good and ill."

Loss of Innocence

Kiørboe, who grew up with his mother and brother, didn't meet his father until he was 21.

"Our mother managed her emotional life remarkably better than August's mother does, but I certainly recognise the feeling of being responsible for your mother's well-being. I guess I was also subconsciously trying to take on the role of 'man of the house' to some extent," the director says.

He does not intend for his film to moralise or make August a victim. He simply wants to depict the letdown and emotional quandaries that follow in the wake of a divorce and that hit children hard.

"August is caught in an emotional conflict that he's too young to work out. It hurts to see his mother grieve and feel responsible for that. At the same time, August loves the little puppy every bit as much as he misses his dad. Over the course of the film, we witness the consequences and the loss of innocence as August encounters the harsh realities of adult life."

Self-Consciousness

Son is a character-driven story and the believability of the character August is essential. August is played by Stefan Søre Iwan, a previously untested 13-year-old.

"He has a terrific expression, full of emotion," Kiørboe says, adding that it takes a special combination of security, praise and persuasion to direct a young kid.

"The film is a snapshot of a crucial phase in August's life. His mother is so unhappy and humiliated after the divorce that she can't see beyond her own grief."

"You can't push too hard from day one on set. It's no good if he's burned out on day three. But you sometimes have to go 'Come on, this is it!'"

"You've got to stay on your toes and dare to be honest – gentle, but honest. The actors can't do anything wrong. Only I, the director, can make mistakes. If a scene goes wrong, it's because I didn't do my job right. I get what I give. It's just like being a parent," Kiørboe says.

Believability

Kiørboe is a graduate of the documentary programme at the National Film School of Denmark, but even

back in school he was moving more towards fiction. Now his documentary background and experience working with real people is evident in his desire to layer more credibility and realism into a fictional framework.

"As I see it, there can be a conflict between how people behave in real life and how it's portrayed in film. Films often show the big emotions, the extremes, in interpreting a character. But this explicitness can run counter to reality, because we're self-conscious and generally try to hide our emotions to avoid confrontation and conflict."

Kiørboe talks about feelings a lot, but he's fascinated by stories about people who are not so good at expressing them ■

Son, screening in the Berlinale's Generation 14plus competition, is produced by Nina Helveg for Frame By Frame with support from the DFI Film Workshop. For more information, see reverse section.



Son Photo: Martin Munch

Photo: Leslie Holm



Kristoffer Kiørboe

Director, born 1979. Before he began filmmaking, Kristoffer Kiørboe was a musician and acted in commercials, short film and TV series. He made his directorial debut in 2003 and enrolled in the National Film School of Denmark, where he graduated in 2009. Since then, Kiørboe has made a transition from documentary to fiction, directing smaller fiction projects and several commercials. *Son* is his first purely fictional film.

The Great Bear got a warm reception in Berlin 2011. Now director Esben Toft Jacobsen and screenwriter Jannik Tai Mosholt are bringing us an enchanting animal fable about fortitude and loss. ***Beyond Beyond*** comes out of a long-running partnership between image-maker Toft Jacobsen and word-man Mosholt.

DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE

Berlin Generation Kplus

By Liselotte Michelsen

This is not your run-of-the-mill cast of characters: A big-eared bunny rabbit who dives in the ocean in search of his mother. A frog captain of a steamer made of driftwood. A big flying creature that looks like a cross between an eagle, a dog and a rodent.

Imagination takes wing in director Esben Toft Jacobsen and screenwriter Jannik Tai Mosholt's *Beyond Beyond*. The duo that brought us *The Great Bear*, which was warmly received at the 2011 Berlinale, are now taking us on a perilous journey with Johan the rabbit boy to the Realm of the Feather King. Johan is trying to find his mother who was kidnapped by the Feather King.

Striking shots on sea and land recall Hayao Miyazaki. The amazing scenery includes a city where houses are stacked in tall, teetering towers and the mysterious Fog Banks navigated by a steamer with impressive machinery in its bowels. Moreover, *Beyond Beyond* evokes a distinctive Nordic tradition of fantastical tales and animated nature, as found in the Moomin world created by the Swedish-Finnish artist Tove Jansson and the stories of Astrid Lindgren.

The European folktale tradition is never far away, either. The film's tiny protagonist Johan can be seen as the rabbit answer to the Brothers Grimm's *The Story of a Boy Who Went Forth to Learn Fear*. Toft



Jacobsen and Mosholt draw on a full cultural heritage of fables and myths, without playing favourites.

"From day one, we discussed Greek myth, especially the tale of Orpheus who descends to the underworld to bring back his beloved Eurydice," Toft Jacobsen says. "But more than anything we worked from our own fascinations. There's a lot of water in the film, for instance, because I love to dive. I get a lot of ideas when I'm diving and swimming. I find the ocean exciting and mysterious. You can look into it but not all the way down. All sorts of things can hide down there."

A Multi-Layered Fable

Beyond Beyond is a Danish minor co-production between Copenhagen Bombay of Denmark and their Swedish subsidiary. Some of the team worked in Copenhagen, other were based in Stockholm and Gothenburg.

It was a great privilege to work with so many skilled people in Sweden and Denmark. Both places have a huge talent pool," says Toft Jacobsen, who did a lot of travelling between the three cities during the film's production.

"A big, expensive apparatus," as he puts it, was cranked up to create *Beyond Beyond*'s expressive visual design. This included hiring a so-called groomer to make the characters' furs and beards look good.

"In *The Great Bear* we were going for a bit of a raw, unpolished look. In *Beyond Beyond* we wanted a lavish look with a wealth of details," he says.

"Another mantra for us was that the film should be fantastical without being dangerous," Mosholt adds. "We decided to make the characters animals



Esben Toft Jacobsen

Director, born 1977. Esben Toft Jacobsen's first animated feature, *The Great Bear* (2011), was warmly received at its world premiere in Berlin. *Beyond Beyond*, a Swedish-Danish co-production, is his second feature. Since graduating from the National Film School of Denmark in 2006, Toft Jacobsen has developed and directed productions for Copenhagen Bombay.



Jannik Tai Mosholt

Screenwriter, born 1978. Jannik Tai Mosholt wrote Esben Toft Jacobsen's first feature *The Great Bear* (2011). A 2005 screenwriting graduate of the National Film School of Denmark, he has worked in TV and features. Mosholt has written episodes of the TV series *Borgen* and screenplays for the award-winning teen films *Hold Me Tight* (2010) and *You & Me Forever* (2012), both directed by Kaspar Munk.



WATERY WORLD. Johan and his father in *Beyond Beyond* have lived at sea for as long as Johan can remember. One day when Johan's father goes for provisions and Johan is left alone on the boat, he receives a distress call on the radio with a clue about his mother's whereabouts.

because an animal fable offers unique opportunities for having different layers in the story. On the face of it, *Beyond Beyond* is a story about a bunny rabbit who goes on a fantastic journey to a strange land. At the same time, the story is also about losing and missing someone – and how to handle loss. We hope the film will appeal to both children and adults because it has multiple layers."

A Perfect Match

Toft Jacobsen and co-creator Mosholt have worked together since 2005. Their joint graduation film from the National Film School of Denmark, the magical *Having a Brother* (2006), won a Special Mention in Berlin. In 2011 their first animated feature, *The Great Bear*, was selected for the Berlinale's children's film competition Generation Kplus.

Each has clearly found a creative soul mate in the other. One is distinctly visual, the other

distinctly verbal – just the right mix for a creative team-up.

"Esben works very intuitively, based on certain fascinations, like the sea in *Beyond Beyond* or the bear in our last film. Me, I'm better at structuring ideas into actual sequences. We complement each other that way," Mosholt says.

Their work on *Beyond Beyond* reflects that. The first thing they did was write 10 lines about the kind of story they wanted to do. Toft Jacobsen then spent three months drawing and painting – characters, setups, locations. When he had covered all the walls of his office in drawings, he asked Mosholt over so they could structure it together.

"We deliberately didn't write very much down before I started drawing because we wanted to let the images rule," Toft Jacobsen says.

"We disagreed at times and got annoyed with each other, but that's just part of a fruitful creative process. We bounce ideas off each other. It was an organic, open process ... We feed off each other's enthusiasm," says Mosholt.

"Jannik assails me with words, and I assail him with pictures," Toft Jacobsen says. "Jannik can be pretty sceptical when I try to explain an idea to him. But when I draw it out, he's a lot easier to convince" ■

Beyond Beyond is produced by Copenhagen Bombay, by producer Petter Lindblad and executive producer Sarita Christensen, and animated in Copenhagen Bombay's own studios in Stockholm and Copenhagen. The film opens on 10 April in Denmark and on 5 June in Sweden. International sales are handled by Copenhagen Bombay Sales.



The Sunfish, Framnagab

By Peter Nicolai Gudme

“Getting on in this kind of tiny North Jutland community can be hard if you start off on the wrong foot,” Søren Balle says about shooting *The Sunfish*, his first feature as director. “But once Jolle – a fisherman pushing 70 – vouched for us, all doors opened.”

Jolle ended up serving as both technical consultant and icebreaker for the crew among the town’s fishermen. Jolle read the script and taught Balle and his crew all they needed to know about fishing quotas and seine nets. The respect he enjoys in the town also got them an in at the local pub where fishermen drink their beer in a perpetual haze of cigarette smoke. Moreover, a lot of the film’s action is set on Jolle’s fishing boat, the HG35 Vendelbo.

Important Not to Ridicule

“Jolle was an absolutely invaluable help,” says Balle, who first got to know the fisherman during his preproduction research. He and his crew later spent three months in Hirtshals shooting *The Sunfish*, which is about a middle-aged fisherman, Kesse, whose wife has left him and who is struggling to make ends meet in a barely profitable business. On the one hand is the temptation of off-the-books fishing and quota fraud, on the other hand is the call of a captivating female marine biologist

LOVE AND FISHING QUOTAS

The Sunfish, Søren Balle’s first feature film, is a personal-growth story set among cod fishers and quota speculation, with a dash of unlikely love. Making a film with a fish smell and a provincial drawl was crucial to the director, who hails from North Jutland and a setting similar to that of his debut feature.

researching fish populations whom the other fishermen consider their mortal enemy. The conflicting attractions force Kesse to seriously reconsider his life.

“The rug is being pulled out from under him, exposing his dilemmas and his struggle to hold onto himself and his identity,” the director says about the protagonist of *The Sunfish*, which is based on an award-winning play of the same name.

“The play affected me because it doesn’t ridicule. It’s weird, and Jutlandic as hell, but it’s done with love,” Balle says. After seeing the play, he got in touch with the playwright, Lærke Sanderhoff, and they developed the screenplay together. Balle and Sanderhoff are both from North Jutland, and for the director it was a matter of honour to represent his native province in a non-cartoony way.

“I have been pretty indignant about how Jutlandic characters are represented in Danish films. Jutlandicness is always used as comic relief. The wacky neighbour is always a Jutlander. Germinating inside of me was the idea of finding a project that had something authentically Jutlandic about it.”

Only Actors from North Jutland

But what actually defines people from North Jutland?

“There’s a collective history up there of tough times. Even now, people are struggling financially. Something tragic tempered with droll wit is magically captured in their language and its melody,” says Balle, who only cast actors from the same area as the characters they would be creating – including Henrik Birch in the lead role who grew up a few kilometres outside of Hirtshals.

“They get it. They know in their bones what it’s all about, what the tone is,” Balle says. A North Jutlander himself, he claims an innate sense of what it takes to represent a *Vendelbo*, the term for an inhabitant of the region.

“This film lives and dies on a kind of documentary representation of a community. The important thing is that it feels real: Would someone really say that? Would someone really do that? Making those calls was second nature to me.”

The documentary vein also shows through in the depiction of life at sea. The director insisted on no cheating, no shooting from the harbour. Instead, the crew would go out on the open sea and catch live fish, come rain or storm.

“We were slipping and sliding all over the place. It was total kamikaze. Everyone took turns getting seasick. People were vomiting over the gunwale,” the director says. “But that’s the price you pay” ■

The Sunfish premiered at the Göteborg film festival and is produced by Claudia Siesbye Halsted for Film Maker. The film was developed with support from the talent scheme New Danish Screen. For more information, see reverse section.

Søren Balle

Director, born 1978. Søren Balle graduated from the National Film School of Denmark in 2009. Balle has written and directed a string of short films, alongside working as 2nd unit director and assistant director on several Danish television series, including *The Killing III* (2011-12). *The Sunfish* is Balle’s feature debut.



Photo: Leslie Holm



The Sunfish, Framnagab

JUTLANDICNESS

Hirtshals, North Jutland ... Geography, and more specifically the northern part of the Jutland peninsula, plays an important role in Søren Balle’s *The Sunfish* about a fisherman struggling to stay afloat in an endangered industry that for centuries was the main source of life in the hamlets along Jutland’s west coast. The director, who himself hails from North Jutland, wanted to tell a story from an overlooked corner of the country in a tone that feels real and truthful.



NEW TERRITORIES. Final Cut for Real are sticking with documentaries, but they are open to the idea of expanding into hybrids and fiction. From left to right: Korthe Barfod, Heidi Elise Christensen, Anne Köhncke, Monica Hellström, Signe Byrge Sørensen, Maria Kristensen.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Final Cut for Real, the company behind Joshua Oppenheimer's multi-award-winning and Oscar-nominated *The Act of Killing*, has a partiality for documentaries that shake our worldview.

By Marianne Lentz

It seems fitting that the Copenhagen production company Final Cut for Real is located on Forbindelsesvej – literally, “Connection Street.” Talking with company co-founder Signe Byrge Sørensen, who produced Joshua Oppenheimer's Oscar-nominated *The Act of Killing*, makes it clear that Final Cut for Real was put in this world to make connections – between people, filmmakers, cultures and world events.

From the beginning, the ambition to make connections was a foundational concept, Byrge Sørensen says. “We want diversity around the table. We want to bring people together every which way

to enable the exchange that's so important for us and for the film scene as a whole.”

Byrge Sørensen holds degrees in development studies and communication, and her personal interests reach far beyond the nation's borders. She is behind documentary film projects in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Thailand, Argentina and Indonesia. Final Cut for Real also makes films about Denmark and Scandinavia – that's just as important, she says. But what most of the company's productions have in common is an international perspective, in addition to their deeper meaning and powerful visual ambition.

“The films should have something to say that's of human, social or political importance. They should aim to be part of the public debate. Plus, the director should have a visual vision. There should be a reason for telling the story as a film rather than as a book or a newspaper article,” she says.

Dealing with the Madness

That's exactly what struck Byrge Sørensen seven years ago when she attended a seminar organised by the film festival CPH:DOX and saw a clip showing two Indonesian executioners describing how they killed a man during the 1965-66 genocide.

“The way they told it, and the way Joshua filmed them, I thought was so wild that I wanted to hear more,” she says. That moment led to a longstanding partnership with Joshua Oppenheimer and the company's biggest and most complex, but also their most prestigious film to date, *The Act of Killing*.

The shattering documentary, Byrge Sørensen says, is a good example of what gets her interested

in a film project: The material rises above the specific and addresses the universal.

“Here was a film that gave me an explanation for what I had been wondering about ever since I started reading about World War II: What happens when people start massacring other people, often their own neighbours? It's an incredibly important question to ask if we want to contribute to making sure it doesn't happen again. This is an Indonesian story, but it's also a story that tells me a lot about what happened in Germany and elsewhere in the world where genocide has taken place.”

Love of Real Life

Signe Byrge Sørensen and her fellow producers, Anne Köhncke, Monica Hellström, Maria Kristensen and Heidi Christensen, are all partial to real life. From the beginning, the company focused on documentaries, because they are fascinated by the lives of real people and because the documentary process is far more unpredictable than fiction.

“The unpredictability of the field is fascinating; the fact that making a documentary is a continuous collaboration between director, characters, crew and producer,” Byrge Sørensen says.

As it is often the rule rather than the exception that the characters' lives take unexpected turns, a documentary film producer has to be able to juggle the balls that come her way. To succeed, you have to work closely together with your director. This, Byrge Sørensen says, is something Final Cut for Real's team of producers excel at – the ability and the will to go deep into the creative process and see the project through to the end.

Add to that a respect for the characters who allow their lives to be blown up on the big screen.

“You must never, by any means, see them as puppets in a play. They are not actors who can leave their roles behind when they go home at night. When they are done, they go out into the same world and meet the same people who saw them on TV or at the movies the night before. That obliges you to behave properly,” Byrge Sørensen says.

In summer 2014, the company is bringing out a new film by Joshua Oppenheimer, *The Look of Silence*. Also, Final Cut for Real is co-producing *Cathedrals of Culture*, a grand-scale 3D-project that has six prominent directors offering their vision of a building's “soul” (read more on page 34) ■

Final Cut for Real

Founded in 2009 by producers Signe Byrge Sørensen and Anne Köhncke. Films include the Oscar-nominated *The Act of Killing* by Joshua Oppenheimer, *The Human Scale* by Andreas M. Dalsgaard and *Chikara: The Sumo Wrestler's Son* by Simon Lereng Wilmont. The company is also producing Oppenheimer's new film about the Indonesian genocide, *The Look of Silence*. Has a strong suit in co-production, with recent titles including *TPB-AFK: The Pirate Bay Away From Keyboard* by Simon Klose and the 3D films of *Cathedrals of Culture* (more on page 34).

THE LOOK OF SILENCE

Joshua Oppenheimer's sequel to *The Act of Killing* revisits the Indonesian genocide, this time telling the story from the victims' perspective.

“We always knew we wanted to do both the victims' and the killers' stories,” Final Cut for Real producer Signe Byrge Sørensen says. The sequel to *The Act of Killing* is set to premiere in summer 2014.

The film follows a family whose son was killed in the Indonesian genocide, accused of being a communist. The youngest son in the family, now grown up, vows to confront the people who killed his brother. These encounters are at the core of the film.

So, the tables are turned. While *The Act of Killing* gave us the killers' unsettling version of the story, this time the surviving victims of the genocide in the 1960s get to speak. Signe Byrge Sørensen assures that *The Look of Silence* includes scenes of equal visual power and extreme intensity.

This story is no less important to get out, she says.

“What we don't get to know in *The Act of Killing* is the victims' experience. How did they cope? How do they experience life in Indonesian society today? We think the two stories complement each other and we hope *The Look of Silence* will help advance the debate that *The Act of Killing* started in Indonesia.”



UNIVERSAL. Travelling with *The Act of Killing* in the Balkans, Signe Byrge Sørensen and Joshua Oppenheimer witnessed how local people saw their own lives mirrored in the film. That's my story, that's about my country, they said.

DENMARK'S REGIONAL FILM FUNDS: HOW DO THEY WORK?

The regional film funds make an important contribution to the success of Danish films and television. Denmark's three funds are stepping up internationally.

WEST DANISH FILM FUND

The West Danish Film Fund, located in Denmark's second biggest city, Aarhus, annually invests around 1.5 million euros in film and media production. Its efforts go beyond funding and include equipment, professional film studios and film workers, an industrial park, training and talent development, as well as servicing the film industry in terms of location scouting and partnering.

The fund supports and invests in co-productions that have Danish artistic or technical participation with a connection to the region.

The Fund is raising its international profile by establishing a film and media commission. This will enhance the West Danish Film Fund's visibility on the international stage and its readiness to enter into minor and major co-productions.

West Danish Film Fund is managed by Carsten Holst.

COPENHAGEN FILM FUND

The Copenhagen Film Fund was founded in 2013 by initiative of the Producers Association as a partnership between eight Copenhagen municipalities, the Capital Region and a number of players in the local film industry. The Fund has a budget of 4.7 million euros up to 2016.

The fund's prime purpose is to invest in international and Danish film and television productions, to be produced in the member municipalities and distributed both nationally and internationally.

The Copenhagen Film Fund primarily invests in international productions of high artistic merit and with Danish co-producers, or Danish projects with substantial international financing and distribution in place. The fund's focus is on productions wholly or partly shot in the region.

Copenhagen Film Fund is managed by Thomas Gammeltoft.

FILMFYN

FilmFyn is located on the island of Funen and manages an annual budget of 1.5 million euros, of which more than 1 million euros is invested in feature films and television series shot on location in the area.

Since its launch in 2003, FilmFyn has invested in more than 50 fiction projects.

The fund primarily gives support to feature films, but any film with investment potential will be considered, based on the local spend in the seven municipalities that are behind FilmFyn.

FilmFyn in 2013 took the initiative to establish Film Commission Fyn, in part to be better able to guide international producers to the right locations, people, facilities and resources available in the area. Read more about Film Commission Fyn at filmcommissionfyn.com.

FilmFyn is managed by Bo Damgaard.

SELECTED PROJECTS

Feature films

Nymphomaniac / Lars von Trier, Zentropa
Sorrow and Joy / Nils Malmros, Nordisk Film
A Royal Affair / Nikolaj Arcel, Zentropa

Documentaries

Sepideh / Berit Madsen, Radiator Film

TV series

Dicte I+II / Miso Film, TV 2

filmpuljen.dk

TV series

Heartless / Natasha Arthy, Fridthjof Film
Midsomer Murders / Alex Pillai, Bentley Productions
The Team / Kathrine Windfeld, Network Movie (DE) & Lunanime (BE)
The Bridge III (in the pipeline)

cphfilmfund.com

Feature films

A Second Chance / Susanne Bier, Zentropa
Silent Heart / Bille August, SF Film Production
Antboy / Ask Hasselbalch, Nimbus Film
Racewalking / Niels Arden Oplev, Nordisk Film

TV series

The Legacy / Pernilla August, DR

filmfyn.dk

Read more about co-producing with Denmark at dfi.dk/coproducing

FOUR DANISH CO-PRODUCTIONS

Introducing four titles with co-production support from the Danish Film Institute.

Ida

Ida is set in 1960s Poland. Anna, an 18-year-old novice, is preparing to become a nun in the monastery where she has lived her whole life. Before taking her final vow, she learns that her biological parents were Jews killed by Polish Catholics in World War II. The discovery makes her go on a journey to find her roots. A Polish-Danish co-production, *Ida* had its world

premiere at the Toronto Film Festival in September 2013, winning the FIPRESCI critics' award. The film also took the main award at the London Film Festival and at the Warsaw film festival.

Director Pawel Pawlikowski
Production Opus Film (Poland)
Danish co-producers Christian Falkenberg Husum and Sofie Wanting Hassing for Phoenix Film



Ida Photo: Sylwester Kazmierczak

Good People

Good People, starring James Franco, Kate Hudson, Omar Sy and Tom Wilkinson, is a thriller about a couple deep in debt who find a hoard of cash in their dead neighbour's apartment. When they take the money, bad things start happening. Henrik Ruben Genz, a Danish director of darkly funny art-house dramas like *Terribly Happy* and *Excuse Me*, is making his first English-language film with *Good People*, adapted from a novel by Marcus Sakey.

Director Henrik Ruben Genz
Production Nu Image/Millennium Films (USA) and Good People Production (England)



Director Henrik Ruben Genz Photo: Thomas Marott

Danish co-producer Thomas Gammeltoft for Eyeworks Fine & Mellow



Berlin Official Competition

In Order of Disappearance. Framme/ab

In Order of Disappearance

Nils, a snow-blower driver, lives a carefree life in the winter paradise of Beitostølen, Norway. The sudden death of his son lands him in the middle of a drug war between the Norwegian mafia and Serbian criminals. In their world he is a complete novice – armed only with heavy machinery and a healthy dose of beginner's luck. In the Norwegian-Danish action-comedy *In Order of Disappearance*, the Norwegian

director Hans Petter Moland continues his partnership with the Danish screenwriter Kim Fupz Aakeson. They last worked together on *A Somewhat Gentle Man*, which was also in competition at Berlin and also starred Stellan Skarsgård (*Nymphomaniac*).

Director Hans Petter Moland
Production Paradox Rettigheter (Norway)
Danish co-producer Peter Garde for Zentropa

The Word

Lila's world collapsed three weeks ago when her girlfriends told her they saw Lila's boyfriend, Janek, kissing another girl at a party. Days before the end of the school year, Lila gives Janek an ultimatum: He has 24 hours to prove his love to her. Otherwise, he can forget about ever being with her again. The Danish co-producer Jesper Morthorst took part in

Producers on the Move at Cannes 2011, as did the Polish producer Lukasz Dzieciol. That kicked off the Polish-Danish *The Word*, a film about misguided love that drives a young couple to commit a horrible crime.

Director Anna Kazejak
Production Opus Film (Poland)
Danish co-producer Jesper Morthorst for SF Film Production



Berlin Generation 14plus

The Word Photo: Philip Straba



NORDIC TWILIGHT ZONE

NEW FILMS. This year will see no less than three Danish youth films giving the horror/fantasy genre a unique Scandinavian spin.

In Jonas Arnby's *When Animals Dream* a girl with supernatural genes frees herself by taking revenge on

a world that humiliates, despises and fears her. In Martin Barnewitz's *Danny's Doomsday* two teenaged brothers barricade themselves in the basement of their house when climate change brings about the appearance of a new species of carnivorous predator. And in Bo Mikkelsen's *Sorgenfri* we follow a family in the idyllic Copenhagen suburb of Sorgenfri whose lives take a dramatic turn when a mysterious and deadly flu epidemic causes havoc in the town.

"The interesting thing about these three films is that they take up certain familiar Hollywood genres – horror, fantasy, adventure – and infuse them



Danny's Doomsday, Framnegrab

This is not the first time Nordic productions give familiar genres a new twist. Series like *The Killing* and *The Bridge* are examples of what has been called Nordic Noir because of the way they represent the crime genre in a unique Scandinavian light.

When *Animals Dream* is produced by Alphaville Pictures Copenhagen, and *Danny's Doomsday* is produced by Miso Film – both with release dates in 2014. *Sorgenfri*, produced by Meta Film, is scheduled for release in fall 2015. *NØ*

with a unique form of Scandinavian realism," Rasmus Horskjær, feature film commissioner at the Danish Film Institute, says. He points to Tomas Alfredson's romantic 2008 horror film *Let the Right One In* as another example of the genre he dubs Nordic Twilight.

FROM MYSTERIES TO FAMILY FEUD

TV SERIES. After a successful run with crime series like *The Killing* and *The Bridge*, and the political drama *Borgen*, Danish broadcaster DR is returning to the intimate family drama in their new series *The Legacy*.

The Legacy is set in and around the country house where Veronika Grønnegaard, an internationally known artist, has lived an eccentric and colourful life since the freewheeling '60s. The series centres on Veronika's four grown children, who in different ways have been affected by their unusual upbringing.

Before their mother died, they were scattered to the winds. Now, they gather to settle the estate.

However, what was meant to be a quick and painless estate division transforms into an emotional turmoil that forces the four siblings to see each other and themselves with new eyes.

The cast includes Trine Dyrholm, who starred as a hairdresser with cancer in Susanne Bier's *Love Is All You Need*, and Mikkel Boe Følsgaard, winner of a Silver Bear in Berlin two years back for his performance in *A Royal Affair*.

The Legacy is inspired by Thomas Vinterberg's *The Celebration* and the British series *Downton Abbey*, says Maya Ilse, the head writer behind the series. Pernilla August has directed.

The first 10 episodes of the series, airing on DR in January-February, have won raves from Danish critics. *NØ*



The Legacy Photo: Martin Lehmann

DANISH OSCAR NOMINATIONS

Three Danish films got through to the final round in the world's most prestigious film competition. Oscar Night is on 2 March.

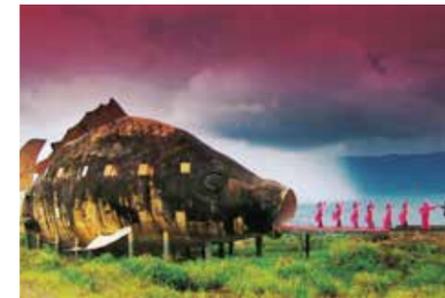


THE HUNT FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The drama marks Mads Mikkelsen's first collaboration with director Thomas Vinterberg.

Mads Mikkelsen won the Best Actor award in Cannes 2012 for his performance as a mild-mannered kindergarten teacher whose life falls apart when a young girl makes false accusations against him. Since Cannes, *The Hunt* has won a host of awards and nominations and was a big hit at the national box office, landing the film among the three best-selling Danish feature films in the last five years.

Director Thomas Vinterberg wrote *The Hunt* with Tobias Lindholm, and Sisse Graum Jørgensen and Morten Kaufmann have produced for Zentropa. Jørgensen also produced Susanne Bier's 2011 Oscar winner *In a Better World* and Bier's 2007 nominee *After the Wedding* as well as last year's Danish Oscar nominee *A Royal Affair*.



THE ACT OF KILLING DOCUMENTARY FEATURE

Today, the rhetoric about Indonesia's 1965-66 genocide has completely changed, thanks to *The Act of Killing*.

Accolades have rained down on Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing* since it premiered at the Toronto film festival in 2012. In January, the film took home the Best Film and Best Production awards at Cinema Eye Honors, a major distinction in documentary filmmaking.

The Act of Killing has also attracted massive attention in Indonesia where it was released online for free download. The film has made a clear impact on the country's public debate with its unsettling story that takes the audience deep into the imaginations of the killers of Indonesia's 1965-66 genocide. Signe Byrge Sørensen and Anne Köhncke have produced the film for Final Cut for Real. Read about the company on page 42.



HELIUM LIVE ACTION SHORT

Helium is the story of Alfred and Enzo who develop a magical world full of hope for the hospitalised boy.

Anders Walter's *Helium*, produced by Kim Magnusson for M&M Productions, is the story of a young boy, Alfred, who is seriously ill in the hospital. He becomes good friends with the eccentric cleaning man Enzo and together they develop a magical fantasy world named Helium.

Anders Walter has worked as an illustrator and comic book artist since the age of 17 and has directed music videos for Scandinavian artists. M&M Productions has had six short films move forward to the Live Action Short nomination round and has won the Oscar in the category on three occasions – for *Election Night* in 1999, *This Charming Man* in 2003, and *The New Tenants* in 2010.

DANISH FILMS AT THE OSCARS

Foreign Language / Previous Winners

2011 *In a Better World*, dir. Susanne Bier, Zentropa

1989 *Pelle The Conqueror*, dir. Bille August, Per Holst Filmproduktion

1988 *Babette's Feast*, dir. Gabriel Axel, Panorama Film & Nordisk Film

Documentary Feature / Previous Nominations

2010 *Burma VJ*, dir. Anders Østergaard, Magic Hour Films

1961 *A City Called Copenhagen*, dir. Jørgen Roos, Minerva Film

1957 *Where Mountains Float*, dir. Bjarne Henning-Jensen, Arnø Studio

Live Action Short / Previous Winners

2010 *The New Tenants*, dir. Joachim Back, M&M Productions

2003 *This Charming Man*, dir. Martin Strange-Hansen, M&M Productions

1999 *Election Night*, dir. Anders Thomas Jensen, M&M Productions

DANISH DOCUMENTARIES



THE SECRET FLIGHT

Weapons drop, rebel movements and intelligence agents – Andreas Koefoed's story has all the trappings of a political thriller.

Combining interviews, observational footage, archival material and reconstructions, Andreas Koefoed probes the story of Niels Holck and Peter Bleach who in 1995 set out on a mission: to drop four tons of weapons from a plane over West Bengal in India.

However, the two men had their own agendas. Holck is the activist who wants to arm a local group to help them defend themselves against a communist regime. Bleach is an arms dealer who is secretly collaborating with the British MI5.

Bleach goes on the plane to arrest Holck, but the weapons drop fails and Holck escapes while Bleach ends up in an Indian prison, tortured and abandoned by his own country. Years later, as Holck faces extradition from Denmark to India, Bleach decides to forgive and help him. At last, they finally have a common goal: to prove that they are just pawns in a much bigger political game between nations.

Andreas Koefoed directed his first documentary feature, *Ballroom Dancer*, in 2011, returning to IDFA the following year with the music documentary *The Ghost of Piramida*. *The Secret Flight* is produced by Fridthjof Film and is set to release in spring 2014.



SHADOW OF A HERO

Laurits Munch-Petersen takes us on a journey through time in search of his grandfather who fell in the Spanish Civil War.

The director's grandfather, Gustaf Munch-Petersen, was a poet and the first true Surrealist painter in Denmark. In 1937, Gustaf joined the International Brigades to fight fascism in the Spanish Civil War, where he was killed the following year, at age 26. Gustaf Munch-Petersen became an icon of the Spanish Civil War volunteers and one of the great dead youth of Danish literature. But for his family it was a different story. His death left a great scar that to this day has never properly healed.

Now, Gustaf's grandson Laurits travels to Spain to find answers: Why did his grandfather abandon his young, pregnant wife Lisbet and his one-year-old daughter in the middle of the night to fight for freedom in a country far away, leaving only a brief farewell note to explain his decision?

Mixing documentary, reenactment and archive findings, the director digs through the layers of myth and memory to put together the pieces of his family history.

Laurits Munch-Petersen won a Student Academy Award for *Between Us* and has directed features and documentaries. *Shadow of a Hero* has a script by Anders Østergaard (*Burma VJ*) and is produced by Fridthjof Film. Release in spring 2014.

Three new films take us into the realm of high-stake politics, family history and circus life.



THE CIRCUS DYNASTY

Anders Riis-Hansen follows two circus families as they pursue a union between the two youngest members of their families.

Securing your dynasty is hard work, even more so when your family runs one of Europe's biggest circuses.

Anders Riis-Hansen's *The Circus Dynasty* follows the Berdinos, owners of the successful Circus Arena, and the Cassellys, seventh-generation circus artists. Their two dynasties can become one, if only Merry Lu Caselly and Patrick Berdino, representing the youngest generation, would fall in love with each other.

The director is driven by a fascination of the circus as a world apart from the rest of society, a time pocket where norms and values have remain unchanged since the '50s. At the same time, life in *The Circus Dynasty* is all too familiar, full as it is of traditions, expectations and family pressure of the kind that no one can truly escape.

Riis-Hansen has produced and directed TV documentaries, and in 2009 he made *The Invisible Cell* for a cinema audience, about a group of political activists who in 1988 engineered one of the biggest heists in Danish history. *The Circus Dynasty* is produced by Hansen & Pedersen Film og Fjernsyn, with a release set for fall 2014.



The Keeper of Lost Causes Photo: Christian Guinness



The Hunt Photo: Per Amesen

WHAT DANES LIKE

The Keeper of Lost Causes seized top spot in 2013, ahead of *The Hobbit 2* and *The Hunger Games 2*.

Last year, Danish films sold more than 4 million tickets for the second year running. The number of tickets sold in total in 2013 reached 13.5 million, landing the local market share at 30%. Five Danish films made it to the overall top 10 list, with Mikkel Nørgaard's thriller *The Keeper of Lost Causes* as number one, followed by Thomas Vinterberg's Oscar-nominated drama *The Hunt*.

Last year showed great diversity in the Danish films on the big screen, the genres and categories spanning thrillers (*The Keeper of Lost Causes*), dramas (*The Hunt*, *Sorrow and Joy*), biopics (*Sex, Drugs & Taxation*), comedies (*All for Two*), cinematic experiments (*Nymphomaniac*) and especially family films (*Antboy*, *My Sister's Kids in Africa*, *Otto Is a Rhino* and *The Contest*).

The two top-selling foreign films at Danish theatres in 2013 were *The Hobbit 2* and *The Hunger Games 2*, followed by *The Intouchables*, *Iron Man 3* and *Frozen*.

Find more on dfi.dk/facts.

Top 10 / Danish Films 2013

| Title | Tickets sold |
|---|--------------|
| <i>The Keeper of Lost Causes</i> * | 721,013 |
| <i>The Hunt</i> | 673,022 |
| <i>My Sister's Kids in Africa</i> | 414,662 |
| <i>All for Two</i> | 392,118 |
| <i>Sex, Drugs and Taxation</i> | 330,312 |
| <i>Sorrow and Joy</i> * | 249,501 |
| <i>The Olsen Gang in Deep Trouble</i> * | 202,572 |
| <i>Otto Is a Rhino</i> | 190,226 |
| <i>Antboy</i> * | 175,077 |
| <i>Catch the Dream</i> | 104,893 |

* still in the cinemas

Top 10 / All Films 2013

| Title | Tickets sold |
|--|--------------|
| <i>The Keeper of Lost Causes</i> ** (dk) | 721,013 |
| <i>The Hunt</i> (dk) | 673,022 |
| <i>The Hobbit 2</i> ** | 465,726 |
| <i>My Sister's Kids in Africa</i> (dk) | 414,662 |
| <i>All for Two</i> (dk) | 392,118 |
| <i>The Hunger Games 2</i> ** | 336,105 |
| <i>Sex, Drugs and Taxation</i> (dk) | 330,312 |
| <i>The Intouchables</i> * | 306,659 |
| <i>Iron Man 3</i> | 276,983 |
| <i>Frozen</i> ** | 274,233 |

* tickets sold in 2013
** still in the cinemas

Source: Distributors Organisation (FAFID). The official figures for 2013 will be release by Statistics Denmark in February-March.

THE SALVATION

Kristian Levring and Zentropa are taking a serious shot at the western genre in their new film *The Salvation*, with a release set for October.

Mads Mikkelsen plays a Danish settler who kills the man who murdered his family, unleashing the fury of a notorious gang leader. Betrayed by his cowardly community, the peace-loving pioneer turns vengeful hunter.

Kristian Levring, co-founder of Dogme 95, has invited a solid cast to support Mikkelsen's epic hero, including Eva Green, Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Jonathan Pryce, Eric Cantona and Mikael Persbrandt.

