

IDFA 2012

MY AFGHANISTAN
SOLAR MAMAS
MERCY, MERCY

DANCE FOR ME / A NORMAL LIFE
THE GHOST OF PIRAMIDA
STEALING AFRICA / FREE THE MIND
THE RECORD BREAKER



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INSIDE



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magazine brings articles and interviews
presenting the films in competition, films in
progress, young talents and news stories.

Catalogue in the reverse section gives a
view of current Danish documentaries and
short films.

The Danish Film Institute is the national
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Danish Film Institute
Gothersgade 55 / DK-1123 Copenhagen K
T +45 3374 3400 / dfi.dk/english
susannan@dfi.dk

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MEETINGS AND CONVERSATIONS / EDITORIAL

In early November we celebrated the 10th anniversary of Copenhagen's CPH:DOX film festival, and now IDFA is turning 25. Aren't we lucky to have them, these generous festivals and their brave and tireless organisers who take reality, art and audiences seriously?

Why are film festivals so important? Because that's where we experience films we wouldn't otherwise get to see: challenging, edgy, experimental, provocative works, retrospective looks at the art form and its creators, hybrid forms, crossovers and the tantalising contours of things to come.

Festivals are important because that's where landmark meetings take place, between creators and audiences, and between audience members. It's where professionals meet, in forums for financing, distribution, new storytelling forms and technical innovations. Not to mention all the informal meetings where new partnerships and new friendships are struck.

A seismic shift in film audience patterns is happening these years. We want to see films where and when we want to. Use of VOD services is in explosive growth. But in our enthusiasm at the availability and the volume of digital content across many different platforms, we should not overlook the importance of physical meetings: meetings that happen when we share experiences, are shocked or amused, reflect or discuss - together.

"Meetings and conversations are essential ingredients in developing a vibrant and diverse film culture."

The Danish Film Institute supports both dimensions: Films should be available to everyone on as many platforms as possible, and there should be opportunities to meet, discuss and celebrate them with others.

We support the festivals in Denmark as well as the participation of Danish films and filmmakers at international festivals, because meetings and conversations are essential ingredients in developing a vibrant and diverse film culture.

Since the first festival 25 years ago, around 150 Danish films have been invited to IDFA, and I know that participation has been hugely important to the films' makers. Moreover, I hope that the films have had an influence in the opposite direction.

Nine powerful Danish films are participating in this year's festival. I hope the coming meetings will enrich and move both audiences and filmmakers.

Happy 25th anniversary, IDFA.

Henrik Bo Nielsen, CEO



Free the Mind. Framegrab

The gaze of a scientist

"I use the camera to understand the world more than to make films," says director Phie Ambo who is bringing her fifth work to IDFA. In *Free the Mind*, Ambo explores the power of thought and meditation and their effect on the brain. Read more page 15 and catalogue in reverse section.

DANISH FILMS AT IDFA 2012

FEATURE-LENGTH COMPETITION

MY AFGHANISTAN

NAGIEB KHAJA

FEATURE-LENGTH COMPETITION

SOLAR MAMAS

MONA ELDAIEF, JEHANE NOUJAIM

MID-LENGTH COMPETITION

A NORMAL LIFE

MIKALA KROGH

FIRST APPEARANCE COMPETITION

MERCY, MERCY

KATRINE KJÆR

FIRST APPEARANCE COMPETITION

DANCE FOR ME

KATRINE PHILP

MUSIC COMPETITION

THE GHOST OF PIRAMIDA

ANDREAS KOEFOED

REFLECTING IMAGES: MASTERS

FREE THE MIND

PHIE AMBO

REFLECTING IMAGES: PANORAMA

THE RECORD BREAKER

BRIAN MCGINN

SPECIAL FOCUS WHY POVERTY?

SOLAR MAMAS / STEALING AFRICA

Find facts on all films in the catalogue in reverse section.



My Afghanistan (above and right) Photo: Henrik Bohn Ipsen

IDFA. Janus Metz's groundbreaking *Armadillo* showed us the war in Afghanistan from the point of view of the young soldiers entering combat for the first time. Now journalist and filmmaker Nagieb Khaja presents us with an entirely different perspective in *My Afghanistan*, which takes a close-up look at the lives of ordinary Afghans through images shot by themselves on mobile phones.

BY NAGIEB KHAJA

The other day I saw a film from Afghanistan about Western-style hair salons opening up in one of the big cities.

If the war isn't viewed from the ranks of Western troops, which is generally the case, we are presented with feel-good stories from the cities - like the one I saw. When a story does contain material describing the conditions in rural areas where most of the Afghan population lives and where the war is actually fought, it's typically by way of statistics or the occasional image of wounded or dead civilians.

I got the idea for my film after working for years as a journalist in Afghanistan without being "embedded", that is, I wasn't under military

"I got the idea for my film after working for years as a journalist in Afghanistan without being embedded."

protection or subject to their rules and restrictions. As a result, I came into direct contact with the locals, whose stories I have tried to tell in reports, articles and in my recent book whose Danish title translates as *The Story Not Being Told*.

WE TEND TO FORGET

It frustrated me that I didn't see my experiences reflected in the general media coverage. All I saw was an oversimplified representation of the war: a conflict between the good Western military and their Afghan allies, and the supremely evil rebels as their foes.

In reality, it is a complex conflict with lots of grey areas, and as in any other war the biggest victims are the civilian population.

It may sound like a cliché, but I wanted to make a film that portrays Afghans as human beings, for good or ill. Many of the images we are usually presented with, for instance from Helmand - where my film was shot - are of deserted wastelands where two warring parties shoot and bomb away without much consequence. That's exactly why the film's premise, cliché or not, is so important to establish, because far too often we forget that there are people living in the middle of the war. Flesh-and-blood people caught in the middle and in spite of it all trying to have a normal life.

MOBILE PHONES WAS THE SOLUTION

Trying to depict the war in Afghanistan at close range is fraught with peril. Spending time in the villages is a big risk for journalists, because the rural population in Afghanistan, unlike so many other places in the world, do not view journalists as objective parties but as an extension of the hated Afghan government or as being in cahoots with the foreign forces that they generally regard as an evil. For those reasons, most journalists usually depict life in the conflict-ridden areas in shoot-and-run footage, because they stay in the villages so briefly.

I personally experienced the results of that risk when I was kidnapped by the Taliban in 2008, while attempting to depict Afghans in their own surroundings over an extended period of time. Being considered a government or foreign-force collaborator could ultimately have put my life and others in danger.

To protect the civilians and still be able to report on their lives, I came up with the idea of giving them mobile phones so they could film themselves instead. Mobile phones are ubiquitous in Afghanistan, while camcorders are still a rarity, especially in the rural areas. This was a way of "staying with them", without endangering their lives nor mine.

GREATER RISK FOR THE WOMEN

So, in 2009, I travelled to Helmand and handed out mobile phones to a group of local Afghans that I wanted to be in the film. We had done a lot of



research and familiarised ourselves with the potential consequences. We knew that they risked getting their phones smashed or getting beat up by the rebels. In fact, one of my first participants got his face punched and his phone smashed, but they were all ready to live with such consequences. Luckily, that turned out to be the worst that happened underway as a direct effect of our project.

My biggest challenge, however, was to find women to work with - and keep them on the project. It would not have been much of a problem to find a woman in a big city like Kabul, but I wanted to show real life in the villages, where people traditionally are much more conservative than in urban areas.

The women would be taking a far greater risk than the men because of how rumours spread in village-based societies, where concepts of honour are a big deal. An Afghan woman is not expected to leave the home, unless it is absolutely necessary. Contact with strange men could ultimately cost her her life.

But I had to try. A film without women would not have painted an accurate picture of village life.

The consequences of war are always worse for the civilians, who are generally unable to influence decisions and are left as the biggest losers. Still, it is not my ambition to portray Afghans as powerless victims for us to pity. Through their own eyes, we see how they live their lives despite difficult and uncertain conditions, with joys, sorrows, dreams and needs that are not all that different from our own ■

For more on *My Afghanistan*, see reverse section.

"One of my first participants got his face punched and his phone smashed, but they were all ready to live with such consequences. Luckily, that turned out to be the worst that happened."



Director Nagieb Khaja Photo: Robin Skjoldborg

THE MAKING OF ...

The 6 Afghans in the film were chosen from a larger group of 30.

In 2009, the team behind *My Afghanistan* distributed 30 mobile phones to local Afghans and asked them to film their everyday lives. The ambition was to collect stories mainly from the rural areas, and the filmmakers wanted both men and women to participate. Also, they wanted them to represent as many ages and social layers as possible. In the second round of the selection process, the filmmakers narrowed the field down to those who showed the most dedication and were good storytellers. From the larger group of 30, 6 were finally chosen for the film. Director of Photography Henrik Bohn Ipsen has shot the frame story, read profile page 41.

MYAFGHANISTAN.TV

A digital storytelling project with support from the Tribeca Film Institute

The Afghans who were handed out mobile phones in Nagieb Khaja's film will continue to document their lives in the war zone - right up until the day the allied troops leave Afghanistan by the end of 2014. Their stories will be posted on *MyAfghanistan.tv*, a website supported by Tribeca Film Institute's New Media Fund which targets non-fiction projects aiming to activate audiences around issues of justice and equality. *MyAfghanistan.tv* was one of the six projects selected for the fund's inaugural year in 2011. The website will also contain a section for educational use where students can contact the Afghan storytellers and ask questions about their daily lives. This part of the site is funded by the Danish Ministry of Education and the Danish Film Institute.

NAGIEB KHAJA

Born 1979, Denmark. Renowned journalist and two-time nominee of the prestigious journalism award, Cavling. Director of documentaries dealing with the ramifications of anti-terrorism legislation after 9/11, including *Convicted for Terror* (2010) with Miki Mistrati and Christian Sønderby Jepsen, *Accidental Terrorist* (2009) with Miki Mistrati selected for IDFA's Mid-Length Competition, and *Maybe Innocent* (2009). Writer of *Historien der ikke bliver fortalt* (not yet available in English). *My Afghanistan* (2012) is selected for IDFA's Feature-Length Competition.

MAGIC HOUR FILMS

Set up in 1984 as Lise Lense-Møller Film. The company has produced a wealth of shorts, documentaries and feature films. Documentary milestones include *Into Eternity* (Michael Madsen, 2009), *BURMA VJ* (Anders Østergaard, 2008), plus the international co-productions *Bananas!* (Fredrik Gerthen, 2009) and *The 3 Rooms of Melancholia* (Piiro Honkasalo, 2005). *My Afghanistan* is produced by Lise Lense-Møller and Henrik Grunnet. magicourfilms.dk

GRUNNET FILM

Founded 2009 by journalist and producer Henrik Grunnet who has extensive experience as commissioning editor for documentaries at DR and TV 2 and as executive producer at major companies like Nordisk Film and Eyeworks. Films include *Silenced Voices* (Beate Arnestad, 2012), *Maybe Innocent* (Nagieb Khaja, 2009) and *Diplomacy* (Boris Bertram, Rasmus Dinesen, 2008). *My Afghanistan* is produced by Henrik Grunnet and Lise Lense-Møller. grunnetfilm.com

THE WAR SEEN FROM AN AFGHAN VILLAGE

ESSAY. Janus Metz sparked heated debate in 2010 with *Armadillo*, a film that showed the cynical mechanisms of war among a squad of Danish soldiers in Afghanistan. We asked the director to give his take on Nagieb Khaja's *My Afghanistan*, a film that shows the war from the other side.

BY JANUS METZ

My Afghanistan shows us children throwing rocks at passing columns of foreign military vehicles. We see their fathers encouraging them and otherwise urging them to steal whatever they can from the foreign troops. We see roadside bombs sitting in living rooms and later listen to incoming calls from the “freedom fighters” who detonate them hoping to hit as many foreign soldiers as possible. We see families with terrified children huddling in their rooms while firefights boom right outside their houses. And we see wounded civilians in hospitals that remarkably often have been hit by bombs from the international forces.

Nagieb Khaja's film provides an image of a mission gone wrong. A vast chasm separates the Afghans and the foreign troops. The “hearts and minds” strategy has run aground, not just because of local cultural patterns and general poverty but simply because of the Afghans' sense of being occupied. They are sick and tired of the presence of foreign troops.

When our team made *Armadillo* in 2009-2010, Nagieb was one of the people I looked up to gain greater insight into the challenges faced by Afghanistan and learn something about how ordinary Afghans viewed the war being waged in their country.

It quickly became clear that the stories I encountered from the Danish authorities did not measure up to the accounts Nagieb gave me. He was already working on *My Afghanistan* at the time and I tried to push mine up, so that we could bring out our films at the same time. Two pieces of the same picture: the soldiers' perspective versus the locals' perspective.

Nagieb's film would cast a light on some of the things that, to us, had to be told as assumptions and mutually suspicious guesswork. I remember thinking how interesting it would be if we could have sat in an Afghan village and observed the war from there. Nagieb Khaja's film allows us to do that.

One of the most telling clips in the film comes when Nagieb interviews a security guard at the protected zone where journalists stay in the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah. He goes home every day through Taliban-controlled territories, wearing his uniform as an unequivocal sign that he is not working for the local governor and thus for the NATO-led ISAF forces. “They don't bother me. We have a deal that if I leave them alone, they leave me alone.” Even so, the Afghan police headquarters in town is a target for rebel bombs. The reality of

the war in Afghanistan is a complex tapestry of the dilemmas that arise when local negotiations of power structures are conducted among a people who are above all simply trying to survive.

Nagieb's film is a unique and welcome window into ordinary Afghans' own stories of survival, family life, the fear of being collateral damage and their modest hopes and dreams for the future. In fact, we are seeing what we already know – that these are human beings behind the weather-beaten faces and earth-toned clothes.

Yet we are also surprised. The world of family, love and desperation that Nagieb's people lets us into is almost overwhelming, and that makes me think that this feeling only arises because our alienation from these people is so shockingly great. War is when dialogue ends and weapons speak. Total alienation enables us to kill each other. The kind of images this film presents us with gets the dialogue going again ■

ARMADILLO – A MILESTONE FILM

Armadillo is an earthquake in the nation's self-image,” one Danish critic said upon its release in 2010. In fact, the film made more headlines in the media than any other film ever, showing the dark side of Denmark at war. Following a group of young soldiers serving their first mission, *Armadillo* traces their friendship and the dehumanising effect of war as the fighting gets tougher and operations increasingly hairy. Winner of the Critics' Week Grand Prix in Cannes 2010 and numerous other awards, including an Emmy for best editing (Per K. Kirkegaard) at the 2012 News & Documentary Emmy Awards.

“Total alienation enables us to kill each another. The kind of images this film presents us with gets the dialogue going again.”

Masho and Roba's Ethiopian father and mother in *Mercy, Mercy*. Framegrab

CONDONING CRIME IN THE NAME OF MERCY

IDFA. Director Katrine W. Kjær had always been convinced that adoption was a compassionate act guided by noble institutions. Now that she has finished *Mercy, Mercy* about Masho and Roba, whose parents give them up for adoption so they can have a better life in Denmark, she is left with profound wonder at the lack of ethics in the international adoption system.

DORRIT SAIETZ

Flying in from all corners of the world, full of love and hope, flocks of prospective parents from wealthy countries arrive in impoverished Ethiopia to pick up adoptive children.

That's how the journey begins for the Danish married couple in Katrine W. Kjær's *Mercy, Mercy*. Like so many other childless Western couples, they long to have a family. They have a surplus of love and material prosperity to lavish on two children from one of the world's poorest countries – two adorable and very wanted children.

It was a fluke that Katrine Kjær ran into Henriette, the mother, who told her that she and her husband were in the process of adopting two children from Ethiopia.

"Adoption – that's an act of mercy," Kjær says. "It makes sense that the powerful should help the less powerful, or so I thought. I almost felt a bit guilty about having given birth to all five of my children."

Henriette showed her a picture of Masho, the girl, with

her mother, Sinkenesh, and Kjær got her first shock when Henriette told her that the two children they had recently been offered after years on the waiting list were not languishing in an orphanage. No, they were living with their mother and father.

"It was the sweetest picture," Kjær says. "Sinkenesh didn't look at all like a mother who is giving up her child."

"It stunned me. I thought adopted children were like babies lying in cardboard boxes on the street. I figured I had to meet this mother who was giving up her children. It was a story I had to tell. But I had to hurry. The Danish adoption agency told me that the parents were very sick, almost dying, and would like the children to go to Denmark as soon as possible."

CLOSE-UP ON AN ETHIOPIAN MOTHER AND FATHER

Kjær went to Ethiopia and discovered the harsh realities behind an adoption boom that has made headlines across the world. In just a few years, the number of Ethiopian children who are given up for adoption to couples abroad has risen exponentially. International adoption organisations have flocked to the country, private orphanages are popping up like

"Adoption – that's an act of mercy. It makes sense that the powerful should help the less powerful, or so I thought. I almost felt a bit guilty about having given birth to all five of my children."



Mercy, Mercy. Framegrab

“In human terms, it was a terrible process to witness. Especially because someone could have stopped it with a bit of financial assistance to the family, as could the Danish adoption agency, DanAdopt, the local authorities or the orphanage. But no one did.”

mushrooms in the rainy season and hopeful adoptive parents are pouring in.

But what about the actual parents who are giving up their children? Their side of the story has never really been told. Not before Kjær’s film, which offers a close-up look at an Ethiopian mother and father who have made the toughest decision of their lives.

“I was prepared for a very sad story. I imagined the two women meeting, one giving up her child before lying down to die, almost like a kind of Christ story,” Kjær says.

Masho and Roba’s parents are HIV-positive and have been told they don’t have long to live. Eager local authorities and agents for a private orphanage have convinced them that the best thing they can do to save their youngest children is to give them up to a wealthy foreign family who will give them a secure upbringing.

When Kjær arrives in the provincial city of Dodola, the family welcomes her with open arms. They are not at all as she had expected.

“We were practically the same age and so were our children. In no time at all, I forgot that the houses are made of cow dung and all the other African clichés. There was just a street like any other with lots of families. They seemed surprisingly resourceful and nurturing. They were physically very affectionate with their children and corrective, patient about talking with them and comforting them,” she says.

Mercy, Mercy gives us a close-up look at African family life, where children and adults sleep together and the children fetch water and help with the cooking. Where the older siblings take care of the young ones, and Sinkenesh, the mother, braids Masho’s hair while she sings to her and Hussen, the father, sleeps with his son Roba in his arms.

“It looked like a really good life for kids. There were lots of hugs and kisses and attention to spare, also for kids from other families, and a disciplining slap if they didn’t do as they were told.”

LOSING THEIR CHILDREN FOREVER

But amid the loving family life, the parents were struggling with intense pain and doubt. Had they really made the right

decision? They had been told that it was best for their children. In Denmark, their children would get an education and could become anything – a doctor, a scientist, even president – and then return to Ethiopia when they were grown up.

“In human terms, it was a terrible process to witness. Especially because someone could have stopped it with a bit of financial assistance to the family, as could the Danish adoption agency, DanAdopt, the local authorities or the orphanage. But no one did. And the Danish parents were never informed about the true background for the adoption, but are repeatedly persuaded by DanAdopt that this was the last resort for the Ethiopian parents.”

With much sorrow and many tears, but also hope, the children are handed over to their new father and mother who take them back to Denmark. End of story. Or, not quite.

Kjær can’t get Sinkenesh and Hussen and their terrible sorrow out of her mind. She reorganises her life, lowering her expenses to a minimum, so she can afford to go back to Ethiopia. In all, she makes four more trips to Dodola, in addition to her regular visits with the adoptive parents in Holbæk, as she tracks the two families over a period of four and a half years.

Instead of a happy end, the drama in both Ethiopia and Denmark mounts. “I’m witnessing a development that becomes increasingly heartbreaking at both ends, while failure follows upon failure on the part of those who should be helping out,” Kjær says.

Sinkenesh and her husband do not die from AIDS but get treatment and get better all the time. But they are left with a huge sense of loss and grief. As they struggle to get in touch with their children, the reality of adoption slowly sinks in: they have lost their children forever and every promise they were made has been broken.

They had been promised that they would stay in touch with their children, but that doesn’t happen – the legally required reports about their children’s welfare and development that they were supposed to receive never arrive. They had also expected that the Danish parents would become like kin to them, because that’s what it’s like in Ethiopia when you adopt someone’s children – then you’re family and help each other out. But no letters or financial assistance from Denmark arrive

“There were many times when I felt like I was stuck in a swamp of ethical dilemmas and wished I didn’t have to make this film.”



Director Katrine W. Kjær Photo: Robin Skjoldborg

in Dodola. Meanwhile, in Denmark the adoption does not go as hoped, and the consequences prove disastrous.

A BRUTAL EYE-OPENER

Adoption from Ethiopia has made headlines in recent years and sparked controversy in many countries. American and Australian media, among others, have carried stories about parents who are conned into giving their children up for adoption on the assumption that it’s just for a temporary stay in a foreign country where the children will get an amazing education. Or stories about couples who get an older orphan at an orphanage and only months later, when the child has learned to speak his or her new language, learn that the child has parents, uncles, aunts and grandparents who are expecting the child to return in a few years and help out the family.

There is huge demand from childless couples in rich countries, and the UN and several NGOs have emphatically warned that the whole adoption industry is fast turning into child trafficking.

And what about the children? Torn away from their parents and their familiar surroundings, they are transplanted to a new life, a new language and a strange culture. Some cope, but not all.

Would we ever let a Danish child undergo the social and psychological experiment that Roba, Masho and hundreds of other children are subjected to? They say children are adaptable. *Mercy, Mercy* raises the question where to draw the line in that respect as well. For Kjær, the making of the film has been a real, and very brutal, eye-opener.

“There were many times when I felt like I was stuck in a swamp of ethical dilemmas and wished I didn’t have to make this film. But I did. Because if I hadn’t, Masho and Roba would just be more anonymous numbers in a sad statistic and we would have learned nothing from their family’s story.”

She is left with profound wonder at the pervasive lack of ethics in the international adoption system.

“I thought people who worked in adoption were the good guys. That adoption was a merciful and loving act for children in need. Now I don’t know what to think. There may be some well-meaning individuals, but in the name of mercy they are creating the vast human disaster that I have witnessed” ■

Dorrit Saitz is a journalist at the Danish daily Politiken and has written extensively about ethical adoption issues.

For more information on Mercy, Mercy, see reverse section.

KATRINE W. KJÆR

Born 1974, Denmark. Holds a degree in multimedia design. Has worked as director and producer of documentary and news productions since 1999, primarily for primetime TV. Besides working on *Mercy, Mercy* for the past nearly five years, Katrine Kjær has directed several productions in Afghanistan and Africa for the national broadcasters DR TV and TV 2. *Mercy, Mercy*, her first feature documentary, is selected for IDFA’s First Appearance Competition.

FRIDTHJOF FILM

Founded 2000 by Ronnie Fridthjof. Projects range from commercials, television shows and creative documentaries to feature films. Widely successful was Janus Metz’s *Armadillo* (2010), winner of the Critics’ Weeks Grand Prix in Cannes. The company’s first venture into feature films, *Take the Trash* (2008) with Thure Lindhardt, was a huge boxoffice success. Also featuring Thure Lindhardt is the international co-production *Eddie – The Sleepwalking Cannibal* (2012). *Mercy, Mercy*, in IDFA competition, is produced by Miriam Nørgaard, Sara Stockmann and Vibeke Windelev. f-film.com



A Normal Life. Framegrab

“Having a child who is so sick that you’re afraid of losing her – that’s tough. I think it’s immensely admirable to insist that that child also do dishes and homework and be a part of the family.”

IDFA. Mikala Krogh has been “the serious one” ever since she was a teenager and hosted radio shows for children and teens. The same gravity permeates her documentaries, Per Juul Carlsen notes. Krogh’s new film *A Normal Life* is about a family in a state of emergency.

BY PER JUUL CARLSEN

“I’m not exactly known for being funny,” Mikala Krogh says self-deprecatingly but also with a good dose of humour. She’s right. Krogh was never known for her stockpile of dirty jokes but for her aura of seriousness. A quick glance at the themes of her films confirms it: a man looking for the answer to who killed his grandfather in World War II (*My Grandad’s Murderer*, co-directed with Søren Fauli), a drug addict and prostitute keeping a video journal of her life in *Beth’s Diary* (co-directed with Kent Klich), and now, in her new film *A Normal Life*, a mother trying to maintain a normal life with a daughter who has had cancer since she was two.

“I’m one of those serious people. People always told me that. Also, it’s hard to do a funny documentary,” Krogh says. For 20 years and counting she has managed to look like a mature, serious-minded woman. Humour may not be her core competency, but the 39-year-old filmmaker has no doubts about her true skill set.

“Nuanced depictions of people. I keep working with my characters until I understand their complexity,” she says.

OVERNIGHT STAYS AT THE HOSPITAL

Nothing illustrates that better than her new film, *A Normal Life*, an almost unbearably painful account of a mother trying to maintain a normal life for herself and her family while struggling to save the life of her 12-year-old daughter who has cancer.

“I spend an enormous amount of time with the people I film. And I thoroughly prepare before I start filming, so they know

me really, really well. I spend a lot of time visiting them and talking with them, listening to what their everyday life is like, what they are interested in, playing with the little kids, if there are little kids,” she says.

Krogh’s current method is an about-turn from her background as a reporter for the Danish national radio DR in the late 1980s. Even though the youth station she worked for made a virtue of spending lots of time talking with young people about their problems, she was still practicing journalism with short deadlines, often from one day to the next. When she started in the National Film School of Denmark’s documentary programme in 1997, she completed her first assignment by shooting during the day and editing the footage at night.

But that’s not how the documentary world works. Now a seasoned documentarian, Krogh tells me how she would stay overnight at the hospital with Cecilie, the girl with cancer.

Of course it takes time to document what happens in a small family with a young daughter who has cancer. Sticking a microphone in the mother’s face and getting her to say how tough everything is would be easy. But documenting how hard things are, trying to capture the family’s life and convey it to an audience, that’s a different, and much more time-intensive, story.

“The mother has many facets, which makes her a super interesting central character.”

A MOTHER’S STRUGGLE

A Normal Life is not really about Cecilie, the 12-year-old girl with cancer, or her healthy twin sister, but about their mother, Stine, who tries to make the family’s routines run smoothly, even as her daughter teeters between life and death. The film shows Stine scolding her spindly, hairless daughter, just back from a harrowing bone-marrow transplantation, because she won’t do dishes or

STRINDBERGIAN GRAVITY

Cecilie has had cancer since she was 2 and has spent half her life in hospital. Her twin sister Katrine is healthy and robust, and today she shows every sign of growing into a pre-teenager, wanting to dye her hair and hang out with friends. Cecilie, on the other hand, has lost her hair and lives most of her life in bed.

Private snapshot from *A Normal Life*



Director Mikala Krogh Photo: Stine Heilmann

“I’m one of those serious people. People always told me that. Also, it’s hard to do a funny documentary.”

MIKALA KROGH

Born 1973, Denmark. Graduated in documentary direction from the National Film School of Denmark, 2001. Co-owner of Danish Documentary. Worked for several years in radio before making her directorial debut in 1992 with *Epilogue* (co-directed with Sara Bro). Has since worked with personal, investigative and experimental documentaries. *My Grandad’s Murderer* (2004), co-directed with Søren Fauli, was awarded in Sevilla and Paris, and *Beth’s Diary* (2006), co-directed with Kent Klich, was named Best Short Doc at CPH:DOX. *Cairo Garbage* (2009) was Krogh’s contribution to *Cities on Speed*, a series of four films on megacities. *A Normal Life* is in IDFA’s Mid-Length Competition.

DANISH DOCUMENTARY

Founded 2007 by Eva Mulvad, Pernille Rose Grønkvær, and Phie Ambo, initially as a distribution platform for the directors’ award-winning films *Enemies of Happiness*, *The Monastery and Mechanical Love*. Joined later by producer Sigrid Dyekjær and director Mikala Krogh. Mulvad’s *The Good Life*, Ambo’s *The Home Front*, Andreas Koefoed and Christian Bonke’s *Ballroom Dancer*, and Rose Grønkvær’s *Love Addict* were all selected for IDFA, followed this year by *Free the Mind*, *A Normal Life*, and the Scottish-Danish co-production *I Am Breathing*. danishdocumentary.com

homework. It’s heartbreaking, incomprehensibly hard, even. But there’s a point to it, the filmmaker says.

“*A Normal Life* is a film about how important it is to maintain a normal life, even in a state of emergency. Having a child who is so sick that you’re afraid of losing her – that’s tough. I think it’s immensely admirable to insist that that child also do dishes and homework and be a part of the family, because they believe in *life*. The film is about handling a crisis,” Krogh says.

“A major challenge of *A Normal Life* is that Stine is such a complex character. She is enormously loving, but she also has a very short fuse and she’s a very honest person. She has many facets, which makes her a super interesting central character. But you have to be careful not to tip the scales and make her look like a hard mother, for instance.”

So, what we get in *A Normal Life* is insistent seriousness and a real desire to penetrate as deeply as possible into the material. Any documentarian might say this about her films, of course, but very few can muster the same arch-Scandinavian, Strindbergian gravity as Krogh. Where does this seriousness come from?

“I always deal with themes I can relate to. I have twins myself, and I’m very involved in what it feels like to share your love equally between two identical children. A Normal Life takes that conflict to an extreme.”

ALL THIS SERIOUSNESS

“I always invest a huge part of myself in the films I make and I always deal with themes I can relate to. I have twins myself, and I’m very involved in what it feels like to share your love equally between two identical children. That’s a conflict I never thought about before I had twins. *A Normal Life* takes that conflict to an extreme, because one twin is in a hospital isolation ward, while the other is at home and about to come out as a teenager. I know this kind of conflict inside and out. I think the mother of these two girls could feel that I recognised her and understood her conflict, that I delved into the details of her conflict instead of just thinking, ‘Oh my god, a cancer kid is such a great story.’

“Everyone has themes in their life that can lead to a documentary. In *My Grandad’s Murderer*, I empathised with Søren Fauli’s trauma (his grandfather was liquidated in World War II – *ed.*), because I’m Jewish and World War II has been extremely important in my life. My mother was born in Stockholm in 1943 and escaping from the Nazis has cast a shadow over my family.”

In Krogh’s next film, the personal angle is her father’s job as editor-in-chief of the serious (naturally) daily *Information*.

“I grew up with the paper and the whole discussion of the journalist’s role,” Krogh says. She will spend the next couple of years shooting in the editorial offices of *Ekstra Bladet*, a Danish tabloid that, she says, “goes right to the line” in its journalism. Others would claim that the paper goes way over the line, but that only makes it a more interesting subject.

“Just as Andrew Rossi’s *Page One* depicted life at *The New York Times*, I think it’s important to do a nuanced film about a Danish newspaper’s offices and get a look into a world that has rarely been seen in a documentary,” Krogh says ■

For more information on *A Normal Life*, see reverse section.



“I take my camera along as my slightly dim-witted friend. Then it’s ok to ask questions like I don’t know anything.”

Director Phie Ambo Photo: Stine Heilmann

MY SLIGHTLY DIM-WITTED FRIEND

IDFA. Phie Ambo started filming her family and the world around her when she was 22. She never looked at the footage, but simply used the camera to help her understand the world. Later on, the same social awkwardness helped her make her documentaries. IDFA veteran Ambo has a new film out, *Free the Mind*, the second in her trilogy about the inner life of humans.

BY PER JUUL CARLSEN

It’s a character type that pops up in feature films now and again – the pathetic nerd who can only face the world through a camera. Well, this type exists in real life, too. In fact, some of them are doing just fine. One has even translated her filter on life into a brilliant career. Her name is Phie Ambo.

“It started out very journal-like. I would video family get-togethers and those kinds of situations. I have a ton of tapes at home of grandparents and

other relatives. I never looked at the footage and I never made it into a film. Videotaping simply became a way of being in a situation while also detaching myself from it,” the director says, well aware that her choice of optics sounds a lot like a disease.

“I don’t think my story is unique. I think you could find a lot of documentarians who take the same approach to filming. It’s not an altogether healthy thing. But you can choose to embrace your disease and turn it into an advantage,” she says.

THE CAMERA AS MAGNIFYING GLASS

Ambo has done just that. She got her first camcorder at 22 and when she applied to the documentary programme at the National Film School of Denmark a few years later, she already had a sense that she could put her camera fetish to good use.

“I had never made an actual film, but I had been filming. I understood my world through a camera.

I videotaped a conversation with my dad, who had cancer and was going to die. We’re doing a countdown, and we’re sitting at the kitchen table, talking about it. The clip I submitted was maybe 13 minutes, totally uncut. It’s just us talking, but I was ready to face the big questions in life.”

While still in film school, she made her debut film *Family* (co-directed with Sami Saif), in 2001, and ever since she has been among the most prominent young Danish documentary filmmakers who have found international success. *Family* won the distinguished IDFA Award for Best Feature-Length Documentary in 2001. Two years later, she returned to Amsterdam with *Growing Up in a Day*, a short doc about an African boy who has to learn to take care of himself after his father dies. She next took up the project that has shown her unique character as a documentarian: her trilogy about “fundamental human questions.” What is a feeling? What is a thought? What is consciousness? Ambo asks these questions in *Mechanical Love* (2007),



“It started out very journal-like. I would video family get-togethers and those kinds of situations. I have a ton of tapes at home of grandparents and other relatives.”

Free the Mind (2011) and *Ripples at the Shore* (in pre-production). “I think of the camera as my magnifying glass. Using it, I can see what things *really* look like. Taking it away, I don’t have the same view of a situation. The camera is like a kind of social worker, an aide, who comes and puts a pair of glasses on me so I can understand my reality,” she says.

“I use the camera to understand the world around me more than to make films. It’s for putting myself here, in this life, on this earth. I use it on a very basic level to understand certain things that others may understand without looking through a camera.”

This approach to the camera and the act of filming give *Mechanical Love* and *Free the Mind* their uniquely Ambo-esque tone. Ambo is above all exploratory. Like an old-fashioned scientist in a strange jungle, she roams around studying the world around her through her magnifying glass. Curiosity is an essential quality, even a virtue, in a documentarian, but Ambo’s films are also permeated with the desire to ask questions – without necessarily getting any answers. She is not the type of filmmaker who wants to document that something actually happened, like a World War II documentary does, for instance. What interests her is the inscrutable world that surrounds her.

“I always marvelled at family connections. My mother and father were neighbours when they were kids, which has given me access to several different versions of parallel situations,” Ambo says. “The two families might describe the same event in widely different ways. It always fascinated me that one event can be interpreted and experienced in so many different ways, that there is no one truth. Everything is fluid. I’ve used that, for entirely self-therapeutic purposes, to understand certain basic psychological mechanisms within a family structure.”

SOFT MEETS HARD

This interest is evident in Ambo’s *The Home Front*. The documentary takes up a subject as dry as basic psychological mechanisms but serves it up in a way that made it palatable in prime time on a commercial channel. Gazing through her camera, Ambo studied five neighbour disputes that had escalated to the point where the authorities had to step in to arbitrate. The neighbours fought and discussed the most absurd trivialities in front of Ambo and her inquisitive camera.

“It’s okay to ask stupid questions when you have your camera. I take my camera along as my slightly dim-witted friend. It represents all viewers, those who don’t know anything about the situation, and when I have my camera, it’s okay to ask questions like I don’t know anything. The presence

“The camera is like a kind of social worker, an aide, who comes and puts a pair of glasses on me so I can understand my reality.”

of a camera somehow adds significance. People take greater pains in their replies.”

Ambo is currently going around asking stupid questions on the phenomenon of “consciousness” for the third instalment in her trilogy. It is pretty descriptive of Ambo’s approach to documentary filmmaking that she is here sticking her camera into things we only know four percent of the answer to.

“What is consciousness? That’s a super abstract question, but I want to have a scientific take on it. It’s interesting to meet something very soft and fluid with something ice-cold and hard. There has to be a contrast. Only going the scientific route leaves so many things out. Only 4 percent of the universe has been explained. 22 percent is dark matter and 74 percent is dark energy, and we don’t know what that is! We only know it’s there.”

While most other documentary filmmakers would find a subject like this too abstract to even document on video, to Ambo it is a treasure chest.

“It’s a major point for me not to know the process when I make a film. I quickly lose interest if I know how it ends. The process of recording and researching is by far the most important thing. I rarely watch my own films. Once they are finished, they don’t interest me at all. The thought of having to sit and watch all my old films with an audience at a festival is torture! I’m just in it for the journey” ■

For more information on Free the Mind, see reverse section.

PHIE AMBO

Born 1973, Denmark. Graduated in documentary direction from the National Film School of Denmark, 1999. Recipient of IDFA’s Joris Ivens Award for *Family* (2001), co-directed with Sami Saif. Made the crisis portrait *Gambler* in 2006 of Nicolas Winding Refn. Her *Mechanical Love* (2007) was again selected for IDFA’s Joris Ivens Competition. *Free the Mind* is the second film in Ambo’s human-being trilogy and chronicles the power of meditation and mindfulness. Upcoming is the third instalment *Ripples at the Shore* (in pre-production) about different states of consciousness. Selected for IDFA’s Reflecting Images: Masters.

DANISH DOCUMENTARY

See page 14.



Producer Sigrid Dyekjær Photo: Stine Heilmann

PICKING UP THE SLACK

PROFILE. Four filmmakers – Eva Mulvad, Pernille Rose Grønkjær, Mikala Krogh and Phie Ambo – each own a fifth of the Danish Documentary production company and keep all the rights to their films. That gives the fifth partner, producer Sigrid Dyekjær, a free hand to go unconventional ways.

BY PER JUUL CARLSEN

Sigrid Dyekjær may be petite, but the force field around her is huge. Were the Good Lord ever to declare that the human species had grown so dumb that he was throwing in the towel and pressing the doomsday button, Dyekjær would put a calming hand on everyone’s arm and say, “Don’t worry, I’ll find someone else to work with!”

On 15 May 2013, Phie Ambo’s documentary *Free the Mind* is screening in Madison, Wisconsin, with the planned attendance of none other than the Dalai Lama, along with mindfulness expert Richard Davidson and a potential throng of American celebrities who want to bask in the spiritual glow. More than the kickoff of the film’s American distribution, it’s a unique and unusual event for a Danish documentary. But first, *Free the Mind* is opening in Germany, in around 100 theatres.

“If you want to communicate with an audience, you have to think PR and strategy from day one of the filmmaker getting her idea. You have to embrace your audience, keep them in mind, very early on, and not be afraid of them,” Dyekjær tells me in a café near Danish Documentary’s offices in old-town Copenhagen. Finding an available room at Danish Documentary proved impossible. That’s only how it should be, the producer says, in a torrent of ideas and opinions.

“I was co-owner of a production company that was acquired by a big film company and suddenly it was all about having high-ceilinged and nice offices,” Dyekjær says. “At Danish Documentary, we share three low-ceilinged rooms. The money we make does not go to 40 assistants and a fancy space. We cut to the bone on every production. That gives us the

freedom to let Mikala Krogh shoot *A Normal Life* for a full year before applying for production support and decide that we wouldn’t complete the film if Cecillie, the young girl in the film, died of cancer. Creative, artistic freedom is possible when you don’t spend your money on high ceilings and the works.”

Wielding that freedom, Dyekjær and her PR officer Freddy Neumann try to send Danish Documentary’s films directly to audiences around excess links, such as sales agents, that traditionally come between the filmmaker and the audience. For Ambo’s *Free the Mind*, Dyekjær is trying to pick the right strategy to match each market.

“*Free the Mind* gives you several themes to play off. There is meditation and the Dalai Lama, who is huge in America. There is the military, war veterans and ADHD. There is something to grab audiences. Germans don’t want to hear about war and veterans at all, so we are rolling out another strategy there. In Germany, our main focus is on the education segment, the potential for kids and teens to optimize their learning, along with the meditation and yoga crowd,” she says.

“Distributors and sales agents have to learn to think in new ways. They have lost the willingness to take risks and that gives me an opportunity, as a producer, to pick up the slack,” Dyekjær says.

Generally, in terms of distributing documentaries, she sees the importance of TV as strongly declining and cinemas and video-on-demand (VoD) as

“If you want to communicate with an audience, you have to think PR and strategy from day one of the filmmaker getting her idea.”

ascendant. For the same reason, all of Danish Documentary’s films are available on VoD on the company’s website. “It’s something the feature film scene has been talking about for years,” Dyekjær says. “We just went ahead and did it.”

Nearby, in Danish Documentary’s offices, Phie Ambo adds, “When I finish my films, I can kick back and relax, because I know Sigrid will fight tooth and nail for every single one of them” ■

Read more page 34.



Free the Mind. Framegrabs



DECAY AND CREATION, HAND IN HAND

The Ghost of Piramida Photo: Eterklang

IDFA. Today all is quiet, but there was a time when Piramida, in the Svalbard archipelago, was an industrious mining town, where life blossomed for Alexander and his small family. Andreas Koefoed's music documentary *The Ghost of Piramida* tracks the Danish band Eterklang as they explore the aural ambience of the site and reanimates the past through the old Russian's grainy 8mm footage, set to the trio's melancholy tunes.

BY RALF CHRISTENSEN

On a day in 2011 we find 70-year-old Russian Alexander Ivanovic Naomkin crunching through the snow in the mining town of Piramida on Svalbard, an island that has more polar bears than people, just 1,200 chilly kilometres shy of the North Pole.

The mining town was abandoned back in the 20th century. All the workers were returned to Russia from Piramida, which is now decaying in solitude. Soon, however, Alexander runs into two

Danes: documentary filmmaker Andreas Koefoed and musician Rasmus Stolberg.

Koefoed films Stolberg, Casper Clausen and Mads Bauer, of the trio Eterklang, as they record the sound of the town and things in it: they blow across the top of bottles, strike things in echoing rooms, drop left-behind bundles of documents to the ground, sending explosions of dust through vacated offices, and run across the many understimulated wooden gangways linking the deserted houses, as if the town were still a living organism.

RECALLINGS OF HAPPIER DAYS

Koefoed's new documentary, *The Ghost of Piramida*, examines the intersection between Alexander's reminiscences of bygone life in the mining town and Eterklang's work of collecting raw sound material for their (then) upcoming album *Piramida*. Old age longing for youth, youth longing for the future.

On the one hand, with Eterklang, we experience present-day life on Svalbard, shot by Koefoed over eight days without much planning, and on the other hand, we get the result of two

“Ultimately the material presented itself, once we figured out that the two stories worked together. It cut itself, so to speak.”

well-planned days, directed by Koefoed and shot by Sophia Olsson, of Alexander alone in his Moscow apartment.

Alexander's wife is dead and his memories are stored in the grainy, black-and-white 8mm clips interspersed throughout the film, recalling happier days in Piramida. At night, Koefoed and Olsson submerge the apartment in 8mm projections across the bed and the sleeping Russian in it. The past comes to life in dreams.

“There's a depth to Alexander's footage that mine probably lacks. I was merely exploring the ghost town with Eterklang, but then Alexander's story gave access to the past and to a deeper sense of loss and remembering,” Koefoed says.

The filmmaker first earned a bachelor's in sociology before, on his third attempt, in 2005, he was accepted into the National Film School of Denmark. *The Ghost of Piramida* is not his first music documentary. He also made *To the End of the World*, about the band The William Blakes. With Christian Bonke, he directed *Ballroom Dancer*. And now, on his own, he has made *The Ghost of Piramida*, which is screening in IDFA's music documentary competition. It's the sixth Koefoed film in five years to be invited to Amsterdam.

SOUND AND THE ABSENCE OF IT

Sound obviously plays a huge role in *The Ghost of Piramida* – as does the absence of sound.

“It was interesting to work with silence. When I met Alexander up there, his girlfriend told me he stayed silent for two years after his wife died. Silent from grief. He only started speaking again recently.”

People become ghosts because they have unfinished business in life. Alexander's nostalgia prevents him from letting go of Piramida. He spent the happiest years of his life there with his wife and children from 1973 until the Russians left in 1998.

What responsibility do you feel for your characters – what is central in your portrayal of them?

“Portraying them so they recognise themselves. That there is truth to what you tell. Then, you might switch around the chronology or plant something: ‘Ask him about that’ or ‘Stand at that edge and look out so I can film you from here’. When you're with people 24/7, you get potential scenes all the time. It's enormously liberating to reduce things beforehand and start assigning an emotion to it in your mind's eye, animating it somehow. Then it becomes personal.”

Did you ever drown in reality?

“I think it's hard to be on shoot when you don't know when to take a break. That could very well

have been the case on Svalbard, where I hadn't planned what I wanted. But ultimately the material presented itself, once we figured out that the two stories worked together. It cut itself, so to speak.”

What do you mean by the concept of silence?

“We have a town that's dead, or silent. There's something beautiful about the way Eterklang brings the place to life with the sounds they make. They also bring his memories back to life and in a way create a sound-setting for his memories. Decay and creation walk hand in hand” ■

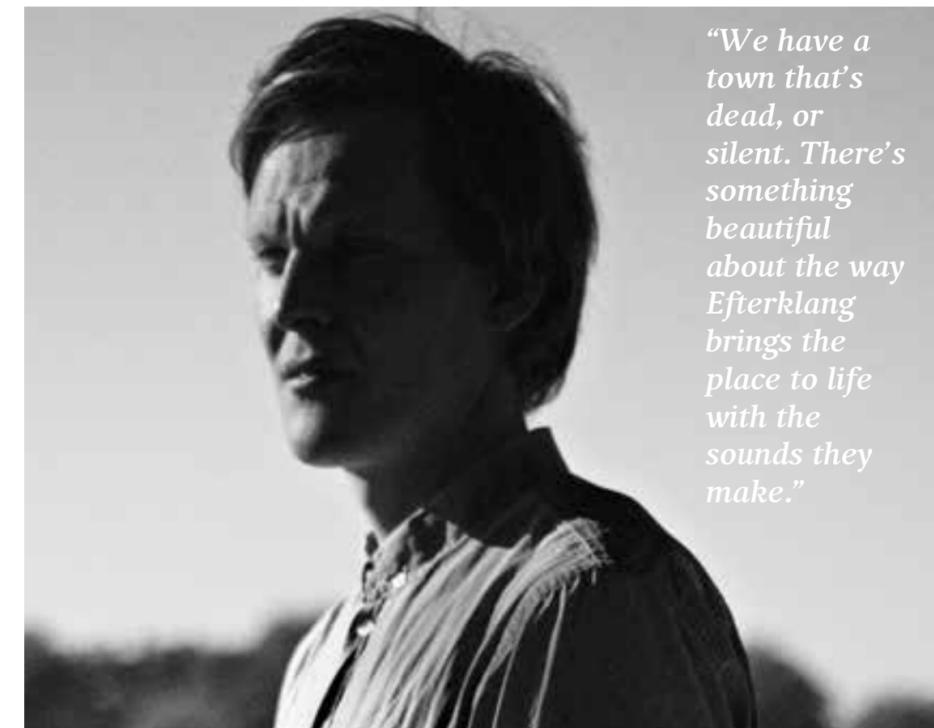
For more information on The Ghost of Piramida, see reverse section.



The Ghost of Piramida Photo: Eterklang



The Ghost of Piramida Photo: Eterklang



Director Andreas Koefoed Photo: Erika Svensson

ANDREAS KOEFOED

Born 1979, Denmark. A graduate of the National Film School of Denmark, 2009, and in sociology from Copenhagen University, 2004. His short films *A Day in the Smoke* (2008), *12 Notes Down* (2008), *Albert's Winter* (2009) and *Pig Country* (2010) have all been selected for IDFA, followed by *Ballroom Dancer* in 2011, Koefoed's first feature-length documentary co-directed with Christian Bonke. *The Ghost of Piramida*, selected for IDFA's Music Competition, has received support from the Filmworkshop at the Danish Film Institute.

KOEFOED FILM

The Ghost of Piramida is produced by Andreas Koefoed through Koefoed Film, together with Rumraket. Koefoed has also produced films about guitarist Jakob Bro and the band The William Blakes.

RUMRAKET

Eterklang's own record and production company is co-producer of *The Ghost of Piramida*. Have produced the two Vincent Moon films *Temporary Copenhagen* (2009) and *An Island* (2011).

“We have a town that's dead, or silent. There's something beautiful about the way Eterklang brings the place to life with the sounds they make.”



Dance for Me Photo: Sophia Olsson

THE PRICE OF PERFECTION

IDFA. Katrine Philp's first feature-length documentary, *Dance for Me*, follows a pair of young elite dancers who have a hard time finding their groove outside the dance floor. The film is celebrating its international premiere in IDFA's First Appearance Competition.

BY NANNA FRANK RASMUSSEN

Dance for Me started out with the director just putting one foot in front of the other, but she soon had to hustle to keep up with her story. The film was initially an assignment for a series of short films about young people in elite sport. Soon, however, there turned out to be a lot more to the story than that, and the film quickly grew into its present feature-length form of 80 minutes.

Now, to Katrine Philp's delight and surprise, the film has made it into IDFA's competition for debut films. "It feels like we're still chasing the film, like it's in a hurry to grow and go places," the filmmaker smiles.

The ambition to be in constant motion is something the film shares with its characters. Like the director, they are at the start of their careers: Egor has moved from Russia to Denmark to form a couple on the dance floor with Mie, and he now lives with Mie and her family. The two teens ask a lot of themselves and each other. Being good is not enough, they want to be legends. Meanwhile, Egor is struggling to adjust to being so far away from home and staying with a strange family that speaks a language he doesn't understand.

GROWING A FACADE

"I didn't want to leave, I just really wanted to dance," Egor volunteers in the opening of *Dance for Me*. The film offers a window into the disciplined world of elite sport while showing what it's like to be a stranger - in a strange land and in a body that's growing from a boy into a man. It takes a lot of self-restraint for the 15-year-old not to show how sad he is and how much he misses his mother. He left her to come to Denmark to dance. It's part of the price he has to pay to become a perfect dancer.

"Egor absolutely does not have an easy time," Philp says. His story caught her eye when she first met the two young dancers.

She spotted Mie and Egor while casting in a ballroom full of dancers. "They were dancing way in the back and it felt like they didn't know each other that well. I could tell they were trying things out. I immediately sensed that they were a charismatic couple. When I asked about them, I was told

"I immediately sensed that they were a charismatic couple. When I asked about them, I was told that Egor had moved to Denmark not 10 days before. That opened up a story that went beyond dance."



Director Katrine Philp

KATRINE PHILP

Born 1978, Denmark. Former dancer and a graduate in documentary direction from the National Film School of Denmark in 2009 and in film production design from the Danish Design School in 2003. Philp's film school film *Silence in a Noisy World* (2008) was winner of Rio de Janeiro's Audience Award. *Book of Miri* (2009), her graduation film, was selected for IDFA's Student Competition. *Dance for Me* is Philp's first feature-length documentary and is selected for IDFA's First Appearance Competition.

KLASSEFILM

Founded 2004 by producer Lise Saxtrup. Recent productions include *My Love* by Iben Haahr Andersen (2012) and *Dance for Me* by Katrine Philp, selected for IDFA's First Appearance Competition. The company also works with trans-media, such as the animated documentary game *The Cosmic Top Secret Experience* by Trine Laier, which was recently pitched at the Pixel Market in London. klassefilm.dk



Dance for Me Photo: Sophia Olsson

that Egor had moved to Denmark not 10 days before. That opened up a story that went beyond dance: a story of the cost of striving for perfection. I had to seize it," Philp says.

"I was always interested in the process of moving towards flawlessness. So it was a good match for me to get a couple of dancers who hadn't reached perfection yet. Latin dance has to be so perfect, and very early in their careers dancers learn to handle the attention and be on the ball. They tend to grow a facade that can be hard to penetrate. Mie and Egor aren't perfect dancers yet, but they are training to get there - with all that involves emotionally. I think it's great that they are still so easy to read that you can see their emotions and how they haven't learned to control them yet."

MEETING PEOPLE ON THEIR OWN TERMS

Philp is preoccupied with exploring what it's like for

someone who is on shaky ground and trying to find an identity. She demonstrated that in her graduate film at the National Film School of Denmark, *Book of Miri*, which tracks a Swedish loner who was adopted from Korea. That film, which was selected for IDFA's student competition, and *Dance for Me* both start from personal stories. While her next project *Suitable* - about a group of Burmese refugees applying to become so-called quota refugees in Denmark - has a broader political perspective, it, too, is a film that meets people on their own terms.

"I approach my films in pretty much the same way. Whether it's dancers or refugees, it's about meeting unique individuals. I always have a personal approach to my films," she says.

"To my mind, a good documentarian is open and curious. Trust is the most important thing. If you can offer your

"I approach my films in pretty much the same way. Whether it's dancers or refugees, it's about meeting unique individuals."

subjects the sincere interest you have inside of you, and not be pretentious or fake but open and ready to share something of yourself, people will let you into their lives. You have to create a space of trust and treat your participants properly and respectfully. I would never be able to make a film about someone I didn't like" ■

For more information on *Dance for Me*, see reverse section.

AN EXERCISE IN AFFECTING THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF MILLIONS

FOCUS. After half a century of aid, why are so many people still living in poverty? This is the central question driving the groundbreaking documentary series *Why Poverty?* which investigates the complexities and challenges of inequality through eight stories from around the globe. Demetrios Matheou talks to the three producers about how a documentary series can hope to change anything.

BY DEMETRIOS MATHEOU

There was a time when journalists could be relied upon to hold a mirror up to society and hold governments to account. But these days, the media can barely keep its own house in order, let alone change the world. One only has to look at the crisis of Rupert Murdoch's press empire in the UK to feel forsaken.

Fear not. Journalism's more idealistic mission has been taken over in recent years, by documentaries. Of course, in cinema films with high ideals and no stars are a tough sell to exhibitors. But on television, it's another matter entirely.

During the last week in November 2012, 71 broadcasters reaching over 500 million viewers across 180 countries – including some of the world's poorest nations – are broadcasting eight feature-length documentaries under the umbrella *Why Poverty?* In addition, 30 short films will be shown online, and there will be accompanying radio, online and live events.

The whole thing was launched by HRH Crown Princess Mary of Denmark, alongside the American actor Danny Glover at the United Nations. As media events go, it doesn't get much bigger. As an exercise in affecting hearts and minds, it is monumentally important.

WANT TO START A DEBATE

The intention is to kick-start a new global debate about poverty and inequality in the 21st century. While recession-hit societies may feel that there's nothing they don't know on the subject of hardship, this collection of revelatory stories – involving greed and injustice, courage and humanity – will come as a wake-up call.

"After 50 years of aid, why are one billion people still living in poverty," asks Mette Hoffmann Meyer, head of documentaries at the Danish national broadcaster DR and a board member of the non-profit organisation behind these films, Steps International. "Why is it so difficult to ensure a decent life for everyone? These questions made us want to investigate the complexities and challenges of inequality, through different stories and points of view."

Steps chairman Nick Fraser, who runs the BBC's acclaimed documentary strand Storyville, insists that

documentaries alone can't change the world. "We are public broadcasters, we're not campaigners," he says. "What we can do is start a debate. We want to talk to presidents, politicians, activists, people who know a lot and people who know absolutely nothing.

"I think that documentaries are at their best when they make you look at the world, and ask questions. This series demonstrates that there is no single answer to the problem of poverty, there's no magic bullet. There are many, complicated answers. We're saying, 'Do you want to know about the state of the world? What do you think you know about global poverty?' Once you've watched, it's up to you what you do about it."

THIRD VENTURE

With offices in South Africa and Denmark, Steps International seeks to address fundamental contemporary issues through high-quality documentaries, which are made available globally via a combination of partnerships – with broadcasters, digital media platforms and community organisations. The result is that these films have a guaranteed life and purpose way beyond their broadcast date.

Why Poverty? is its third venture. In 2001, *Steps for the Future* was a collection of 38 films about life in Southern Africa under the cloud of HIV/AIDS. In 2007 *Why Democracy?* featured 10 documentaries and 13 shorts exploring different interpretations of democracy. The series garnered a number of awards, including an Oscar for Alex Gibney's *Taxi to the Dark Side*.

Don Edkins, the organisation's South Africa-based director and executive producer, says that the desire is to impact as much on individuals – and cumulatively on public opinion – as on governments and institutions.

"*Steps to the Future* targeted discrimination towards people living with HIV, and was extremely effective," he says. "We've done a number of follow-up studies looking at how the films encouraged people to address that particular issue – in their families, in their communities, in their schools – and become more aware of what it means to be living with HIV. That sort of response has a very direct impact on people's lives.

"*Why Democracy?* had a less direct, personal impact, but it was more aimed at getting people to start discussing the importance of good governance. All these projects are founded on human rights," he adds, "whether it's the right to live with HIV, the right to good governance, the right to fairness and justice in society. Enduring poverty reflects a real failure to uphold basic human rights."

Poverty was a natural theme for the team to address, they say, but they then had to win over the six key broadcasters – in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Holland, Denmark and the UK – whose

co-production or licence agreements provided the development funding that enabled the project to get off the ground.

The average budget of the eight films was around 500,000 euros. "That's a fair bit, especially in this climate," says Edkins. "A single broadcaster will only pay part of that, so you have to encourage a lot of broadcasters to put in production finance." For the other areas of the project – including the short films, website, and wider distribution of the films after broadcast – funding came from charitable foundations.

Edkins says that the scale of ambition pays off in the long run. "What's important about these Steps projects is that they consist of a collection of films made by excellent filmmakers from all over the world, screened together as a series, so you have a greater impact upon a particular issue than a single film. And the collaboration between so many broadcasters means you are reaching a much bigger audience."

EXTRAORDINARY RANGE OF VOICES

With *Why Democracy?* Steps had an open call and received over 600 proposals. This time it was decided to speed up the process by approaching directors directly. Three of the *Why Poverty?* directors have returned from the previous project, including Gibney. In the end there were 90 proposals, from which eight were chosen.

It was clear early on that it was impossible to discuss poverty, today, without also investigating inequality.

"We always hear of the global north donating money to the global south, as if that's a good thing," says Hoffmann Meyer, "but that just speaks to the growing inequality all over the world.

"Many of the films deal with inequality. *Stealing Africa* is a very powerful story about multinational money leaving Africa without being taxed, by going into safe havens, and making others rich. It's just outrageous. *Park Avenue* is about the increase in inequality in the US – reminding us that this really is a universal problem, as does *Welcome to the World*."

Says Fraser: "We tried to achieve a geographical spread, looking at a range of important places and questions. But the most important thing is the extraordinary range of voices in these films. I was particularly struck by the Bedouin wife in *Solar Mamas*, which is a very touching and important film, the vice-premier of Zambia in *Stealing Africa*, an educated white farmer and an activist for Zambia, and the stories of the tutor, the high school graduate and the kid looking for work in China, in *Education*, *Education*, which are sensational.

"These are people I will long, long remember. And there's no other way I would have met them other than through these documentaries" ■



DFI Film Commissioner Klara Grunning-Harris **Photo:** Robin Skjoldborg

"Creative documentaries can transcend the complexity of the world by their artistic engagement."

"Some of them make you embarrassed, upset, outraged even, but I think the deepest feeling the *Why Poverty?* films impart is that they make you feel part of a global community. That you have a responsibility," says Klara Grunning-Harris, film commissioner at the Danish Film Institute which has helped fund the production of all eight films.

"The power of creative documentaries really shows through. The films are able to transcend the complexity of the world by their artistic engagement. This, in turn, makes the stories engaging to us, in all their diversity – much deeper than news or reportages can, I think."

"Making a series creates an extraordinary synergy. Watching the films, I was captured by how the stories keep on reflecting on each other. For instance, Alex Gibney's *Park Avenue* made me see one very important question related to creating poverty: At which point do you stop caring? What defines that very moment when money, wealth, power or whatever takes over and you stop caring about your fellow human beings?"

"For the Danish Film Institute, *Why Poverty?* is a way to take part in an important global discussion without taking a specific political stand. For us, the outreach of the project is crucial. That you can get people engaged in the "whys" and "hows" and "whos" of this extremely complex issue," Klara Grunning-Harris says.

Why Poverty? has a special focus during IDFA. The festival will be screening all eight films on 22 November.



Eight stories, eight questions

EDUCATION, EDUCATION

What does an education get you?

China's economic boom and talk of the merits of hard work have created an expectation that to study is to escape poverty. But these days China's higher education system only leads to jobs for a few, educating a new generation to unemployment and despair. **Director** Weijun Chen **Producer** Don Edkins **Produced by** Steps International

GIVE US THE MONEY

How do you change the world?

From Live Aid to Make Poverty History, celebrities have become activists against poverty. But have the concerts and campaigns really lifted millions out of poverty? Geldof, Bono and Bill Gates speak candidly about how to lobby effectively. **Director** Bosse Lindquist **Producer** David Herdies **Produced by** Memento Film

LAND RUSH

How do you feed the world?

75% of Mali's population are farmers, but rich nations are leasing Mali's land in order to turn large areas into agribusiness farms. As Mali experiences a military coup, the developers are scared off – but can Mali's farmers combat food shortages on their own? **Directors** Hugo Berkeley & Osvalde Lewat **Producer** Eli Cane **Produced by** Normal Life Pictures

PARK AVENUE

How much inequality is too much?

740 Park Ave, New York City, is home to some of the wealthiest Americans. Across the Harlem River, 10 minutes to the north, is the other Park Avenue in South Bronx, where 40% of the residents live in poverty. In the last 30 years, inequality has rocketed in the US. **Director** Alex Gibney **Producer** Blair Foster **Produced by** Jigsaw Productions

POOR US

Do we know what poverty is?

The poor may always have been with us, but attitudes towards them have changed. Beginning in the Neolithic Age, Ben Lewis's film takes us through the changing world of poverty. **Director** Ben Lewis **Producers** Femke Volting & Bruno Felix **Produced by** Submarine

SOLAR MAMAS

Are women better at getting out of poverty than men?

Rafea is the second wife of a Bedouin husband. She is selected to attend the Barefoot College in India that takes uneducated middle-aged women from poor communities and trains them to become solar engineers. **Directors** Mona Eldaief & Jehane Noujaim **Producer** Mette Heide **Produced by** Plus Pictures. *Read more about the film on page 24.*

STEALING AFRICA

How much profit is fair?

Rüschlikon in Switzerland has a very low tax rate and very wealthy residents. But it receives more tax revenue than it can use, thanks to Ivan Glasenberg, CEO of Glencore, who owns copper mines in Zambia. **Director** Christoffer Guldbrandsen **Producer** Henrik Veileborg **Produced by** Guldbrandsen Film. *Read more about the film on page 26.*

WELCOME TO THE WORLD

Is it worse to be born poor than to die poor?

130 million babies are born each year. In Cambodia, you're likely to be born to a family living on less than 1 dollar a day. In Sierra Leone chances of surviving the first year are half those of the worldwide average. **Director** Brian Hill **Producer** Rachel Tierney **Produced by** Century Films

Worldwide broadcast 25-30 November 2012. In addition, 30 shorts are distributed on WhyPoverty.net and on YouTube. *Why Poverty?* is initiated and produced by Mette Hoffmann Meyer of the Danish national broadcaster DR and Nick Fraser of the BBC, via STEPS International and its executive producer, Don Edkins. The Danish Film Institute is supporting all eight films.

WHYPOVERTY.NET



WOMEN ON POWER

Solar Mamas Photo: Mona Eldaief

IDFA. Can you teach illiterate women from developing countries to build solar panels? That's exactly what a project in India aims to do. *Solar Mamas*, in competition at IDFA, tracks a Jordanian woman's struggle to educate herself and improve conditions in her native Bedouin village.

BY MARIANNE LENTZ

"Should I stay like this forever?" Rafea Anad, 32, asks her fellow female villagers. Cigarette in hand, she gestures at her husband who is lazing on a mattress. "Look at him, he just lies there all day." It's a key scene in Mona Eldaief and Jehane Noujaim's

documentary *Solar Mamas*, which tracks Rafea's struggle to be allowed to get an education.

Rafea wants to work. She wants to see the world and she wants to learn. Not least, she wants to be able to feed her four children and change life in her village of Manshait Al Gayath, Jordan, whose population of 300 are all unemployed or mired in deep poverty.

Unlike so many other women around the world, she gets the chance to fulfil her dream. She is one of 27 women chosen to participate in an education programme at the Barefoot College, India, which recruits illiterate women from Third World villages. Over a six-month course, they are taught how to build solar panels – a skill they can take home and use in their respective villages, which then become

energy sustainable and self-reliant. But, in Jordan it's dishonourable for women to work and Rafea's husband is against it.

THREATENS TO DIVORCE

A grandmother from another village had originally been selected to go to India. Barefoot College likes to recruit grandmothers, because they don't have small children and – unlike the men, who are more flighty – they take their new skills back to the village and apply them there. But, at the last minute, the grandmother opted out and Rafea took her spot.

Six weeks after Rafea leaves, her husband calls her up, threatening to divorce her and take their four daughters away unless she comes home immediately. Distressed and miserable, Rafea

returns to Jordan, horrified at the thought of losing her children. But her time in India has changed her – she has learned what she is capable of. She has gained confidence and courage. "I want to see how people in other countries think and work," she says. "I want to think and work with them."

"Think in Jordan," her mother snaps. "It's better for a woman to be at home with her children." But for Rafea there is no way back. With the aid of the Jordanian government, which is eager to bring alternative energy sources to the country, she convinces her husband to let her go again. She passes her exam with flying colours, is interviewed for Jordanian TV and returns home full of initiative and confidence.

EDUCATION IS EMPOWERING

"When they arrive at Barefoot College, the women have absolutely no confidence. They come in with bad posture, scared and intimidated. But at the end of the programme, their posture is erect and they look like they could conquer the whole world. They never thought that they could become engineers, that they were competent," co-director Mona

Eldaief says. "It boosts their inner strength. This is a universal issue for women anywhere. Having a career and a family, balancing the two. Witnessing Rafea's struggle, how much she is up against – if she can conquer all that, then my situation doesn't look so bad," Eldaief, who lives in New York, says.

Eldaief is convinced that women play an important role in fighting world poverty. "As primary breadwinners who are responsible for their children's survival, women who live in villages like Rafea's usually invest their time and effort in their family and immediate surroundings. They don't migrate to the big cities in search of jobs, leaving their families, as the men tend to do" ■

Selected for IDFA is the long Director's Cut version. Mette Heide has produced the short version, see catalogue in reverse section.

Read more about Mette Heide on pages 28 and 34.



Solar Mamas Photo: Mona Eldaief

"Women who live in villages like Rafea's usually invest their time and effort in their family and immediate surroundings. They don't migrate to the big cities, as the men tend to do."

WHY POVERTY?



JEHANE NOUJAIM

Director, producer, cinematographer. Known for documentaries such as *Control Room* and *Startup.com*. Has co-directed, with Mona Eldaief, *Solar Mamas* of the *Why Poverty* project.

MONA ELDAIEF

Director and cinematographer. Has collaborated with Jehane Noujaim on *Control Room* and *Startup.com*, and the two are co-directors on *Solar Mamas* of the *Why Poverty* project.

PLUS PICTURES

See page 29.



SCRUTINISING A SWISS MINING VENTURE

WHY POVERTY?

IDFA. In his new documentary *Stealing Africa*, Christoffer Guldbrandsen investigates how multinational companies are draining money out of Africa and into tax havens in the rich countries. The filmmaker wants to shake up our image of a well-meaning West unilaterally contributing development aid and donor funds to the poverty-stricken continent.

BY MARIANNE LENTZ

Idyllic images of children playing. Half-timbered houses and majestic mountains behind whitewashed bell towers accompanied by dulcet violin tones.

This is how Christoffer Guldbrandsen opens his documentary *Stealing Africa*, made as part of the global documentary film project *Why Poverty?*. The iconic images are of the Swiss village of Rüschiikon and at first glance have no connection to the film's subject, copper extraction in Zambia. But they do.

The citizens of Rüschiikon enjoy the tax revenues paid by one man: Ivan Glasenberg, CEO of Glencore. While generating negligible revenues for the African nation, Glencore's Zambian copper mines provide Rüschiikon with a municipal budget surplus of more than 40 million euros. The surplus is so big that the local politicians don't even know how to spend it, so last year they decided to lower the already minimal tax rate by seven percent.

Guldbrandsen wants his film to shake up the image Western countries have of themselves as benevolent donors to developing countries.

"The film focuses on the money flows that big Western corporations are draining out of Africa and shifting into tax havens abroad. It's a general problem, and to make it relatable we zero in on a specific country and a specific corporation," Guldbrandsen says.

"It's interesting that the corruption we are always criticising Africa for is just a little grease in a machine that generates millions for western corporations."

As a contributor to *Why Poverty?*, he was on the lookout for examples of Western exploitation of Africa. Such cases often lack documentation and can be hard to prove. When a report documenting how Glencore exploits a series of tax deals unfavourable to Zambia was leaked, Guldbrandsen saw a clear opportunity to take a closer look at the multinational corporation's African copper venture.

DEVELOPMENT AID IN REVERSE

The images of Rüschiikon illustrate the striking contrast between this affluent village on the outskirts of Zurich and poverty-ridden Zambia, which has the third largest copper reserves in the world. While the politicians of Rüschiikon debate how to spend all of Glasenberg's tax revenues, 60 percent of Zambia's population live on less than a dollar a day and unemployment is stable at 80 percent. The country's vast copper reserves are all being mined by multinational companies who pull their profits out of Zambia while paying negligible taxes there.

In 2000, as Zambia was nearing bankruptcy and was forced to privatise its mining operations, the country signed a series of highly unfavourable contracts with foreign companies. Glencore, for

one, negotiated a deal that meant it would pay the Zambian government royalties of just 0.6 percent on the copper it extracted.

The problem, Guldbrandsen says, is rooted in the world community's faith in the market's ability to regulate investment by Western multinationals in developing countries. The skewed balance of power between weak, and hence easily corruptible, African governments and extremely powerful multinationals is another key factor.

The combination of cynical businessmen, insufficient international regulation and disadvantaged African governments is fatal for a country like Zambia. Today, the government actually spends more on its mining operations than it earns.

"The amount of money that is being pulled out of the continent is staggering. It's interesting that the corruption we are always criticising Africa for is just a little grease in a machine that generates millions for western corporations," Guldbrandsen says ■

For more information on Stealing Africa, see reverse section.

The combination of cynical businessmen, insufficient international regulation and disadvantaged African governments is fatal for a country like Zambia.



Christoffer Guldbrandsen Photo: Jeppe Gudmundsen-Holmgreen

CHRISTOFFER GULDBRANDSEN

Born 1971, Denmark. Graduate from the Danish School of Journalism and London City University. Is acclaimed for his fly-on-the-wall portrayals of high profile politicians, including *The President* (2011), a unique inside story about how Europe got its first president, and *The Road to Europe* (2003) which follows Anders Fogh Rasmussen (currently NATO Secretary General) leading the negotiations towards the Union's enlargement as Danish Prime Minister and EU President back in 2002. He created a heated debate in 2006 with *The Secret War* which questioned whether the Danish government knew that Americans did not necessarily observe the Geneva Convention at a time when Danish soldiers extradited captured Afghans to the US. *Stealing Africa* is part of the international documentary project *Why Poverty*.

GULDBRANDSEN FILM

Founded 2005 by director and journalist Christoffer Guldbrandsen. *Stealing Africa* is produced by Henrik Veileborg for Guldbrandsen Film. Productions include some of Guldbrandsen's most renowned films including *The President* (2011). guldbrandsenfilm.dk



Stealing Africa Photos: Guldbrandsen Film

THE HAPPIEST MAN



The Record Breaker Photo: Brian McGinn

IDFA. Brian McGinn, a connoisseur of quirky characters, picked Mette Heide of Denmark to be his producer after seeing a Heide-produced film about the eccentric Japanese inventor Dr Nakamats. *The Record Breaker* is a documentary comedy about Ashrita Furman, a 56-year-old New Yorker who holds the world record for most world records.

BY FREJA DAM

Ashrita Furman holds the world record for walking in the heaviest shoes (323 lbs), catching the most grapes in his mouth (202 in three minutes), splitting the most apples in the air with a samurai sword (27 in one minute) and bicycling the longest underwater (3.03 kilometres). He also holds the official record for most Guinness World Records – 147 in all, at this writing.

But what drives this 56-year-old manager of a health-food store to dedicate his life to breaking records, to travel round the world and tirelessly train his skills in all manner of odd disciplines, even as his family and friends shake their heads? This is what the American director Brian McGinn set out to investigate in his documentary *The Record Breaker*, introducing us to Furman as he trains to ascend Machu Picchu on stilts.

McGinn stumbled on the Danish producer and her company

Plus Pictures when he saw one of her past productions, Kaspar Astrup Schröder's *The Invention of Dr Nakamats*, a portrait of the eccentric 85-year-old Japanese cult inventor who claims to hold the world record for most patents. McGinn is a devotee of quirky films about incredible things – films like *Man on Wire*, *Amélie* and the work of Wes Anderson. Heide's film about Dr Nakamats made him think that the Furman project would be right up the Danish producer's alley. And it was.

THE AMERICAN CONNECTION

Heide founded Plus Pictures in 2008. The company focuses on making thought-provoking, surprising and entertaining documentaries, often produced in partnership with American filmmakers.

"Mixing up the teams makes for exciting information exchange," the producer says. "But even in productions that do not directly involve American co-production partners, we



The Record Breaker Photo: Steve Milligan



The Record Breaker Photo: Brian McGinn

try to include the American partners financially to get into the American distribution market and expand our network. That way, American money goes back to Denmark and we get exciting partners, creatively and financially," she says.

Of course, McGinn's nationality was not why Heide jumped at the project because of but because of the American director's vision of reaching large audiences by making a meaningful documentary comedy. All the same, the American director does provide access to the American market, and that's interesting to Heide because it's so much bigger and has other distribution opportunities than the Danish market.

AMBITIOUS ECCENTRICS

A good example of an artistically and financially successful partnership is the co-production of Lauren Greenfield and Evergreen Pictures' documentary *The Queen of Versailles*, which

IN THE WORLD

won the Directing Award at Sundance 2012 and has exceeded expectations at American theatres. The film is a Shakespearean tale of an American family of billionaires who got hit by the recession while building the biggest house in America. Though David and Jackie Siegel have no one to blame but themselves and their decadent ways, they are actually rather quite lovable people and easy to identify with – no one was untouched by the recession, after all.

Furman, the subject of Heide's new production, holds the world record for most world records, Dr Nakamats for most patents and the Siegels for biggest house. Eccentric, passionate, larger-than-life characters variously afflicted with delusions of grandeur appear to be the common denominator in Heide's productions. Meanwhile, she has also introduced us to such absurd characters as Ryuichi Ichinokawa, the Japanese proprietor of a company that rents actors out to people who need stand-ins for family members, in Kaspar Astrup Schröder's *Rent a Family Inc*, and the dating coach Neil, in Anders Gustafsson's *Chasing Success*, who does nonstop sit-ups while raving about how great he feels.

Personally, Heide does not think she goes for offbeat characters as much as what she calls "unique stories with universal themes." On her involvement in *The Record Breaker*, she says,

"I'm attracted to unique stories told in entertaining ways. *The Record Breaker* is an amazingly positive story about a man who wants to be happy and has his own way of looking at what makes him happy."

THE COURAGE TO GO YOUR OWN WAY

As they shot the film, it came out that even a zesty record breaker has his sorrows. After dropping out of Columbia University, Furman and his father didn't talk for years, because his father was disappointed that his bright son had abandoned his plan to take over his father's law firm. Instead, Furman devoted himself to spiritual study. His wish to get closer to God, in fact, is what motivates him to break records. Meditation and mental focus enable him to break physical limits, he says. His parents, for their part, were initially unimpressed by all his records.

Furman's conflict with his parents elevates the film from a curiosity to a universal tale of acceptance, dedication and the courage to go your own way.

"We arrived at the conclusion that the core of the story is a universal narrative of letting your children follow their hearts."

"We arrived at the conclusion that the core of the story is a universal narrative of letting your children follow their hearts," Heide says.

Over the course of the film, though, the parents do come closer to accepting their son's life choices, as Furman's dad realises that his son is "the happiest man in the world" and that's the most important thing. Indeed, Furman does look

happy when he is bouncing on his pogo stick like a giddy, overgrown kid, hula hooping or crawling up a mountain like a bear. It almost makes you want to drop out of the rat race, quit your day job, forsake materialism and go out and play.

In the meantime, you can secretly practice at your desk: eat 18 marshmallows in one minute and you'll break Furman's record ■

Read more on pages 24 and 34.

For more information on *The Record Breaker*, see reverse section.

Furman holds the world record for most world records, Dr Nakamats for most patents, and the Siegels for biggest house. Eccentric, passionate, larger-than-life characters appear to be the common denominator in Heide's productions.



Producer Mette Heide Photo: Brian McGinn



Director Brian McGinn

BRIAN MCGINN

Born 1984, USA. Co-directed and edited the 2011 feature documentary *American Teacher*, produced by Dave Eggers and narrated by Matt Damon. His short fiction *Would You*, starring Dave Franco and Christopher Mintz-Plasse, premiered at the 2012 SXSW Film Festival. In production with *Kenny: A Documentary in G*, a documentary about saxophonist Kenny G to be released in 2013. *The Record Breaker* (2012) premiered at the short film festival in Palm Springs where it won the Best Documentary award, and is selected for IDFA's Reflecting Images: Panorama.

PLUS PICTURES

Founded 2008 by producer Mette Heide. Recent titles include Lauren Greenfield's Sundance winner for the US directing award *The Queen of Versailles* (2012), *Rent a Family Inc.* (2012) and *The Invention of Dr Nakamats* (2009) by Kaspar Astrup Schröder, *Solar Mamas* of the *Why Poverty?* series (see page 24), and *The Record Breaker* (2012) by Brian McGinn, winner of the Best Documentary award at Palm Springs and selected for IDFA's Reflecting Images: Panorama. pluspictures.dk

POWERFUL, SURREAL, FRIGHTENING ...

The Act of Killing has garnered massive attention since it took the film festivals in Telluride and Toronto by storm. The film has now reached screens in Indonesia. We bring some of the international reactions to Joshua Oppenheimer's unsettling portrait of Indonesian gangsters responsible for killing thousands in 1965-66's anti-communist purge. Read interview with Danish producer Signe Byrge Sørensen on the next pages.

"The Act of Killing is shocking. It grips the audience with incredible force, especially Indonesians, forcing us to wake from a nightmare that we have lived for so long that we have become accustomed to it, and have accepted it as a reality. Watching this film is a wakeup call." Rainny Drupadi, Kompas, Indonesia

"On top of a mountain of corpses, our fellow countrymen rolled out a red carpet for the growth of gangster capitalism and political Islam. In documenting this, The Act of Killing exposes the hypocrisy at the heart of this country's notions of 'patriotism' and 'justice'. The film achieves all this thanks to the director's genius and audacious choice of filmmaking method."

Ariel Heryanto, Tempo Magazine, Indonesia

"I have not seen a film as powerful, surreal, and frightening in at least a decade ... unprecedented in the history of cinema." Director Werner Herzog

"Like all great documentaries, The Act of Killing demands another way of looking at reality. It starts as a dreamscape, an attempt to allow the perpetrators to reenact what they did, and then something truly amazing happens. The dream dissolves into nightmare and then into bitter reality. An amazing and impressive film." Director Errol Morris

"It's often said of documentaries that they deserve to have as wide an audience as possible. This doesn't deserve; it demands – not for what it says about present-day Indonesia or even about its former horrors. But because almost every frame is astonishing." Catherine Shoard, The Guardian

DECONSTRUCTING A GENOCIDE



Producer Signe Byrge Sørensen Photo: Robin Skjoldborg

PROFILE. Depicting the genocide in Indonesia in 1965 from the point of view of the perpetrators, *The Act of Killing* has caused an uproar in Indonesia and the West. “If you want to understand where genocide comes from, you have to find out what drives the perpetrators,” says Signe Byrge Sørensen, the film’s Danish producer.

BY FREJA DAM

Producer Signe Byrge Sørensen was attending a seminar at the CPH:DOX festival in 2007 when a sequence from a work-in-progress documentary project made her eyes go wide: two perpetrators of the Indonesian genocide 1965-66 are recreating a scene by a river in a rural area outside Medan. One is playing the victim, the other the executioner. The former drags the latter down to the river, demonstrating how, in this very place, he used to behead Communists, ethnic Chinese and intellectuals and dump their bodies in the water. He then asks the soundman to take a picture of him and his fellow criminal as they flash the victory sign.

“The scene provoked me violently,” Byrge Sørensen says. “It was very bestial, and the perpetrator was obviously proud of what he had done. I got extremely curious to hear the whole story – to find out who the people were who shot the footage and how they got the killers to talk so openly about everything.”

The Danish producer went straight home and called up the film’s American director, Joshua Oppenheimer, who was filming in Indonesia, and

“Josh was already busy developing when I came aboard. At the time, it was financed as an academic project and my main job was to find a shape so that it could reach a wide audience.”

asked him if he needed a producer. As a matter of fact, he could use professional assistance to structure and finance his ambitious documentary about the Indonesian genocide. Oppenheimer and the rest of what was then a filmmakers collective had thousands of hours of footage and a huge archive of materials mapping out what had taken place in the country. And Oppenheimer felt he had only just scratched the surface.

A GLOBAL OUTLOOK MATTERS

In the film, Oppenheimer challenges former leaders of death patrols, who today are celebrated as heroes, to recreate their roles in the genocide. We watch the criminals stage the killings in cinematic scenes inspired by American gangster movies. We watch them play all the roles themselves and their reactions afterwards when they watch the scenes. In that regard, *The Act of Killing* is typical of the kind of film Byrge Sørensen is attracted to – intellectual and political documentaries of an international bent. Films with opinions. Films that provoke and experiment with the cinematic vocabulary and whose content ask something of the audience, intellectually and emotionally.

“Josh had a very clear vision, aesthetically, politically and content-wise, and he was already busy developing when I came aboard. At the time, it was financed as an academic project and my main job was to find a shape for the film so that it could reach a wide audience,” Byrge Sørensen says.

FINAL CUT FOR REAL

Founded 2009 by producer Signe Byrge Sørensen and Anne Köhncke, later joined by Monica Hellström. Among recent productions are *Football is God* by Ole Bendtzen, *Returned* by Marianne Hougen-Moraga, and *The Kid and the Clown* by Ida Grøn, selected for IDFA 2011. *The Act of Killing*, executive produced by Erroll Morris and Werner Herzog, had its first screening at the Telluride Film Festival and celebrated its official world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival. final-cut.dk and theactofkilling.com

Byrge Sørensen studied international development and communication at Roskilde University in Denmark and later worked for the production company SPOR Media, which focuses on cultural and social conditions in developing countries. Of course, that doesn’t mean she’ll agree to anything “as long as it’s about Africa”, but international projects do attract her.

“It’s important to have a global outlook. I’m interested in communicating political issues from around the world to Western audiences.”

MANY VERSIONS OF THE SAME STORY

One thing is being interested in the world. Another is making yourself the mouthpiece of mass murderers. Why give them a voice?

“It was never Josh’s nor my intention to make a film that give them a pulpit,” Byrge Sørensen says. “But if you want to understand where genocide comes from and prevent it from happening again, you have to find out what drives the perpetrators. By letting them speak and recreating scenes in their versions of events, Josh is documenting how the perpetrators of this genocide think.”

In large parts of the film, the perpetrators seem completely twisted and unscrupulous, bragging about their participation in a brutal genocide and demonstrating the most effective way of strangling someone with a steel wire. How did the director get them to talk so openly about what they had done?



The Act of Killing. Framegrab



The Act of Killing Photo: Anonymous

“Josh had built up very good relationships with these people. He listened to them without judging. When I came along on shoot, I, too, concentrated on being open and present and held off dealing with my own feelings until I got back home. I’m sure one of Anwar’s (Anwar Congo, the film’s main character, ed.) reasons for being in the film is that he gets an opportunity to talk about his nightmares. He needed that because, needless to say, killing another human being affects you, and the point is that it was people who committed these atrocities, not monsters,” Byrge Sørensen says.

“It’s interesting that, in an Indonesian context, you can say straight out that you intend to tell the story of what happened in 1965-66. Only, it’s a story that’s understood in many different ways.” Indonesia has never had a reckoning with its bloody past. After 1966, a military regime ruled the country for 31 years and it had no interest in seeing anyone who helped them come into power being charged with murder. “The winners write the laws and they write history. The story that the communists were evil and it was good that they were killed hasn’t really been contested. Moreover, in our part of the world,

“In our part of the world, in the mid-’60s, it was welcome news that an Asian country was taking care of its communists themselves.”

in the mid-’60s, as the Vietnam War was raging, it was welcome news that an Asian country was taking care of its communists themselves without our intervention,” Byrge Sørensen says.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE OF INDONESIA

Byrge Sørensen is delighted that the film has sparked debate in the US over Guantanamo, torture and impunity, and she’s especially delighted at the powerful reactions the film has elicited in Indonesia. The Indonesian Tempo magazine put out a special issue about the genocide, and the film is still being discussed in both the Indonesian and the English-language press in the country. The national human rights commission has released a report about the 1965-66 killings which it has been working on for four years that the government has ignored until now. Byrge Sørensen hopes that the current discussion will change all that.

“We hope the film can be used as a catalyst for a truth and reconciliation process, that there will be open discussion and that the general discourse will change, so that the genocide is not something to brag about. And we hope it will happen peacefully” ■

For more information on *The Act of Killing*, see reverse section. Read more page 34.

IF YOU CAN MANAGE A CHILDREN'S BIRTHDAY PARTY ...



SIGNE BYRGE / FINAL CUT FOR REAL
Time is one of the most important resources.

"The real lives of real people hold amazing stories. When you produce documentaries, you have to catch the stories on the fly, and that's a huge challenge.

It has been, and still is, a great joy working on *The Act of Killing*, mainly because of my collaboration with the director, Joshua Oppenheimer, and with people in Indonesia. Also, I'm really happy about the strong statements we've received regarding the film's impact on the Indonesians' self-understanding. I enjoy working internationally, and in the field of documentary, international collaboration is absolutely essential.

My biggest challenge today is the never-ending struggle for time. Time to develop. Time to shoot, time to cut. Time is one of the most important resources in the production of durable documentaries. And time is a very scarce resource in today's media world.

When I look at the women producers I work with every day, they are all skilled, creative, smart, well organised and tough. Whether that's because they are women, it's very hard to say."

Bonus info: Final Cut for Real always have champagne on ice and pickled herring with curry sauce, a true Danish delicacy, on their lunch table. Fortunately, they rarely combine the two.
Films: The Act of Killing, Traveling with Mr. T, The Human Scale, The Kid and the Clown, Returned, Football is God.
Read about The Act of Killing page 30.



METTE HEIDE / PLUS PICTURES
The biggest challenge is ensuring a continued market for single documentaries.

"I like the combination of being sparring partner and entrepreneur.

The biggest challenge is ensuring a continued market for single documentaries. In the big international media landscape, documentaries are under enormous pressure. That's why it's important to produce films that explore new storytelling forms and reach a big audience via new as well as existing distribution platforms.

It's important for a producer to strike the right balance between courage and a sense of reality. I definitely do not think that has anything to do with gender. Also, a producer has to know how to communicate with a director, the crew and the people who finance the productions. I don't think that's gender-specific either. Maybe the job as producer has become a female profession, both in documentaries and fiction, because film production has become less financially lucrative. Then most men bail out."

Bonus info: Despite the bone-dry answers above, at Plus Pictures they like to crack jokes, go to the hairdressers, buy shoes, discuss holiday plans in warm climates only, and brag about their children.
Films: Solar Mamas, The Record Breaker, The Queen of Versailles, The Invention of Dr Nakamats.
Read more on pages 24 and 28.



LISE LENSE-MØLLER / MAGIC HOUR
Experience is an asset – if it's constantly challenged.

"I enjoy the process of starting with a 'seed' – whether it is an idea or a talent – and finding out what that particular seed needs and how to make it grow.

I enjoyed working on *Burma VJ* because I felt that film actually made a difference. I enjoyed working on *Into Eternity*, because it was so difficult, and we were so close to not "solving it," but Michael Madsen and I refused to give up. I enjoy teaching and tutoring immensely – not least for EAVE.

Apart from being understaffed and underfinanced like most independent documentary producers, the biggest challenge is avoiding boxes. Thinking in boxes or being put into one is lethal to creativity. Experience is an asset – if it's constantly challenged.

Of course there are many female producers. Why shouldn't there be? Being a documentary producer does not earn you fame or money. In my experience it requires a lot of perseverance, patience and genuine interest in the people you work with. I believe I have that, but whether it is linked to my gender or not, I have no idea."

Bonus info: Ten years ago, Lise Lense-Møller published a cookbook. Now she has also become a publisher of food for the soul: 96-year-old Sven, who has been running a spiritual bookshop in 71 years and whom Lise Lense-Møller has just finished a film about, has donated his company, The Wisdom Books, to Lense-Møller and director Marie Louise Lefèvre.
Films: The Visit (in production), 1989 (IDFA Forum), My Afghanistan, Into Eternity, Burma VJ. Read more page 42.

When it comes to producing documentaries, however, Danish women are very well represented. Seven out of the nine Danish films at IDFA are produced by women (including *My Afghanistan*, which has both a male and a female producer). When you look at the rest of the Danish documentary film business, a similar pattern emerges. Women produced 65 percent of all the documentaries that received support from the Danish Film Institute in 2011 and the current rate for 2012 is an impressive 76 percent – as opposed to 53 percent for features.

There's a saying that goes, If you can manage a children's birthday party, you can manage a film production. Do women owe their success to their



VIBEKE VOGEL / BULLITT FILM
It's good to have humour, empathy and persistence in copious amounts.

"I have an undying love affair with reality. I love to see it spelled out, angled by a skilled director who can turn the flow of human subject matter and impressions of real life into a filmic story. What drives me is my curiosity about the director's wrestling with the subject and the subject itself. My job gives me an opportunity to always get smarter about life.

In the documentary business, I find that the inertia in the representation of the sexes has been exploded. There has been a space where you could clearly make your mark without the rulebook that constricts fiction film production. Women have been supremely good at taking advantage of that, which has contributed to the strong position of Danish documentaries. I'm wary of 'gendering' abilities too much, but I can say that it gives me real pleasure to keep track of many threads at once, that it's good to have humour, empathy and persistence in copious amounts, and that recognition in a partnership is crucial to success."

Bonus info: Vibeke Vogel has known her producer partner Elise Lund Larsen for 23 years. They both worship Steve McQueen (the actor, hence the name Bullitt Film), Joan Wasser, Patti Smith, Jessica 6, Sophie Calle and a Danish band from the eighties named Sneakers.
Films: Cooper's Challenge (IDFA Forum), Harbour of Hope, Turning, The Land of Human Beings – My Film about Greenland, The Journals of Knud Rasmussen. Read more page 42.



HELLE FABER / MADE IN COPENHAGEN
My main approach is a really good story.

"I have a deep love of telling stories. That's the main approach for me: a really good story that the director and I work together to resolve in the strongest possible way.

Enemies of Happiness, directed by Eva Mulvad, has a special place for me because it was the first international film I produced. It ended up going all the way and winning top awards at IDFA, Sundance and Berlin. It gave me so many good experiences and helped me build the international network I draw on today.

My greatest challenge is that too much winds up on my desk. I wish more tasks could be delegated, but that's not always possible.

If my gender gives me any advantages as a producer? I'm not sure, but there's no getting around the fact that a solid maternal instinct is a useful skill for a producer: great love, great patience – and the ability to cut to the bone when necessary."

Bonus info: Every year when attending IDFA Helle Faber buys 200-300 tulip bulbs that she plants in her garden.
Films: Embracing the Dead (IDFA Forum), Putin's Kiss, Dark Side of Chocolate, The Samurai Case, Au Pair, Shanghai Space, Enemies of Happiness.
Read more page 42.



SIGRID DYEKJÆR / DANISH DOCUMENTARY
I wish there were 48 hours in a day and I could work for 40 of them.

"I love to organise, build teams, make them work together and bring out a creative product. The meeting of film and audience for me is the high point. Documentaries give me a special opportunity to touch other people and give them inspiration and perspective on their lives.

I wish there were 48 hours in a day and I could work for 40 of them. My motto is: Where there's a will, there's a way. Sometimes the road is long, winding and tough, but I want to succeed every single time.

Personally, I'm not much involved in the gender discussion. But I would propose that more women than men work in documentaries because women are more patient. A good documentary requires you to spend a lot of time delving into the substance and waiting for the material to open up. Men lose heart more quickly. They usually need to be able to control the process instead of surrendering to the film's natural story."

Bonus info: Sigrid Dyekjær was once interrogated by the secret police in Teheran and found herself, technically speaking, deported out of Iran.
Films: Free the Mind, A Normal Life, The Good Life, Ballroom Dancer, Love Addict, Cairo Garbage, Mechanical Love, The Monastery. Read more page 17.

MORE ABOUT WOMEN IN FILM

A WOMAN'S JOB. Film editing has been practiced by women since the very beginnings of cinema as it was considered a menial labor, like sewing. It is said that women are actually better editors than men, because they have a greater talent for reading and interpreting facial expressions of emotions.
ON THE RED CARPET. In Denmark it has been 12 years since a woman last won at the Danish equivalent of the Oscars, the Robert Awards.
THE NEW GENERATION. The 2011 graduates in documentary direction from the National Film School of Denmark consisted entirely of women. Only 1 out of the 6 graduates from the fiction direction programme was a woman, while 4 out of 6 of the graduating producers were women.

Sources: The New York Times 25 May 2012, the Danish daily Politiken.

MORE DANISH WOMEN PRODUCERS AT IDFA 2012

Sara Stockmann, Miriam Nørgaard and Vibeke Windeløv form the producer team on *Mercy, Mercy*. Back in 2010, **SARA STOCKMANN** signed one of the most influential Danish films in recent years, Janus Metz's *Armaddillo*, for Fridthjof Film. Today she is running her own company, Sonntag Pictures. **MIRIAM NØRGAARD**, who trained as an editor, was film commissioner at the Danish Film Institute 2006-10, and is now producer at Fridthjof Film. **VIBEKE WINDELØV**, producer of many of Lars von Trier's films, forms one half of Windeløv/Lassen Interactive, a company aiming mainly at trans-media content. First release is *Cloud Chamber* (see page 36). Read about *Mercy, Mercy* on page 8.
LISE SAXTRUP is producer on *Dance for Me*. Saxtrup is founder of Klassefilm and also works in trans-media, e.g. *The Cosmic Top Secret Experience* selected as one of 30 international projects to be pitched at the 2012 Pixel Market in London. Read more on pages 21 and 36.

NEW DANISH TRANS-MEDIA

TREND. Trans-media and cross-media have been around since the 1960s, but it has never been surrounded by so much attention as now. In this development, the film industry is central. New storytelling forms, new players and new financing and revenue opportunities are waiting to be explored. FILM looks at current Danish trans-media initiatives.

BY JAN FREDSLUND

“Trans-media” usually refers to projects that aren’t tied to a single medium. Either because they unfold across several different platforms, e.g., combining TV and the Web. Or because they contain elements of several different media, e.g., combining computer games and film.

At the Danish Film Institute, New Danish Screen maintains a special focus on the phenomenon. To Jakob Høgel, artistic director of the talent development programme, it’s important to try out trans-media opportunities. He’s seeing a new development in the field of documentaries.

“We have to investigate the storytelling forms that are out there,” Høgel says. “I see some interesting shifts happening in documentaries. How do people use the Internet? In other ways than sitting still, reclining and looking at something. They want to be able to do things, choose things, interact in various ways. And that type of experience will, of course, also exist in filmic documentary forms.”

48 HOUR GAMES

New Danish Screen has had a hand in this shift. November saw the premiere of *48 Hour Games*, an interactive documentary by director Suvi Andrea Helminen and game producer Dajana Dimovska.

The project is based on Nordic Game Jam, an event where young computer game developers over one frantic weekend developed an entire computer game from scratch. It was all caught on video – and the user will now create her individual version of the Nordic Game Jam story by picking her own way through the material. Picking certain clips triggers rewards and there are small games to be played along the way, including those developed by the teams featured in the film.

48 Hour Games is produced by Mikael Windelin for Minerva Film.



NEW BUSINESS MODELS

A pressing aspect of trans-media that needs to be resolved is revenue options. How do you sell something that’s available online or involves multiple platforms?

“We have to get away from the retail sales philosophy,” Høgel says. “There has been a tendency to sell individual units: one DVD, one cinema experience of a certain duration. People exhibit an entirely different behaviour online – first they need to get something for free, then, if they are interested, they will pay to go in-depth, get extra stuff, etc. That’s also a development we’ll be supporting.”

Cloud Chamber is a Danish example of this strategy. The project, a trans-media fictional story, is produced by Vibeke Windeløv and Stinna Lassen, directed by Christian Fønnesbech, with Fabian Wullenweber as the episodic content director, and features a cast starring Jesper Christensen and Sara Hjort.

The story is set in an online science fiction universe and includes film, computer games and social media. Solving a mystery about a secret signal from outer space, users have to work together online to find out what really happened – in the past and in the future, on Earth and in the rest of the universe.



Fønnesbech, the director, expects the game to be free at first.

“The payment model will probably be that the first episodes are free and then we introduce episode sales – possibly combined with “free-to-play” options like purchasing extra adventures inside the game. One possibility could be paying to progress in the mystery instead of having to play your way through, which takes time and effort, or buying increased visibility to other users. The attraction of such ‘virtual merchandise’ is that it’s cheap to make – while an extra film clip, for example, is really expensive.”

Cloud Chamber is supported by New Danish Screen. The game is expected to go fully online in February 2013.

EDUCATION AND NEW NETWORKS

Apart from new storytelling forms and business models, trans-media involves new players in creative development and financing. This takes new networks and skills for working together across industries.

An important initiative in this regard is the National Film School of Denmark’s new programme, European Cross Media Academy, which offers graduate students from all over Europe who have the relevant professional skills a semester’s training in a trans-media approach



to animated films and computer games. The programme will initially train 200 students over the next three years.

New Danish Screen has supported two projects this year that develop National Film School graduate projects: Petter Madegård and Jakob Balslev’s *Cinema dell’Arte*, blending animation and live motion-capture, and Trine Laier and Lise Saxtrup’s *The Cosmic Top Secret Experience*, a platform game and autobiographical documentary hybrid.

Another initiative is PIXEL JAM, an annual three-day networking workshop organised by New Danish Screen and other partners. The aim here is to develop original concepts, make new contacts across the worlds of film, gaming, TV, music and the Web, and bring creative people together with commercial interests to help out with the continued development, financing and distribution of the projects.

FESTIVALS

Finally, there are the film festivals, whose markets are increasingly focusing on new networks and financing opportunities.

“Trans-media has become a very important part of certain festivals. IDFA is raising its profile and there’s the market in London, which is probably the international leader in interactive productions. This year, four Danish projects were pitched, which is amazing,” Høgel says, referring to the London Film Festival’s trendsetting Pixel Market.

At Pixel Market, 30 trans-media projects are selected to meet with 100 potential investors and decision-makers.

The four Danish projects this year were *Cinema dell’Arte* and *The Cosmic Top Secret Experience*, along with *Let’s Dance – A Casual Game about Death* by the Kong Orange digital agency with support from DFI’s Video Games programme, and *World Online Orchestra Project* by the Copenhagen Phil symphony orchestra in partnership with the Makropol media agency. *Cloud Chamber* was in last year’s market ■

FIVE TRANS-MEDIA PROJECTS FROM THE DANISH FILM INSTITUTE

48 HOUR GAMES [01]

How to recreate the creation of a video game, as it took place over one frantic weekend during Nordic Game Jam. **Director** Suvi Andrea Helminen **Script** Dajana Dimovska **Producer** Mikael Windelin **Produced by** Minerva Film **Support** New Danish Screen

CLOUD CHAMBER [02]

The viewers become detectives in a science-fiction drama where they have to solve a mystery by decoding a signal from outer space. **Directors** Christian Fønnesbech, Hans Fabian Wullenweber **Producers** Vibeke Windeløv, Stinna Lassen **Produced by** Windeløv/Lassen Interactive **Support** New Danish Screen

CINEMA DELL’ARTE [03]

A live-animation theatre where the actors interact with the audience from the screen through motion-capture technology. **Director** Petter Madegård **Producer** Jakob Balslev **Produced by** Cinema dell’Arte **Support** New Danish Screen.

THE COSMIC TOP SECRET EXPERIENCE [04]

An animated documentary game about T who is searching for answers about her father and his Intelligence work during the Cold War. **Director** Trine Laier **Producers** Lise Saxtrup and Dajana Dimovska **Produced by** Klassefilm **Support** New Danish Screen

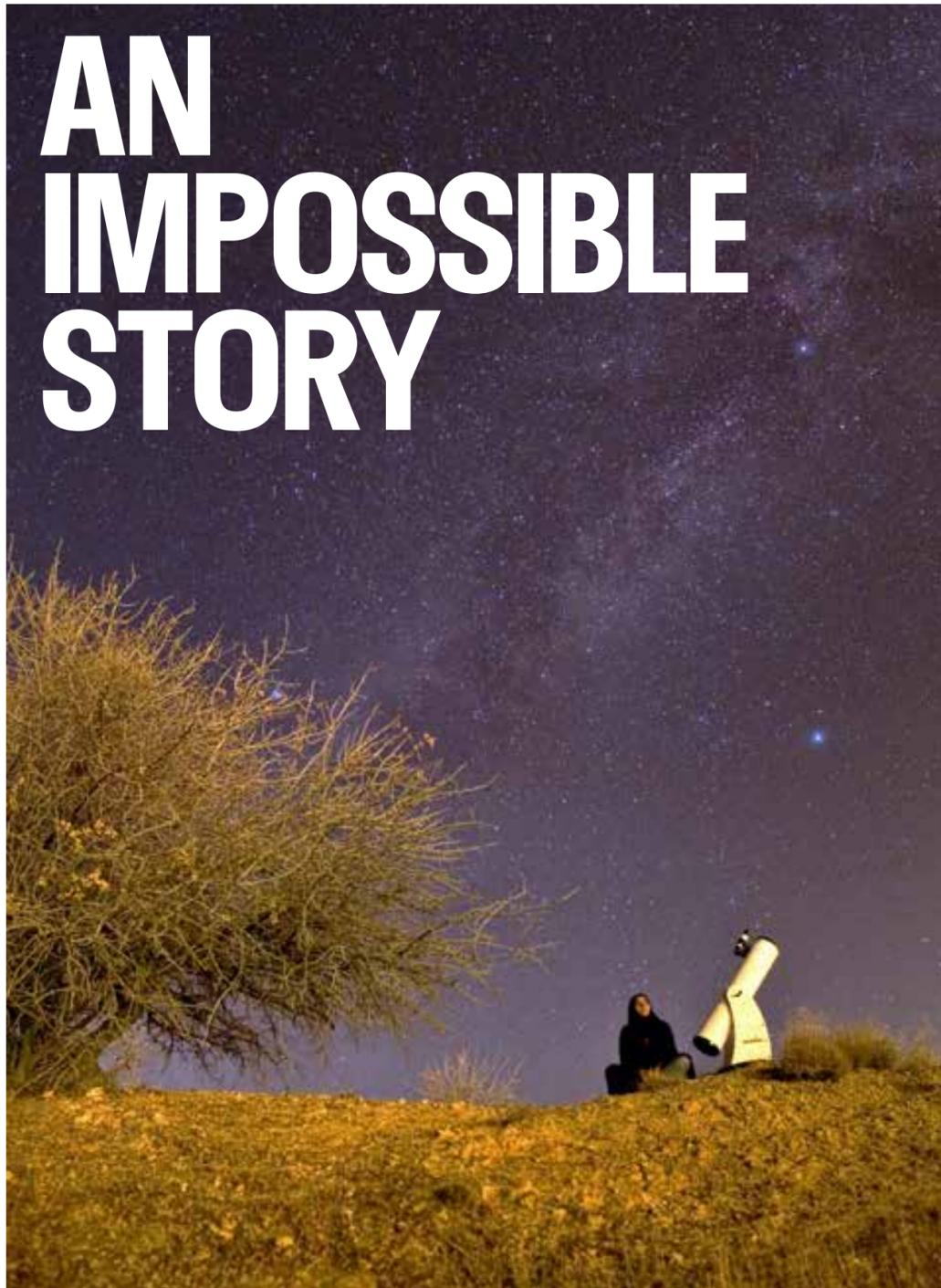
LET’S DANCE – A CASUAL GAME ABOUT DEATH [05]

The player is Death dancing his fatal dance through the world, presented on the backdrop of an animated cultural history of Death. **Director** Mikkel Maltesen **Producer** Esben Kjør Ravn **Produced by** Kong Orange **Support** DFI’s Video Games programme

NEW DANISH SCREEN

Mads Brügger’s iconoclastic *The Ambassador*, which was IDFA’s opening film in 2011, encapsulates part of the ambition of the Danish Film Institute’s talent development programme: to give new generations of filmmakers as well as professional-grade directors the opportunity to push their limits and create new experiences for cinema and television audiences. *Ballroom Dancer* by Andreas Koefoed and Christian Bonke, also at IDFA 2011, is another film which has been talent funded under New Danish Screen. The programme is also designed to give room for manifest talents in other areas to make a career change and try their hand at film directing. Operated jointly by the Danish Film Institute and the national broadcaster DR and TV 2.

AN IMPOSSIBLE STORY



Break of Dawn Photo: Babak Tafreshi

UPCOMING FILM. Last year at IDFA, director Berit Madsen and producers Stefan Frost and Henrik Underbjerg pitched the idea for *Break of Dawn*, a documentary about 16-year-old Sepideh from Iran who dreams of becoming an astronaut. While the story seems quite unlikely, the film is soon becoming a reality.

BY MARIANNE LENTZ

"It's an amazing story, but will it ever become a reality?" That's what several investors asked at IDFA's investment forum Central Pitch last year, when the team behind Berit Madsen's documentary *Break of Dawn* pitched their idea. The film centres on Sepideh, a 16-year-old Iranian girl who, much to her family's chagrin, spends her days

with her nose in an astronomy book and her nights gazing at the stars.

Sepideh spent the money she inherited from her father to buy the only telescope in her village. And she vowed to pursue her dream of becoming an astronaut. But now that her uncle is head of the family, he does what he can to block his niece's ambitions, in particular her nightly excursions into the desert to stargaze.

The investors' questions were right on the money: the odds are heavily stacked against Sepideh's dream ever coming true.

THE GIRL HAS STAMINA

After visiting Sepideh's village, the crew knew she had the right stuff.

"The girl turned out to have more stamina than we first believed," producer Stefan Frost says. "So, today we are cutting a film that is everything we had hoped for and so much more." Currently in postproduction, with an expected completion date in 2013, the film is the story "of a Persian teen who almost doesn't dare to dream big. But she does anyway. She sticks with her dream and soon things start working out for her," Frost says.

Fortunately, plenty of investors at last year's IDFA could spot that potential – especially the Americans. Apart from the Danish Film Institute, the Danish national broadcaster DR, the West Danish Film Fund, ZDF/Arte, the Influence Film Foundation and others, *Break of Dawn* is receiving American funding from the American investors ITVS, Chicken & Egg, the Sundance Documentary Fund and the Gucci Tribeca Documentary Fund.

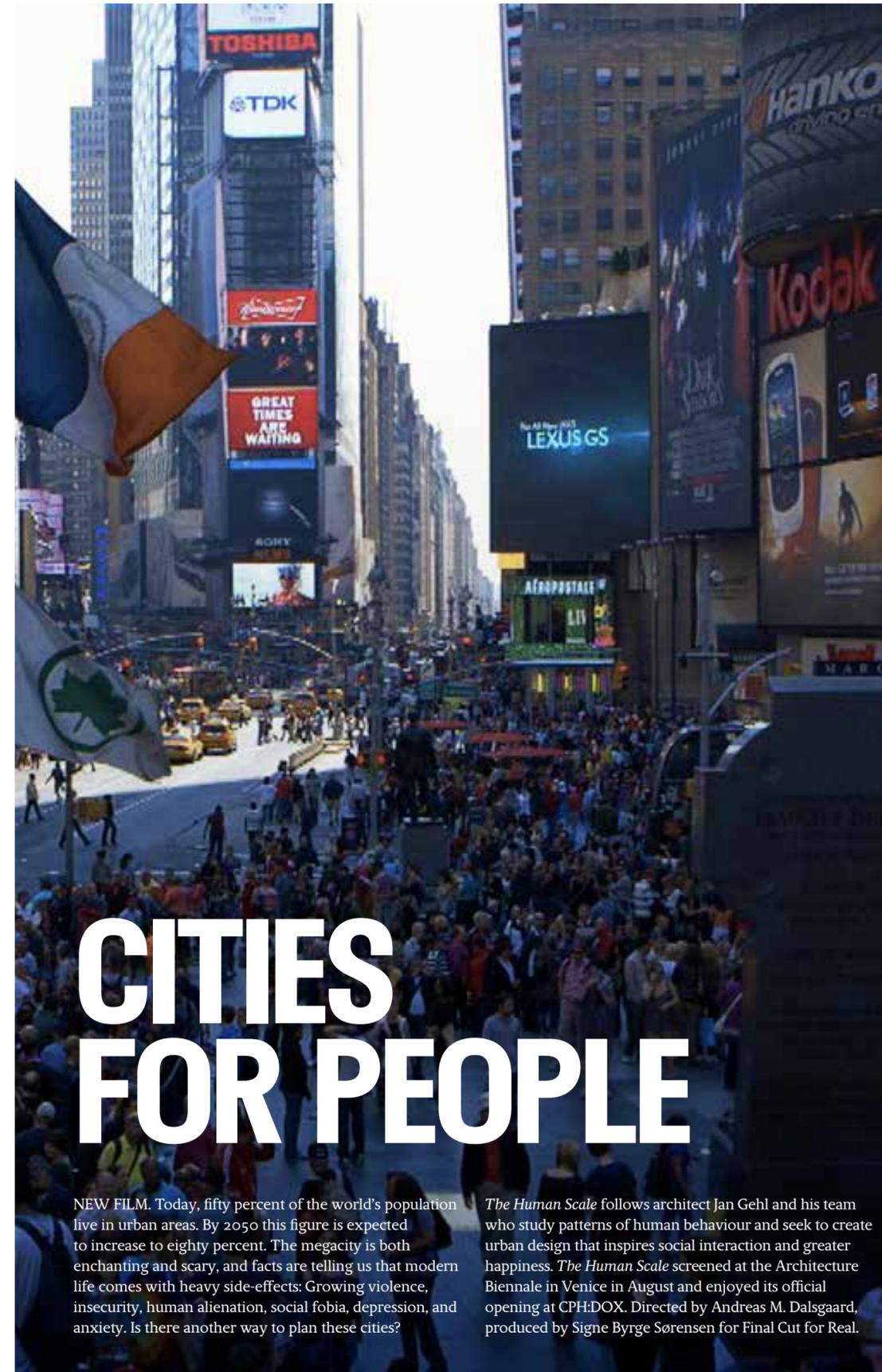
A UNIVERSAL STORY

"The Americans were among the first ones to see that this isn't just the story of an Iranian girl who wants to become an astronaut. It's a universal story. There is so much of ordinary life in this film about a teenage girl who meets resistance from her family, confronts authority and pursues her dream. These are basic conflicts that are found in so many other places than Iran," says director Berit Madsen who hopes the film will inspire teens all over the world.

At the same time, the film is a window on another Iran than the one we know from the news media. "We show aspects of Iran that are not about revolution and death and destruction but about everyday life in Iran, how people simply go about their lives there as well," Frost says.

"When we show clips from the film to Iranians, they are generally happy and touched that we would show that Iran is those things, too. That Iran is also about love and having a good life," he says ■

Break of Dawn is produced by Radiator Film.



CITIES FOR PEOPLE

NEW FILM. Today, fifty percent of the world's population live in urban areas. By 2050 this figure is expected to increase to eighty percent. The megacity is both enchanting and scary, and facts are telling us that modern life comes with heavy side-effects: Growing violence, insecurity, human alienation, social fobia, depression, and anxiety. Is there another way to plan these cities?

The Human Scale follows architect Jan Gehl and his team who study patterns of human behaviour and seek to create urban design that inspires social interaction and greater happiness. *The Human Scale* screened at the Architecture Biennale in Venice in August and enjoyed its official opening at CPH:DOX. Directed by Andreas M. Dalsgaard, produced by Signe Byrge Sørensen for Final Cut for Real.

The Human Scale Photo: Final Cut for Real

COSMIC

UPCOMING FILM. How would we humans react if we got visitors from outer space?

Not your average question, but that is exactly the kind of mind-boggling scenario that triggers filmmaker Michael Madsen. His next film *The Visit* with expected release in early 2014 follows a group of people with obscure competences – such as the author of the so-called Space Law, an astrobiologist, a space architect, a space social psychologist, and experts in Lingua Cosmica which is a cosmic language that has been created, yet is spoken by very few. These very different personalities



The Visit Photos: Magic Hour Films

are assembled for one purpose: to devise a plan in the event that an alien party set foot on Earth. The film is seen through the eyes of The Visitor and partly set at the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs in Vienna, which is no fiction, by the way. Madsen garnered international acclaim for *Into Eternity*, a philosophical reflection about the world's first permanent storage facility for nuclear waste. Produced by Lise Lense-Møller for Magic Hour Films.

DANISH CO-PRODUCTIONS IN AMSTERDAM

Networking and collaboration across borders makes a lot of sense, not least in filmmaking. Danish creative professionals are on board two documentary features selected for IDFA. *I Am Breathing* and *Gulabi Gang* have both gained support through the Danish Film Institute's co-production programme.



I Am Breathing

GULABI GANG

IDFA Reflecting Images: Masters

The Gulabi Gang is a group of vigilante women in India, committed to protecting women against social malpractice, corrupt administrators, and abusive husbands – using their long bamboo sticks if they have to. They refuse to accept domestic violence and have decided to strike back. *Gulabi Gang* is directed by Nishtha Jain and produced by Norwegian Thorstein Grude for Piraya Film. Danish co-producers are Signe Byrge Sørensen and Anne Köhncke for Final Cut for Real. Sound editing and mix by Danish Peter Schultz.



Gulabi Gang

I AM BREATHING

IDFA Feature-Length Competition

33-year-old Neil Platt has Motor Neurone Disease. Paralysed from the neck down and with only a few months left to live, Neil ponders how to write about his life in a letter to his son. How can he anticipate what Oscar might want to know about his father in a future he can only imagine? *I Am Breathing* is directed by Scottish Emma Davie and Morag McKinnon and produced by Sonja Henrici for the Scottish Documentary Institute and Sigrid Dyekjær for Danish Documentary. Danish Peter Winther is editor.

PRODUCING WITH DANISH PARTNERS

THE FRAMEWORK. The Danish Film Institute may support four to six international productions in short and documentary films per year involving a Danish co-producer. The desire is to promote cooperation, networking and creative sparring across borders and film producing traditions. To qualify, the application must be submitted by the Danish co-producing company.

THE PROFESSIONALS. The online trade directory dfibogen.dk contains contact info on people, companies and institutions in the Danish film business. Available in an English version.

THE DFI WEBSITE. Read more under Funding at dfi.dk/english

CURIOSITY AND WONDER

PROFILE. He always brings the same poetry collection, a Navajo silver clip in his right side pocket and a lens cleaning cloth in his left. He says he's autistic about packing his suitcase and car. And he has a sixth sense enabling him to spot troublemakers by the cut of their suit. Henrik Bohn Ipsen is a director of photography on two films screening at IDFA, *Mercy, Mercy* and *My Afghanistan*.

Henrik Bohn Ipsen was a cameraman even before attending the National Film School of Denmark. In the early '90s, on a trip to South America, he assisted on a film about the Arhuaco Indians. The crew was returning to the tribe six years after making a film about them. Lugging the projection equipment, screen and batteries up a mountain, they show the Indians the film and eagerly await their reaction.

The next day, the Indians line up, very formally, and announce that, Sure, the film represented their cause quite well. But it wasn't about them at all, it was about the film crew!

"They didn't even recognise themselves," Ipsen says. "That experience really etched itself into my memory – and it affected my way of being a DP."

Ipsen has often been hired for jobs abroad that require something special – what is it he's got?

"I'm probably quite good at meeting people," he says. "When you meet a stranger, they can tell from your eyes whether you are interested in them as human beings or not, whether it's an Afghan Muslim or an Argentine football fan. You can't measure people by your own background and norms."

As crucial to his approach, he cites his childhood and youth in Ishøj, a Copenhagen suburb where many immigrants live.

"There will always be barriers, of course, when you travel places where people are less privileged. You're rich, you have a

camera, you can travel the world. But I like to think that people can tell from my attitude that I grew up in a mixed social and cultural environment."

For Ipsen it's about looking with fresh eyes, being able to cope with the strange state of uncertainty and always looking for that which can't be expressed in words. It's about reaching deeper layers and not resorting to obvious solutions. "Case in point, I refuse to photograph anyone in Africa carrying water jugs on their head," he says with a grin.

Ipsen always carries the collected verse of the Danish poet Henrik Nordbrandt when he is travelling. Perhaps because he shares the writer's aspiration. "A poet puts two words together and something new happens, something metaphysical. He formulates a perception that's universal," the DP says.

In addition to his Nordbrandt book, Ipsen never travels without his Navajo silver clip. "It doesn't feel right if I don't have it in my right side pocket," he says. "My lens cleaning cloth has to go in my left side pocket, plus there are lens filters I can't do without. I'm generally pretty autistic about where my things should be, and I have to help pack the car. After all of that, then I feel safe."

Another comforting factor is his years of travel experience. "I have evolved a whole sensory apparatus to screen drivers and local contacts. I can usually tell the size of the problem by the cut of someone's suit," he says.

Once the project is on the road, Ipsen possesses one of the most important qualities in a DP: stamina.

"When we have been driving and driving and shooting and shooting and plugging along all day and we're almost at the verge of giving up – then everything falls into place. People stand in the right light, an atmosphere emerges – these are the moments you're looking for. And to seize them, you have to stay 'on' for a very long time."

"So they can tease me about running on Duracell all they want," he smiles. "I don't quit." SN

DIRECTORS ABOUT IPSSEN

NAGIEB KHAJA, MY AFGHANISTAN

"Apart from giving the film such incredibly beautiful images that capture the beauty of Helmand, which we in the West think of as barren and deserted, Henrik Ipsen, through his curiosity and wonder, fluently acquaints everyone who doesn't know Afghanistan with the conditions there. Ipsen's presence caused quite a stir in Helmand, because the locals weren't used to Westerners travelling without a military escort or bodyguards. Despite, or perhaps because, of the fact that he wasn't surrounded by security personnel, he managed to film in places where Western journalists for years have been afraid to linger without military protection. His honest approach quickly turned the locals' suspicion of him into candid dialogue."

KATRINE KJÆR, MERCY, MERCY

"Ipsen is the most uncompromising, insistent and courageous DP I have ever worked with. He is physically brave, he stays calm and keeps a level head while chaos reigns around him, and he is also brave in the choices he makes as a DP in individual scenes. That gives his images great authority and calmness and that singular "Ipsen look." He insists on staying in a situation longer than any other DP I know and he often ends up getting an entire scene long after others, including me, have given up. His uncompromising attitude can be really annoying at times, but it's also why, when he's good, he's world class!"

Films at IDFA over the years:

My Afghanistan, Mercy Mercy, My Avatar and Me, Accidental Terrorist, In a Soldier's Footsteps, The German Secret.



Henrik Bohn Ipsen during the shoot of *My Afghanistan* Photo: Nagieb Khaja

IDFA FORUM

FOUR DANISH PROJECTS



1989

"The events of 1989 have fundamentally defined the world we are living in today and since my passion as a documentary filmmaker is to bring the past back to life, it feels inevitable that I would cross paths with this magic year sooner or later," says director Anders Østergaard, who won the Joris Ivens Award, an Oscar nomination and more than 50 other awards for *Burma VJ*. Taking us to the secret rooms where battles are fought and history is made, *1989* offers new insight into the high-risk political game that led to the fall of the Wall and to a world forever changed.

Directed by Anders Østergaard

Produced by Lise Lense-Møller for Magic Hour Films

IDFA Forum
Round Table Pitches



COOPER'S CHALLENGE

Serbia and Kosovo's border dispute is Europe's last territorial conflict and must be solved. That is, in short, chief negotiator Robert Cooper's challenge. The documentary is in the "negotiator" genre with strong comedy elements due to the three central figures around the table, and most of all due to Robert Cooper himself, a larger-than-life Brit who reads poetry out loud in between meetings and takes pride in choosing the one tie among his collection of at least 200 that best meets the mood of the day. The director has gained unique access to the corridors of power thanks to her professional links to the Danish Foreign Ministry.

Directed by Karen Stokkendal Poulsen

Produced by Vibeke Vogel for Bullitt Film

IDFA Forum
Central Pitches



EMBRACING THE DEAD

Jørgen is a forensic expert. He is used to examining the dead. But one day Jørgen is assigned to solve a different type of case. On behalf of a large human rights organisation, he is to investigate a group of Iraqi civilians, who are still alive, and determine whether they have been subjected to torture. Jørgen faces a moral dilemma: Will he be able to know the truth? How will it help the Iraqis to take the state to court? The film debates the importance of placing a responsibility in war time and contemplates who might benefit from it. The director has named the Danish TV series *The Killing* as a source of inspiration for the film's psychological crime drama.

Directed by Nanna Frank Møller

Produced by Helle Faber for Made in Copenhagen

IDFA Forum
Central Pitches

SLOW MOTION REVOLUTION

Over a period of two years, in the midst of the Syrian revolution-turned-civil-war, a defiant female radio presenter, Oby, undergoes a transition from peaceful rebel to armed resistance fighter. "I met Oby in 2008 at an informal gathering and was immediately drawn to her strong and unusual public voice," says director Marie Skovgaard. "Oby had her own radio programme and was a controversial counter-cultural focal point admired by Syrian youth, especially young women. Although we speculated about the coming revolution none of us could have foreseen at the time how her life was about to change."

Directed by Marie Skovgaard and Oby.

Produced by Jesper Jack for Fridthjof Film and David B. Sørensen for Dharma Film

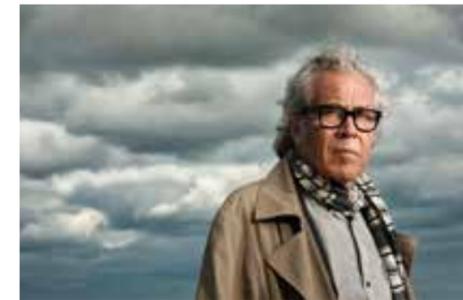
IDFA Forum
Round Table Pitches



Life in Denmark Photo: Vibeke Winding

LIFE IN DENMARK / 1972

Jørgen Leth presents an idiosyncratic catalogue of life in Denmark, where a number of Danes are invited into a black space to make small, edited versions of their own personal or professional lives. We meet a number of unmarried women from a country town, a farmer, a traffic cop, a singing boy, Leth's own family – and among the more absurd elements these four naked poets taking up position in the empty space.



Director Jørgen Leth Photo: Søren Solkær Starbird

DOCUMENTARY DANDY

EXHIBITION. He is a cycling enthusiast, poet, journalist, writer and he has directed an abundance of documentaries. He insists on the beauty in life and is obsessed with reality, which he views with a sense of profound anthropological wonder. He is considered a leading figure in experimental documentary filmmaking. His name is Jørgen Leth. Keep an eye on the Danish filmmaker in Amsterdam, where a selection of his work is screening in an exhibition running during IDFA. Leth is also serving as member of the festival jury.

In spring 2012, a large crew with 17 cameras was on the spot for the world's toughest one-day bike race, the Paris-Roubaix challenge in France. The crew was led by Brendt Barbur, creator of the New York Bicycle Film Festival, and legendary documentarian Albert Maysles, who were shooting a crowd-funded project called *The Commentator*. The film will follow Jørgen Leth as he comments on the gruelling race, thereby tracing the story back to Leth's pioneering 1977 documentary classic, *A Sunday in Hell*.

Jørgen Leth, who turned 75 this summer, continues to draw new audiences and inspire new generations of filmmakers. He has directed over 40 films since the early 1960s, written a shelf full

of poetry, essays, non-fiction books, plus radio and television drama, and he has been a popular cycling commentator on Danish television for two decades.

So, what is the attraction of Leth? Is it the sense of timelessness radiating from his lifelong poetic investigations into the nature of sports, art, sensuality, women or life in general? Is it his dandyish attitude and his love of surfaces, which to him hold great meaning? Is it his dynamic creativity and uncompromising honesty?

Now audiences in Amsterdam will have a chance to decide for themselves. *My Name Is Jørgen Leth*, a retrospective exhibition held during the IDFA festival, gives audiences an opportunity to experience the breadth of Leth's artistic practice and his lifelong engagement in various art disciplines.

Leth's classic *A Sunday in Hell* is among the films showcased in the exhibition which features a cross-section of the filmmaker's cinematic work. The film programme also features *Haiti. Untitled*, *66 Scenes from America*, *The Perfect Human*, *The Five Obstructions* and *Life in Denmark*, projected in the exhibition space in a continuous loop. As a special event during the exhibition, Leth will be reciting a selection of his poems to a live audience.

In addition, Leth is serving as a member of this year's official IDFA festival jury. *AH*

FILMS BY JØRGEN LETH / A SELECTION

Erotic Man / 2010
Aarhus / 2005
The Five Obstructions / 2003
Dreamers / 2002
New Scenes from America / 2002
Haiti. Untitled / 1996
Michael Laudrup – A Football Player / 1993
Traberg (fiction) / 1992
Notes on Love / 1989
Notebook from China / 1987
Moments of Play / 1986
Haiti Express (fiction) / 1983
66 scenes from America / 1982
A Sunday in Hell / 1977
Stars and Watercarriers / 1974
Life in Denmark / 1972
The Perfect Human / 1968

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

My Name Is Jørgen Leth is on display 14-25 November 2012 during IDFA and is part of the festival's larger documentary art and storytelling programme presented in collaboration with De Brakke Grond Arts Centre. See more at brakkegrond.nl.

My Name Is Jørgen Leth is a condensed version of an exhibition held at Kunstforeningen GL STRAND in Copenhagen over the summer, based on a concept by Michael Thouber.



Komet er
FARE!

Around 150 Danish films have
taken part in the IDFA fest
over the years.

**DANISH
FILM
INSTITUTE
CONGRATULATES
IDFA ON ITS**

**25TH
ANNIVERSARY**