



PHOTO: NORDISK FILM

Noomi Rapace as Lisbeth Salander in *The Girl Who Played with Fire*, the second film in the acclaimed Millennium trilogy.**FILM:**

Swedish film in focus

Swedish cinema is known for its intensely personal meditations on the human condition, but the question has always been how to take art house mainstream. Now a new generation of directors is making its mark, from feature-length productions to documentaries and animation.

Directors **Ola Simonsson** and **Johannes Stjärne Nilsson** debuted in 2010 with their thriller/musical comedy *Sound of Noise*. This unusual film won two prizes at the Cannes Film Festival, the Young Critics Award and the Golden Rail Award.

Josef Fares is one of the hottest and most versatile artists in Swedish cinema. His most recent release, *Balls* (Farsan, 2010), is a comedy about love, friendship and the art of being a man. Fares made his breakthrough in 2000 with *Jalla! Jalla!*, a comedy about love bridging the cultural divide. The police farce *Kopps* followed in 2003, and in his semiautobiographical *Zozo* (2005) an orphan finds refuge from the Lebanese civil war in Sweden. In 2007 Fares made *Leo*, a drama about street violence and its aftermath.

Johan Brisinger's debut film, *Suddenly* (Underbara älskade, 2006), received rave

reviews from Swedish critics. His most recent film, *Among Us* (Änglavakt, 2010), is a melancholy drama depicting how life can be turned upside down in an instant.

Ulf Malmros wrote and directed the tragicomedy *The Wedding Photographer* (Bröllopsfotografen, 2009), for which he won an award for best screenplay at the 2010 Guldbagge Awards. Prior to that, Malmros had major hits with his films *Slim Susie* (Smala Sussie, 2003) and *God Save the King* (Tjenare Kungen, 2005).

Ruben Östlund's *Incident by a Bank* (Händelse vid bank) won the Goldene Bäre (Golden Bear) for Best Short Film at the Berlin Film Festival in 2010. The short film is a reconstruction of an attempted robbery witnessed by Östlund in downtown Stockholm in June 2006. Östlund is also known for his film *Involuntary* (De ofrivilliga, 2008), a tragicomedy about group pressure.

Tarik Saleh's animated film *Metropia* (2009) is a dark vision of the future that takes place in a terrifying Europe in 2024. Saleh earlier directed the films *Gitmo* (2006) and *Sacrificio* (2001) together with **Erik Gandini**. However, *Metropia* was his first animated feature film.

Director, screenwriter and sound engineer **Babak Najafi's** *Sebbe* (2010) is the story of the isolated 15-year-old Sebbe and his mother. The movie won Best First Feature Award at the 60th Berlin International Film Festival. Najafi's movies *Elixir* (2004), *Skolan* (The school, 2003), *Gösta & Lennart* (2001) and *Pablos Födelsedag* (Pablo's Birthday, 2001) have also won critical acclaim. ■

Editor's note: English title in italics: International English title. Non-italicized English title: A straight translation of the original Swedish title for the purpose of this publication.

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SWEDISH FILM FESTIVALS

There are about a dozen film festivals in Sweden every year. The most keenly anticipated are the Göteborg International Film Festival (January/February), the Stockholm International Film Festival (November) and the Uppsala International Film Festival (October), which mainly screens short films. Buff, the International Children and Young People's Film Festival, takes place in Malmö in March.

TWO OSCARS TO THE SWEDE PAUL OTTOSSON

Paul Ottosson won two Academy Awards at the 2010 Oscars for Best Achievement in Sound and Best Achievement in Sound Editing on the feature film *The Hurt Locker*. He has also won a British Academy of Film and Television Arts Award (BAFTA) and a CAS Award, which is presented by the industry organization the Cinema Audio Society, for his work on the film. Ottosson, who has been involved in over 120 productions, was nominated for an Oscar for sound editing on *Spider-Man 2* and won an Emmy for sound editing on the television series *National Geographic Explorer*.

GULDBAGGE AWARDS

The Swedish Oscars have taken place every year since 1964. The Guldbagge (Golden Beetle) Awards are handed out by the Swedish Film Institute for achievements in Swedish cinema during the previous year.

ANIMATED FILMS—NOT JUST FOR CHILDREN

Sweden has many creative and talented animators working with feature-length and short animated films. Among those involved in short animated film production, **Magnus Carlsson** is best known internationally. The director **Tarik Saleh** is also making a name for himself. His adult-friendly *Metropia* (2009) broke new ground with a digital technique developed by the Swedish production company Atmo Media Network.



Alexander Skarsgård as the vampire Eric Northman in *True Blood*.

Famous Swedes in Hollywood

Sweden has many talented actors and directors who have been involved in everything from small Swedish films to major Hollywood productions.

Stellan Skarsgård made his breakthrough as an actor as early as 1968 in the Swedish television series *Bombi Bitt and Me* (*Bombi Bitt och jag*). Since then, he has played a number of acclaimed roles. Internationally, the Swedish actor captivated many viewers with his performance in Lars von Trier's film *Breaking the Waves* (1996). Following this, Skarsgård appeared in major films like *Good Will Hunting* (1997), *King Arthur* (2004), *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* (2006), *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* (2007), *Mamma Mia!* (2008) and *Angels & Demons* (2009).

Alexander Skarsgård, the son of Stellan Skarsgård, has followed in his father's footsteps and is pursuing a career as an actor. He took part in his first film production, *Åke och hans värld* (*Åke and His World*, 1984), when he was only eight years old. He made the move to Hollywood when he took on the role of Ben Stiller's thick-headed buddy Meekus in the hit film *Zoolander* (2001). Many will recognize him more recently as the vampire Viking Eric Northman in the television series *True Blood*.

Isabella Scorupco scored a success in 1995 when she portrayed the Russian computer expert Natalya Simonova in the James Bond film *GoldenEye* with Pierce Brosnan. Following that, she took part in blockbusters like *Vertical Limit* (2000) and

Exorcist: The Beginning (2004). Most recently, she acted in the Swedish drama *Among Us* (*Änglavakt*, 2010).

Peter Stormare broke through the international market as a villain in the Coen brothers' film *Fargo* (1996) and has performed in many major film productions since. Many may remember him as the scatter-brained Russian cosmonaut Lev Andropov in the hit film *Armageddon* (1998) or as the hunter Dieter Stark in *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* (1997). He has also appeared in films like *Bad Company* (2002), *Minority Report* (2002) and *Constantine* (2005). Most recently, he played the president of the universe in *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus* (2009).

Lasse Hallström debuted as a director with the Swedish TV film *Pop – en jättegrej mellan öronen* (*Pop—A big thing between the ears*, 1968). Since then, a great deal has happened. In 1993, he directed the acclaimed film *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*, with Johnny Depp and Leonardo DiCaprio in the leads. In 1995, he made *Something To Talk About* with Julia Roberts and Dennis Quaid. Following this, Hallström directed blockbusters like *Chocolat* (2000), *The Shipping News* (2001), *An Unfinished Life* (2005) and *Casanova* (2005). In 2010 he directed *Dear John* with Channing Tatum and Amanda Seyfried in the leads. ■

RECENT SWEDISH BLOCKBUSTERS

THE MILLENNIUM TRILOGY

The trilogy, which is based on Stieg Larsson's popular series of books, has enjoyed great success both nationally and internationally. The first installment in the series, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Män som hatar kvinnor), directed by **Niels Arden Oplev**, won Best Film, Best Female Actor in a Leading Role and the Audience Award at the 2010 Guldbagge Awards. The movie also won the Audience Award for Best Film at the Palm Springs International Film Festival in the US. The first film was followed by *The Girl Who Played with Fire* (Flickan som lekte med elden) and *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest* (Luftsottet som sprängdes), both directed by **Daniel Alfredson**.

THE WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHER

Ulf Malmros's most recent film, *The Wedding Photographer* (Bröllopsfotografen, 2009), was a major box office hit in Sweden. The film is about Robin, who is unemployed and decides to become a wedding photographer. In the film, we follow Robin's search for happiness and success. *The Wedding Photographer* won two Golden Beetles at the 2010 Guldbagge Awards.

WALLANDER

In recent years, there has been a boom in the crime film genre in Sweden. One policeman making the transition from the written page to the silver screen is Kurt Wallander. To date, there have been 26 films. All the episodes are based on characters created by the author Henning Mankell. The Wallander film series has also been a success internationally.

MAMMOTH

By Swedish standards, the popular director **Lukas Moodysson's** latest film, *Mammoth* (2009), is a huge production. The cast features Gael García Bernal and Michelle Williams, and locations include Sweden, Thailand, the US and the Philippines. A family drama, it explores parent-child relationships and the contradictions between different societies and people's values.

Swedish film financing

Swedish film policy aims to support the production, promotion and distribution of worthwhile films, to preserve and promote Sweden's film heritage and to make sure that Swedish films are represented internationally.

Other tasks include supporting regional and local film culture and improving the conditions under which women filmmakers operate. Film policy funding and other support measures are allocated and

administered by the Swedish Film Institute, which was founded in 1963.

Under the Swedish Film Agreement, which came into force on January 1, 2006, Swedish cinema receives funding from the government, the cinema industry and television companies. In 2009, contributions totaled roughly SEK 386 million (about EUR 41 million/USD 54 million). The agreement runs until December 31, 2012. ■



PHOTO: MEDIMA FILM/C. SKAGERSTRÖM

The beautiful, prize-winning short film *Bathing Micky*.



PHOTO: SANDREW METRONOME

The audience favorite *The Wedding Photographer*.

Gifted documentary makers

Sweden continues to produce award-winning shorts and documentaries.

Frida Kempff and **Camilla Skagerström's** film *Bathing Micky* (Micky badar, 2010) was awarded the Special Prize of the Jury at the Cannes Film Festival, which is the second most prestigious prize after the Palme d'Or. The film is about Micky, who is turning 100 and loves to swim in the sea. This beautiful story gives perspective to life and our existence.

Patrik Eklund's *Seeds of the Fall* (Slitage, 2009) won the Canal+ Award for best short film at Cannes in 2009 and won a Special Jury Mention at the Nordisk Panorama – 5 Cities Film Festival in Reykjavik. Eklund also made the short *Instead of Abracadabra* (Istället för Abrakadabra, 2008), for which he received an Academy Award nomination.

Gunilla Heilborn and **Mårten Nilsson's** acclaimed mock documentary *This is Alaska* (2009) revolves around a group of people who move to Alaska to find a higher level of freedom. The film

won the prize for Best Swedish Short at the Uppsala International Short Film Festival. It also attracted attention and was shown at the film festivals in Rotterdam and Clermont-Ferrand.

In his film *Videocracy* (2009), **Erik Gandini**, who was born and grew up in Italy, depicts the world of Italian television, which is almost totally controlled by the country's prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi. The documentary attracted considerable attention and received glowing reviews. Gandini is known for his gripping documentaries *Gitmo* (2006, co-directed with **Tarik Saleh**) and *Surplus* (2003).

Nahid Persson Sarvestani's film *The Queen and I* (Drottningen och jag, 2009) is a portrait of the former Queen of Iran Farah Diba Pahlavi. Persson Sarvestani was herself born and raised in Iran and took part in the revolution that overthrew the monarchy in Iran thirty years ago. ■

LEARN MORE

CINEMA FACTS

In 2009, Swedish cinemas sold almost 17.4 million tickets, grossing some SEK 1.5 billion (about EUR 159 million/USD 203 million). Swedes prefer to watch American films (53.9%), followed by Swedish (32.7%) and British (7.3%) films. The movie with the highest number of viewers in 2009 was *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, with 1.2 million viewers, followed close behind by *The Girl Who Played with Fire*, with about a million viewers.

THE MASTER

Ingmar Bergman is one of the all-time film greats. His career as a director and writer spanned almost 60 years, and his work continues to inspire and move audiences and filmmakers alike. In 2002, Bergman donated his archive—45 cases of manuscripts, notes, sketches, photographs and private films—to the Swedish Film Institute. The material is administered by the Ingmar Bergman Foundation.

CHILDREN'S FILMS

Swedish films for children and young people do not shy away from difficult subjects. **Lisa Siwe's** *Glowing Stars*, based on Johanna Thydell's award-winning novel, is about a teenager torn between her mother, who has cancer, and her desire for a normal teenage life. But Swedish films for children and young people do not just take up heavy topics. The movie *Kenny Begins* (2009), by **Carl Åstrand** and **Mats Lindberg**, is a comedy about Kenny, who wants to become a galaxy superhero while his parents think he should become a hairdresser and work in the family beauty salon.

Regional filmmaking is booming

Regional filmmaking has been booming for the past decade, with more Swedish films being set outside Stockholm than ever before.

Trolleywood

The regional production center Film i Väst in southwest Sweden is better known as Trolleywood (for Trollhättan, the town where it is based). *Balls* (2010), *Glowing Stars* (I taket lyser stjärnorna, 2009), *Mammoth* and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* were all filmed there. **Lars von Trier's** blockbuster *Antichrist* was also filmed in Trolleywood in 2009.

Film i Skåne

The regional resource and production center Film i Skåne promotes film operations in the county of Skåne in southern Sweden. The company has co-produced, among others, **Pernilla August's** feature film directorial debut, *Beyond* (Svinlångorna, 2010), and **Othman Karim's** feature film *Dear Alice* (För kärleken, 2010), with Danny Glover in one of the leads.



PHOTO: FRANK ASCHBERG/NORDISK FILM

A hair-raising glimpse of Stockholm's underworld in *Easy Money*, starring **Joel Kinnaman** (center).

Filmpool Nord

A growing number of films have been either wholly or partly produced in the north of Sweden, among them **Beata Gärdeler's** *In Your Veins* (I skuggan av värmen, 2009) and **Tomas Alfredson's** *Let the Right One In* (Låt den rätte komma in, 2008).

Stockholm

Production companies based in Stockholm have **Daniel Espinosa's** *Easy Money* (Snabba Cash, 2010) and **Daniel Wallentin's** *One Eye Red* (Ett Öga Rött, 2007) to their credit. ■

Useful links

www.buff.se — International Children and Young People's Film Festival
www.filmfestival.org — Göteborg International Film Festival
www.filmiskane.se — Film i Skåne
www.filmivast.se — Film i Väst
www.filmpoolnord.se — Filmpool Nord
www.filmtpv.se — Organization for Swedish Film Producers
www.films.si.se — Discover Sweden in films
www.ingmarbergman.se — Ingmar Bergman Foundation
www.sf.se — SF Cinemas
www.sfi.se — Swedish Film Institute
www.shortfilmfestival.com — Uppsala International Short Film Festival
www.statensbiografbyra.se — National Board of Film Classification
www.stockholmfilmfestival.se — Stockholm International Film Festival
www.stofilm.com — Stockholm Film Commission
www.svt.se — Swedish Television
www.sweden.se/film — Watch film on the web

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