



Teddy Bear

A film by Mads Matthiesen

"Matthiesen's unadorned observational style has a distinctly Scandinavian stoicism that trusts both the comedy and sentiment to emerge organically."

-Hollywood Reporter



**Denmark | 2012 | Drama | Danish, English, Thai with English Subtitles |
93 min. | 1.85:1 | Dolby SRD**

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SYNOPSIS

The 38-year-old Dennis is a painfully shy bodybuilder who would really like to find true love. He has never had a girlfriend and lives alone with his overbearing mother in a suburb of Copenhagen. When his uncle marries a girl from Thailand, Dennis decides to try his own luck on a trip to Pattaya, as it seems that love is easier to find in Thailand. He knows that his mother would never accept another woman in his life, so he lies and tells her that he is going to Germany for a competition. Dennis has never been out traveling before, and the hectic Pattaya is a huge cultural shock for him. Quickly thrown into the seedy underbelly of Thailand's sex tourism scene, he nearly gives up on finding a bride of his own. He is about to lose hope when a visit to a local gym turns into an unexpected night on the town with the Thai woman of his dreams. Dennis finds that there may be hope for him yet, if only he can confront his mother...

FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

WINNER--SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL, Directing Award (World Cinema Dramatic Competition)

WINNER—TRANSYLVANIA FILM FESTIVAL, Best Performance

WINNER—OFF PLUS CAMERA FESTIVAL OF INDEPENDENT FILM (KRAKOW), Best Film

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BEHIND *TEDDY BEAR*

It's hard to mention *Teddy Bear* without also mentioning Mads Matthiesen's successful short *Dennis* (2007), as both films revolve around the same main characters and dramatic conflicts. *Dennis* was Mads Matthiesen's midterm project at the alternative Danish film school Super16, and was a huge festival success. *Dennis* had its world premiere at Sundance and went on to win a number of prizes including at the Melbourne International Film Festival. *Dennis* was not only very popular with film critics and festival juries around the world, but, maybe even more impressive, it has been seen by more than 3 million users on YouTube since it was uploaded in 2009, a number that is still rising.

Mads Matthiesen got the idea for *Teddy Bear* already during the shooting of *Dennis*. It was Frank Corsaro, former chairman of Actors Studio, who inspired Mads to go in this direction.

Teddy Bear is Mads Matthiesen's first feature film, and it carries several footprints from his 9 short films, including the intense feel of realism and the mixture of amateur actors and professionals.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The story recounted in *Teddy Bear* is about feeling oneself to be an outsider. I have always been particularly fond of portraying people who do not fit in that well with society. What prejudices do we harbor when confronted with a tattooed, muscle-bound six-foot man? Most of us would reckon this is a criminal of some kind or at the very least someone prone to violence. At any rate a hard, emotionally stunted individual, and hardly a vulnerable, shy, affectionate person with an overly close relationship with his mother, who has trouble relating to girls.

By the same token, there are a great many prejudices against men who travel to Thailand in search of love. They are either booze sodden sex tourists who exploit all those unfortunate Thai girls or oddball loners who go there to buy themselves a wife. In *Teddy Bear* I am attempting to play around with people's prejudices, and turn them on their head. Things are seldom as they appear from the outside. Prejudices and received ideas about people and who they are all too frequently create divisions between human beings.

The film portrays different aspects of love. A mother's clinging love for her son, which in very many ways is unhealthy, but which is also extremely primal. It is about that mother/son love, in contrast to the love Dennis is seeking in a female partner. It also attempts to portray the very different pathways love between men and women can take in Denmark and Thailand. In the modern day Denmark with its Welfare State, love and family are no longer just about money and survival. People in the West have other criteria

when they seek out love than purely financial considerations. In Thailand, things are different.

Here that kind of love is all about survival, especially in the poorer strata of society. A woman has to find a husband who can support the entire family, from children to grandparents. It is because of this that poor girls from villages in the North head for places like Pattaya to try their luck with male tourists from Europe who have come there because they have issues with love and self esteem in their own countries – because they feel that back home, they are losers in the game to win women's favors.

The encounter is an interesting one, because in so many ways it is doomed to go wrong. It is an encounter between the West and the Third World, between two very different approaches to love.

Despite all this, it is extraordinary what a vast industry is at work behind this kind of encounter, and how often a kind of loving relationship comes into being against all the odds.

Teddy Bear was shot with a strong regard for realism. From the outset, it was my prime concern to create a credible story world with believable characters, almost documentary in tone. The characters in the film were to be real people, not actors. The story itself is, of course, wholly fictitious in which the characters are playing a role, but the "cast" was to be composed of real people deployed in the real settings we portray in the film.

For these reasons, I have used, almost without exception, "non" actors throughout. The bar girls in Thailand are real bar girls, the men around them are the real people who hang out in these places, and last but not least, Kim Kold is a real professional bodybuilder. The characters were cast in their real locales, and the film was shot on location in the midst of all the crazy stuff going on. Real people and real locations were used to create a believable world, and to get closer to the "truth" of the characters' situation. But also because I wanted to create a mode of expression seldom seen in Danish films, where the same array of actors and stereotypes reappear in film after film.

I wrote the screenplay with "Dirch" Martin Zandvliet, with whom I have collaborated on various projects for over ten years.

Teddy Bear is about love, and the search for happiness. It is about the bonds, healthy and unhealthy, that we create with the people we are fond of. And it is about Dennis, who has to learn how to pursue happiness according to his own needs, and not allow himself to be dictated to by his surroundings.

CREW BIOGRAPHIES AND FILMOGRAPHIES

Director MADDS MATTHIESEN

Mads was born in 1976 in Copenhagen, Denmark. He has a BA in comparative literature and rhetoric from Copenhagen University 2005. He graduated as Director from the "Super16" film community in 2008. Within the last 10 years, Mads has directed more than 10 short films which have participated and won prizes at many festivals including the Venice International Film Festival, Berlin International Film Festival, Sundance Film Festival, Melbourne Film Festival, Los Angeles Film Festival, London Film Festival, and many more.

Mads' short film *Mum* (2006) was selected for the 63rd Venice Film Festival in the official program "Corto Cortissimo" 2006, and his short film *Dennis* (2007) premiered in competition at the Sundance Film Festival 2008. *Dennis* later won a handful of main prizes including the City of Melbourne Grand Prix (Best Short Film) at the Melbourne Film Festival. The film was also selected for the Sundance Film Festival "Art house project" which took it on a tour around the United States, and the Worldwide Short Film Festivals "Canadian tour" which took it all around Canada. *Dennis* has nearly 3 million hits on YouTube.

Mads' film *Cathrine* (2008) won the Danish Film Academy's "Robert" Prize for the best short fiction film of the year, and had its world premiere in the *Generation* competition at the Berlin International Film Festival 2009. *Cathrine* was also selected for New Directors/New Films at MoMa and The Film Society of Lincoln Center in 2009.

Teddy Bear is Mads' first feature film as a director.

Producer MORTEN KJEMS JUHL

Morten Kjems Juhl, born 1976, holds a master in Film Science, University of Copenhagen in 2005. He graduated from the independent film school Super16 in 2008, and is a part of Copenhagen Film Mentor, 2010-11. Morten has been a producer for the last 5 years working in the fields of fiction features, documentary and TV drama series. Among other titles Morten has produced: *Teddy Bear* (SF Film Production & Beofilm), a fiction feature drama by Mads Matthiesen, in competition at Sundance, 2012. *Skyscraper* (Fine & Mellow), a fiction feature black comedy by Rune Schjøtt, in competition at the Berlinale, Generations 14+, 2011. *Lulu & Leon* (Fine & Mellow, development producer), a 12 episodes TV drama series for TV3 & DR, 2009. *Complaints Choir* (Fine & Mellow), a one hour doc by Ada Bligaard Søby, in competition at Hot Docs, 2010. Morten is currently a producer with Beofilm.

Writer MARTIN PIETER ZANDVLIET

Martin Pieter Zandvliet was born January 7th 1971, in Fredericia, Denmark. Zandvliet is a self-taught director and writer. He first started out as an editor working on documentaries for various directors. Zandvliet's first film as a director, *Angels of Brooklyn*, won a Danish Robert for Best Long Documentary and was chosen for various festivals including Toronto and Nyon. Afterwards, he did several shorts as a writer and director. In 2009 he directed and co-wrote his first feature, the highly acclaimed *Applause* starring Paprika Steen.

Dirch (A Funny Man) starring Nikolaj Lie Kaas, is Zandvliet's second feature film. The film was released domestically on August 24th, and is the most seen feature film this year with 500,000 admissions in Denmark, as well as being presented at various international festivals, including its World Premiere at Toronto IFF.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Kim Kold (Dennis)

Kim Kold has a long-standing career as a super-heavyweight bodybuilder. He holds a number of national and international titles. Since his debut as an actor in Mads Matthiesen's short fiction *Dennis* (2007), where he played the title role, Kim has appeared in a number of Danish films and TV drama series, among them Ole Bornedals' *Deliver Us from Evil* (2009) and the award winning series *The Killing* (2007).

Elsebeth Steentoft (Ingrid)

Elsebeth Steentoft is an acclaimed Danish actress educated from Århus Teater, 1964, and has appeared in a large number of Danish films and TV drama series during her career. Among her credits include Golden Bear winner at Berlin Film Festival *Italian for Beginners* (2000), *The Green Butchers* (2003), and Pernille Fischer Christensen's award winning *A Soap* (2006). In addition, Elsebeth Steentoft played the mother of Dennis in Mads Matthiesen's short fiction film *Dennis* (2007).

Lamaiporn Sangmanee Hougaard (Toi)

Lamaiporn Hougaard is an amateur actress. She is Thai and has lived in Denmark for a few years. Her part as Toi in *Teddy Bear* is her first appearance in a film. She was cast in the Danish Thai society and, from the first time she stepped in front of the camera, it was clear that she was perfect for the role.

Allan Mogensen (Uncle Bent)

Allan Mogensen is an amateur actor. His role as Uncle Bent in *Teddy Bear* is his first appearance in a film. In his every day life, Allan is a truck driver for beverage delivery.

David Winters (Scott)

David Winters is an English-born American with a long-standing career in film and theatre working as an actor, director, producer, choreographer and dancer. Among his endeavours, David appeared in the legendary *West Side Story* (1961).

INDIEWIRE Q & A WITH DIRECTOR MADS MATTHIESEN AT SUNDANCE (excerpts)

Tell us about yourself. What's your background? Why did you want to make movies?

I was born in 1976 in Copenhagen and I have lived in Denmark all my life. My interest in filmmaking set off around 1999. For the first time I got to work with film on my own.

Making my own films and loving it from the beginning.

The past ten years I've done a bunch of short films, which have been received very well by the audience and film festivals. With these shorts I have worked my way into filmmaking and tried out different things in a playful matter.

The reason to why I make movies is probably because I have an urge to tell stories (sounds cliché but true). Sharing my thoughts on life, you could say it's my own attempt to try to understand and connect with my surroundings. For me film is the ultimate media for telling stories. It combines images, sound, music, and actors and has endless possibilities. I grew up watching films and even though I love reading a good book no other art form captures me like a good film.

Beside my work with films I also studied Comparative Littérateur and Rhetoric, and I have a BA from Copenhagen University and studied a MA in Modern Cultural Studies. Something I have had a great joy in doing in addition to filmmaking, seeking inspiration from different places.

What was your single biggest challenge in developing or producing this project?

It's hard to pinpoint one single challenge that was the hardest while doing this film. But one of them was definitely the fact that I wanted to work with

"real" people in the cast. Most of the actors in the film are real people ("non actors") cast in the environment we were filming. From the outset, it was my idea to create a credible story world with believable characters, almost documentary in tone. The story itself is, of course, wholly fictitious in which the "non actors" are acting, but the "cast" was composed of real people deployed in the real settings we portray in the film. The bar girls in Thailand are real bar girls, the men around them are the real people who hang out in these places, and of course, Kim Kold (main character) is a real professional bodybuilder. The characters were cast in their real locales, and the film was shot on location in the midst of all the crazy stuff going on. Real people on "real sets" were used to create a credible world, to get as close to the "truth" of the characters. Working mostly with amateurs was a big challenge but also a gift, because you get a great deal of authenticity when you work with real people in real environments.

What would you like Sundance audiences to come away with after seeing your film? Do you have any expectations of how audiences will react?

First of all, I am excited to see how the audience are going to react to the film. It's going to be the first time I show the film to a bigger audience, as it's the world premiere of the film at Sundance. I have a special love for portraying people who are outsiders. Outsiders who are trying to deal with the social life surrounding them. Outsiders who have a hard time socializing.

In *Teddy Bear* the main character is a very introvert shy guy not always doing what would be the smart thing to do. He is in many ways not an obvious film hero. I'm excited to see how people will react to this main character and his quest. Do they like the guy? Do they understand his quest and how do they relate to it? And as always it is just going to be exciting to see what people get from the film. To see what came through and what moved them.

Did any specific films inspire you while making the movie?

Teddy Bear is in many ways inspired by a short film I directed four years ago. The film is called *Dennis* and was in competition at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival. While making the short I got to know the bodybuilder Kim Kold who is playing Dennis. Kim was a non-actor and I met him doing casting sessions in the Danish bodybuilder community. I remember doing the first casting with him.

He came in the room and started doing the lines. I knew by that instant that this guy was something special. He could act and visually he was all I was looking for. Later in a master class I showed Actors Studies legend Frank Corsaro the short film and after seeing it he said: "Why don't you make it into a feature?" This got me thinking and after meeting with the scriptwriter Martin Zandvliet we slowly started to work on the idea. Kim Kold was up for the challenge of doing a feature and we set out to do the film. And 2-3 years later I finished the film. Even though *Teddy Bear* is a lot different from the

short film, watching the short film is a great way to get a taste of what Teddy Bear is about.

What would you like to get out of your Sundance experience?

I hope that with having the film at Sundance I will have a possibility to come out to more people that it would have without Sundance. For me the audience is an important element of why I have made this film and I think that with Sundance I have the possibility to get out to a much broader audience. I really hope that the film will connect with people and give them a good experience.

Having the film shown at the festival has been on my mind from the start of the production of the film. It somehow began at Sundance with the project four years ago with the short film Dennis, and luckily I get to come back and show Teddy Bear. I'm very pleased that the film ended up like it did and that it was selected for the competition. I hope that Teddy Bear will make a tribute together with the other films at Sundance, and make it an inspiring festival of 2012.

Future projects in the pipeline? Tell us!

I'm working on several projects at the moment but none of them are so far in the process as to talk about them here. But the plan is to have a Danish produced feature film ready for shooting next year. And I would love to do some International work at some point. It has been a great experience doing my first feature and I cannot wait to get started on the next one. It has been great working with shorts for some years but now I got the taste for the longer format. With a feature film you have the possibility to reach out to more people and that thought also appeals to me.

CREDITS

CAST

Dennis
Ingrid
Toi
Scott
Phatnay
Jeff
Bent
Aoi
Sasha
Nuu
Nok
Prap
Lars
Udlejer
Miss Mayflower

KIM KOLD
ELSEBETH STEENTOFT
LAMAIPORN SANGMANEE HOUGAARD
DAVID WINTERS
SUKUNYA MONGKOL
JONATHAN WINTERS
ALLAN MOGENSEN
SUKIANYA SUWAN
BARBARA ZATLER
SONGPORN NA BANGCHANG
PAWEENA IM-ERB
PRAP PORAMABHUTI
PATRICK JOHNSON
PER OTTO RASMUSSEN
KRITSANAI PROMSIRIRUK

CREW

Director
Screenplay

Producer
Executive Producers

Photographer
Editor
Production Designer
Sound Designer
Composer

MADS MATTHIESEN
MADS MATTHIESEN
MARTIN ZANDVLIET
MORTEN KJEMS JUHL
BIRGITTE SKOV
KAROLINE LETH
MORTEN FREDERIKSEN
MICHAEL FLEISCHER
LAUST TRIER MØRK
ADAM NIELSEN
THOMAS BREMER
PETER ALBRECHTSEN
SUNE MARTIN