

# Glögg for the Soul

## The 8th Annual Scandinavian Film Festival L.A.



**BOVE:** (L-R) Sidse Babbett Knudsen ("Helene") and Mads Mikkelsen ("Jacob") in a scene from *After the Wedding* directed by Susanne Bier. An IFC Films release.

**BELOW:** A scene from *After the Wedding* directed by Susanne Bier. An IFC Films release.



In the peak winter film season prior to Oscar nominations, southlanders will once again see "northern lights, camera, action" at the 8th Annual Scandinavian Film Festival L.A. in a program that includes Academy Award submissions and current feature films from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.

"We have a devoted audience of film lovers, industry professionals, and homesick Nordics eager to see what's new from the northlands," says festival Founder/Director Jim Koenig. With wit, grace, and charm, he turns the Writers Guild Theater and lobby into a cozy haven for film culture where, over pickled herring, Swedish meatballs, and cardamom-speckled egg bread, cineastes mingle with émigrés and foreign talents shake hands with locals. It's one of the few fests among many in the "film capital of the world" where everyone attending meets in one and the same hall, throughout the day and night, to ask and argue about what they've seen. But that is not all that keeps it warm in the winter.

Far from Hollywood, Scandinavian film industries have nourished traditions of their own, from literature and theatre and also their predecessors in cinema. So it's not surprising

that a prolific actor like Mads Mikkelsen, seen in *Casino Royale* as a James Bond adversary, has a treasure chest of roles in his repertory yet unknown to American fans. Susanne Bier, a consistently profound director from Denmark working with the astounding screenwriter Anders Thomas Jensen, has cast Mikkelsen before in *Open Hearts*, a chamber drama that sneaks up on us so quietly and yet so fully that we can't shake it off. This year the same writing-directing team casts him as a flawed Everyman intensely committed to raising money for an orphanage where he works in Bombay. When he arrives in Denmark to bid for it from a wealthy venture capitalist whose daughter is getting married, his past catches up with him, but not before it takes the whole family for a ride in *After the Wedding*. As evidenced in *Brothers*, Susanne Bier is in her element with family conflict in its vast interconnectedness with the new world order; call it disorder, but know that Bier will play it out with a drama crafted like crystal. The reason; they are all good people, all keeping each other and themselves from getting what they want. And what we want is for Bier to solve it, and she does. Susanne Bier is noted for her intimate camera work and poignant close-ups. In *After the Wedding*, look at the way she shows us an eye, in her words, "the way a wide angle can capture a world."

The Danes are formidable filmmakers these days, but their neighbors give them a run for their money. *Comrade Pedersen* from Norway by the reputable Hans Peter Moland is stylishly provocative, with laughter, imagination, and best of all, its sobering reflection. And Norway's huge hit, *Long Flat Balls* (a soccer film) showcases our own resident, Harold Svart, a bi-coastal filmmaker — between the Pacific and the North Sea.

**8TH ANNUAL SCANDINAVIAN FILM FESTIVAL  
L.A.— JAN 6, 12, AND 13, 2007**

Writers Guild Theater, 135 S. Doheny  
(at Wilshire), Beverly Hills

**For tickets contact:**

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www.asfla.org or tel. 323-661-4273