Ruben Östlund's *Force Majeure* (2014), about a family crisis during a ski trip, won the Jury prize in Cannes.

**FILM:**

**SWEDISH FILM’S NEW WAVE**

Swedish film and filmmaking has long enjoyed international success, famous for auteurs such as Ingmar Bergman. A new generation of directors – such as Ruben Östlund and Lisa Langseth – are now making their mark; winning prizes and charming audiences both locally and internationally, creating everything from small indie films to high-concept Hollywood movies.

Ruben Östlund is a writer-director whose early ski movies got him into film school. He made his feature debut in 2004 and has made two prizewinning fictional shorts and three feature films since, among others *Play* (2011) – which won the Nordic Council Film Prize, along with the Best Director Award at the Tokyo Film Festival and Coup de Coeur in Cannes. His most recent production *Force Majeure* (*Turist*, 2014) won the Jury Prize of Un Certain Regard at Cannes 2014 – Hollywood remake rumours abound.

Lisa Langseth is a cutting-edge director interested in themes of sex, class and power. Her debut *Pure* (*Till det som är vackert, 2010*), a film about power structures in the world of culture, launched the career of rising star Alicia Vikander. Langseth and Vikander teamed up again for *Hotell* (*2013*).

Lukas Moodysson’s breakthrough came in 1998 with *Show Me Love* (*Fucking Åmål*). He has directed a number of films since, such as *Together* (*Tillsammans, 2000*), *Lilya 4-ever* (*2002*) and *Mammoth* (*2009*), starring Gael Garcia Bernal and Michelle Williams. His latest film, *We Are the Best!* (*Vi är bäst!*) won the Tokyo Film Festival Grand Prix in 2013.

Gabriela Pichler wrote and directed *Eat Sleep Die* (*Äta sova dö, 2012*), a humorous drama about a woman who loses her job. The film won a series of film awards, including the Venice Film Festival’s 2012 Audience Award. Pichler’s latest work is the play *Red Card* (*Rött kort, 2014*).

Tomas Alfredson directed the screen version of John le Carré’s *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (*2011*). His vampire drama *Let the Right One In* (Låt den rätte komma in, *2008*) won Best Narrative Feature at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2008. He is currently working on crime film *The Snowman* and an English-language adaptation of Astrid Lindgren’s *Brothers Lionheart*.

Lisa Aschan directed a short film and a TV series before making her first feature *She Monkeys* (*Apflickorna*), about two competitive adolescent girls, in 2011. The film won Swedish film prizes as well as Best Narrative Feature at the Tribeca Film Festival and a Crystal Bear in Berlin. Her next film, *White People* (*Det vita folket*) is due for release in 2015.

Daniel Espinosa directed the film version of Jens Lapidus’ crime novel *Easy Money* (*Snabba cash, 2010*). The film gave Espinosa the opportunity to direct the action thriller *Safe House* (*2012*), starring Denzel Washington. His latest film, *Child 44*, was released early 2015 and featured Tom Hardy and Gary Oldman.
CONTEMPORARY STARS

Alicia Vikander was born in 1988 and has already managed to captivate audiences in three different languages: Danish (A Royal Affair, 2012), English (Anna Karenina, 2012) and, of course, Swedish (Hotell, 2013). Vikander, who originally trained as a ballet dancer, is set to appear in six films in 2015, including Ex Machina and Guy Ritchie’s The Man from U.N.C.L.E. You might not recognise her name yet, but she looks likely to be inescapable soon.

Johan Renck is a director most known for his commercials and music videos. In addition to his feature debut with Downloading Nancy (2008) he has directed a number of episodes for television shows, most notably for Breaking Bad, Walking Dead and Vikings. He is most recently credited for the first six episodes of The Last Panthers (2015).

Jonas Åkerlund is another Swedish director who has made a distinct directorial mark through his music videos rather than his feature films. His innovative videos for the likes of Madonna, Lady Gaga and Beyoncé have earned him a number of awards, including Grammy awards, MTV Video Music Awards and Music Video Production Association awards.

Lasse Hallström received two Oscar nominations for My Life as a Dog (Mitt liv som hund, 1985). In 1991 he began his Hollywood career, which has continued unabated with film such as What’s Eating Gilbert Grape (1993), The Ciderhouse Rules (1999), Chocolat (2000) and Safe Haven (2013).

Lena Olin earned international light through the film The Unbearable Lightness of Being (1988), in which she shared the lead with Daniel Day-Lewis, and has worked with directors such as Sidney Lumet, Roman Polanski and Sydney Pollack. Her latest projects include the American TV Series Welcome to Sweden (2014–).

Ingrid Bergman is the face for the Cannes Film Festival, and would have become 100 years old in 2015.

**Swedish Starlets**

Sweden is the birthplace of some of film history’s most iconic actresses. Sadly, Anita Ekberg passed away in January 2015, while the same year would have marked Greta Garbo’s 110th birthday – and Ingrid Bergman’s 100th – had they lived to see the day. The centenary of the latter’s birth is commemorated at the Cannes Film Festival 2015.

Ingrid Bergman would have turned 100 years old in 2015 (she passed in 1982). She is one of the most Oscar-winning actresses of all time and has also won a number of other awards, including two Emmys, four Golden Globes and a Tony. Ingrid is the poster girl for the Cannes Film Festival 2015, during which a new documentary about her will be premiered – I am Ingrid (Jag är Ingrid, 2015) – starring Sigourney Weaver, Isabella Rossellini and rising Swedish starlet Alicia Vikander, whom the director Stig Bjorkman has called “The Ingrid Bergman of today”.

Ingrid is most remembered for her roles opposite Humphrey Bogard in Casablanca (1942) or Cary Grant in Hitchcock’s Notorious (1946). She made her first major impression in the Swedish-language Intermezzo, 1936, which brought her to Hollywood for a 1939 US remake. Ingrid returned to Sweden for her last major film role: Ingmar Bergman’s (no relation) Autumn Sonata (Höstsonaten, 1978).

Greta Garbo was born ten years before Ingrid and was a major star in silent and early talking films of the 20s and 30s. A role in the 1924 Swedish film The Saga of Gosta Berling (Gösta Berlings saga) piqued the curiosity of Hollywood. After a number of successful silent roles, in which she used intense expressions and ground-breaking performances with restrained realism, she moved on to the talkies in 1930. Garbo was nominated for three Academy Awards during her career, but only won one – the Academy’s Honorary Award long after her career had ended. The mysterious Garbo made her last film in 1941, after which she pretty much disappeared from public view.

Anita Ekberg came to Hollywood by way of winning the Miss Sweden contest in 1950 and participating in the ensuing Miss Universe pageant, earning a contract with Universal Studios. She is perhaps most known for her role, and the famous fountain scene, opposite Marcello Mastroianni in Federico Fellini’s La Dolce Vita (1960). Anita Ekberg passed away in 2015, aged 83.
CONTEMPORARY STARS

Noomi Rapace’s portrayal of Lisbeth Salander in the Millennium trilogy (2009) launched her to international stardom. Among a number of roles in Hollywood films, she has acted in Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows (2011) and most notably held the lead in Ridley Scott’s Prometheus (2012). She’s set to appear in Prometheus 2 (2016) as well, once again sharing the lead with Michael Fassbender.

Peter Stormare got his international breakthrough in the Coen Brother’s film Fargo (1996) and followed up with his part as a nihilist in The Big Lebowski (1998). He has also appeared in Armageddon (1998), Minority Report (2002), and The Last Stand (2013) and is continually cast in an impressive number of TV and movie roles (14 only in 2014).

Malin Åkerman got her big break in the Farrelly brothers’ comedy The Heartbreak Kid (2007) where she held the lead with Ben Stiller. She has since starred in blockbusters such as Watchmen (2009) and The Proposal (2009).

Joel Kinnaman rose to international fame through his role in Easy Money (2010), followed by a lead in TV show The Killing (2011–2014) and feature film Robocop (2014).

THE SKARSGÅRDS – A FAMILY OF ACTORS

Alexander became widely known for his role as vampire Eric Northman in the HBO series True Blood (2008–2014). He has also starred in lead roles in films such as Straw Dogs (2011), Melancholia (2011) and The East (2013), and is cast as Tarzan in Harry Potter-director David Yates’ upcoming adaption of the classic story.

While Alexander reached major stardom through a vampire role, brother Gustaf did it as a viking – playing Floki in the animation of characters and creatures. Special effects might not be the first thing that comes to mind regarding Swedish film. But ambitious efforts by post-production and production companies during the last decade have undoubtedly left a Swedish influence on international visual effects.

Filmgate started as a postproduction company in Sweden in 2006 and has worked on over 85 feature films in eleven different countries. So far. Credits include visual effects for Swedish films such as Mammoth and a five minute long avalanche shot in Force Majeure. Filmgate has also worked on international films such as Cloud Atlas (2012), Lars von Trier’s Antichrist and upcoming British werewolf film Howl (2015).

Fido film is one of Scandinavia’s largest special effects companies, specialising in the animation of characters and creatures. They were a big part of Swedish film’s foray into sci-fi and horror, working on vampire drama Let the Right One In (2008). They also received a 2014 BAFTA nomination for their contribution to David Attenborough’s Natural History Museum Alive.

Panorama film specialises in physical rather than digital effects, and has created every imaginable weather, fire and pyrotechnics effect since the company was founded in 1982. They recently produced the effects for Swedish drama-thriller Gentlemen (2014), and their expertise in bullet hit FX means that they’re hardly at risk of running out of a job – considering the amount of crime and police films produced in Sweden.

With the recent Swedish upswing for VFX, Sweden’s leading film award Guldbaggen will reintroduce the Visual Special Effects category to its awards list as of 2016.

ACADEMY AWARD-WINNING SWEDES

Sweden’s most prominent Oscar winner is Ingrid Bergman, who took home three Oscars in the course of her career, two for Best Actress (Gaslight, 1944 and Anastasia, 1956) and one for Best Supporting Actress (Murder on the Orient Express, 1974).

Three of Ingmar Bergman’s films won Best Foreign Language Film (The Virgin Spring, 1960, Through a Glass Darkly, 1961 and Fanny and Alexander, 1983) awards. In 1970, Bergman also received The Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award.

Other Swedes who have received Oscars include Arne Sucksdorff (Best Short Film for Symphony of a City, 1948), Olle Nordemar (Best Documentary Feature for Kon-Tiki, 1951), Greta Garbo (The Academy’s Honorary Award, 1955), Sven Nykvist (Best Cinematography for Cries and Whispers, 1974 and Fanny and Alexander, 1983) and Anna Asp and Susanne Lingheim (Best Production Design for Fanny and Alexander, 1983).

At the 2013 Oscars, Paul Ottosson (Zero Dark Thirty, 2012) and Per Hallberg (Skyfall, 2012) shared the prize for Best Sound Editing. Both had been awarded previously, Ottosson for Best Sound Mixing and Best Sound Editing (The Hurt Locker, 2009), and Hallberg for Best Sound Editing (Braveheart, 1995 and The Bourne Ultimatum, 2007). The most recent Swedish Oscar winner is Malik Bendjelloul, who won the 2013 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature with Searching for Sugar Man (2012).
FACTS AND FIGURES

In 2014, Swedish cinemas sold 16.3 million tickets, grossing around SEK 1.652 billion. Most Swedes (58.2 per cent) prefer to watch US films, while 25.1 per cent favour Swedish movies. The most popular film in 2014 in Sweden was a domestic production, The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared (Hundra åringen som klev ut genom fönstret och försvann), with 1.57 million viewers. The film has also won several international awards.

FUNDING EQUALITY

Swedish film policy supports the production, promotion and distribution of Swedish films through a collaborative process between the state, film industry, cinema owners and television companies. The latest Swedish Film Agreement, which came into force in 2013 and runs through 2016, provides filmmakers with greater freedom of distribution and also stipulates that ‘the funding shall be divided equally between women and men’ in the key positions of director, screenwriter and producer. The Film Agreement will be terminated as a model in 2017 and the state’s new focus will be on quality, innovation and accessibility – aiming for a better balance between artistic and commercial interests.

Funds and other means of film support are allocated and administered by the Swedish Film Institute. In 2013, their contributions totalled about SEK 332 million. There are alternative means of distribution, however, as exemplified by 27-year-old Swedish rookie director David Sandberg’s success in online crowdfunding, setting a Kickstarter record with his martial arts comedy spoof Kung Fury. The film will premiere in the Directors’ Fortnight section at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival, before being released on SVT (the Swedish Public Service Broadcaster), YouTube and other streaming media.

SEK 1 (Swedish krona) = EUR 0.11 or USD 0.12

Roy Andersson’s tableau aesthetic in A Pigeon Sat on a Branch Reflecting on Existence (2014).

SWEDISH AUTEURS

Their films and imagery have made a profound impact on the entire film industry. Ingmar Bergman and Roy Anderson are two of Sweden’s great auteurs.

Ingmar Bergman’s career as a director and scriptwriter spanned almost 60 years. He remains one of Sweden’s most well-known cultural figures and his work continues to inspire audiences and filmmakers alike. By the time he passed away in 2007, he had directed over 50 feature films, including Wild Strawberries (1957), Persona (1966) and Fanny and Alexander (Fanny och Alexander, 1982). The Bergmancenter – on the island of Fårö, where Bergman shot many of his films and built his home in 1967 – opens to the public every summer, and is especially popular during the internationally acclaimed Bergman week.

Roy Andersson made a name for himself in 1970 with A Love Story (En kärlekshistoria), about teenage love. Giliap (1975), was crushed by the critics, and it was not until 2000 that perfectionist Andersson completed his third feature, Songs from the Second Floor (Sånger från andra våningen) – a major success. You, the Living (Du levande, 2007) and A Pigeon Sat on a Branch Reflecting on Existence (En duva satt på en gren och funderade på tillvaron, 2014) follow in the same theme and imagery – the latter won the Golden Lion in Venice 2014. Andersson’s unique visual style of shooting tableaux has had considerable impact on filmmakers all over the world.

USEFUL LINKS

www.sf.se  SF cinemas
www.sfi.se  Swedish Film Institute
www.statensmedierad.se  Swedish Media Council
www.swedenfilmcommission.com  Sweden Film Commission

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