



SØREN MALLING PILOU ASBÆK DAR SALIM ROLAND MØLLER GARY SKJOLDMOSE PORTER ABDIHAKIN ASGAR  
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EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS HENRIK ZEIN, LENA HAUGAARD & THOMAS HEINESEN PRODUCERS TOMAS RADOOR & RENÉ EZRA WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY TOBIAS LINDHOLM



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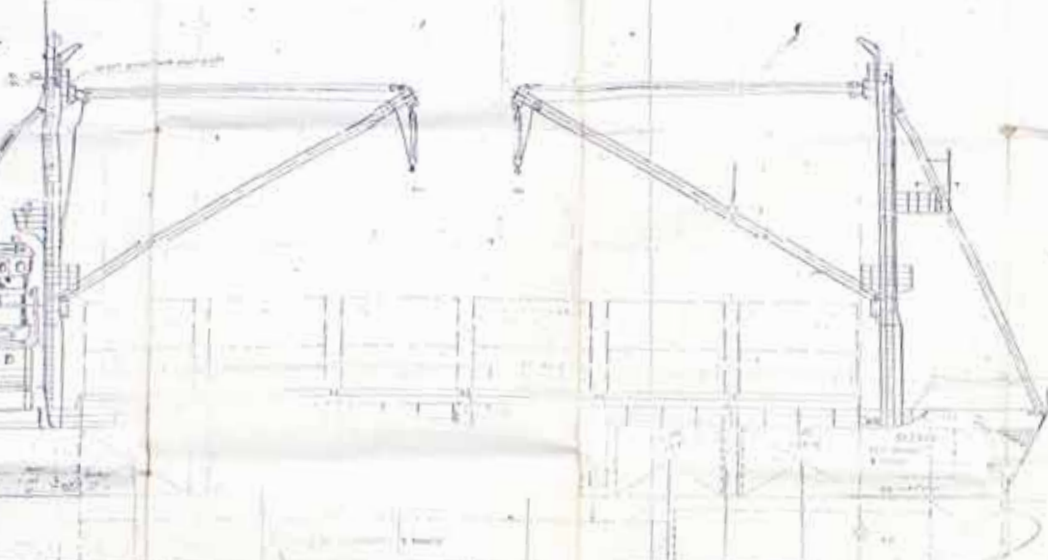
  
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D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA  
la Biennale di Venezia 2012  
Orizzonti - Competition

 **tiff** toronto  
international  
film festival  
OFFICIAL SELECTION 2012

A FILM BY TOBIAS LINDHOLM

# A HIJACKING





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№ 46

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№ 47



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## A HIJACKING

The cargo ship MV Rozen is heading for harbour when it is hijacked by Somali pirates in the Indian Ocean. Among the men on board are the ship's cook Mikkel (Pilou Asbæk), who along with the rest of the seamen are taken hostage in a cynical game of life and death. With the demand for a ransom of millions of dollars, a psychological drama unfolds between the CEO of the shipping company (Søren Malling) and the Somali pirates.

Tobias Lindholm made his directorial debut with the tough prison drama R (co-directed with Michael Noer, 2010). As a scriptwriter Lindholm has worked with Thomas Vinterberg on the acclaimed drama SUBMARINO (winner of the Nordic Council Film Prize) and THE HUNT (2012) with Mads Mikkelsen in the leading role (winner, Best Actor, Cannes 2012).

Since 2010 he has written several episodes for the internationally acclaimed and BAFTA winning BORGEN with Pilou Asbæk and Søren Malling in leading roles.

As with Tobias Lindholm's debut R (2010), which was filmed at the former Horsens State Prison, A HIJACKING is filmed under realistic conditions. The crew filmed in secret in pirate filled waters in the Indian Ocean on a freighter which itself had previously been hijacked and with a real professional negotiator in a central role.

A HIJACKING is produced by Tomas Radoor and René Ezra for Nordisk Film Production with support from The Danish Film Institute, DR and Nordic Film & TV Fund. Domestic release is set for September 20th



## **SYNOPSIS**

The cargo ship MV Rozen is heading for harbour when it is hijacked by Somali pirates in the Indian Ocean. Amongst the men on board are the ship's cook Mikkel (Pilou Asbæk) and the engineer Jan (Roland Møller), who along with the rest of the seamen are taken hostage in a cynical game of life and death. With the demand for a ransom of millions of dollars a psychological drama unfolds between the CEO of the shipping company (Søren Malling) and the Somali pirates.







## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

Before I was born my father was a seaman, but he never spoke to me about it. Maybe that is why the sea has always been on my mind.

With the hijackings of the Danish-owned freighters DANICA WHITE and CEC FUTURE in 2007 and 2008, I became aware of a reality that I did not know existed. A reality where shipping companies are forced to negotiate directly with pirates. A reality where pirates earn millions of dollars and a reality where seamen are held hostage for months without any influence on their own fate.

I couldn't make a film about the truth of the hijackings in the Indian Ocean, because I don't believe that truth exists. But I could make a film about seamen, pirates, CEOs and relatives. Because they do exist. And if A HIJACKING feels like it is about them, then I am very close to my goal.

*Tobias Lindholm, Copenhagen 2012*



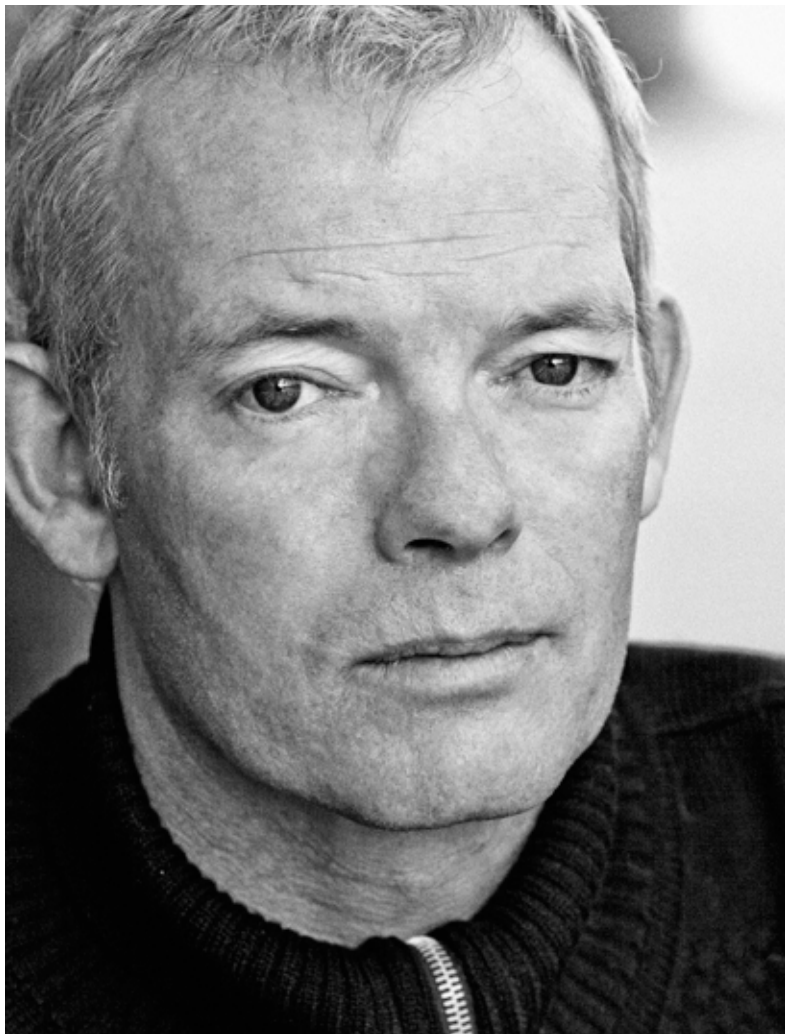


## **TOBIAS LINDHOLM**

*Born in Denmark, 1977. Screenwriter graduate from the National Film School of Denmark, 2007.*

Tobias Lindholm has written several episodes for the DR TV-series THE SUMMERS (2008) and BAFTA winner BORGEN (2009–2010) and was co-writer, together with Thomas Vinterberg, on Vinterberg's SUBMARINO (2010) which was selected for the Berlinale competition and winner of the Nordic Council Film Prize, and THE HUNT (domestic release 2013), winner of Best Actor (Mads Mikkelsen), the Vulcain Prize and the Ecumenical Jury Award in Cannes 2012. The prison drama R (2010) was a writer-director collaboration between Lindholm and Michael Noer and marked their debut as feature film directors. R was selected for Rotterdam International Film Festival, won the Dragon Award for Best Nordic Film in Gothenburg in 2010 and the Danish Critic's Bodil Award for Best Film in 2011 where Lindholm also received a special commendation for his writing on R and SUBMARINO. A HIJACKING (2012) is Lindholm's second feature film (domestic release fall 2012).



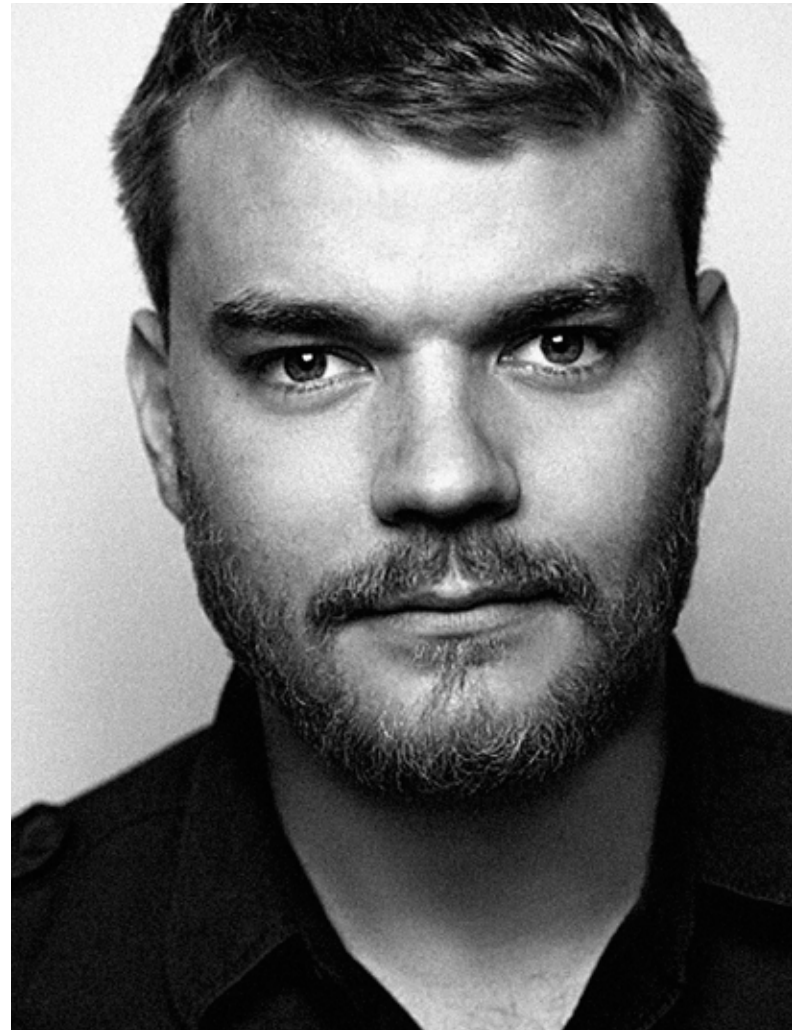


## **SØREN MALLING**

Søren Malling graduated from Odense Theatre in 1992 and has since performed in a number of plays in theatres in Copenhagen and in various film and TV productions. His enormous artistic versatility has been seen in his wide range of work including the comedies TAKE THE TRASH (2008), WHAT GOES AROUND (2009), WINNIE & KARINA (2009), THE CHRISTMAS PARTY (2009), ALL FOR ONE (2011) and TV-series such as THE EAGLE (2004), THE KILLING (2007), THE LEFT WING GANG (2009) and the hugely popular BORGEN (2010) where he played the chief editor, Friis. Recently he has been seen in Nikolaj Arcel's historical drama A ROYAL AFFAIR (2012).

## **PILOU ASBÆK**

Pilou Asbæk graduated from The Danish National School of Theatre in 2008 and made his debut in Niels Arden Oplev's *WORLD'S APART* (2008). In just a few years Pilou has become one of Danish cinema's biggest talents after his leading role in Tobias Lindholm and Michael Noer's *R* (2010); Pernille Fischer Christensen's *A FAMILY* (2010); and above all in two TV-series: *THE LEFT WING GANG* (2009) and the international hit *BORGEN* (2010) where he played the spin doctor Kasper Juul to great acclaim. He was selected as a 'Shooting Star' at the 2011 Berlin Film Festival and in the same year he received a Robert and a Bodil Award for Best Male in a Leading Role in *R* (2010).



## **IF IT TOLD YOU I SAW A COW**

*By Per Juul Carlsen*

*This interview originally appeared in the May 2012 issue of the Danish Film Institute's festival magazine, FILM#75.*

*It has only been five years since Tobias Lindholm graduated as a screenwriter, but he has already established himself as one of the most respected story-tellers in Danish cinema. His credits include the BAFTA-winning TV series "Borgen" and two Thomas Vinterberg films, "Submarino" and Cannes winner "The Hunt". Lindholm is a big fan of "Pretty Woman", but when he directs his own films, like the upcoming "A Hijacking", he likes to trim all the fat and let the logic of reality rule, as he tells Per Juul Carlsen.*

Fat. Or low fat. That's the question. A big topic for storytellers discussing their technique and a major theme of "A Hijacking", the new film by Danish writer-director Tobias Lindholm.

Even though the two main protagonists of

"A Hijacking" find themselves in the biggest crisis of their lives, their emotions are never spelled out or magnified or crammed down the audience's throat. There are no wild crying jags. No glasses or dinnerware smashed in crazed tantrums. No long talks over a liquor cabinet being emptied. No dramatic metaphors for the emotional world wars raging in the characters.

Naturally, you can discuss what's extraneous and what's important in a story. It's a favourite subject of screenwriters. As a rule of thumb, those who aim for broad, popular appeal rarely talk about "trimming the fat," while those who try to create serious Art can go on for days about all the patently extraneous fat they have eliminated in cold blood.



Tobias Lindholm, 34, is not the serious artist-type who claims to have reinvented cinematic language. Not even close. With his gum-chewing boyishness and longish, combed-back hair, he looks more like a business student who is ready to fish the shades out of his shirt pocket and hit the beach on the first day of summer. No grand artistic flourishes here, just a humble wish to get to the core of storytelling.

He professes his love for “Pretty Woman”, which he would never know how to write himself. And he takes pride in having co-written the Danish hit series “Borgen”.

### **“Borgen” – a fish tank**

Lindholm has co-written 20 episodes of BAFTA winner “Borgen” which deals with the political game for power in today’s Denmark and the personal costs and consequences of the game for those involved, on and off the political stage.

“The fact that our ‘little’ TV series about a subject as local as Danish parliamentary democracy has found an audience around the world is surely proof that we have succeeded in writing a good story,”

Lindholm says with satisfaction.

On the difference between writing for TV and films, he says:

“TV series and films are two widely different ways of telling stories. A film, to simplify it a bit, is a character’s journey from one point to another. A movement. From unhappy to happy. From lonely to in love. From alive to dead. In a TV series, conversely, the characters are caught in an arena. In a kind of fish tank where, episode after episode, we try to look in on them from new angles and tell what we see. Over and over. New developments. Setbacks. Conflicts. And we have the liberty of leaving questions much more open for the audience. Because you can always answer them in the next episode. Or the next.”







## **Owes Vinterberg one**

Lindholm's characteristically humble attitude also applies to his collaboration with Thomas Vinterberg. They have written two films together, "Submarino" (2010) and "The Hunt" (2012). Through the lens of a reporter who loves simple answers, it looks like Lindholm has revitalised Vinterberg. With Lindholm as a sparring partner, "Submarino" was invited to compete in Berlin in 2010 and won the Nordic Council Film Prize with a mention of the film's strong screenplay. Now Vinterberg has returned from Cannes with the Best Actor award. But if you ask Lindholm, it's he who owes Vinterberg one.

"It's more reasonable to say that Thomas sparked my little career, which wasn't even born yet when I met him. He was brave enough to ask me if I wanted to write "Submarino" with him – before I was even out of film school. More than anything, I think, I got the courage from Thomas to carry out my own ideas, decisively and brutally."

The fact that Vinterberg mentioned Lindholm in the first line of his jubilant press release after "The Hunt" was selected to compete in Cannes, the respect would seem to be mutual. Still, Lindholm says, they are two very different storytellers.

"Thomas can get away with things that I could never get away with. He makes up situations that I would kill off right away at the screenplay level. He's much better at breathing life into everything. So, often my job is to tidy things up a bit and hand back something that's maybe a little dry. Then Thomas fills it up – and I strip away again."

## **Reality rules**

Stripping away narrative fat is key, both in Lindholm's 2010 directorial debut "R" and in his upcoming film "A Hijacking". Making "R", he and his co-director Michael Noer discussed the tenet of "reality rules" – following the logic of real life instead of the logic of dramaturgy. This became the premise







of a claustrophobic film about a young man who ends up in prison – we are never told for what crime – and is immediately tangled up in the power struggles behind the walls. The whole film was shot in an actual prison with a cast mostly of real guards and ex-convicts.

“A Hijacking” was made according to a similar premise. The film was shot in the Indian Ocean on a ship that was hijacked once in real life, with a cast including a real-life hijack handling expert from an international shipping company as himself. The outcome is a film that feels less like a made-up story and more like someone just happened to be filming actual events as they were taking place.

“I’m really glad you say that,” Lindholm says. “I’m really, really glad to hear that. That’s also why the film is just called “A Hijacking” and not something like ‘Somali Pirates.’”

The film tracks two men: a cook, who is headed home to his wife and child when the cargo ship MV Rozen is hijacked off the coast of Somalia, and the president of the shipping company, who insists on personally negotiating with the pirates. Over the months that go by as the company and the pirates try to wear each other down, while seven seamen are held hostage, the two men change. How and how much they change is up to the audience to decide. That’s a key point for Lindholm as a storyteller.

“American and European films have a tendency to over-explain the characters, to the point where I stop caring about them. If I tell you I saw a cow, you’ll immediately envision a cow you once saw. But if I start telling you in detail about my cow, you’ll become too focused on whether you’re understanding my cow correctly, instead of sticking with the cow you know. That’s how I look at the characters we are building up here. I find it exciting to see how





little we can tell and still provide a complete picture. How much do we really need to know about each other to understand each other?”

The more unusual of “A Hijacking”’s two “cows” is the shipping company president, whose self-image is challenged when he decides to negotiate with the pirates himself. His hard-ass facade cracks, but without the usual dramaturgical tricks. There are no explanatory flashbacks to his childhood, no indications of a domineering father, not a hint of the proverbial lack of morals that tycoons in movies tend to come with. Lindholm is in no hurry to explain his “cow” and the audience can fill in the gaps any way we see fit.

“I wanted to get away from the standard TV-drama style, where you have to look in on a marriage or relate to the kids or something that will reflect what the character feels. Obviously, the emotions should be clear when we are making a TV series like

“Borgen”, which has to have very broad appeal on Sunday night when viewers have so many different options to zap between. But I don’t want to take cheap shots by showing obvious emotions. People in films shouldn’t cry – the audience should.”

If the title of Lindholm’s film makes you think of the kind of film from the ‘80s and ‘90s that had Steven Seagal or Jean Claude van Damme sneaking around on a hijacked ship, beating up 20–30 pirates, think again. A lot of automatic weapons are waved around, sure, but it’s the emotional action that propels the film, like the psychological change effected in the cook when a pirate sticks the barrel of a gun in his mouth.

“It’s important for me to make the hijacking as close to real life as possible. There are a lot of myths and preconceptions about Somali pirates. There’s the myth that they are like Robin Hood, poor fishermen whose fish were all caught by big European trawlers.







There's the myth that shipping companies are a bunch of greedy bastards who don't care about their seamen. There's the myth that seaman actually have it pretty good when they are held hostage, and the myth that they are forced to eat their own faeces.

It was interesting to strip away all those rumours and preconceptions."

### **'I can't fathom the whole world'**

Here, Lindholm differs from such popular directors as Alejandro Gonzalez Iñárritu ("Babel" and "Biutiful") and Susanne Bier ("Brothers" and "In a Better World"), who would probably have seized the opportunity to make a film weighty enough to carry the world on its shoulders.

"I can't fathom the whole world and I can't represent the true state of the world, because I don't think such a thing exists. But real people exist, and if

I have made a film that remotely feels like it depicts real people in a real situation, then I have come a long way.

"The reality is that the pirates are no longer impoverished fishermen. Russian mob money is sponsoring a hijacking system. The pirates are buccaneers, just like in the Old West. There's lots of booze and prostitution in the former fishing towns. When a young man has tried his luck and hit the jackpot, he can pay young boys 10 dollars a pop to go out and hijack ships for him. I don't think any Somalis think this is a good idea, but huge refrigerators are sailing around out there and I can understand why hungry kids would want to go get them.

And why is no one in the international community doing anything? It's an insanely complex issue."









## CREDITS

**Mikkel Hartmann:** Pilou Asbæk  
**Peter C. Ludvigsen:** Søren Malling  
**Lars Vestergaard:** Dar Salim  
**Jan Sørensen:** Roland Møller  
**Connor Julian:** Gary Skjoldmose Porter  
**Omar:** Abdihakim Asgar  
**Maria Hartmann:** Amalie Alstrup  
**Kamilla Hartmann:** Amalie Vulff Andersen  
**Anette Ludvigsen:** Linda Laursen  
**Captain:** Keith Pearson

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**Composer:** Hildur Gudnadottir

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