



FESTA
DEL CINEMA
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OFFICIAL
SELECTION 2020



BUSAN
International Film Festival
21-30 October 2020

BASED ON THE MEMOIR
IN THE SHADOW OF SAN SIRO

TIGERS

A FILM BY RONNIE SANDAHL



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TIGERS

A FILM BY **RONNIE SANDAHL**

2020 - Sweden, Italy, Denmark - Original title: Tigrar - 116 min - Swedish, English, Italian

INTERNATIONAL SALES

wild bunch
INTERNATIONAL

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<https://www.wildbunch.biz/movie/tigers/>



SYNOPSIS

Martin is one of the most promising football talents Sweden has ever seen. At sixteen, his lifelong dream comes true when he is bought by one of Italy's most prestigious clubs. Yet that dream comes at a very high price in terms of sacrifice, dedication, pressure and - most of all - loneliness. Martin begins to question whether this is actually the life he yearned for.

"Tigers" is a life and death rollercoaster ride through the modern-day football industry. With a unique perspective on the world of professional sports, Ronnie Sandahl tells the true story of 16-year-old football prodigy Martin Bengtsson. A coming-of-age drama about a young man's burning obsession in a world where everything, and everyone, has a price tag.



ABOUT RONNIE SANDAHL

Ronnie Sandahl (born in 1984) is a screenwriter, director and author with a background in journalism. Since his feature debut *“Underdog”* (2015), Ronnie has been working on a movie trilogy on sports and psychology: in addition to *“Tigers”* he also wrote the script for *“Borg vs McEnroe”* (2017) and the upcoming gymnastics drama *“Perfect”*, directed by Olivia Wilde, which was recently sold to Searchlight Pictures after a heated bidding war.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

I wanted to make a film about the tigers of the football world.

Young, admired men, locked in gilded cages, tamed into brands in service of the global football industry: bought and owned, pushed to the limit, trained to perform or die.

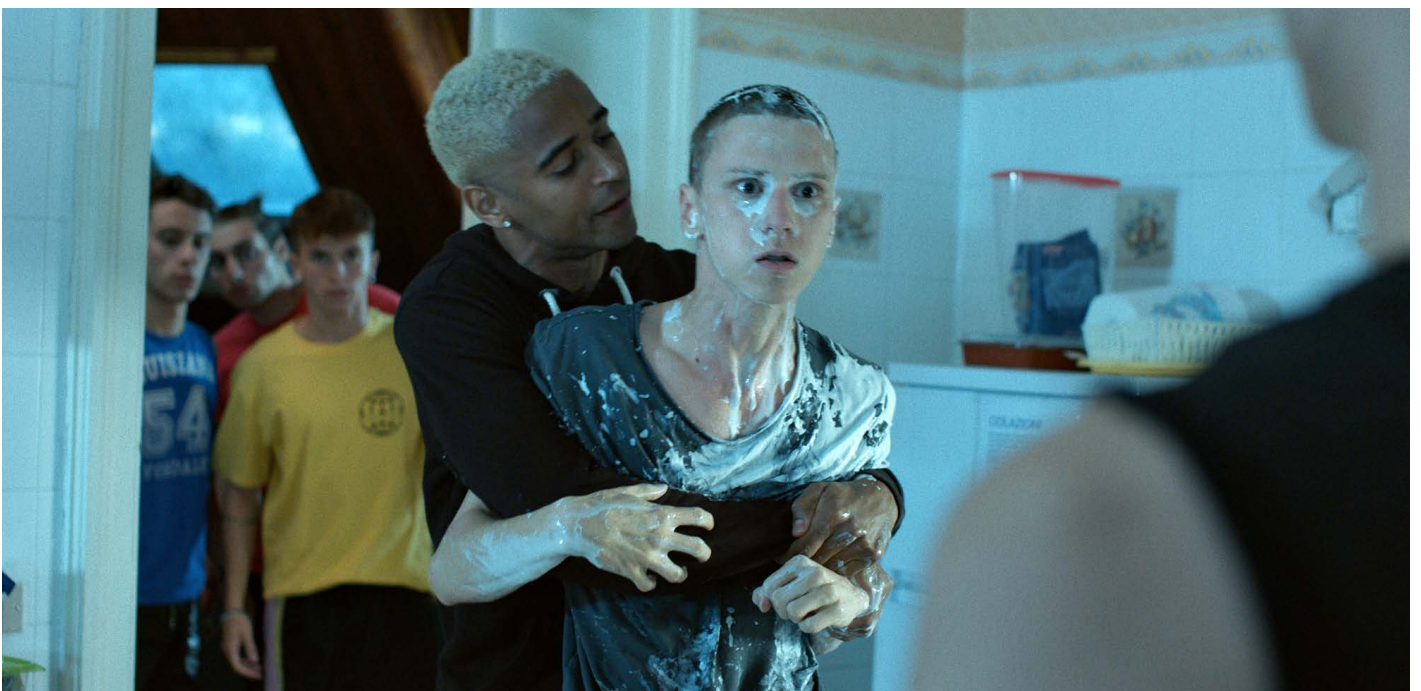
Martin Bengtsson was one of them. As a teenager, one of Sweden's most promising football talents of all time, he was sold to top Italian club Inter. His future was bright as lightning. So how, and why, did it all fall apart?

Martin himself sought the answers to those questions in his autobiography *"In the Shadow of San Siro."* It came out the very same spring that my own debut novel was released. Martin and I got to know each other on book tours and soon became close friends. We agreed that I would make a film inspired by his experiences. The only problem was that I was 22 years old at the time, had just started to direct my first short film.

You could say we made a pact: Martin would turn down all movie offers, and I would write and direct the film the day I was creatively and artistically ready to do it justice.

And it may have taken thirteen years, but we honored that pact. As time went by, my writing project has grown into a trilogy of character driven films that all center around the psychological, financial and political aspects of sports.

The first film was the psychological tennis drama *"Borg vs McEnroe"* from 2017, directed by Janus Metz, starring Shia LaBeouf, Sverrir Gudnason and Stellan Skarsgård.



The third film, *“Perfect,”* directed by Olivia Wilde, will be released in 2021 and is set in the world of American female gymnastics.

“Tigers” was the one film of the trilogy I chose to direct myself, maybe because it was the most dangerous of the three, the messiest, and the most personal. The result is a free adaptation of Martin Bengtsson’s story - free in the sense that certain biographical details have been changed, but always aiming to reach the utmost emotional truth.

My ambition was all along to achieve a collision between the shiny and the grimy: a raw, edgy arthouse film, but set inside the shallow, polished, extremely commercial football industry.

By telling the story of a teenager’s obsession with making it in the world of football - and doing it as subjectively as possible - I saw the chance of making a coming of age drama set in an environment never before portrayed on the big screen. A world where everything and everyone can be bought and sold. Or, if you will: a funhouse mirror of our patriarchal capitalist society, as absurd and entertaining as it is potentially lethal.

But first and foremost, I think I wanted to accomplish a story about the fact that victory can, in fact, mean defeat - and, maybe more importantly, the other way around.





ABOUT MARTIN BENGTSSON

Martin Bengtsson (born in 1986) was one of Sweden's most promising football talents and made his debut in the Swedish top rank for Örebro SK at the age of 16.

The following year, he was sold to top Italian club Inter. Nine turbulent months later, Martin returned to Sweden and decided to quit the sport. In 2007, his autobiography *"In the Shadow of San Siro"* was released, one of the first reports from inside the world of professional football that also dared to address the topic of mental health issues, a subject which has since become increasingly recognized, and urgent - a survey by professional players' union FIFPRO showed that 38% of active players suffer from anxiety and/or depression.

Following the end of his football career, Martin has studied literary composition and dramatic writing, and today he is working as an author, screenwriter and playwright. His most recent production as a screenwriter is the television show *"Agent Hamilton"* (2020) for TV4/CMORE.

MARTIN BENGTSSON ON IN THE SHADOW OF SAN SIRO

I wrote *"In the Shadow of San Siro"* (2007) when I was 19 years old. The book is about my experiences in professional football. It's the story of how a life-long dream turned into a nightmare, and of the external circumstances as well as the internal processes that, combined, led to depression and a mental breakdown.

With the book I wanted to shine a spotlight on the destructive norms to which boys are subjected - as well as to give people a glimpse into the glorified, but tightly closed, world of international professional football. I wanted to deepen the discussion and debate on mental health issues in professional sports and point to the risks of being turned into a commodity at a young age.

At the same time, it's a story of a dream, of disciplining oneself to reach a goal and make that dream come true. Of the feeling of possibility that experience brings with it, which, in turn, makes way for other dreams, a desire to explore other areas of life.



ABOUT PIODOR GUSTAFSSON

Piodor Gustafsson has more than thirty years of experience within film, TV and advertising. Since March 2016, Piodor has been running BLACK SPARK FILM & TV a film and television company mainly focusing on development and production of local originals.

Piodor recently produced the Oscar®-nominated *“The Wife”* featuring Glenn Close and Jonathan Pryce, directed by Björn Runge, and in 2018 he produced the feature film *“Border”*, by Ali Abbassi, based on a novel by John Ajvide Lindqvist. *“Border”* was selected for the Cannes Film Festival in Un Certain Regard, won the prestigious Best Film prize, and was selected as Sweden's contribution to the Foreign Language category for the 2019 Academy Awards®.

Piodor has previously worked as Head of Programming and Commissioning Editor at SVT and as a commissioning Feature Film Consultant at the Swedish Film Institute.

CAST

Martin Bengtsson Erik Enge
Ryan Alfred Enoch
Vibeke Frida Gustavsson
Galli Maurizio Lombardi
Luca Lino Musella
Coach Panelli Alberto Basaluzzo
Tonolli Gianluca Di Gennaro
Dario Daniele La Leggia
Walter Antonio Bannò
Team doctor Antonio Zavatteri
Karin Liv Mjönes
Peter Johannes Bah Kuhnke

CREW

DIRECTOR Ronnie Sandahl
SCREENPLAY Ronnie Sandahl
DP Marek Septimus Wieser
EDITOR Åsa Mossberg
PRODUCTION DESIGNER Kajsa Severin
COSTUME DESIGNER Mariano Tufano
MAKE-UP DESIGNER Francesca Tampieri
CASTING DIRECTORS . Francesca Sambataro, Shakyra Dowling
FAD Mike Lundin
PRODUCERS Piodor Gustafsson, Lucia Nicolai
. Marcello Paolillo, Birgitte Skov

