



Dark Knight Returns



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When Bleeding Cool Met Mads Mikkelsen

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Written on June 13, 2012 by [Brendon Connelly](#) in [Film](#), [Recent Updates](#)

His high profile roles in *Thor 2* and as Hannibal Lector in Bryan Fuller's new TV show are going to change this, but right now, **Mads Mikkelsen** is a pretty poorly kept secret. He's an actor that plenty of us love and have been following for a good few years, but is still just a couple more rolls of the ever-growing snowball away from properly wide recognition. Winning the Best Actor award at Cannes this year certainly wouldn't have hurt.

The next chance for British audiences to catch up with Mads is this weekend's release, *A Royal Affair*. It's the kind of period film in which the King insults the "boring cow" queen, and which includes dialogue exchanges like this:

I like to drink. I like hookers with big breasts, and I like fighting.

What's wrong with that?

I met up with Mikkelsen recently to speak about this film, about Danish cinema, and about being cast as a villain in English-language projects.



Rock 'n' Roll Energy vs. Big Motion Pictures

I think that the Danish tradition, from the beginning of its new golden age, has been very much hand held camera, rock 'n' roll, documentary energy. That has changed. We still do it, but people also do other kinds. In this case, Nikolaj [Arcel, the director of A Royal Affair] wanted it to be a film-film. He loves American films, I love American films. We're heavily inspired by some cool, good American films. Nikolaj wanted A Royal Affair to have that flow and that elegance, but at the same time we used our cool tradition of Dogme style acting.

Nikolaj brings an approach to film that is heavily inspired by the films we grew up with, big motion pictures and the elegance of that. It has been a taboo back home. People say that we don't have the budget to make films like this and he just says "No fucking way, I love this" and I love it as well. His belief and energy is so refreshing. Everything was surprised to see us go down the alley of what the Brits go down, but all of a sudden, we sold the film in 60 countries.

Humans, 300 Years Ago

I'd never worked with Nikolaj before but I loved every second of it. He is obviously a master of the whole technical side – how it looks, how you write it, how you edit it – but he turned out to be a master of directing acting as well. Every time there

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Written on June 12, 2012 by [Rich Johnston](#) in [Comics](#), [Top Stories](#).

was something that did not feel right, he was right there. He knew exactly what we should do. Very much an actor's man on the floor. But he gave us a lot of liberty, within the frame of the film. We did not feel closed as actors, we felt very liberated.

We had quite a bit of a rehearsal period. The script was really good from the beginning but we wanted to play around with it and see if there was something else in there, something we could emphasise. For many reasons, the young queen who spoke Danish in the film, the actress [Alicia Vikander] was Swedish, so she had to practice her Danish. And we had to play around to find the level of the king's performance. We had to make sure he was part of the film and not off in his own film. So we did quite a lot of rehearsals to find each other.

I was caught off guard by Mikkel [Følsgaard, playing the king] several times. He's a fantastic young actor, and he became a very good friend of mine. Personally, he made me laugh a lot, but in character, he made me laugh and cry. He was so touching. When he got into his own little universe and improvised a little something would pop out of him that we couldn't expect. But this worked because my character really liked him as well, this young man he saw potential in but he didn't know how to open him.

I believe that people who were human 300 years ago are the way we're human today. They might have different formalities but deep down inside, they were human like we are. I'm interested in the character and which energy, not what period I'm in though, having said that, things do change when you put on the costume and have to say "Your Highness" and things like that.

Stage vs. Screen

In the beginning, I was a dancer for eight years and I did a lot of theatre as a dancer. I think acting is acting, whether you're in front of a camera or on stage. I think you still have to find it in the same place, though the means can be slightly different. I have always been more in love with cinema than the stage. I think you can refine the performance in a different way. You don't have to go to the audience, you can ask the audience to come to you. That kind of forgetting about your surroundings is magical, when you're not aware that there is a camera.

I've done some dark comedies back home that were heavily inspired by theatre. I was playing theatrical style characters on film. It was fun, and deadly scary to act like this on film but it worked. It worked because I was not alone in the boat, everybody acted like this in these films.

With [director Thomas] Vinterberg on *The Hunt* we went back to basics, like when he did *The Celebration*. It's not a shaky camera but it's definitely a flexible camera that moved around with us. The drama is deep and, hopefully, we fill it out. It's a dark and gritty film.

The Impact of an Editor

He or she is the boss. Sometimes you plan your own journey as a character and if they take a little thing and move it up to the beginning because they would like the scene there, they get a performance that I would have done differently. I would have done it differently knowing it was going to be somewhere else. But I have to remember that these changes are made with the best intentions. It's rarely that I get disappointed. I'm more often relieved that the editor can feel the temperature of what the actors did, that they went in and sailed the same boat. Editors are definitely important people for actors.

Danish Cinema

We make about 20 or 25 films a year. Some will maybe be very local, in the sense that you need to know some part of our history. I think you should just import them all, it's only 25 a year!

There are new people coming up in the Danish film industry but it takes a little while to travel. It's been five years since I worked at home. A *Royal Affair* we shot in the Czech Republic, so I wasn't even home doing this. But it's my first language and I have something that makes me lean back differently, there's some comfort in not having to think twice about what I'm saying and how I say it. English comes out pretty fluently, to a certain degree, but that can be interesting too. I've done Russian too, French and German, and that can be interesting. The character can be informed by this. But I have to get past the language barrier, integrate it and then play the character. I like coming to the set on a foreign film and nobody knows who I am, and I have no idea who these actors are, and it puts us all on a level.

Bad Guys

I think I've been very lucky. I've been extremely lucky in that people have seen the variety of work that I've done. They might have seen the *Bond* film, but they might also have seen *Valhalla Rising*, or *After the Wedding*. I do play a bad guy in the *Bond* film and they thought he had to have certain identifiable things that made him the bad guy, but it was a very different film to the previous ones. The things I were getting offered afterwards were varied, very few bad guys.

And then, in the weeks after we spoke, Mikkelsen was cast in two huge profile bad guy roles. Isn't that the way it goes?

A Royal Affair is in UK cinemas this Friday. It's rather good, thanks in no small part to the three central performances. Mikkelsen and Følsgaard in particular bring some real bite.

Here's the film's trailer, for a taste.

Switcheroo After



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What Does The Dark Knight Rises



"Courage, Bravery, Valor,

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