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# **RIDERS OF JUSTICE**

**A film by Anders Thomas Jensen**

115 minutes

**Official Selection**

2021 Rotterdam Film Festival – Opening Night

**FINAL PRESS NOTES**

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## **SYNOPSIS**

RIDERS OF JUSTICE follows recently-deployed Markus, who is forced to return home to care for his teenage daughter after his wife is killed in a tragic train accident. But when a survivor of the wrecked train surfaces claiming foul play, Markus begins to suspect his wife was murdered and embarks on a mission to find those responsible.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

### **Anders Thomas Jensen – Director**

RIDERS OF JUSTICE is a fable, set in a framework of realism. It is the tale of a group of people all of whom, on the same day, lose their sense of security as well as their lives foundation. In meeting each other they eventually respectively find: love, self-respect, trust and the feeling of belonging to a place. Everyone ends up experiencing a kind of trust, whether that is in themselves, in God or in life's coincidences. The film depicts how our lives are affected when the unthinkable occurs. How do we keep our faith in life, when we no longer believe in anything?

Life can seem utterly meaningless, especially when we lose our loved ones. But is there any pivotal reason why we should fully understand the point of it all? Is it not so, that if we accept, we will never understand death, then being present, grateful and among those we love, is the most meaning we can aspire to in life? And is that in itself not enough?

Accepting that all around us, even our very existence, is solely governed by chance, is a tough realization... Because if everything is random, it can be argued, that everything is also irrelevant. And irrelevant is not far from meaningless. But perhaps everything isn't all together random.

In RIDERS OF JUSTICE there is also a lot of serendipity. A group of hurt people come together and along the way they help heal each other.

Humans are pack animals, we are meant to gather and the more we dare to devote ourselves to each other, the more significant and fuller our lives will be. Markus is a wounded animal, who would prefer to go into hiding. Life has exhausted his faith and deprived him of his youthful naivety. He has lost his hopes and dreams of having a big family around him. But coincidences, the accident, gives him what he desired as a young man, albeit in a completely different way. And maybe it isn't coincidences, perhaps it is God, or something else entirely.

I intend to create a drama with both touching moments and humour, which unfolds around a father and daughter, Markus and Mathilde. We stay with them in the extreme situation they find themselves in following the sudden loss of their wife/mother.

The core of the story is pretty dark and serious. The underlying theme is quite monumental. The meaning of life. That kind of subject matter is daunting. It has to be communicated with humour, otherwise it is hard to cope with the gravity of it.

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

### **Director, Anders Thomas Jensen**

Award-winning Anders Thomas Jensen is one of Denmark's most renowned screenwriters and directors. Anders Thomas Jensen is known for his unique cinematic universe, the dark humor and his collection of characters with many contrasts – and he has directed the successful movies *Men & Chicken* (2015), *Adam's Apples* (2005), *The Green Butchers* (2003) and the iconic *Flickering Lights* (2000). Anders Thomas Jensen has also found success as a screenwriter on a wide range of other Danish movies, including in collaboration with Susanne Bier, Lone Scherfig, Søren Kragh-Jacobsen and Nikolaj Arcel. Anders Thomas Jensen wrote the screenplay for Susannes Bier's *Love Is All You Need* (2012) as well as the Oscar-winning *In A Better World* (2010), while the two of them were four years prior to that Oscar-nominated for *After The Wedding* (2006). In addition to that, Anders Thomas Jensen has written the screenplays for, among other movies, *Daniel* (2019), *The Sun King* (2005), *Murk* (2005), *The Duchess* (2008) and *All For Two* (2012). In 2003, he was awarded an honorary Bodil award for his collected contribution to Danish cinema after having made a name for himself with a considerable number of feature films in a range of genres after his breakthrough in 1999, when he won an Oscar for the short film *Election Night* after his first two short films, *Ernst & The Light* (1996) and *Wolfgang* (1997), had been Oscar-nominated.

### **Producer, Sisse Graum Jørgensen**

Producer Sisse Graum Jørgensen is a central figure at Zentropa Productions, she is an executive and sits on the board of directors. Graum Jørgensen is also a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and The European Film Academy.

Riders of Justice is Sisse Graum Jørgense's first collaboration with Anders Thomas Jensen as a director, however, they have previously worked together as screen writer/ producer on a string of successful films including Susanne Bier's Academy Award-winner *In Another World*, Academy Award-nominee *After the Wedding* and Levring's acclaimed *The Salvation*, which premiered in the Official Selection at Cannes. Graum Jørgensen is also known for her long, successful partnerships with some of the most celebrated filmmakers in Denmark, including Thomas Vinterberg, Susanne Bier, Kristian Levring, and screenwriters Tobias Lindholm and Kim Fupz Aakeson. Graum Jørgensen's productions have been recognized locally and internationally, with an Oscar win and three nominations; a Golden Globe win and two nominations; three Cannes competitors, one Palm for Best Actor, one Cannes Jury Special Prize; A Berlinale Bear and four European Film Awards. Her most recent production was *Another Round* (2020), which was selected for the Cannes Film Festival's Official Selection and screened at both Toronto International Film Festival and San Sebastian Film Festival where it took home the Best Actor Award. It is also the Danish entry for The Academy Awards.

### **Producer – Sidsel Hybchmann**

Riders of Justice is Sidsel Hybschmann's debut as a producer. Previously, she has worked closely with Sisse Graum Jørgensen for more than a decade. Both as Associate Producer: *The Hunt* (2012), *Love is All You Need*(2012), *Someone You Love*(2014), *The Salvation*(2014) and *A Second Chance*(2014) and as Co Producer: *The Day Will Come*(2016), *The Commune*(2016), *The Mom Squad*(2019) and *Another Round*(2020).

## ABOUT THE CAST

### **Markus - Mads Mikkelsen**

In 2016 Mads Mikkelsen starred in “Rogue One: A Star Wars Story” as the Imperial scientist Galen Erso. Just before this, he starred in the Marvel film “Dr. Strange” alongside Benedict Cumberbatch and Tilda Swinton as the villain Kaecilius, who sees time as life’s biggest enemy, and his longing for eternal life ends up being his final.

Mads Mikkelsen is especially known from “Hannibal” as the accomplished psychologist and sociopathic serial killer, Dr. Hannibal Lecter, who is based on the character from Thomas Harris’ classic novels. Excepting his homicidal tendencies, Dr. Lecter is every bit the gentleman, with his impeccable wit, astonishing intellect, gourmet pallet and eye for the more refined aspects of life.

The Copenhagen-born actor began his professional career as a gymnast and dancer, and has worked steadily in theatre, television and film to become the top male star in Denmark and Scandinavia. This work was especially acknowledged when he was pointed out as member of the prestigious Jury at the Cannes Film Festival 2016.

Part of the way of getting here was in the Academy Award-nominated film, “A Royal Affair,” in the role of Johann Friedrich Struensee, the German physician who became a confidant to the mentally ill King Christian VII and had an affair with his wife, Queen Caroline Mathilde. The historical film, written and directed by Nikolaj Arcel, premiered in competition at the 62<sup>nd</sup> Berlin International Film Festival in February 2012 and at the 2012 Toronto International Film Festival. The film was released in the United States in 2012.

At the 2012 Cannes Film Festival, Mads Mikkelsen received the Best Actor Award for his role in “The Hunt” by Thomas Vinterberg. Mikkelsen plays a kindergarten teacher in a small Danish village that is falsely accused of child abuse. Following a premiere at Cannes, the film screened at the 2012 Telluride Film Festival, the 2012 Toronto International Film Festival, and was released by Magnolia Pictures in Spring 2013.

Mikkelsen also co-starred in “The Necessary Death of Charlie Countryman” in the role of Nigel, a violent crime boss, opposite Shia LaBeouf, Rupert Grint and Evan Rachel Wood. Directed by Fredrik Bond, the film premiered in January 2013 at Sundance Film Festival and was screened in competition at the 63<sup>rd</sup> Berlin International Film Festival in February 2013.

Mikkelsen made his film debut with a lead performance in director Nicolas Winding Refn’s (“Drive”) 1996 international crime drama success “Pusher,” part one of a trilogy. He reprised his role as a low-life pusher/junkie in the much-anticipated sequel, “With Blood On My Hands: Pusher 2.” This performance garnered him a “Best Actor” Robert statue from the Film Academy of Denmark and a “Best Actor” Bodil Award from Denmark’s National Association of Film Critics. In 2006, Mikkelsen starred as the villain, Le Chiffre, in the 2006 James Bond film, “Casino Royale.” The film was received positively by critics and earned over \$594 million worldwide, claiming the title of the highest-grossing James Bond film. Also that year, Mikkelsen played the lead role in the Academy Award- nominated film “After the Wedding,” directed by Academy Award-winning director Susanne Bier.

In 2009, Mikkelsen was reunited with Danish director Nicolas Winding-Refn (“Drive”) for “Valhalla Rising.” The story follows a group of Christians who get tragically lost on a journey to Jerusalem, and takes place in 1,000 AD. The film premiered at the 66<sup>th</sup> Venice International Film Festival.

In 2010, Mikkelsen starred as Draco in the 3D fantasy adventure film, “Clash of the Titans.” The film was directed by Louis Leterrier (“The Incredible Hulk”) and distributed by Warner Brothers.

In 2011, Mikkelsen starred as Rochefort in the 3D adaptation of “The Three Musketeers” for director Paul W.S. Anderson. The film also starred Orlando Bloom, Christoph Waltz and Milla Jovovich.

In 2017 Mads Mikkelsen shot the thriller “Arctic” where he plays the lead role; a man lost in Arctic trying to survive the inhuman cold and loneliness, living an uncertain destiny in his camp partly sheltered from the ice-cold nothingness outside. The film premiered at Cannes Film Festival in May 2018.

Mads Mikkelsen starred in the graphic novel adaptation “Polar” directed by Jonas Akerlund. The film was released in 2019 by Netflix.

Recently Mads Mikkelsen has been starring “Another Round” by Thomas Vinterberg, which is among this year’s Cannes Film Festival selection and has been nominated as Denmark’s Oscar nominee in the competition for a nomination in the category for best international film. “Riders of Justice” by Anders Thomas Jensen just premiered with Mads Mikkelsen in one of the leading roles.

In 2021 you will see him in the American science fiction film “Chaos Walking” in one of the leading roles and 2022 you will see Mikkelsen in J.K Rowling fantasy film “Fantastic Beast 3” directed by David Yates where he will be acting as the villain, the dark wizard Gellert Grindelwald.

### **Otto – Nikolaj Lie Kaas**

Nikolaj Lie Kaas is one of Denmark’s absolute greatest and most popular actors. Nikolaj Lie Kaas has been a regular contributor to Anders Thomas Jensen’s movies, and their close collaboration includes *Men & Chicken* (2015), *Adam’s Apples* (2005), *The Green Butchers* (2003) and *Flickering Lights* (2000). Beyond Anders Thomas Jensen’s work, Nikolaj Lie Kaas has most recently played the lead role in the Avaz brothers’ *Collision* (2019), portrayed Detective Inspector Carl Mørck in the first four Department Q movies: *The Keeper Of Lost Causes* (2013), *The Absent One* (2014), *A Conspiracy Of Faith* (2016) and *The Purity Of Vengeance* (2018); in Peter Shønau Fog’s *You Disappear* (2017), and in the first season of the DR television series *Follow The Money* (2016). On the international stage, he has appeared – among other things – in one of the leading roles in the huge, international HBO project *Britannia* (2018-now) as well as in the film adaptations of *The Whistleblower* (2010) and *Angels & Demons* (2009). In addition to this, Nikolaj Lie Kaas has been part of a range of successful Danish movies, including *A Second Chance* (2015), *The Candidate* (2008), *The Sun King* (2005), *Murk* (2005), *Open Hearts* (2002), *In China They Eat Dogs* (1999), *The Idiots* (1998) and *Carl, My Childhood Symphony* (1994). Nikolaj Lie Kaas got his breakthrough in Søren Kragh-Jacobsen’s *The Boys From St. Petri* (1991), for which he was awarded both a Bodil and a Robert award.

### **Mathilde – Andrea Heick Gadeberg**

Despite her young age, Andrea Heick Gadeberg has already stated that she is a great talent in acting and singing. In 2020, Anders Thomas Jensen's long-awaited *Riders of Justice* premiered and in the critically acclaimed film, Andrea Heick Gadeberg has the leading female role as the daughter Mathilde. The year 2019 was a busy year for Andrea Gadeberg, where she played little sister Christina in Niels Arden Oplev and Anders W. Berthelsen's audience success *Ser du manen, Daniel* (2019), while she had the role of little sister Karla in DR's Christmas calendar *Pagten* (2009) and took over the slanted boards as a young version of Denmark's rock mama Sanne Salomon- sen in the performance *Sanne - The Musical* (2019), for which she also won the Talent Award at this year's *Reumert 2020*. Andrea Heick Gadeberg debuted in the musical *Annie* (2007) at Fredericia Theater, and already the following year she appeared in *Sound of Music* (2008) - also at Fredericia Theater.

### **Lennart – Lars Brygmann**

Lars Brygmann is one of Denmark's most popular and versatile actors, who has had a rich and varied career across film, television and theater, and who has worked with some of Denmark's most well-known directors. Educated a carpenter Lars sought out acting and attended the private acting school *Tsarens Hof*, where he graduated in 1987.

Lars' big breakthrough came with the drama crime series *Unit One* (DR1 2000/04) where he played the eccentric detective *La Cour*. *Unit One* received an Emmy Award for Best Drama Series in 2002.

2020 Lars Brygmann has his first collaboration with Academy award winning director Anders Thomas Jensen in *Riders Of justice* where Lars plays the role as Lennart Gerner

In 2019, Lars appears in Fahad Safinia's *The Professor and the Madman*, opposite Mel Gibson and Sean Penn. And appears as well in *The Day We Died* directed by Ole Christian Madsen.

In 2018, Lars will starred in the four-part TV naval drama *Finding Home*, and in the popular comedy drama *That Time of Year* directed by Paprika Steen. Lars also appear in *Kursk* directed by Thomas Vinterberg, where he plays opposite Lea Seydoux and Colin Firth.

In the psychological drama *White Night* (2007), Lars plays the leading role of a workaholic whose life takes a dramatic turn when he gets involved in a fatal accident. For this achievement Lars won the Robert Award for Best Leading Actor and was nominated for a Bodil Award in the same category. A year later he was nominated for both accolades once more for his performance in the highly acclaimed *Terribly Happy* (2008). Other film credits include strong performances in *Applaus* (2009), *A Funny Man* (2011), *The Great Bird Race* (2012), *Player* (2013), *Summer of '92* (2015) and *Across The Waters* (2016). In 2017 Lars starred in Rebecca Daly's feature film *Good Favour* which premiered at TIFF.

Lars has appeared in multiple movie successes in the past two decades, among others *Smilla's Sense of Snow* (1997), *The Celebration* (1998), *The Bench* (2000) and *The Inheritance* (2003), before starring in *Stealing Rembrandt* (2003) for which he won a "Zulu Award" for Best Leading Actor and was nominated for several Best Leading Actor awards in 2004.

His television credits include *Defence* (TV2), *Lulu & Leon* (TV3, 2009-10) and the internationally acclaimed *Borgen* (DR1, 2010-11). For his role as Flemming in the acclaimed comedy series *Happy Life* (DR1, 2011-12) he was nominated for both a "Television de Monte Carlo Award" for

Outstanding Actor in 2012 and a Robert Award for Best Leading Actor in a TV-series in 2013. Lars also played the role of John Wagner in the popular series *Dicte* (TV2, 2013-16) and appeared in the family drama *The Other World* (DR1, 2016).

On stage, Lars has played a great variety of both serious and comical roles in the modern as well as the classical repertoire. Early in his career he was engaged in various ensembles Theatres such as Far 302, Dr. Dante and Mungo Park Theatre. In 1996 he won the Danish Theatre Critics award, "Teaterpokalen".

He played George in the critically applauded *Virginia Wolf* at Østre Gasværk Theatre in 2008, and in 2013 Brygmann starred in the monstrous theatre concert *Frankenstein Genskabt* at the Royal Danish Theatre. He also appeared in *Toves Værelse* (2016) and *Erasmus Montanus* (2017).

More recently, Lars won praise for his outstanding performance in the role of Francois in the breathtaking monologue based on Michel Houellebecq's provoking novel *Submission* at Betty Nansen Theatre. Francois, a professor in literature, who spends his time drinking, seducing the female students, eating TV dinners and watching YouPorn.

### **Emmenthaler – Nicolas Bro**

Nicolas Bro graduated from The Danish National School of Performing Arts in 1998, and has played a number of appraised roles in films, on TV, and on stage. Nicolas Bro's remarkable talent or playing distinctive nuances makes him one of Europe's most sought after character actors.

Bro will star as Emmenthaler in Academy Award winner Anders Thomas Jensen's *Riders of Justice* (2020). Bro and Jensen have previously teamed up in *Men & Chicken* (2015), *Adam's Apples* (2005), *The Green Butchers* (2003), and *Election Night* that won an Academy Award in 1999 for Best Short Film. In 2020 Bro stars in CMore's thriller series *Thin Ice*, a series where climate changes plays a central role.

In 2018 Bro appeared in the period drama series *The Alienist*, and as the neurotic Brandt in Christoffer Boe's *The Purity of Vengeance* (2018). Bro also worked with Boe on *Offscreen* (2006), for which he won a Bodil Award, *Sex, Drugs & Taxation* (2013), for which he won a Robert Award, and on the crime series *Warrior* (2018).

Bro played the neo-Nazi leader Tykke in *Brotherhood* (2009), which won both for Best Film and a Golden Butterfly at Rome Film Festival. He worked again with director Nicolo Donato on the WWII drama *Across the Waters* (2016). On the small screen Bro has starred in Ole Bornedal's *1864* (2014), *The Bridge III* (2015), and in the family series *The Other World* (2016).

Bro worked with Lars von Trier in the 2013 *Nymphomaniac*. In 2011 Bro worked with Steven Spielberg, playing the German soldier and horse whisperer Friedrich in *War Horse*.

On stage Bro has played award-winning roles such as Hamlet, Don Juan, King Arthur, Macbeth, and Mephisto.



# **CREDITS**

**Directed by Anders Thomas Jensen**

**Screenplay by Anders Thomas Jensen**

**Producers: Sisse Graum Jørgensen & Sidsel Hybschmann**

**Director of Photography: Kasper Tuxen, D.F.F.**

**Editors: Nicolaj Monberg & Anders Albjerg Kristiansen**

**Production Designer: Nikolaj Danielsen**

**Composer: Jeppe Kaas**

**Sound Designer: Eddie Simonsen**

**Key Make-up Designer: Louise Hauberg Lohmann**

**Costume Designer: Vibe Knoblauch Hededam**

**Line Producer: Karen Bentzon**

## **Cast list:**

**Mads Mikkelsen - Markus**

**Nicolaj Lie Kaas - Otto**

**Andrea Heick Gadeberg - Mathilde**

**Lars Brygmann - Lennart**

**Nicolas Bro - Emmenthaler**

**Gustav Lindh - Bodashka**

**Roland Møller - Kurt**

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