


GUNS, GRUDGES, GANGSTERS, AND GRAVEDIGGERS...WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?

GRAVE



CINEDOKKE
FILM PRODUCTION

 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra
Département fédéral de l'intérieur DFI
Office fédéral de la culture OFC

MEDIADESK
SUISSE

RSI Radiotelevisione
Svizzera

CINÉFOROM
Fondation romande
pour le cinéma

MIGROS
kulturprozent

 **DFJC** Département de la
formation de la jeunesse
et de la culture

ti 
Dipartimento dell'educazione,
della cultura e dello sport

1291
PRODUCTIONS

TECHNICAL SHEET

DIRECTED BY ANNA PIERI ZUERCHER, PIETRO ZUERCHER
WRITTEN BY ANNA PIERI ZUERCHER, PIETRO ZUERCHER, ZIAD HAMZEH, TOBY MCSHANE
PRODUCERS MICHELA PINI, OLGA LAMONTANARA
GENRE DARK COMEDY
LANGUAGE ENGLISH
SHOOTING LOCATIONS SWITZERLAND, BALTIC/NORDIC COUNTRIES
ESTIMATED SHOOTING DATE 2025
BUDGET 5 MIO EURO
SECURED FINANCING 50% FINANCING IN PLACE
CONFIRMED PARTNERS SWISS FEDERAL OFFICE OF CULTURE, RSI
RADIOTELEVISIONE SVIZZERA - SRG SSR, MEDIA DESK SUISSE AND OTHERS
LOOKING FOR CO-PRODUCTION PARTNERS IN EUROPE AND CANADA;
US INVESTORS, FINANCIERS, EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS,
PLATFORMS/STREAMERS, SALES AGENTS, AND BUYERS

**SCRIPT AVAILABLE
UPON REQUEST**



LOGLINE

The destinies of GUNNAR, a depressed gravedigger whose cemetery has been sold, and HEINZ, a butcher-hitman who just wants to retire, are forced together by unpredictable circumstances.

A host of quirky characters accompany them on a frenzied road trip filled with hope and fear, shootouts and corpses, absurdity and death, and finally an unlikely friendship.





SYNOPSIS

There is little to do in the forlorn village of Hoftur. Forty residents kill time playing Bingo, getting on each other's nerves, and not much else.

Among them is the chronically depressed gravedigger GUNNAR ERIKSSON, who every now and then contemplates suicide after the 'supposed' loss of his wife ILDE. As well, there is Gunnar's old friend, BRITTA FUCHS, an honourable park ranger who, despite her feelings for the gravedigger, has not seen their relationship develop beyond friendship.

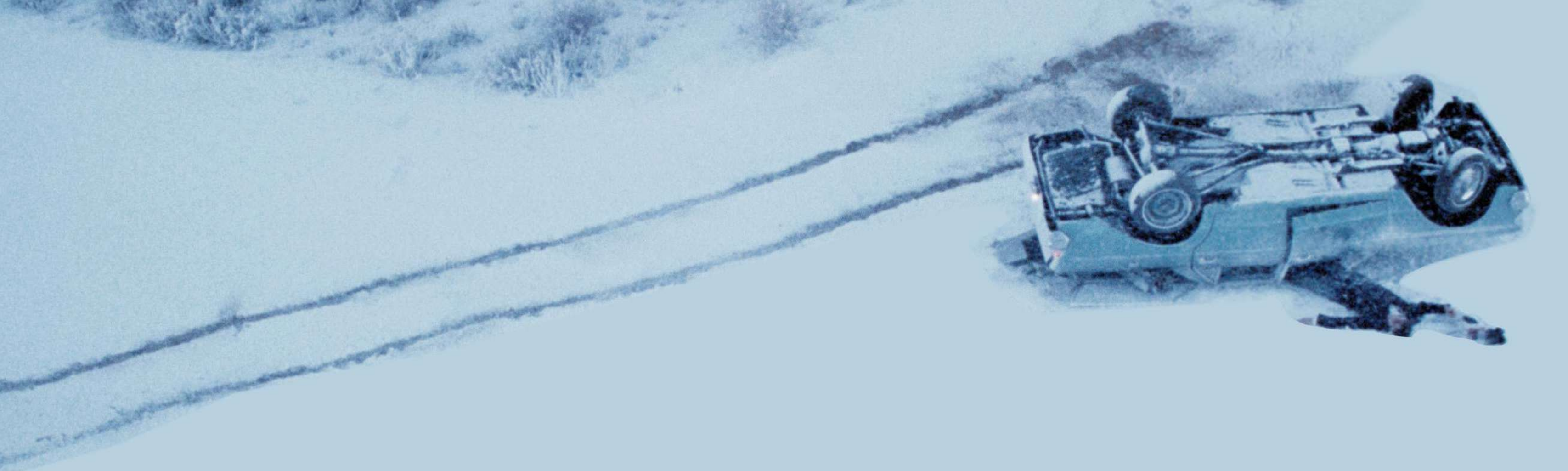


Also present in the village is the unscrupulous Mayor ADALSON LEDER, who discovered a gas field under Gunnar's cemetery and sold it to the MONTANDON BROTHERS, a pair of small-time big city criminals.

GUNNAR CONFRONTS THE MAYOR IN AN ARGUMENT THAT ULTIMATELY RESULTS IN THE LATTER ACCIDENTALLY SHOOTING HIMSELF IN THE HEAD.


Forty kilometers away, in the city of Kefflinach, the Montandon brothers are backed into a corner by the head of a major criminal organisation, FRANK RAVN, who thinks the gas field is his to own. In order to protect their assets, they approach grizzled butcher-come-hitman HEINZ WASSMUTH to solve their problem. Although reluctant at first, the old butcher has his heart set on a costly retirement complex in Spain. Thus, with the money they offer, he accepts. The contract goes wrong, he kills Frank but he has to run away chased by three thugs.





Meanwhile Gunnar is tasked with returning the dead mayor to his family in Kefflinach. On the way there the two worlds collide - literally. Gunnar, Heinz and the thugs are involved in an awful accident, from which they miraculously survive unharmed. Heinz kills three men who were chasing him and abandons his wrecked car, kidnapping Gunnar.

Hence begins the journey of Heinz and Gunnar on the roads of the Great North, chased by some eclectic characters including an incompetent cop, a blind priest accompanied by a decrepit fanfare, a pack of angry thugs, a rangeress and the mayor's family who now wants his body back.

A cinematic still from a movie showing two men inside a car at night. The man on the left is looking forward with a serious expression. The man on the right is using binoculars. The scene is dimly lit with a blueish tint.

**IN ORDER TO SURVIVE THEY WILL HAVE
TO JOIN FORCES. GUNNAR WILL HAVE
TO DEAL WITH HEINZ'S VIOLENCE AND
HEINZ WILL HAVE TO PUT UP WITH
GUNNAR'S QUIRKINESS.**



Through shootings, chases, winding roads and a surreal gas station, the two find themselves on an introspective journey. Gunnar questions his own existence: has he given too much to the dead and not enough to the living? As Heinz reflects on his life full of violence, will he ever be able to retire to Spain or will his fate be hell at once?

Britta, tirelessly investigating to find Gunnar, rises to the role of guardian Angel of Hoftur and its inhabitants. Ultimately, it is her fortitude and acumen that save the day.

In a decisive confrontation at the Hoftur cemetery, Gunnar finally puts his suicidal desires to rest, Heinz sacrifices himself for others in a moving act of redemption.

AS THE STORY COMES TO AN END, GUNNAR AND BRITTA TENTATIVELY EXPLORE THE IDEA THAT MAYBE THERE IS VALUE IN A FUTURE TOGETHER AFTER ALL.



I WANTED TO TALK ABOUT DEATH BUT THEN LIFE CAME ALONG AS USUAL.

VIRGINIA WOOLF

AUTHORS' & DIRECTORS' NOTES



GRAVE IS A BLACK COMEDY ABOUT DEATH AND FRIENDSHIP.

The theme of death and mourning has been with us for a long time, having tragically lost a little brother and a father who both brutally died too young. Throughout our grieving journeys and in our writing, we developed a sense of irony toward death in general. The desire to share these reflections and emotions led us to the idea of making this film.

In our film, death is everywhere. There are the dead we carry around and the ones we leave behind.

There is Gunnar, depressed gravedigger who avoids real relationships by preferring the silence of the dead. Heinz, butcher by day and hitman by night. Britta, the sharp and determined ranger surrounded by a

multitude of dead animals. There are the Montandon brothers, small-time criminals who eliminate anyone who gets in their way. There is Ilde, Gunnar's presumed deceased wife, and Sigmur, maestro whose band members keep dying. And finally, there is Hoftur, a small village isolated from the rest of the world, slowly dying in general indifference.



Death, approached truthfully but in a light-hearted way, becomes the thread that guides us through the frantic journey of Gunnar and Heinz: two men at complete opposites who, through their unintended encounter, will get to know each other and discover an unlikely and powerful friendship.

In GRAVE, sardonic realism and dark comedy are combined to provide an entertaining, disturbing and ultimately redeeming window in their lives, while creating a world that aims at being poetic and surprising.



COMEDIC STYLE

GRAVE is a tale in the style of Nordic dark comedies in which realistic characters live absurd situations, like ADAM'S APPLES or MEN & CHICKEN. The dry humor of Northern Europe is of great inspiration. We mix it with the kind of humor of action comedies such as LOCK, STOCK AND TWO SMOKING BARRELS or BURN AFTER READING, with the effect of potentially having a broader appeal for different audiences.



An aerial photograph of a winter forest. The ground is covered in a thick layer of snow, and the trees are heavily laden with snow, appearing as dark, textured shapes against the white background. A narrow, winding path or road cuts through the center of the forest, leading the eye from the top towards the bottom of the frame. The overall atmosphere is serene and quiet.

LOCATIONS

A surreal atmosphere of snow, fog and silence will reinforce the sense of isolation and of being lost in the middle of nothingness. The locations will be essential to the film's visual style: the landscape, the village and the town are characters of their own, which will strongly influence our protagonists and their journey. We are looking for these ambiances in Lapland (Finland) and Estonia.



VISUALS

GRAVE will begin by using still “tableau” shots that will evolve into a dynamic interplay of objective and subjective perspectives as the protagonists meet. From extremely wide shots of the land, to handheld close-ups that reveal the characters’ intimate stories. This visual rhythm will create a dynamic and engaging experience.

The set design will reflect the personalities of the characters, and at the same time contribute to the dark comedy tone of the film: realistic but sprinkled with eccentric and unconventional elements to create an atmosphere of absurdity and satire.





15 GRAVE

A DARK COMEDY ABOUT DEATH AND FRIENDSHIP



DIALOGUE EXCERPT

BRITTA

Have you ever felt like maybe doing something else?

GUNNAR

What?

BRITTA

Like... Taxidermy?

GUNNAR stares blankly.

BRITTA

It's working with bodies... you already do that.

GUNNAR

Yeah, but I'm not in the habit of stuffing them, am I, Britta? Taxidermy?!

BRITTA

It might be a nice thing for us to work together on.

GUNNAR

But it's not in the same ballpark. It's not even the same sport. I'm about trying to help folk pass on into the next life, not fill them full of fluff and prop 'em up on a hook.



PRODUCERS' NOTES

GRAVE is a dark comedy bordering on the surreal. We envision it to be close on one hand to the cinema of the Coen brothers, on the other hand to the tradition of cold, black Nordic humour but also to the British gangster comedies of Guy Ritchie.

It is the directorial debut of Anna Pieri Zuercher, actress with a solid career and many accolades to her credit, and Pietro Zuercher, award-winning cinematographer with international experience.

Anna and Pietro want to bring this unusual story to the screen: it tackles death, a sensitive subject close to them, with healthy irony, in a film that will touch audiences for the originality of the characters, the absurdity of the situations, and the fast pace of the events

The combination of distinctive visual imagery, a captivating plot with strong entertainment

qualities and engaging protagonists guarantee a great potential to attract viewers across countries.

We aim at having a cast of established names, and the project has already attracted preliminary interest from various international actors.

THE FINAL PART OF THE FILM CALLS FOR ICY AND REMOTE LANDSCAPES,

for which we're looking at coproduction partners in Nordic and Baltic countries (including but not limited to: Finland, Estonia, Iceland, Denmark, Sweden).

Our goal is to ensure an elevated production value by carefully planning ahead smart solutions (compatible with a viable budget) for stunt and action scenes as well as SFX, in order to make a film that lives up to the ambitious script the authors envisioned.

We loved this original idea from the very beginning, and we are certain that Anna and Pietro's combined experience will create the conditions for an excellent directing team - Anna with her ability to direct actors, Pietro with his experience and visual sensitivity.



DISTRIBUTION

FANS OF ARTHOUSE CROSSOVER WILL APPRECIATE GRAVE AS MUCH AS VIEWERS LOOKING FOR ACTION AND COMEDY.

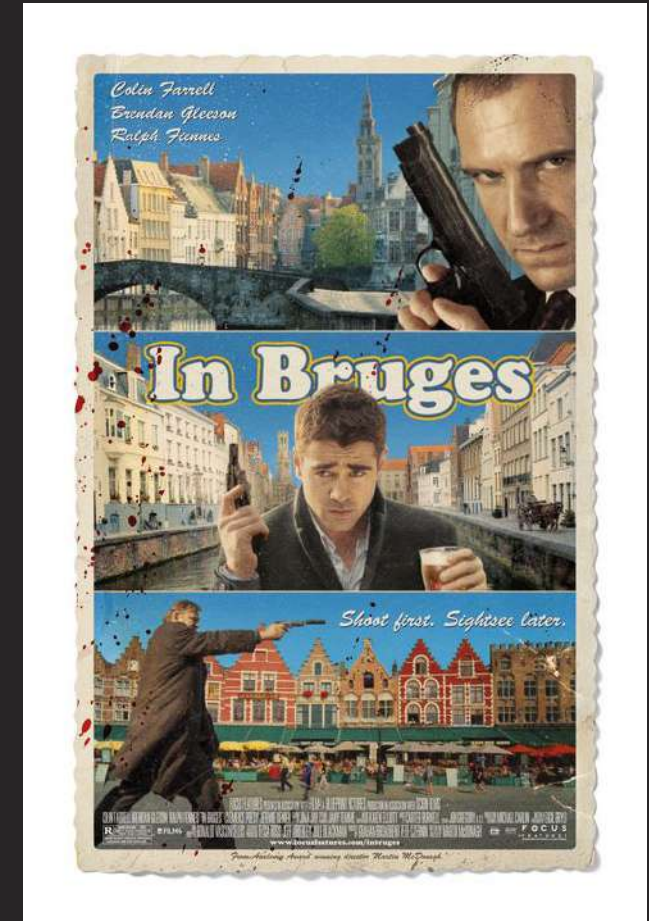
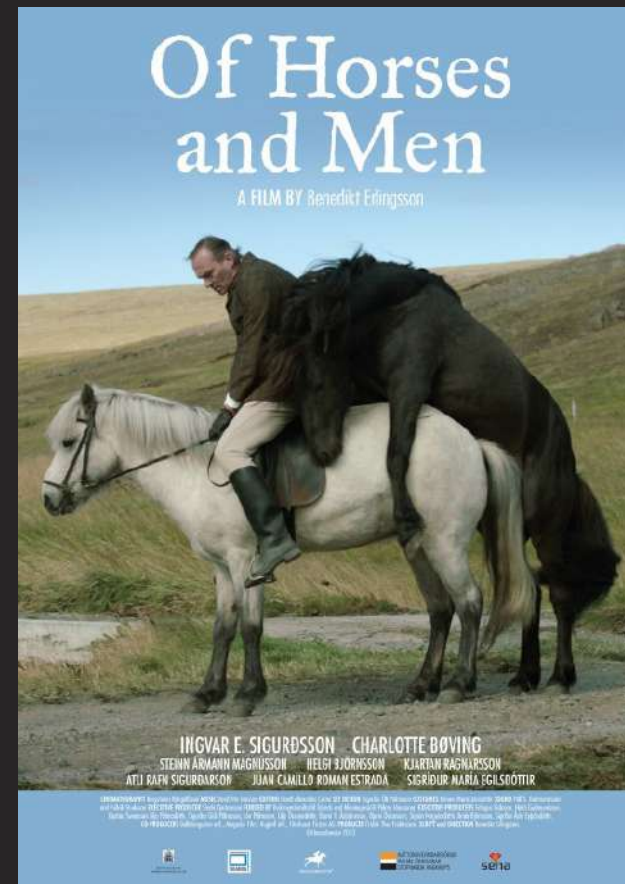
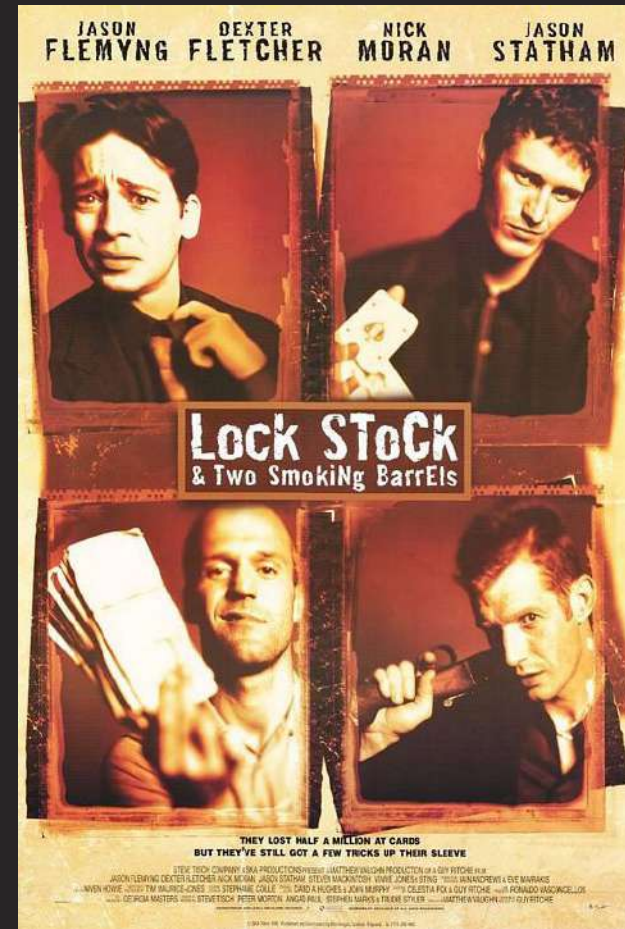
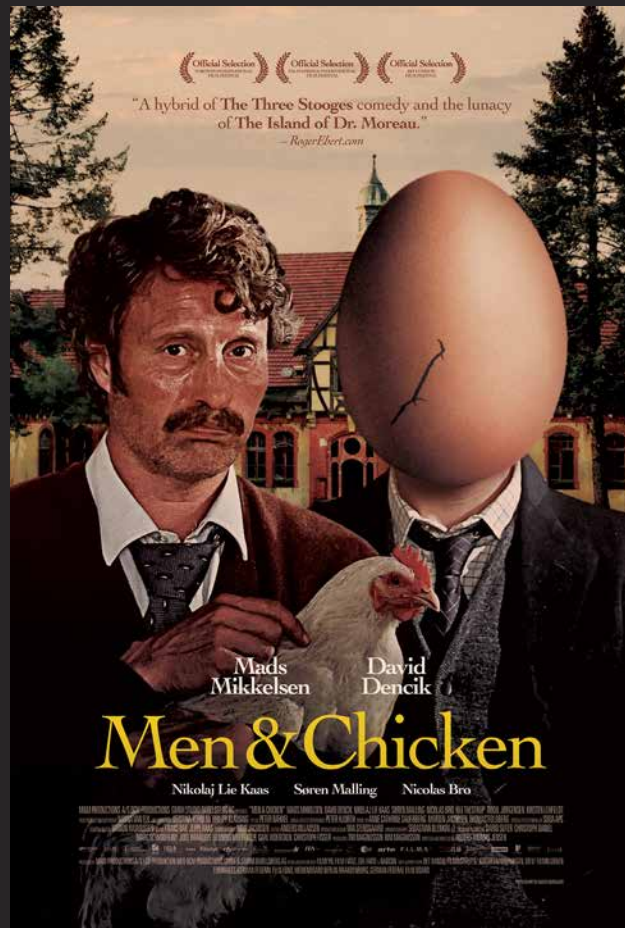
- **Primary audience:** men aged 40-60, ideal audience of comedy and action films; they will identify with the male protagonists and the 'bromance', regular film-goers; AND cinephile women aged 40-60 who will appreciate the focus on friendship, redemption, love story.
- **Secondary audience:** audiences aged 25-39, attracted by fantasy/surreal aspect, irony, action and entertainment component; they will consume the film on platforms.
- **Tertiary audience:** more mainstream adult audience, interested in pure entertainment.

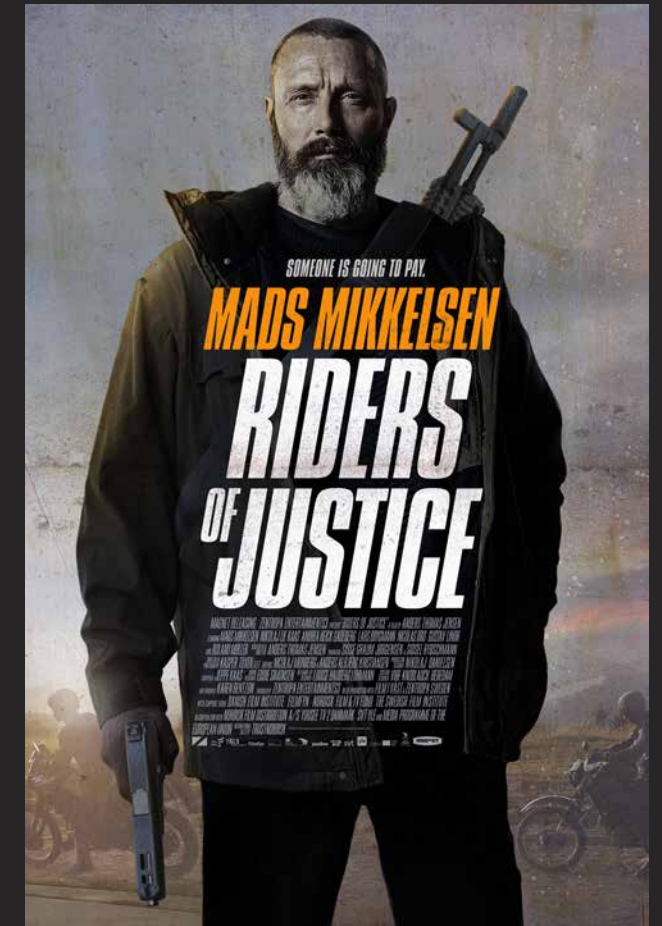
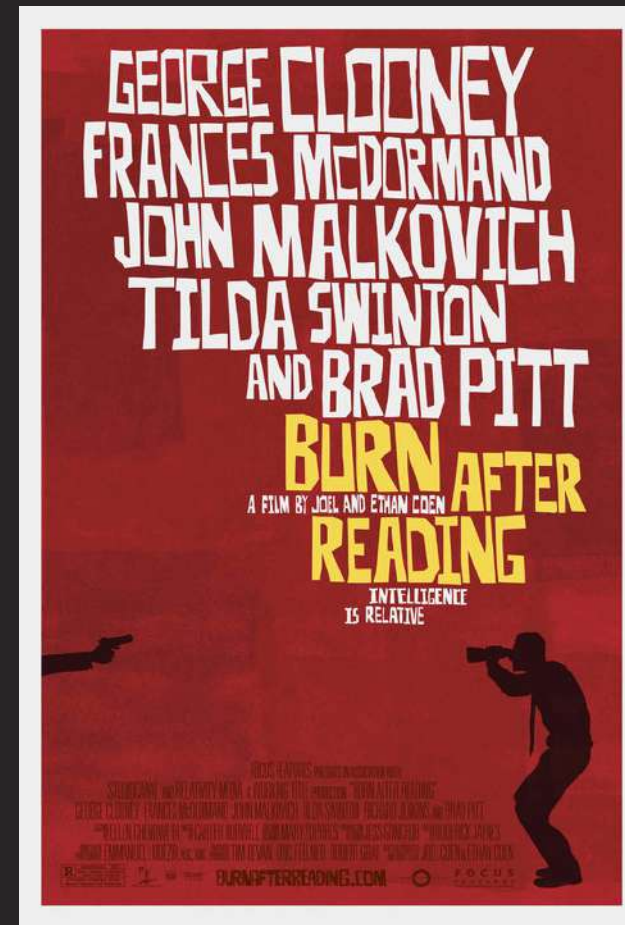
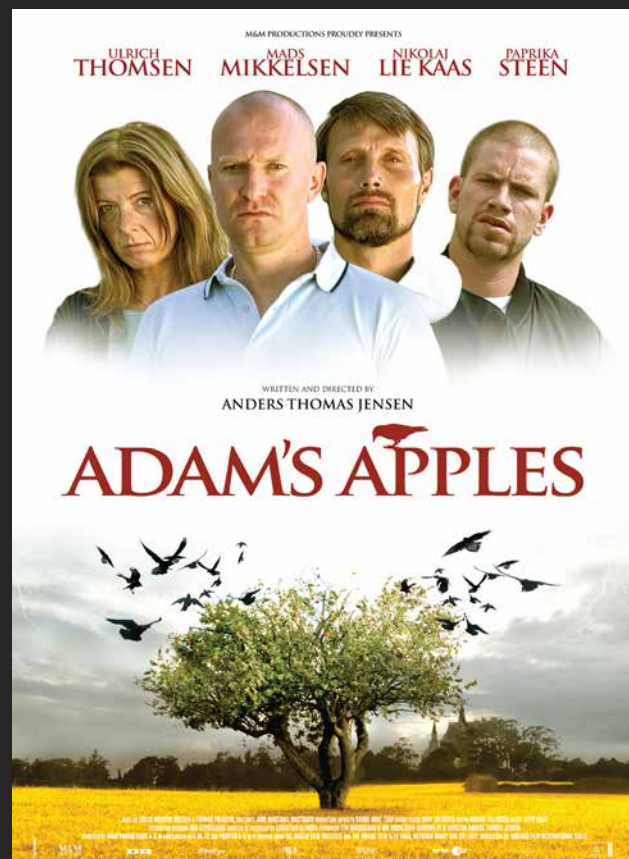
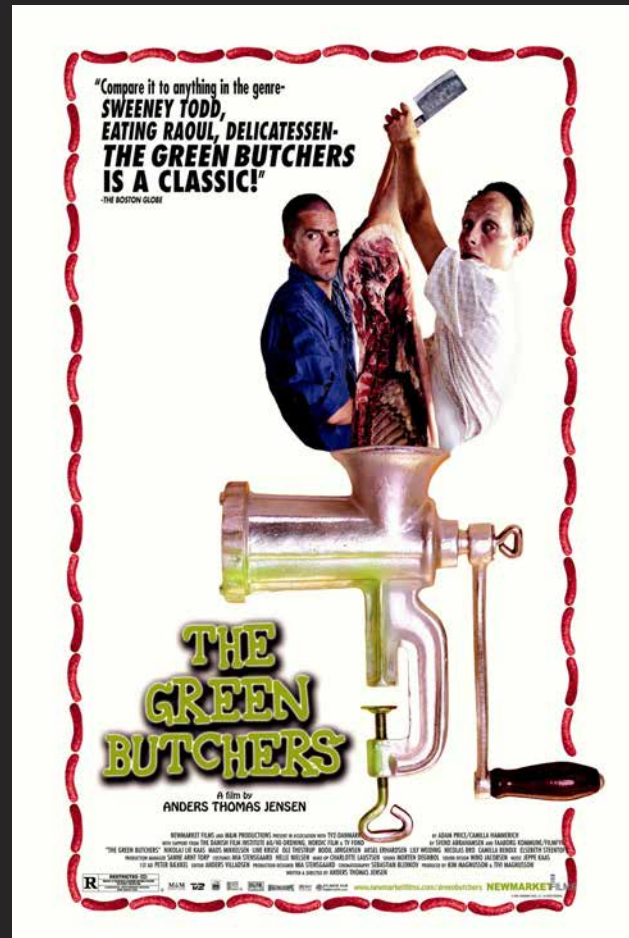
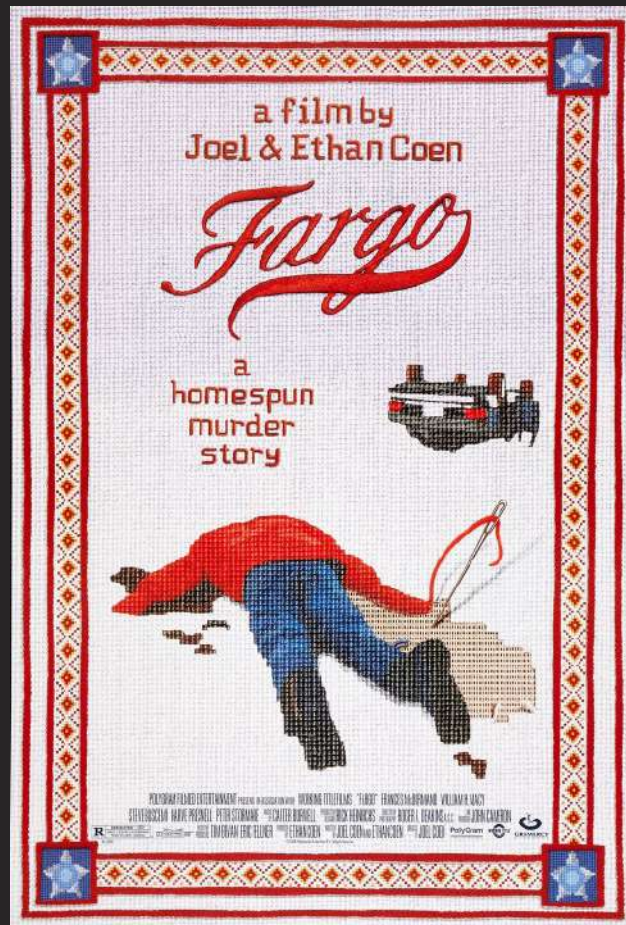
We see a clear commercial potential in the film, which can have a good success on both cinemas and TV/platforms alike.

While it is certainly a film to be enjoyed on the big screen due to its striking visuals, landscapes, cinematography and spectacular action moments, it also has great appeal for VOD audiences around the world, especially those looking for entertainment. An international cast with recognisable actors will be an additional asset for the promotion.



INSPIRATION





DIRECTORS' BIO



ANNA PIERI ZUERCHER

An actress and pianist by profession, Anna Pieri Zuercher works in film, television, theatre and music.

In 2019, Anna Pieri Zuercher won the Swissperform award as best leading actress for the role of Nina Favre in the series *DOUBLE VIE* by Bruno Deville. Since 2019, Anna stars in the series *TATORT*, the most popular German-language detective series broadcast in Germany, Switzerland and Austria, in which she plays the lead role. She has also worked in several other Swiss and international series, including the recent *ALTER EGO*, directed by Erik Bernasconi and Robert Ralston.

Among her many credits, Anna Pieri Zuercher starred in the film *LAST DANCE* (Locarno, Piazza Grande, 2022) by Delphine Lehericcy.



PIETRO ZUERCHER

Born in Switzerland, Pietro Zuercher is an internationally renowned Director of Photography. He is a member of the European and the Swiss Film Academy, the European and the Swiss Society of Cinematographers.

He is a graduate of the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. For his work at AFI, Pietro received the American Society of Cinematographers' Special Mention for outstanding cinematography.

He has more than 30 feature films and series to his credit. In recent years, he has been shooting mainly films and series for productions and co-productions in the United States, France, Switzerland, Italy, India and Belgium. He has also won or been nominated for numerous awards, including two nominations for the Swiss Film Award for Best Cinematography (*ATLAS* by Niccolò Castelli, 2019 and *TUTTI GIÙ* by Niccolò Castelli, 2011).



CINÉDOKKÉ BIO

Founded in 2007, Cinédokké has become a solid reference point for up-and-coming Swiss and international directors. So far, the company has produced more than 30 short films, documentaries, feature films and web series.

Cinédokké's most recent credits include Caterina Mona's SEMRET (Piazza Grande, Locarno 2022), UNTIL BRANCHES BEND by Sophie Jarvis (Discovery, TIFF 2022; Prix de Soleure

Winner 2023) and SOMETHING YOU SAID LAST NIGHT by Luis De Filippis (Changemaker Award / Discovery, TIFF 2022; Sebastiane Award / New Directors, San Sebastián 2022), as well as the co-production with Seeland Film UNREST / UNRUEH by Cyril Schäublin (Best Director / Encounters, Berlinale 2022).

Michela Pini, founder and main producer of the company, has over 15 years of experience and more than 50 credits under her belt as producer,

line or executive producer, ranging from fiction features to shorts and documentaries. She has worked with the likes of Alice Rohrwacher, Ursula Meier, the D'Innocenzo Brothers or Marco Bellocchio, just to name a few.

Among other titles, Michela Pini and Olga Lamontanara have also co-produced via Amka Films LA CHIMERA by Alice Rohrwacher (Official Selection, in Competition, Cannes 2023) and THE INNER

CAGE / ARIAFERMA by Leonardo Di Costanzo (Official Selection, Venice 2021; 11 nominations for the David di Donatello 2022 incl. Best Producer for Michela Pini; winner for Best Actor and Best Original Screenplay), as well as the recently completed TV series ALTER EGO (RSI Radiotelevisione svizzera, December 2023): a collaboration with GRAVE's writer-directors Anna Pieri Zuercher and Pietro Zuercher respectively as lead cast and director of photography.



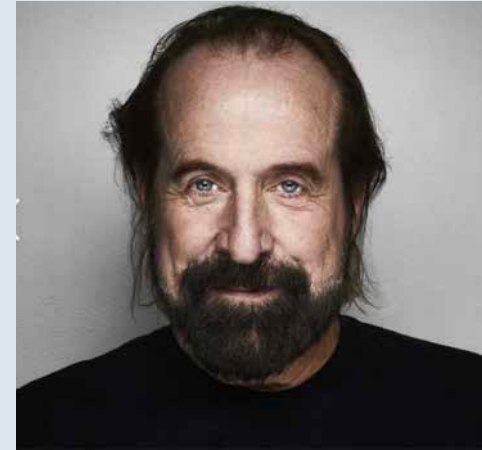
CAST & CHARACTERS



GUNNAR ERIKSSON

Gunnar Eriksson, the 47-year-old gravedigger of Hoftur, feels more comfortable with the dead than with the living and is maniacally attached to his cemetery. He's chronically depressed but has a great sense of irony.

To be found



HEINZ WASSMUTH

Heinz Wassmuth, the 63-year-old slaughterhouse worker by day and hitman by night, who just wants to retire in the South of Spain. He's cynical and acts like a violent guy, but deep down he's very lonely.

To be found



BRITTA FUCHS

Britta Fuchs, the 42-year-old forest ranger and former regional shooting champion, in love with Gunnar, who sees her only as a friend. Deeply attached to nature, she is the guardian of Hoftur.

Laura Birn (confirmed preliminary interest)
FOUNDATION - S1 & S2, Apple TV+, 2021-2023
THE INNOCENTS, Netflix, 2018
LIGHT LIGHT LIGHT by Inari Niemi, 2023



JEPPE

Jeppe, the 38-year-old chief of police of Hoftur. He is as proud to be the Chief as he's useless. Fearful of responsibility but sensitive and kind.

Joel Basman
LUBO by Giorgio Diritti, 2023
THE AWAKENING OF MOTTI WOLKENBRUCH by Michael Steiner, 2019
AMNESIA by Barbet Schroeder, 2015
JOHN WICK - CHAPTER II by Chad Stahelski, 2018



THE MONTANDON BROTHERS

The Montandon brothers, owners of the slaughterhouse and mighty duo in the criminal underworld. Gerard also known as "the Cardinal", 47-year-old, calculator and strategic. Roger, also known as "the Warrior," 42-year-old, vulgar, aggressive, and unpredictable. They are Heinz's employers.

GERARD

Thibaut Evrard (confirmed preliminary interest)

UN PETIT FRERE by Leonor Seraille, 2022
BEYOND THE HORIZON by Delphine Lehericéy, 2019

ROGER

Kacey Mottet Klein

LAST DANCE by Delphine Lehericéy, 2022
QUAND ON A 17 ANS by André Téchiné, 2016
SISTER by Ursula Meier, 2012



SIGMUR

Old man Sigmur is the maestro of Hoftur's fanfare. As he prepares to the idea of his own death approaching, his band members keep actually dying.

Richard Sammel
(confirmed preliminary interest)

SPENCER by Pablo Larraín, 2021
INGLORIOUS BASTERDS by Quentin Tarantino, 2009



ILDE WILDER

Ilde Wilder, Gunnar's 45-year-old presumed dead wife, leads a nomadic life in her mobile home. She used to travel from city to city to launch bingo clubs.

Sabine Timoteo
(confirmed preliminary interest)

THUNDER by Carmen Jaquier, 2022
THE GIRL AND THE SPIDER by Ramon Zürcher and Silvan Zürcher, 2021
THE WONDERS by Alice Rohrwacher, 2014



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