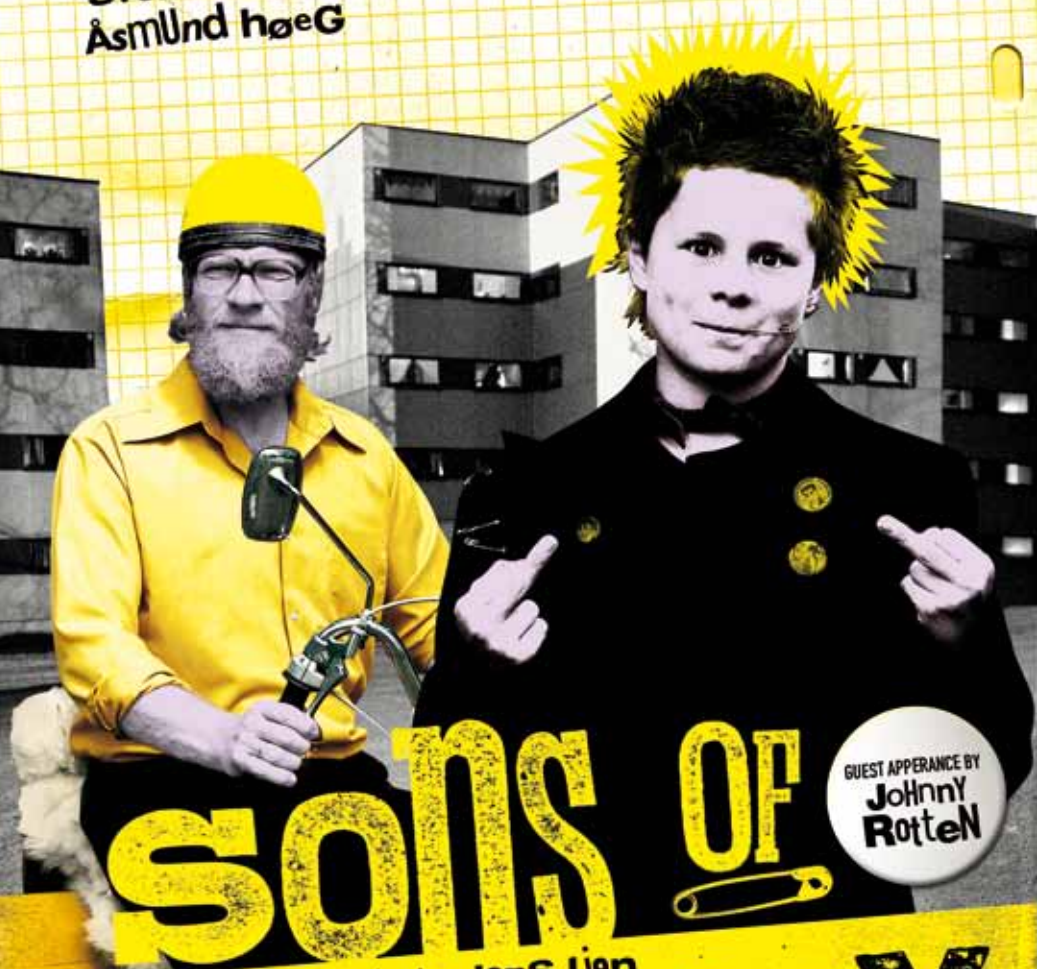


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Sven norDin
Åsmund hœeG



SONS OF

a film by Jens Lien

NORWAY

BASED ON THE NOVEL
"THEORY AND PRACTICE"
BY NIKOLAJ FROBENIUS


GRAPHIC DESIGN *Amel*

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Sven Nordin
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SONS OF NORWAY



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BASED ON THE NOVEL
"THEORY AND PRACTICE"
BY NIKOLAJ FROBENIUS

NORWAY - 2011 - 88 MINUTES - 2.35 - COLOUR - DOLBY SRD

synopsis

IT'S NOT EASY TO REBEL WHEN YOUR DAD WANTS TO JOIN THE PARTY... ONE DAY (IN 1979), MAGNUS AND HIS SON NIKOLAJ HIT THE WALL IN THEIR NEW TERRACE HOUSE IN RYKKINN. MAGNUS IS AN ARCHITECT, HIPPIE AND FREE SPIRIT, A GLARING EXCEPTION IN A COMMUNITY WHERE EQUALITY AND CONFORMITY IS THE NORM. HE ALWAYS STANDS UP FOR HIS SON, SUPPORTING HIM UNCONDITIONALLY, EVEN WHEN NIKOLAJ DECIDES TO STOP GIVING A DAMN. SONS OF NORWAY IS A FILM ABOUT REBELLION, PUNK ROCK, SUBURBAN HELL AND THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN FREAKS AND PUNKS. BUT MOST OF ALL, IT'S THE STORY OF AN UNUSUAL FATHER-SON RELATIONSHIP, AND ABOUT THE STRENGTH OF THE BONDS WE SOMETIMES DO OUR BEST TO RIP APART.

full synopsis

It was the best of political intentions that in the early 1970s transformed a muddy patch on the outskirts of Oslo into a satellite community housing 14 000 people, virtually overnight. Rykkinn was a product of the era of social democratic housing developments, a place where ideas about solidarity and equality would be moulded in concrete into two rooms and a kitchen.

Into this housing machinery, tailored to the nuclear family, 13-year-old Nikolaj and his all but conformist family move in. His father, Magnus, is an exuberant, radical architect with an infectious grin and rather unorthodox ideas on raising kids. He's also one of the architects behind the housing development. The vibrant love of his life, Lone, is the anchor who with varying success tries to bring Magnus down to earth – where all their neighbours are. The brothers Ivan, Nikolaj and Peter have all been named after Russian tsars. They're respectively studying in London, approaching a turbulent adolescence, and still in the blissful ignorance of childhood.

In theory, Rykkinn should be the perfect place to grow up. But the family is soon to discover that the housing dream the father has helped design, in practice develops into something far from idyllic. Their dreams of a new life are quickly and brutally crushed when the mother one evening is hit by a reckless, unknown driver, and dies shortly thereafter. The tragedy immobilises the father who, almost apathetic from grief, loses his ability to take care of his sons. The roles of

dependency between Nikolaj and his father are reversed, at the same time as Nikolaj has his own adolescent demons to fight. Their relationship reaches a turning point when Nikolaj channels his rage into punk rock, which has started to gain a foothold in Norway. The aggressive music and indifferent fuck-all attitude strikes a chord in both Rykkinn and Nikolaj, at a time when the future doesn't look particularly bright for any of them. It seems the human sense of community finds it harder to thrive in the communal areas between the box houses than politicians and architects had hoped. With cramped living conditions and few recreational opportunities, the problems surface in the form of substance abuse, violence and distrust between people who should be neighbours. Sex Pistols' No Future reverberates between the concrete walls of Rykkinn with more than a grain of truth.

Sons of Norway is a widely cast story in terms of topic and temperature. The framework of the narrative is what happens when existence becomes tragic destiny, both on the family and community level. But the humour is still omnipresent. It's a story about coming of age, and under which conditions. About identity and gaining independence. About dysfunctional social engineering, and the impossibility of continuing life as before after an accident has changed it forever. And not least, it's a story about an unusual father-son relationship, and about the tenacity of the bonds we sometimes do our best to break.



cast

Nikolaj	ÅSMUND HØEG
Magnus	SVEN NORDIN
Lone	SONJA RICHTER
Tor	TONY VEITSLER SKARPSNO
Nina	CAMILLA FRIISK
Anton	TROND NILSSEN
Johnny Rotten	JOHN LYDON



“Sons of Norway” is a vibrant and different family portrait. The multiple layers of the story is one of the things I like the most about it. The contrast between constructive and destructive; Hippie versus punk; Tragedy – comedy.

The core of the story is a powerful father/son portrayal. It’s a different coming-of-age story. The starting point is the hippie generation’s flawed approach to upbringing and freedom. But is their approach so different from the current reality? I think you can draw many parallels to the present. What do children need to grow up? What is a perfect life? Can life be planned? The combination of a raw adolescent drama, a colourful snapshot of the era and a captivating portrait of punk music creates the potential for a vibrant, entertaining film with plenty of punch.

Nikolaj is a sensitive soul. When his mother dies, he’s not given enough room to grieve. His survival mechanism becomes seeking out a scene with more room for chaotic emotions. Punk rock becomes the arena where he feels he can vent his frustration and suppressed emotions. But Nikolaj sees through punk after a while. It doesn’t give him what he needs. Besides, Magnus quickly invades the scene as well, becoming more of a punk than Nikolaj. Nikolaj’s self-image is erased, leading to an inevitable breakdown.

The story contains many humoristic situations. The way Nikolaj is forced to relate to his life and his father may be bittersweet, but also comical. I want Nikolaj’s surroundings to appear colourful. His playful fathers, the absurd, humorous and often painful situations caused by him are portrayed in a vibrant, unsentimental manner. The tone remains light, at the same time as we develop sympathy with Nikolaj and realise how much pain and frustration he has to go through.

I like the fact that the story has a family arena. Magnus is a family man who loves his wife and three sons deeply. But he lacks the inhibitions and the will to be a responsible adult. He’s unable to draw the line, to provide the predictability and security Nikolaj needs. Nikolaj has a father who becomes comradely and tiresome. Magnus is an old hippie with plenty of theories about how to make life perfect. But in practice, life is so capricious and painful, and children are conservative. Life itself does not always fit into Magnus’ theory.

I think Nikolaj has inherited his temperament and disposition from his mother. He has problems understanding his father and coping with all his wild ideas. There’s a lot of energy and tension in the way the frustration and suppressed emotions from a chaotic world build up behind Nikolaj’s expressionless face, and how it finally is released.

“Sons of Norway” is an emotional story. It’s an adolescent boy’s encounter with reality, his struggle to find a place in a world he fails to understand. I wish to raise the social realist theme of the film to a plane where we can read the film on several levels. Punk rock serves as a metaphor for destruction and Nikolaj’s feelings. It’s the alienation that Nikolaj feels in the world he is forced into by his father that I wish to visualise. I imagine how the satellite town of Rykkinn, that his father has helped design, is lent a sort of futuristic artificiality. This is not a satellite town of high-rise buildings and muddy fields. It’s colourful Scandinavian-designed low-rise apartment blocks, terrace houses and glaring green lawns, built to create a happy society. But to Nikolaj, it becomes increasingly frightening.

director's biography

Educated at the London International Film School 1990-92. He started out making documentaries, commercials and industrial films along with short films. Among his short films is Shut the Door (2000) and Natural Glasses (2001) both invited for the Official Competition in Cannes. He has won numerous awards all over the world with his short films. His award winning feature film debut Jonny Vang from 2003 premiered at at Berlin International Film festival. His second feature The Bother-some Man won the ACID award in Critics' Week at Cannes Int. film-festival 2006, and the Hampton Golden starfish award same year. It was official selected for Toronto Int. Film festival and has since the release won more than 30 international prizes.

Liens films contains often surreal elements. He is inspired by a wide range of film makers, but Jim Jarmush early movies and Luis Bunuels films made great impression on him in early years. His interest for music is hard to overlook in his films which often has distinct and original use of music and soundtracks.

Lien has also directed numerous commercials for TV and cinema which has received international awards.



selected filmography

SØNNER AV NORGE / SONS OF NORWAY
feature film 88 min, 2011

EVERYDAY IS A FISH DAY
short film 1 min, 2008

DEN BRYSSOMME MANNEN / THE BOTHERSOME MAN
feature film 95 min, 2006

JONNY VANG
feature film 85 min, 2003

NATURLIGE BRILLER / NATURAL GLASSES
short film 1 min, 2001

DØREN SOM IKKE SMAKK / SHUT THE DOOR
short film 10 min, 2000

Punk music has a direct, sizzling energy and presence which pulls us into a concrete world. I plan to use punk rock actively to achieve this. A number of Sex Pistols' songs and other punk anthems shall help concretise and impel both the characters and plot forward. Punk has both punch and nerve. Punk rock is part of the film's theme, and it draws us forward and down to earth. This will create a nice contrast to the film's score, which

I visualise as baroque-inspired. It will be arranged using 1970s synthesizers to create a more exciting and exotic sound. I believe the expression of the synthesizer will provide a more pubertal directness, while it also can be vulnerable and alienated (ref. "A Clockwork Orange"). This is also true to the decade in which the story is set. The score will portray Nikolaj's emotions. The alienation, the overwhelming emotions in the young soul, the beautiful and diseased.



Sven Nordin

(B. 1957) - PLAYS NIKOLAJ'S FATHER MAGNUS

The Palace announced on 29 October 2009 that His Majesty The King has knighted Nordin under the Royal Norwegian Order of St. Olav for "his distinguished services for Norwegian film and stage art".

Sven Nordin grew up in Grefsen in Oslo, as a child he sang in Sølvguttene, NRK's boys choir, later taking an active part in high school revues. After graduation, he played in amateur theatre, went to Romerike People's College and worked as a stage hand and extra at the National Theatre before gaining admittance to

the Theatre Academy in Oslo in 1979. After completing his studies he worked at Oslo Nye Teater, in addition to participating in a number of projects in film and TV. He moved on to the National Theatre in 1990, where he has interpreted major roles as Ibsen's Brand, Shakespeare's Romeo and Isak Sellanraa in the critically acclaimed performance of Growth of the Soil in 2007.

Nordin is probably best known in Norway as Nils in the TV series Mot i brystet, but he has also played a number of roles in TV series like Red Snow, West Wind, Martin's Place, At the King's Table and Torpedo.

One of his most noted film roles was as Kjell Bjarne in the feature film Elling by Petter Næss, which was nominated in the category best foreign film at the 2002 Academy Awards. Nordin was nominated for an Amanda Award as best male actor for his role in the sequel Love Me Tomorrow.

In 1995 he entered into a longstanding cooperation with Thalia Theater at Chateau Neuf in Oslo, where he has played leading roles in a number of comedies and musical successes. He is currently on tour with Bjarni H. Thorsson's bestselling one-person show The Dad.



Åsmund Høeg

(B. 1996) - PLAYS NIKOLAJ

Åsmund is 16 years old, and a student at Nordseter junior high at Nordstrand in Oslo.

His family has several actors on his mother's side, and he has taken part in school plays since he was a young child. His first professional role was at the Black Box Theatre in an alternative project where youths staged an adult play.

Åsmund is also an active climber, slalom and cross-country skier, kick-boxer and athletics contestant, and sang for many years in the Cathedral Boys Choir, performing for both commoners and royalty. He is still interested in music, though no longer as a performer, rather a listener of hard rock and metal. He is currently on set with his new part in the feature film Into That Good Night (Det viktigste er forbi) by Sara Johnsen.

John Lydon (b. 1956)

The ultimate icons of the punk generation, The Sex Pistols, played a vital role in the creation of the manuscript for Sons of Norway. Not only is the Pistols' music formative for the band in the film, but the anti-attitudes of punk are also thoroughly discussed throughout the story, where Johnny Rotten remains the steadfast and foremost spokesperson of his generation. In the narrative, Rotten represents the antithesis of the happy, adventurous and vital beatnik father, Magnus. Where Magnus is light, Rotten is dark, where Magnus sees opportunities, Rotten sees destruction, where Marcus sees ideals, Rotten sees truths, where Magnus sees soil, Rotten sees dirt. The lead character of the film, Nikolaj, tries to navigate the muddy, turbulent confluence between the optimism of the hippie generation and the urban pessimism of punk. But there's also something uplifting about punk, its destructiveness is rerouted into drive and commitment,

and even the parent generation begins to realise the potential of punk.

Johnny Rotten was written into the story already at the manuscript stage, a result of somewhat unbridled optimism. We knew that getting the legendary John "Rotten" Lydon to take on a role in a minor Norwegian film – to be shot in winter in an abandoned hospital outside Oslo – would be challenging. However, the screenwriter and acclaimed director Jens Lien managed to get through to Lydon and his manager – John Rambo Stevens – at Lydon's concert with his influential Public Image Limited (PiL) at London's Brixton Academy in the winter of 2010, and after Lydon got to read the manuscript and meet with the director, there was no longer any doubt that he liked the project and could imagine taking part.

After his filming was completed in early 2010 Lydon and his manager became so involved in the project that Lydon would go on to become an executive producer. The film's producer quickly learned that Lydon is completely hands on in everything he does.

Nikolaj Frobenius THE SCREENWRITER



Nikolaj Frobenius (b. 1965 in Oslo) made his debut as a writer in 1986. Since then he has written a number of novels, and is regarded as one of the most important literary voices of his generation in Norway. His best known novel may be Latour's Catalogue, which raised his fame to a European level. Frobenius graduated from the London Institute of Screenwriting with a master's degree in research and scriptwriting. He has

written a number of film manuscripts, including *Insomnia* (1997) and *Dragonfly* (2001). His manuscript for *Insomnia* was remade in an American version under the direction of Christopher Nolan, starring among others Al Pacino. His dedication and commitment to the Norwegian film industry, which he demonstrated during his tenure as film consultant for the Norwegian Film Fund from 2005-2009, has made Nikolaj a well-known figure among movie lovers in Norway.

Frobenius has previously worked as editor of the literary journal *Vinduet* (The Window). His novels have been published in 17 languages, and have won a number of literary awards.

In 2004, Frobenius published the novel *Theory and Practice*, which he called "a mendacious autobiography" about his childhood in Rykkinn. The novel sparked both enthusiasm and debate when it was released. He has himself written the manuscript based on the book.

Morten Søborg THE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Morten Søborg graduated as a director of photography from the Danish Film School. He's known for his distinctive dark and rough style, especially in Nicolas Winding Refn's «Pusher»-trilogy. Morten works regularly as the director of photography with such acclaimed directors as Susanne Bier and Nicolas Winding Refn. Some of his other well-known work includes *In A Better World* a film that won best Oscar in the Foreign Language Film category and *After the Wedding* which received an Oscar nomination in the same category. He has also worked on the films *Open Hearts*, and *Brother Between Brother*.

Joakim Sundström SUPERVISING SOUND EDITOR

Swedish-born sound designer Joakim Sundström worked as a recording artist before making the transition to film in 1998. Joakim works regularly with director Michael Winterbottom (*24 Hour Party People*, *In The World*, *Code 46*, *9 Songs*), *Tristram Shandy* (*A Cock and Bull Story*); and with Kevin Macdonald (*Touching the Void*). Most recently he worked with Fernando Meirelles on *The Constant Gardener*. He was nominated for the MPSA's Golden Reel, a BIFA, and the International Press Academy's Golden Satellite.



Production Story

When author and screenwriter Nikolaj Frobenius published *Theory and Practice* in 2004, loosely based on his own childhood and coming of age in Rykkinn outside Oslo, he chose to make it a novel because the story seemed too extensive and surreal for film. But up-and-coming director Jens Lien thought otherwise. He fell in love with this vibrant and different family portrait, with its multiple story layers and stark contrast between the constructive and deconstructive. In it, he recognised some of the stripped realism he seeks in his movies. The director instantly went to work to persuade Frobenius to transform the book to a screenplay. At first he dreaded having to rip a story so close to his heart to pieces, but it turned out to be easier to tear down his own construction and put it back together again than it would have been to treat another writer's novel with such disrespect. Frobenius later remarked: "In many ways I think the screenplay has improved the novel, the story is leaner, more focused and more intense in dramatic terms."

Jens Lien dedicates much time to assembling exactly the right cast for his films. For him, the casting process is an exploration of discovery into the film itself. Not only do the characters have to be excellent actors, they have to fit into the setting as well. It took particularly long time to decide who should portray the teenage Nikolaj. After auditioning close to one thousand kids, he ended up with the first one he had considered, namely Åsmund Høeg. He notes, "I wanted someone who looked young for his age, because I envisioned Nikolaj as a sort of a mascot in the punk world. The moment you're assigned the role of mascot, you have to fight much harder to make your mark."

Åsmund turned out to have all the qualities needed for the role. Although his father is the most active character in the film, this is Nikolaj's story, told through his eyes. His personality is the exact opposite of the character he plays, Åsmund is extremely active and talkative. Cast as a sullen, silent character, he became increasingly frustrated. In the film, this tension becomes evident in his eyes.

The director found it much easier to cast the right person in the role as Nikolaj's father, namely Sven Nordin. At an early stage of the project he pitched the story to his meaningful other, who quickly pointed out that there was only one choice for the part. The more they worked on it, the more evident it became. Sven Nordin was positive toward taking the role, as there are few parts where one can expose so many sides of one's talent. Magnus is extrovert, charming and intelligent, but also egotistical and childish, dragging his suffering teenage son on holiday to a nudist camp when normalcy is what he needs more than anything. Providing credible depth to such a complex character was a challenge that Nordin handled with extraordinary flair.

The process of defining the film required a highly focused and deliberate approach, not least to avoid it becoming what it should not be. Numerous films have been made about adolescents coming of age in dreary Scandinavian suburbs, moping through puberty in huge, ugly concrete high-rises, grudgingly coming to terms with the gritty reality around them. There was a huge humorous potential in the extremely ambivalent father-son relationship, and the location itself had a huge bearing on this story. Filming in a terraced house proved to be a challenge, a cramped,

difficult and slightly drab location, but the key Christmas scene at the start of the movie, where bananas replace every religious and traditional symbol imaginable, managed to cement it firmly as a home of absurdity.

And Jens Lien says he doubts he ever will make completely realistic films. Poetry has to be part of the filmic language. Subtext can convey more than realism. It's not enough for something to look right. It must be taken further until you feel it in your guts. What starts as an almost objective narrative, drifts toward the subjective as the intensity builds. In the first act, everything is fun and games, then comes punk, brutal and down to earth. When the drab satellite town is unmasked, its surrealistic ruthlessness

becomes evident, and Nikolaj ends up sharing a hallucinatory meal with his father as they together consume what is cake, but appears to be mom.

For Frobenius and Lien, making the film also became a voyage of discovery into their own role as fathers. They both have children about the same age as Nikolaj, and the challenge posed by the character of Magnus is a highly contemporary one. Being grown-up has gone out of style, it seems almost as bad as growing old. The role of adult appears boring, it's more fun to be a child, to be playful. And this has become the contemporary ideal, adults are supposed to play. But what happens if you never grow up?




CREW

Director Jens Lien
Producer Christian Fredrik Martin, Friland Produksjon (NO)
Executive Producers John Lydon, Asle Vatn
Co Producers Les Films d'Antoine (FR) Antoine Simkine,
Nimbus Film (DK) Bo Erhardt, Maja Dyekjær
Film i Väst (SE) Tomas Eskilsson
Göta Film (SE) Christer Nillsen
Screenplay Nikolaj Frobenius
Cinematographer Morten Søborg
Editor Vidar Flataukan
Production Designer Are Sjaastad
Sound Designer Joakim Sundström
Music Jan Inge (Ginge)
In collaboration with Sandrew Metronome
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