



MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE
D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA
la Biennale di Venezia 2014
Venezia 71 - Competition

A PIGEON SAT ON A BRANCH

REFLECTING ON EXISTENCE

By Roy Andersson

“I have vampire teeth you can have at half price.”

Jonathan from A PIGEON SAT ON A BRANCH REFLECTING ON EXISTENCE

Cast

Holger Andersson (Jonathan), **Nils Westblom** (Sam),
Charlotta Larsson (Limping Lotta), **Viktor Gyllenberg** (King
Carl XII), **Lotti Törnros** (The Flamenco Teacher), **Jonas Gerholm**
(The Lonely Colonel), **Ola Stensson** (The Captain/Barber), **Oscar
Salomonsson** (The Dancer), **Roger Olsen Likvern** (Caretaker)

Crew

Director and Scriptwriter: **Roy Andersson**
Cinematographers: **István Borbás**, **Gergely Pálos**
Music: **Traditional**
Production Design: **Ulf Jonsson**, **Julia Tegström**, **Nicklas Nilsson**,
Sandra Parment, **Isabel Sjöstrand**
Coordination and continuity: **Jane Ljung**
Costume: **Julia Tegström**
Make-up and Hair: **Linda Sandberg**
Sound: **Robert Hefter FSS**
Sound Mixer: **Robert Hefter FSS**, **Owe Svensson FSS**
Editing: **Alexandra Strauss**
Casting: **Sophia Frykstam**, **Zora Rux**, **Katja Wik**, **Stig-Åke
Nilsson**, **Andrea Eckerbom**

Production

Producer: **Pernilla Sandström**
Line Producer: **Johan Carlsson**
Coproducers: **Philippe Bober**, **Håkon Øverås**
Executive Producers: **Sarah Nagel**, **Isabell Wiegand**
Production Company: **Roy Andersson Filmproduktion AB**
In co-production with: **4 ½ Fiksjon AS**, **Essential Filmproduktion**,
Parisienne de Production, **Sveriges Television AB**, **Arte France
Cinéma**, **ZDF/ Arte**
Supported by: **Svenska Filminstitutet**, **Eurimages Council of
Europe**, **Nordisk Film- och TV Fond**, **Norska Filmfonden**,
Film- und Medienstiftung NRW, **Centre national du cinéma et
de l'image animée**
International Sales: **Coproduction Office**



A PIGEON SAT ON A BRANCH REFLECTING ON EXISTENCE

By **Roy Andersson**

Sweden, Norway, France, Germany 2014 / 100 min.

Synopsis

Like a modern day Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, Sam and Jonathan, two traveling salesmen peddling novelty items, take us on a kaleidoscopic wandering through human destiny. It is a journey that unveils the beauty of single moments, the pettiness of others, the humor and tragedy hidden within us, life's grandeur as well as the ultimate frailty of humanity.



Long Synopsis

Three meetings with death: A man dies of a heart attack in an energetic attempt to uncork a wine bottle whilst his oblivious wife continues to prepare dinner in the kitchen. An old woman on her deathbed clutches a handbag full of jewelry whilst her sons try to seize it from her desperate grip: "You're not allowed to take this to heaven, Mother, you'll get new jewelry in heaven..." A passenger lies dead in the cafeteria of a ferry, having just paid for his lunch. The cashier asks: "Does anyone want this? It's free."



Sam and Jonathan are two travelling salesmen peddling novelty items. Like a modern Don Quixote and Sancho, they take us on a kaleidoscopic wandering through multiple human destinies. It is a trip that shows us beauty in one moment, pettiness in another; the humor and tragedy within us all, life's grandeur next to human frailty. The salesmen are an unlikely pair; they sell grotesque party masks and quarrel continuously. Sam, who considers himself the brains of the operation, ceaselessly patronizes his companion. Jonathan is slow and phlegmatic, finding happiness in the simple act of eating. Sam and Jonathan inspire hilarity as much as gravity and accompany us through a series of rich and surprising moments:

The captain of the ferry abandoned life on the sea and now runs a hair salon, but his only customer leaves upon overhearing that he only has military experience cutting hair.

A female flamenco dancer reveals her affections by touching one of her male students. Outside the dance studio, a cleaning lady on her cell phone exclaims: "I'm glad to hear that you're doing well!" Later, an officer watches the flamenco dancer and her student through the window of a restaurant whilst he waits for an enigmatic and perennially postponed meeting. Placing a call he asks: "Is it my misunderstanding? Is it me who has made the mistake?"

Inside a bar, a morose and partially deaf old regular orders another shot. Two other customers remark: "Sixty years – that's a lot of shots!" "What would life be without a shot or two?" For a moment it is 1943, and the regular is drinking as a young man. Sailors and soldiers have no money and employ kisses as their currency to buy drinks at Limping Lotta's pub.

In a kitchen, a husband is sitting at the window while his wife places a phone call: "I'm glad to hear that you're doing well!" Two young girls on a balcony blow bubbles whilst wandering dangerously close to the edge. An 18th-century army of horses and footmen is marching towards Moscow. Their king stops at a modern-day bar with his men, insulting its guests and manager. In another bar, the officer is complaining about his cancelled meeting once again.

The desperate CEO of a corporation, gun in hand, stands in front of his desk, speaking on the phone: "I'm glad to hear that you're doing well!" After experiencing a humiliating defeat, the once-confident 18th-century army is reduced to straggling remnants. In the bar, a weary officer mutters to anyone who will listen: "If only it hadn't rained". In a laboratory, whilst a monkey suffers electric shocks in a fiendish experiment, a scientist chats on her cell phone: "I'm glad to hear that you're doing well!" A gigantic and grotesque antique copper organ surrounded by British colonial soldiers extracts magnificent music from the wretched moans of African prisoners roasting slowly inside...

The salesmen Sam and Jonathan help us navigate this universe of strange yet familiar faces whilst selling their own eccentric merchandise. In their various sales pitches, they strive to convince potential buyers that people need comedy and fun. The two do not find their own products particularly amusing, but they do their best to convince others. In one joke shop, whilst unsuccessfully attempting to sell their wares, Jonathan scares a female customer with a 'One-Tooth-Pete' mask. In another shop, they unsuccessfully attempt to collect on monies they are owed. The suppliers of the novelty items are soon calling on Sam and Jonathan to demand payment of their own debt. Later, in a café, Jonathan sees a beautiful woman uncovering her feet to remove a stone from her shoe. He is touched by the scene but another customer comments: "What's so special about that?"

We wander through A PIGEON SAT ON A BRANCH REFLECTING ON EXISTENCE, tasting the beauty and absurdity of our being in the here and now, surrounded by others all too much like ourselves.



Interview with Roy Andersson

How are the films of THE LIVING TRILOGY united and how do they differ?

Roy Andersson: It is my conviction that any film could – and should – be watched at any time on its own terms. Within an individual film, each scene actually can be seen separately. A PIGEON has 39 scenes, and my ambition is that each can deliver an artistic experience to the audience. As a whole, THE LIVING TRILOGY

Interview

attempts to challenge viewers to examine their own existence, asking them “What are we doing? Where are we headed?” It aims to generate reflection and contemplation, regarding our existence with a large slice of tragicomedy, “Lebenslust” – lust for life, and a fundamental respect for human existence.

THE LIVING TRILOGY shows mankind potentially heading towards apocalypse, but also that the outcome is in our hands. SONGS FROM THE SECOND FLOOR throbs with Millennialism, from the scene with the salesman throwing away crucifixes, symbolizing the abandonment of compassion and empathy, to the scene with the moving houses, evoking the panic of cyclical financial crises, themselves minor apocalypses. The themes of collective guilt and human vulnerability were central to that film. YOU, THE LIVING represented a daring departure into dreams, a transition that opened up an entire realm of new possibilities for me. Before, my characters would comment on their dreams. Now with A PIGEON scenes are simply dream-like, with no further explanation. A PIGEON also teases more than the other two films, and the tone is overwhelmingly that of “Lebenslust” even if the characters are sad and struggle greatly.

What has the shift from 35mm to digital meant to the process?

R.A.: When you get older it is often hard to change your working methods, but this time that has actually not been the case. I am

very positive about this change, to have shot the film digitally. I am happy to have found my way in this method, with the support of my outstanding collaborators, of course. In practice, it has meant that I can more easily rely on wide shots. Previously I was more concerned and more anxious about obtaining focus in the background. I am a fan of deep focus and depth, and with a digital camera it has become possible to accomplish overall sharpness, which I find amazing.

The abstract and painterly aesthetics of A PIGEON will be reminiscent of my previous work. Images are slightly brighter and sharper due to the use of the digital camera. In addition, I have aimed to achieve more dynamic scenes, to make the new film feel less like a series of tableaux, and to have a more distinct rhythm. Overall, this is as good as my team and I are capable of. We have taken it to the extreme.

Painters have inspired your filmmaking, from Renaissance painters to Neue Sachlichkeit, also known as New Objectivity to Edward Hopper. Which painters have been most important for A PIGEON?

R.A.: I would say Otto Dix and Georg Scholz – the two German artists whose artistic innovations were inspired by their experiences in World War I. Ravaged by the war, their worldview resonates in a way I feel very close to, without myself having participated in a war. When I grew up, realism was the only thing that mattered to me.

Everything else was just weird – bourgeois, in fact – but with time I have become more and more fascinated by abstract art, starting with symbolism, expressionism, and Neue Sachlichkeit. It is so much more interesting than pure naturalistic representation. Today I almost find viewing a naturalistic representation boring, whereas the personal interpretation of an abstract expression is extraordinary, with van Gogh as the master. He is able to paint three crows flying over a cornfield – and as a spectator you believe you have never seen anything like it before. It is a kind of “super-realism”, an ambition that I also have for A PIGEON, in which abstraction is condensed, purified, and simplified. Scenes should emerge as cleansed, as memories and dreams. Yes, this is no easy task: “c’est difficile d’être facile” – it is difficult to be simple, but I will try.

Bruegel the Elder is another inspiration. Amongst his Renaissance masterpieces, he painted an exquisite landscape entitled Hunters in the snow. From a snowy hilltop overlooking a small Flemish town, we see villagers skating on a frozen lake in a valley. In the foreground, three hunters and their dogs return from a hunt. Above them, perched on the naked branches of a tree, four birds curiously observe the endeavours and pursuits of the people below. Bruegel specialised in detailed landscapes populated by peasants and frequently adopted the bird’s eye view to tell a story of society and human existence. His oeuvre also contains fantastical allegories of man’s vices and follies, using flawless satire to express the tragic contradictions of being. In Hunters in the snow, the birds appear to

be speculating: “What are the humans doing down there? Why are they so busy?”

I also want to mention a naturalistic painter named Ilja Repin, who accomplished a remarkable painting of the Cossacks. It took him eleven years; it is an enormous work based on drafts and sketches. After 11 years he was happy with the painting. Today it is part of world heritage. Of course it sounds pretentious to aim for world heritage, but, at the same time, as an artist you have to commit and take your expression to the extreme. Unfortunately, it is very hard today with financial aspects in filmmaking and with the attitude and the recruitment of filmmakers. Businessmen have taken over the expression of cinema.

Do you find it sad that contemporary filmmakers do not take further inspiration from painting?

R.A.: I find it very depressing. That is probably why cinema today is so diluted and so uninteresting. The imagery is so scant. And that is, in turn, due to economics; there’s neither time nor money to be more rigorous. Still, I believe it is very sad that so few filmmakers are ready to nurture the visual elements of filmmaking today, even if it is expensive and time-consuming. It took me four years of full time work to complete this film.

Did you manage without cash flow from commercials?

Interview

R.A.: Yes, unlike the two previous films in THE LIVING TRILOGY, we financed A PIGEON without making commercials during the process. Even if the extra cash could have come handy at some stage, I found it satisfying to be able to focus entirely on the film.

When SONGS was released in 2000 you described your own style as a sort of “trivialism”. Is that still valid?

R.A.: Yes, I think A PIGEON is an even clearer example of what I consider “trivialism”. This refers to the trivial heightened into a more appealing experience. And that also goes for painting in general, the entire history of art is filled with trivialities because they are a part of our lives, our premises in life. I love that, and in the future I would like to become even more trivial than I was in this film. Even more so than the scenes with the Swedish king Charles XII on his way to the field in Poltava, where he unexpectedly appears in a very trivial situation, finding himself thirsty and later with the need to visit the toilet.

Is the alleged homosexuality of Charles XII emphasized in order to make this very masculine, idiosyncratic conqueror look more human?

R.A.: In Sweden, he is generally considered a true macho male and therefore a strong symbol for many right wing organizations. But now I also feel great respect towards the beauty of the scene, especially when the king suddenly feels so attached to the young

bartender. I am really happy with it. Deep down, in whichever position one has in society, people are sensitive and vulnerable. Illustrating this is what I basically want to achieve with my work.

Do you believe there is an increasing lack of compassion and empathy in the world?

R.A.: Compassion is part of everyone at some point. It is my great sorrow, and the great sorrow of us all, that this element is often repressed in the name of commercialism. I am thinking of Emmanuel Levinas discussing the face of the human being and the respect for another existence, another present, which is rewarding. In one scene of my film, an old man regrets his mean and ungenerous behaviour throughout his life: “That is why I have been so unhappy”, he declares to a waiter.

But words are not sufficient to create full understanding and total communication – a fact that somehow explains the lack of words in the THE LIVING TRILOGY. I think that the visual portrait of the human being, both in painting and in film, tells us more than words. I cannot explain it in another way. That is also why I like Beckett – Waiting for Godot for example; it is so trivial, laconic, with these people misunderstanding each other. Yet it is so true. My scenes are supposed to show the misunderstandings and mistakes made by people who meet but do not really connect because they feel pressed for time in their pursuit of what seems

important to them.

You seem to have a special affection for salesmen – protagonists of your films are selling crucifixes, refrigerators, and as in A PIGEON, laughing gadgets. Is this a kind of self-portrait?

R.A.: In a way, it comes from my childhood, from family members selling things. But being a salesman is so universal; that is pretty much what life is about. Selling and marketing is the actual fundament of a civilized society, one could argue. I am going to convince this fund or that television broadcaster that this is interesting and important. I am a salesman myself, and we all are. We are supposed to promote ourselves, and to reach out with our things and ideas.

How did you get the idea for the two salesmen living in a flophouse?

R.A.: The hotel stems directly from my own background in Gothenburg. The place where I grew up is now a flophouse, and sadly my brother, a drug abuser for a long-time, ended up there. Therefore I know about the fates of that environment.

In a wider sense, these companions are directly modelled on literature: Don Quixote and Sancho Panza; John Steinbeck’s Mice and Men; and, not to forget, from film history, Laurel and Hardy, who were also a source of inspiration for Beckett. The guys in

Interview

the film are a version of Laurel and Hardy. One of them is a little pompous, whereas the other is not really capable; he is a little sadder and cries easily. I am very much inspired by these male double acts from cultural history.

And in their unequal relationship the two salesmen also represent a wider universe, the oppressor vs. the oppressed.

R.A.: Yes, it is becoming more and more evident. Today I spoke with my cinematographer, István Borbás, about this prevalent problem, about a society with less and less solidarity. Nowadays you are expected to think only about yourself, to increase your own profit by cracking down on other people. I dare not think about the terrible consequences of this behaviour. It is a disaster, an alienation that will make young people lose faith entirely.

I hate humiliation, to see other people being humiliated and to be humiliated myself. In a way all my films are about humiliation. I have a working class background and have seen how relatives humiliate themselves before their superiors, an exaggerated respect for authority, which makes them unable to speak up, only to be left with a feeling of guilt. I have experienced it all my life, and I have decided to fight against it.

And did you succeed in this fight?

Interview

R.A.: Yes, in the sense that I am not like my grandparents, not the slightest bit afraid of the ruling classes. But I will live with that humiliation all my life and with hatred towards authority. That is also the main reason for my recurring caricatures of monarchs. It is a way of blaspheming against the history of the ruling class.

In *A PIGEON* there is also a rigorously arranged scene where a terrible crime is put into a fictitious historical context. It is almost a provocation in its combination of cruelty and beauty. I am referring to the extermination scene near the end of the film. British colonialists are forcing slaves into a copper cylinder, and slow, beautiful music evolves from the victims' last cries.

As an artist it is important, even necessary, to shake up preconceptions, to stir, to add to the feeling of guilt in the world. We are still supposed to feel ashamed. I have had this scene in mind for 50 years, and there is also a wide range of historical references in it. I am very happy to have managed it without obsequiousness or sentimentality. In *A PIGEON*, there are a number of scenes of this kind. At least I have tried to create great tension between the banal and the essential, the comic and the tragic, but even the tragic scenes contain energy and humour. I envision *A PIGEON* as comical from beginning to end, emotional and uplifting. But from time to time, the audience will also witness outbreaks of terror. The range between humour and horror will be profound.



“I envision *A PIGEON* as comical from beginning to end, emotional and uplifting. But from time to time, the audience will also witness outbreaks of terror. The range between humour and horror will be profound.”

Roy Andersson

THE LIVING TRILOGY has now come to its end. Is this also the last film to be expected from Roy Andersson?

R.A.: No, actually I am already working on a new film. It is going to be even wilder, with even more charm and appeal. *A PIGEON* has this too, but the next one is going to take the wildness even further. But I will never abandon the probable and possible. My filmmaking has to be attached to a certain practicality, a kind of stylized realism.

Will you continue your style that includes wide compositions and static camera, composed in one take?

R.A.: Yes, this way of working allows me to locate the characters in the universe that surrounds them instead of isolating them. I cannot even watch films that cut consistently to speed up the story. I am committed to these visual values, creating the space for a more open, more democratic composition. There is a French sociologist, Loïc Wacquant, a student of Bourdieu, whom I sometimes quote. When he returned to France after a time as a guest professor in the US, he described what he found as an American phenomenon: “hostility against clear thinking”. Conversely I consider the composition of my work to favour clear thinking. Everything is there, fully lit. Together with my collaborators I am trying to contest “hostility against clear thinking”.

Jon Asp, film critic

The Human Being and the Room

In our daily life we seldom reflect deeply on the rooms and the space around us, whether we observe or are being observed – occupied as we are by our every day tasks and thoughts. But when it comes to depicting a human being and his existence we are reminded of the importance of space. It describes his fate and his fortune, his situation in life.

I use the word “room” in the wider Swedish sense of the word,

meaning personal space, which also signifies that a room may exist outdoors as well as inside. We cannot escape our own room. To a certain extent it is possible to choose which room to exist within or to shape it according to our own preferences. This space follows us around and reveals our ambitions. More often than not, though, we find ourselves in a room over which we have not had the slightest bit of control. We seldom end up in a space purely by our own free will.

Our environment, our “room”, reveals our place in society and in history. It reveals the conditions of our life, our existence. It is the result of a historical process, whereby the influence of our own free will is of less importance than we would like to think.

Within photography, painting, and installation art, the understanding of space has always been evident, and it is also here where a crossing of disciplines has taken place. Filmmaking, by

contrast, has long since abandoned space for the benefit of a non-historical, pseudo-social narcissism. It is not without reason that filmmaking is still associated with the notion of a “dream factory”. Space defines man and reveals the values and conditions behind the dreams that we have. Space speaks the truth. We do not always see it or hear it, and this is even less so, by tradition, in the movies.

Roy Andersson

Holger Andersson

Holger Andersson (born in Eskilstuna, 1953) is a Swedish artist and Renaissance man. Holger studied graphic design at Konstfack art school from 1974 to 1976. His latest exhibition was a retrospective at Walla Scen in 2011. Holger has appeared in commercials, a TV-series, and a documentary film, but he has also had other odd jobs, including working as newspaper carrier. Holger had a minor role in Roy Andersson's YOU, THE LIVING (2007).



Nils Westblom

Nils Westblom (born in Stockholm, 1949) used to work as an assistant at a rehab clinic. Nils has a background as a sailor and a handyman. He had a minor role in Roy Andersson's YOU, THE LIVING (2007). In 2009 he appeared in a commercial by Andersson for Aftonbladet.

Description of Characters

"If there is a thread between the characters, it would be their vulnerability; they are all very exposed in everyday life. Even the king is vulnerable, though, by constitution, he is only responsible to God, creating total submissiveness around him. Many of the characters are also afraid of losing face, which of course does not mean they are able to avoid it."

- Roy Andersson



Sam and Jonathan

These travelling salesmen of novelty items have formed a friendship of opposites, both living in a flophouse reminiscent of a social institution. As business is tough, they find themselves constantly quarrelling. Whereas Sam is the stronger of the two, often inconsiderate towards his companion, Jonathan is very fragile and more sensitive to the travails of daily life. Sam and Jonathan are at the centre of the story, bearing witness to other characters' experiences.

The Flamenco Teacher

Roy Andersson: "I think it was important to make the Flamenco teacher a female character, as women can also commit sexual abuse, although if it is not really abuse in this case. For me the scene is above all about desire. My aim was to show how far people can take their desire even in public."



Charles XII of Sweden

The young and uncompromising Swedish king (1697-1718), posthumously called the “last of the Vikings”, finds himself in trivial situations on his way to and from Poltava, Russia. It is an unusual portrait and a new take on the conqueror, presenting a more sensitive and universal side to the monarch.





- He says that he also thinks it's nice to hear that you are doing well .



Jonathan in his room compulsively listens to the song "Sweet Little Anna"



I loved mom and dad very much, but I don't want to meet them again in heaven





A flamenco dance teacher caressing a male dance student's body



Of course you should do things for your own pleasure!
... why not? stupid!





Conversation with producers

Pernilla Sandström (producer) and Johan Carlsson (line producer), longtime associates at Studio 24, Roy Andersson's production company and studio in Stockholm

Roy Andersson's working style is unique. It has been a very long process to build his studio, Studio 24, which encompasses, in one central Stockholm building, everything you need to make a film. You have been part of this process for very many years. Can you discuss how Roy's way of working has developed?

Johan Carlsson: Basically we have been working the same way, more or less, with all the films in THE LIVING TRILOGY. The team has changed, and that affects the work to some extent. Roy's approach is the same, but we have refined the working method.

Interview

Pernilla Sandström: I actually think that Roy's collaborators are very important to how this style has developed. The longer people work with him, especially in the studio, the more they learn to work with cameras or props – and to come up with new ideas. They find Roy's vision in colours and materials. The time spent with Roy is a process of learning his visual style and trying to develop it.

J.C.: Exactly, the team has to learn to understand Roy's vision. But people working on the film also affect how it looks, of course, even though Roy has very strong ideas. If someone is very good at something, Roy tends to support that work by using it more.

P.S.: There have been three different teams – a new one for each film – except for two or three people who have remained the same. So when SONGS FROM THE SECOND FLOOR was made, people did not know about Roy's working style, but now people keep coming here to learn more about it. They have also studied Roy's previous films, so they are quite efficient.

J.C.: Even though we have worked for several years doing these scenes, we do not have a recipe. I guess this is an artistic approach rather than an industrial one.

How many people were working full time on the production of A PIGEON?

J.C.: Ten people. I think that is the ideal number for Roy's working process. On some shooting days, there were 30-40 people in the team, but normally it was just the 10.

How many shots were not shot in the studio?

J.C.: None, all scenes were shot in a studio. The two scenes with Charles XII were shot at another studio outside Stockholm, and the "organ" scene with the British colonial soldiers was made in Oslo, Norway. That is it – only three shots in total were shot at another studio and no exteriors. I think this film has the most "exteriors" that were actually shot in studio, more than YOU, THE LIVING.

The way of working has not changed much since SONGS, neither in the script nor in the method. In SONGS there was no script even for financing. Does Roy still use the wall in Studio 24's meeting room as a "script"?

P.S.: Perhaps there is a draft, but there is never a completely written script with full dialogue. Before the production starts, Roy sticks sketches and drawings that he has made on the wall in the order that he thinks they will appear in the film, and this acts as a kind of a storyboard. That is his main "script". Then, during shooting, he gradually replaces the drawings with stills from the scenes we have shot. At the end he then uses the wall to "edit" the film, switching the photos on the wall in order to imagine what the

best order of the scenes will be. This is much more his style than using the editing suite.

J.C.: And of course the explanation for how we manage without a complete script is that we talk a lot about the scenes; we talk about them all the time. Roy presents the idea at some point, and then we talk about the scene for the whole working process of that scene. We also discuss the correct order of the scenes. Because each scene can actually be seen separately, without the rest of the film, it takes time to understand the right order.

P.S.: All the scenes are entirely worked out in Roy's head, and when they are perfect on paper, they end up exactly the same when shot. But if you press him to draw a scene when he is not ready, it is not going to be the same. However he draws the scenes he has had in his mind very early on.

Do you know about sources of inspiration for specific scenes in A PIGEON?

J.C.: For example, the old regular who leaves the restaurant when the others are shouting good night is actually a character based on the founder and former Managing Director of the Swedish Film Institute, Harry Schein. He and Roy had this small conflict during Roy's stay in film school in the late 1960s, and afterwards with SWEDISH LOVE STORY and so on. Then, maybe 20 years ago, Roy

had a reunion, a dinner for his old schoolmates here at Studio 24. For this reunion party they invited Harry Schein, and he came. He was pretty drunk when he left the party in the middle of the night. They were helping him with his clothing in the same way as in the scene in A PIGEON.

Any other anecdotes?

P.S.: I remember one time we were in Berlin, staying at a hotel, and Roy came in for breakfast in the morning and said: "I had such a strange dream last night." He explained the scene with the three judges drinking beer in court, and this was the exact same scene that appeared in YOU, THE LIVING.

J.C.: Also the scene with the electric chair in YOU, THE LIVING came from the same dream. Very precise.

P.S.: And the scene in A PIGEON with the British colonials and Africans – everybody asks where it comes from. He remembers that he was "inspired" from reading a book in the university library in Lund 50 years ago.

What does it mean to produce Roy Andersson? It is completely different than producing another director. Can you describe your job?

P.S.: To finance Roy's way of working, which is very different, can

Interview

be quite complicated. First of all he can never say exactly what the film is going to contain. You never have an exact script from the start, which makes it very difficult. Normally when you finance a production you say when it starts, when it ends, and what it is going to contain, but this is more about financing Roy's creativity. You know that you are going to make something great over a couple of years. Financing does not get easier over time, even though Roy has always delivered, and covered overages, if any, by himself. Funds and financiers nowadays want to know exactly what they are getting, and the only thing we can tell them is that they will have a Roy Andersson film eventually. It is very difficult since you have to give more details about the cost and the schedule in the beginning, and we simply do not have details about the costs or the schedule of a Roy Andersson film. We can only say that it will be completed on Roy's terms, and that Roy's terms are extremely ambitious artistically.

The fact that the production is so long – three or four years – is probably also tougher when it comes to cash flow than for a normal production that takes one year.

P.S.: Absolutely. The funds and the financiers' way of working is very much based on a specific form – for instance a shooting schedule of 40 days – and we do not always fit into these regulations with our four years of production. So we need to adjust, and we need them to try to adjust as well, so that we can make the

most of it. But as soon as we start to adjust to the rules, we also limit Roy in his vision and creativity. That is a big challenge.

For SONGS, you needed to mortgage the building in which the studio is located and also to shoot commercials for the cash flow. Has it been easier with A PIGEON?

P.S.: We have had a little bit more freedom, but it continues to be difficult for Roy, who still has to use the building to guarantee loans. He still has to struggle. But at the same time, if he did not have his own studio, office, and mixing facilities, he would never ever be able to achieve this kind of production. He needs to have this creative freedom 24 hours a day.

Do you know when it became clear that the three films would become a trilogy?

P.S.: It was during the four years of production of YOU, THE LIVING that Roy gradually realized it would be three films in the same vein, related to each other. With A PIGEON Roy is a little bit calmer. He is very serious still, but with a lot of humour. It seems he is much easier about everything now, as he has been able to express his ideas. People realize what he is saying and what he wants to express.

And now he is thinking about his next film? How will it relate to THE LIVING TRILOGY? Will it be in the same style?

J.C.: Of course it won't be a fourth part of the trilogy; it will be a separate project. It will be in the same style because, in a way, it is not a style. It is Roy's world.

P.S.: It is Roy's world and who he is. But next time there may be a different approach. All the films in the trilogy have had approximately 40 scenes. The visual style will be the same, but the set up and the content will be different.

What temperament is needed to work with Roy?

J.C.: As in all projects, it is good to have people with different temperaments. You have to be really interested in what Roy is doing, and you have to be very fine-tuned to his way of working. We have managed to create a structure that works really well, and we have been aware of it and talked a lot about it. It does not look like a structure in the first place, it is a very loose structure, very adjustable – but it exists.

P.S.: What we are trying to do is keep everything very organized and very strict, but not so much that Roy notices. He is chaotic, in a sense, and he likes it when it is chaotic. He likes to try a lot of things, but he also has a method underneath. When you get to

know him, you realize that we need to have 100 percent control. So, intentionally, we let it stay a little chaotic because it enables creativity. And we are very open about it; if Roy wants to work late at night, we will do that, but we will do it in a structured way.

In short, how it is to work with Roy?

J.C.: It's great – inspiring but sometimes also frustrating.

P.S.: Actually I have the same words. It is very inspiring and sometimes very frustrating. However it is also important to say that even if I respect and admire his visions, I do not always agree. That is important also. Sometimes people can see us as his supporters in everything he says, but that is not always the case. Our relationship has developed through the way we work.

J.C.: One reason I have worked for so long with Roy is out of respect for his creative ambition and with the knowledge that everything we do is underpinned by ideas that are honest, interesting, and valuable. At the same time, he does not really do the normal things a boss does, and I think that creates an opportunity to take responsibility in a way that some people find inspiring and fun. He is a master of communicating his ideas, a master of motivating people.

Biography

Roy Andersson

Roy Andersson was born in 1943 in Gothenburg, Sweden. In 1969, he graduated from the Swedish Film School, and his first feature, *A SWEDISH LOVE STORY*, won four prizes at the Berlin Film Festival in 1970. *GILIAP*, his second film, was presented at the Directors' Fortnight at Cannes in 1976. In 1975, he started a pioneering career as a commercials director, earning a total of eight Golden Lions at Cannes. In 1981, he founded Studio 24 in Stockholm in order to freely produce and make his films. This is also where he developed his unique filmmaking style. After *SOMETHING HAPPENED* (1987) and *WORLD OF GLORY* (1991), two shorts that earned the most prestigious awards (a.o. Clermont-Ferrand), he shot *SONGS FROM THE SECOND FLOOR* in his studio and won the Special Jury Prize

Filmography

A PIGEON SAT ON A BRANCH REFLECTING ON EXISTENCE (2014)

YOU, THE LIVING (2007)

SONGS FROM THE SECOND FLOOR (2000)

WORLD OF GLORY (1991, short)

SOMETHING HAPPENED (1987, short)

GILIAP (1975)

A SWEDISH LOVE STORY (1970)

at the 2000 Cannes Film Festival. As the first chapter in *THE LIVING TRILOGY*, *SONGS FROM THE SECOND FLOOR* was followed in 2007 by *YOU, THE LIVING*, which was also screened in Cannes. The films cemented his personal style characterized by stationary shots and meticulously conceived tableaux, absurdist comedy as well and an essential humanity. In 2009, Roy Andersson was distinguished by an exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, presenting not only his integral filmmaking oeuvre but also several of his commercials. *A PIGEON SAT ON A BRANCH REFLECTING ON EXISTENCE* his 5th feature film, is the final chapter in the *THE LIVING TRILOGY*, which has been 15 years in the making.







Production

Roy Andersson
Filmproduktion AB
Sibyllegatan 24
114 42 Stockholm
Sweden
Tel: +46- (0) 8-662 57 00
studio24@royandersson.com

International Press

mm filmpresse
Sylvia Müller
Schliemannstr. 5
10437 Berlin
Germany
Tel: +49 (0) 30 41 71 57 22
Tel: +49 (0) 176 24 25 33 09
Fax: +49 (0) 30 41 71 57 25
mueller@mm-filmpresse.de
www.mm-filmpresse.de

International Sales

Coproduction Office
24 rue Lamartine
75009 Paris
France
Tel: +331 5602 6000
Fax: + 331 5602 6001
sales@coproductionoffice.eu
press@coproductionoffice.eu



COPRODUCTION OFFICE
24, RUE LAMARTINE
75009 PARIS
FRANCE