



PREVIEW

The Worst Person in the World

+ Q&A with director Joachim Trier and actor Renate Reinsve

Joachim Trier on 'The Worst Person in the World'

What is the genesis for this film?

My previous film, *Thelma*, was a genre movie, which had more to do with suspense and the supernatural and about characters that were more removed from my own life. After that film, I felt that I wanted to go back to basics, to talk about ideas, characters, scenes and the type of cinema that I started out with. It started almost like a therapy: what do I want to talk about in my life right now? I am now in my forties, I've seen friends going through different types of relationships and I felt that I wanted to talk about love, and about the negotiation between the fantasy of what we think our lives will be and the reality of what they become. The character of Julie started arriving: a spontaneous woman, searching and believing that you can change your identity, and then suddenly having to confront the limitations of time and of oneself. There isn't an endless number of possibilities in a lifetime, but I sympathise with her yearning.

Did you aim to scan all the questions of a young woman in our present time (love, sex, relationships, motherhood, adulthood, career...)?

Some of these questions are existential and I guess could apply to everyone. This film deals with how relationships mirror our existential expectations of life. In our culture, we are brought up to expect love to be the place where we fulfil ourselves, and the same with our careers.

This film is a character piece about Julie; I did not want to make a general statement about what it means to be a woman today, that would be impossible. The fact of her being a woman eventually comes in to play by itself: through truthful situations, humour, satire, and different things that I have experienced, seen or imagined. I don't have so much control when I write, my co-writer Eskil Vogt and I try to find interesting ideas to explore truthfully. The great thing about art is that it doesn't have to be an analysis or sociological study: it can hopefully be a truth about one person, and out of that, there may be something bigger to think about.

Can you talk about the title 'The Worst Person in the World'? It seems to play into an intentional hyperbole that is telling of Julie's feelings towards herself.

Making a film about love and calling it *The Worst Person in the world* obviously has an ironic edge. Confronted with intimacy and relationships, Julie feels like a failure throughout the film, like the worst person in the world, and as it turns out it seems some of the other characters also experience this feeling of personal failure.

Julie settles with Aksel who is nice, intelligent, handsome, caring... But Julie eventually remains unsatisfied with this relationship. Why?

I think they're both idealising each other. Aksel is older and accomplished whereas Julie is escaping herself. In a way, she's filling the role of the smart and funny girl, but after a while, she asks herself: where's my space to grow? One of

the big subjects of the film is the idea of time: the relationship between Aksel and Julie may be a matter of bad timing because of their age difference. Very often, in romantic stories, or in reality, we are brought up to think about meeting the right person, as though there is an essence of the right person! But time and essence are two different things! Even if you can meet the person with whom you have the right connection, in real life, this meeting can have the wrong timing. I have experienced that in my life. The best of romantic comedies can teach us something about being human. If you think about *The Philadelphia Story* by George Cukor, Katharine Hepburn has to choose between two different lives through two different loves. On her part, Julie has to accept herself and to love herself and not feel so miserable. To quote Virginia Woolf, she has to find ‘a room of her own’, which is as important as an admirable relationship. And this search creates a conflict between Julie and Aksel.

Does Julie express something concerning love and relationships in our time of internet, social media, dating apps? Are deep and long running love stories more difficult than 30 or 50 years ago?

It’s a paradox. On one hand, I try to look at people in present day society and no one I know finds love to be easy or to live up to the framework that romantic movies often set for us. So yes, we are living in a time of extreme choices, and ultimately, many people feel an inability to choose, or to know what to choose. It’s a complicated time to find longtime partners. But part of that is positive because it’s also a kind of freedom. Today, women don’t have to get married and have babies at a certain age. On the other hand, all of us feel a tremendous pressure to succeed in love. It’s tricky. But if you read Henry James novels from the 1880s or if you watch the films of Antonioni or Bergman from the 1960s, you can see that people struggled also in the past with the question of love and relationships! As an artist, you always hope to make art from your time that could be valid for all time. In the film, there is this scene where Julie celebrates her 30th birthday and we see a montage of women in her family – her mother, grandmother, great-grandmother etc, and we can see all the changes in love and relationships through different generations. In 1750, the life expectancy of a woman in Norway was 35 years old. So yes, times have changed!

Once again, you film Oslo and we can feel your pleasure in doing so. What do you like specifically in Oslo and in the gesture of filming this city?

First, the light is very special in Oslo and northern Scandinavia. My editor and my cinematographer are Danish and they were astonished by the lights of Oslo although Denmark is not far from Norway. Second, Oslo is changing a lot, it has grown tremendously as a city, and throughout my films, I try to show the history of the city.

I love that sense of specificity of a place in movies. When I watch a Martin Scorsese or a Spike Lee movie, I like to see the parts of New York that they show. For a filmmaker, it’s a cinematic gift to have a place that you know intimately, that you can film and show to an audience. Oslo is exactly this to me. Making films is about memory, spaces and time. In cinema, you have documentaries which are ‘vérité’ and on the other side, you have the big blockbusters that create everything digitally; I am trying to find my place in cinema in between, where it’s not all digital and synthetic, where it’s true to the faces and light. That’s why I keep shooting on 35mm as well.

Production notes

**THE WORST PERSON IN THE WORLD
(VERDENS VERSTE MENNESKE)**
Director: Joachim Trier
©: Oslo Pictures AS, MK Productions, Film i Väst, Snowglobe ApS, BR•F AB, Arte France Cinéma
an Oslo Pictures, MK Productions, Film i Väst, Snowglobe, BR•F *production*
in co-production with: Arte France Cinéma
in association with: Memento Distribution, MK2
with participation of: ARTE France
with support from: The Norwegian Film Institute, Eurimages, The Danish Film Institute, Nordic Film & TV Fund, The Swedish Film Institute, Aide aux Cinémas du Monde, Centre national du cinéma et de l’image animée, Institut Français
Presented by: Oslo Pictures
International Sales: MK2
Executive Producers: Dyveke Bjorkly Graver, Ton Erik Kjese, Joachim Trier, Eskil Vogt
Produced by: Thomas Robsahm Tognazzi
Producer: Andrea Berentsen Ottmar
Line Producer: Magnus Ramsdalen
Unit Production Manager: Caroline Jacobsen
Post-production Supervisor: Brian Yuan Zhang
2nd Unit Director: Emil Trier
1st Assistant Director: Mike Lundin
Script Supervisor: Aslaug Konradsdóttir
Casting Director: Yngvill Kolset Haga
Written by: Eskil Vogt, Joachim Trier
Director of Photography: Kasper Tuxen
Stills Photography: Sara Marie Ramsoe, Christian Belgaux
Visual Effects: Baconx, Storyline VFX, Symbiosys VFX
Editor: Oliver Bugge Coutté
Production Designer: Roger Rosenberg

Art Director: Mirjam Veske
Set Decorators: Elin Våg, Olga Gøril Vik
Costume Designer: Ellen Dæhli Ystehede
Make-up Designer: Trine Morland
Colourist: Julien Alary
Composer: Ola Fløttum
Music Supervisor: Goran Orad
Sound Designer: Gisle Tveito
Sound Recordist: Kasper Rasmussen
Re-recording Mixer: Gisle Tveito
Supervising Sound Editor: Gisle Tveito
Stunt Co-ordinator: Kai Kolstad

Cast
Renate Reinsve (*Julie*)
Anders Danielsen Lie (*Aksel*)
Herbert Nordrum (*Eivind*)
Hans Olav Brenner (*Ole Magnus*)
Helene Bjørneby (*Karianne*)
Vidar Sandem (*Per Harald*)
Maria Grazia di Meo (*Sunniva*)
Lasse Gretland (*Kristoffer*)
Karen Roise Kielland (*Tone*)
Marianne Krogh (*Eva*)
Thea Stabell (*Åse*)
Deniz Kaya (*Adil*)

Norway/France/Sweden/Denmark 2021©
127 mins

A MUBI release

IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

The Proposition + Q&A with director John Hillcoat, actors Emily Watson and Danny Huston and producer Cat Villiers
Wed 16 Feb 18:00
Preview: La Mif (The Fam) + Q&A with director Fred Baillif
Sat 19 Feb 18:00
A Tribute to Roger Michell: Preview: The Duke + Q&A (guests TBA)
Thu 24 Feb 18:00
BFI Expanded: World Premiere: UNIQUE
Fri 25 Feb 19:00 and 20:30
Woman with a Movie Camera Preview: Ali & Ava + Q&A with writer-director Clio Barnard
Mon 28 Feb 20:20

REGULAR PROGRAMME

BFI Future Film Festival
17-20 Feb
Seniors’ Free Matinee: The Night of the Hunter + intro by BFI programmer David Somerset
Mon 21 Feb 14:00
Member Picks: Close Encounters of the Third Kind
Wed 23 Feb 17:50
Terror Vision: The People under the Stairs
Thu 24 Feb 20:40
Relaxed Screening: Keep the Change + discussion
Mon 28 Feb 20:10

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