



The Hijacking (2012)

(Denmark/Rest of the World) Running time: 99mins

Director: Tobias Lindholm

Screenplay: Tobias Lindholm

Cast: Johan Philip Asbaek as Mikel, Soren Malling as Peter and Dar Salim as Lars

Cinematography: Magnus Nordenhof Jonck

Based on real events this film was released before **Captain Philips** (also based on real life). Lindholm has said that he thinks the main difference between American and European films is that in American films, the main character's job is to define the plot, whereas in European films it's the psychology of the person who defines the plot. He may well have a point, as anyone who has seen **Captain Phillips** will know that in terms of salvation of the main character from his plight, all that is left to appear on screen is John Wayne riding in over the horizon.

The starting scenario is similar – a cargo ship M V Rosen is heading for harbour when it is hijacked by Somali pirates. Amongst the crew on board is Mikel the cook and Jan the ship's engineer. With the demand of a ransom of millions of dollars, a psychological drama unfolds between the CEO of the shipping company (Soren Malling), the negotiator, Mikel and the pirates. The action alternates between events on board and the shipping company's office in Denmark, focussing on the cook and the CEO as he is advised by a professional negotiator. Visually we switch between a sweaty ship's cabin and a sterile office, both with their own type of hyped intimacy. There is little about the pirates' point of view and as the action actually takes place over almost 4 months, it is possible that a sort of relationship would have realistically developed between the two sides on board over that length of time which would have complicated the drama. Also the pirates' dialogue is not subtitled. (They were just told to talk between themselves about everyday stuff).

The film is instead about the glacial pace of the negotiations. There is no hero and there are no heroics. If anything the film exposes the moral callousness of both sides of those doing the dealing and the desperation of the people they break. Gary Skyjoldmose-Porter, who plays Connor, is an actual negotiator for the same shipping company in real life. On his advice the Danish office was kept to a small conference room and the red tape stuck to the CEO's phone. He took part in the film that the basis that he didn't act. "I can react and do my thing, but you're not gonna make me say any lines," so that is what happens. Lindholm filmed the crew scenes on a ship anchored in the Indian ocean. The actors were apparently put in a cabin 2-3 hours before a shoot – after that they hardly needed to act, they just wanted to get out! At least 4 of the original crew are also in the cast. (One wonders why they wanted to relive those events?)

Lindholm also wanted maximum authenticity, so the hand held camera and inefficient lighting can at times be uncomfortable to watch. A satellite phone was set up on the ship to make phone calls to the actors in Denmark, so the echoes and time lagging weren't scripted and the reactions were often improvised. The two sets of actors did not meet during the filming. The violence happens off screen, so the terror has to be put over by the actors. We see Mikel going from anxious to angry, to resigned and finally to shell shocked.

The film has been criticised for being drawn out and in need of editing, but Olivia Collette on Rogereburt.com has commented that, "if you can survive 12-14 hours of a Danish TV serial, then you can survive this."

Lindholm is of course known for his writing for **Borgen** and a lot of his experience is TV based. This has prompted criticism that the film is a TV drama shown on a bigger screen. However, Lindholm himself sees the scripts for both as different entities. "A film is about a character going on a journey from beginning to end. Writing a TV

series is more like looking in a fish tank. The characters are all in there and you keep looking at them from different angles.” He was inspired to write this film by Kathryn Bigelow’s style of direction.

Filmography

R – 2010

Submarino – 2010 - Screenplay

Jagten – 2012

The Hunt - 2012 (screenplay)

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