

Maria von Heland digs deep into the world of internet dating

Sex, Sunshine and Chocolate

S EVEN YEARS AGO, when Maria von Heland made her first feature film *Recycled*, she was convinced that no film could be any good unless she herself had to suffer on the set.

And suffer she certainly did. On the second day of filming she went down with pneumonia and didn't recover until the day before the film was in the can.

"I lost my voice, I was coughing, throwing up – you name it, right though the shoot. And it was bitterly cold. Everyone suffered, especially me."

But worst of all, despite all this monumental suffering, the film itself didn't turn out to be very good. So Heland learned her lesson. By the time she came to shoot her latest film *Search* (Sök), suffering was positively discouraged.

"At times it was even fun. And I'm pleased to say I'm delighted with the result. For me, making a film is a dream. And the wonderful thing about my profession is that when a film is ready, I can invite everyone to share it with me. It's like waking up in the morning and saying, hey – you'll never guess what I dreamt. Look, I'll show you..."

Search is Maria von Heland's first film in Swedish. She was born and grew up in Stockholm, but she moved to Berlin twelve years ago.

"I've flirted with lots of cities – Los Angeles, Paris, Brussels, Chicago, Copenhagen. But I've only really fallen in love twice – with New York and Berlin. You have time and space in those cities to find a meaning, as a filmmaker, a writer and an artist. Where you end up is largely down to chance, but what I've eventually found above everything else in Berlin is my husband."

Search is the story of 38-year-old Lisa. She has no husband, no children, but she has always regarded herself as the family type.

"She has never consciously decided to stay single. But the years have just flown by since she was 25. So quickly that she still feels like a 25 year-old."

The difference between Lisa and the men she works with is that her biological clock is ticking away: she can't wait forever to start a family. It's something that fills her with dread. She doesn't want to be the final link in her own biological chain.

"But she doesn't want to get laid and pregnant by the first suitable guy who comes along, either. She's looking for a genuine solution, but she suffers terribly from the thought that she might never find one."

Search is a sexy film. Maria von Heland herself is of the opinion that sex, sunshine and chocolate are three things in life you can easily have too much of.

"I myself have tried to maintain a balance. But Lisa's search is desperate. And she often sets off on the wrong track."

The director is completely in earnest when she says that the film shouldn't be seen by people "whose moral standards are too high". Apart from the fact that it's a quotation that should get people flocking to the cinemas, what does she mean exactly?

"Well, you know. You have different types of friends. There are those you can tell that you've been unfaithful. And there are others that you'd never dream of sharing something so private and immoral with. If you're unsure which category a certain person falls into, you should take him or her to see *Search*. And if it turns out that they find the whole thing

totally incomprehensible, then you should definitely not let them in on your intimate secrets."

What Maria von Heland wanted to do above all was to make a film about the kind of people she meets every day. Having just finished her second feature *Big Girls Don't Cry* (produced by Columbia Pictures), she wanted to do something on a smaller scale, something closer to herself, a story she could really relate to. And she wanted to make another film with Amanda Ooms (who'd starred in *Recycled*).

The film was shot intensively on a very low budget. Amanda Ooms was the female lead, casting director and assistant producer all rolled into one. And von Heland thinks it would be

fun to set up a competition where people can count up how many times she herself appears in the film as an extra.

Emotions were running high on the set right from the outset. And as if the normal tension wasn't enough, shooting began the day after the funeral of Maria von Heland's father.

"His determination, drive and my love for him permeate the film, even though the storyline has nothing whatsoever to do with his death. But filming helped me to fill up the emptiness I felt after he'd gone. My brother, my mother and my husband all made contributions to the film, too. We're not the type to take grieving sitting down. So we made a film instead." ■ MATS WEMAN



Search

Search/Sök Director and screenwriter **Maria von Heland** Principal cast **Amanda Ooms, Lia Boysen, Pernilla August, Mikael Persbrandt** Director of Photography **Peter Östlund** Music **Niclas Frisk & Andreas Mattsson** produced by **Pelle Gunnerfeldt** Editor **Søren B. Ebbe (Jessica Congdon)** Production design **Tom Bewermeier, Ingo von Heland** Producer **Helena Danielsson, Maria von Heland** Produced by **Heppfilm** in co-production with **Sveriges Television, Film i Väst and Min Film - Maria von Heland with support from the Swedish Film Institute/Per Nielsen** Screening details **35 mm, 1:1.85, DTS** Sales **Trust Film Sales 2 APS**