

Thale Person about CLUE - THE MALTESE MYSTERY

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That is no normal place where Cecilia lives. It is a hotel, and her father is the owner. Ever since her mother died, Cecilia is supposed to help him serve the guests. In her rare spare time, together with her best friend Une and the newly arrived city boy Leo, she gets on the trail of a dark secret that might even lead her towards the mystery behind her mother's death. Director Thale Persen serves a portion of Nordic noir by full daylight, in a Norwegian detective story.

Even if things will take a different turn later, the opening scenes are extremely mild, even a bit cheesy. Cecilia walks down from the hotel, onto the terrace, waving her skirt as if she was Julie Andrews in THE SOUND OF MUSIC.

Thale Persen: We had several sources of inspiration and Julie Andrews was not one of them, but it's nice to hear. I wanted the opening to be like a slow dance; with one long shot taking us through the restaurant, the scene was very pinpointed. There is a huge kindness and politeness with all the

people we meet there, smiling gently when greeting. The main vibe for that scene was pure Agatha Christie.

In what sense?

Persen: There is this whole gallery of people who might potentially have something to do with the crime, and regardless of their gentle appearance, they all make a somewhat suspicious impression. In the closing scene they will gather again in one room and the mystery is revealed in their presence. Like with Agatha Christie.

CLUE is a treasure hunt. We've seen many of them before, but this one is different. What did you do to make it look different?

Persen: What do you think?

The kids are very well-mannered. They look nice and dutiful, not like a bunch of young superheroes.

Persen: I wanted them to be regular kids in which the audience could recognise themselves - *“This could have happened to me too.”* These characters are interesting enough without



granting them special features; I didn't want the usual clichés in the constellation of the group. Cecilia is like the girl next door, stumbling into a big mystery adventure. Besides the treasure hunt, I also wanted to include a storyline about Cecilia's grief. A crime plot in the centre of the story, with the loss of the mother in the background, that should be enough.

Although Leo carries with him a mysterious past.

Persen: We're not very explicit about it, but from the little clues we give about his backstory, you understand he has reasons to behave well. That girls understand it too, but they live in a secluded place, where you'll hardly

meet other children. They're curious about Leo because he is new. Even if he got off on the wrong foot, they want to know more about him.

As the title suggests, the film gives away clues to solve the puzzle, but how did you make the concept look visually attractive?

Persen: People might see children's films as a genre on its own, but to me it's just another audience that I want to offer the full cinematographic experience. For the opening scene, I knew at an early stage how I wanted it; in one take. But I needed a young actress who was able to deliver, she needed to feel the rhythm and know how to move.





The full experience... you even offer them two dead bodies!

Persen: We seriously considered it, but a young audience can handle a lot, as long as they get answers. Not knowing what happened to Cecilia's mother would have been more scary. A dead body is something concrete; it leaves nothing to your imagination (even if in reality, the corpse would have looked very different from what we show in the film). That is why a 10-12 year old audience, waiting to be thrilled, is the perfect age group for this film.

I was intrigued by the perspective of a daughter of a hotel owner, who's all the time confronted with guests - strangers - interfering with her private life.

Persen: What I like about hotel life is the feeling of entering a different

world. As a guest, you feel safe; somebody is taking care of you. During the shooting we even lived in that hotel.

Which is a very particular location!

Persen: The movie is based on a book, and the author Jørn Lier Horst told us he got inspired by a specific hotel. We went to check out the place and it was perfect. The hotel is open in summer but looks a bit run down; it breathes a feeling of the old days. Because of Covid, we had to shoot the entire movie in Norway so we were blessed to find this location with its specific surroundings. We even stayed in that place. After finishing their scenes, the actors simply went to their rooms, came back for dinner or breakfast but never had to leave their 'bubble'. Given the strict time restrictions when working with children, it is so nice that you can get up in the morning



and immediately start to work.

What's going on between father and daughter?

Persen: They're both grieving, but in different ways. Cecilia thinks about her mother all the time, while her father tries to escape in his work, pushing away the pain. It's a classic constellation, but often very true. Now it's time for them to talk, which is probably what they will do, now that they have gained a better understanding of each other. If there is a message to this movie, it is definitely this one.

A dog was needed to complete the story?

Persen: The book on which the film is based is famous in Norway; everywhere I go people would ask about the dog. I am a dog person, I made

films about dogs before and I have one myself, but I wouldn't take him to work with me. I had a love-hate relationship with this one, so he is in the story whenever he needs to be, and it works.

What about the author?

Persen: Jørn Lier Horst is a former policeman who is now among the most popular writers of 'Scandinavian noir' murder mysteries. A TV-series was made about his most famous character William Wisting. But every now and then he writes a book for a young audience, using all the 'true crime' features that he masters so well. As you can see on the screen.

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Gert Hermans