PRESS MATERIAL:

**THE STRANGER**

*A true story based on a lie*

A film by

**Nicole Horanyi**

**Featuring Amanda Kastrup and Esben Dalgaard**



 Photo: made in copenhagen

**International premiere DOCNYC November 10th 2017**

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**INTRODUCTION:**

*What would it take for YOU to be seduced and deceived?*

Most people will probably ask themselves that question after watching Nicole Horanyi’s film *The Stranger*. Human beings are fundamentally trusting, so what does it take to be deceived?

We live in a time where identity theft and fake profiles are everyday occurrences. The Internet is full of fake profiles, which makes it a jungle to navigate and gives con artists free rein. Casper Rieper-Holm is a notorious Danish con artist, who has been convicted several times for fraud.

*The Stranger* is the story of how Amanda Kastrup, a single mom from Denmark, met Casper Riper-Holm – or Casper Ludvig Christian Kastrup Augustinus, which was the name he used back then.

The film is about Amanda, who tries to figure out who her new boyfriend really is. On her journey to discover the truth, she comes across numerous cases that Casper Rieper-Holm has been convicted in.

In Amanda’s case, Casper Rieper-Holm created several fake Facebook profiles in order to lure her in. He talked his way into her life and heart by meeting all her needs and he was spectacularly good at it. They lived together for three months.

The film is based on a popular Danish podcast from Third Ear *In a relationship with…* and it is Krister Moltzen from Third Ear, who has written the script for the film together with director, Nicole Horanyi.

The role of Casper is played by an actor, Esben Dalgaard. He acts opposite Amanda, who plays herself, something not previously seen before in documentary filmmaking. The film is thus a mix of documentary and fiction which, when combined, creates a quite unique meta-layer.

It is a story based on memory and reflection, both Amanda’s and that of the other “real” participants in the film, who also got to experience Casper Rieper-Holm close up. As Nicole Horanyi puts it in her notes later on: *Even though all the external events in the film are based on real events, The Stranger is first and foremost Amanda and the other participants’ experience of reality. Following her experiences with Casper Rieper-Holm, Amanda has bounced back with great strength. She has twice, first with the podcast (In a relationship with…) and now with this film, used re-narration as a therapeutic exercise to work through and make peace with the time she spent with Casper Rieper-Holm. The most important thing for Amanda is that her story could potentially help others. That is a desire she has expressed several times during this process.*

**SYNOPSIS**

Amanda lives alone with her daughter in a suburb to Copenhagen, but one day she meets Casper on Facebook. Three months later she agrees to go on a date with him, and falls head over heals in love with Casper, who is both fun and caring, and who also has a daughter. Casper reveals that he is heir to one of the wealthiest families in Denmark, but also tells her that it is an inheritance he would rather be without. Therefore it does not seem so odd that he is the one who ends up moving into Amanda’s small apartment. But he is not the only one who ‘moves into her life.’ He brings along a number of scheming family members and other dramatic friends, who via Facebook insert themselves into Amanda’s life, until one day the phone rings…

***The Stranger*** is a documentary thriller, based on Amanda’s real life experiences with Casper, who turns out to be several different people.

The film is based on a popular podcast *In a relationship with…* produced by the Danish company Third Ear

The main participants in the film are real people, who play themselves, while Casper is played by an actor, Esben Dalgaard.

**ABOUT THE CHARACTERS IN THE FILM:**

**Amanda Midtgaard Kastrup, b. 1986**

Born and raised in the suburb, Hvidovre, Denmark. Has a background as a kindergarten teacher but today she runs an online fish shop.

Lives with her daughter, Michella and the dog Conrad.

Meets Casper Rieper-Holm in 2011. Lives with him for 100 days.

**Casper Rieper-Holm, b. 1978**

In the film Casper is played by the actor, **Esben Dalgaard**, amongst other things known from *Below the Surface* (TV3, 2017), *Splitting Up together* (TV2, 2016), *1864 (*DR1, 2014).

**Michella, b. 2004**

Amanda’s daughter. In the film played by the actress, **Nora Buljubasic.**

**Martin Poulsen, b. 1981.**

Born and raised in Hvidovre, Denmark. Neighbour and best friend to Amanda for nine years.

Lives alone with his dog Zeus.

Is at the moment training to become a tattoo artist at Newmac Ink.

Meets Casper Rieper-Holm in 2011, when Amanda introduces them.

**Bjarne Stenbæk, b. 1956**

Former team leader in Slagelse FH (handballclub).

Chairman of Slagelse FH in 1999, when the club was put in contact with Anja Andersen. In February 2000 Slagelse FH signed a contract with Anja Andersen. Their goal was to create the best women’s handball team in the world over a period of three years with Anja as their coach and manager.

Born and raised in Slagelse.

Meets Casper Rieper-Holm in 2009.

**Hans Jørgen Kaptain, b. 1946**

Lawyer and partner at the company HjulmandKaptain.

Manager of the big estate Voergård Slot and chairman of the board at the estate.

Meets Casper riper-Holm in 1998.

**DIRECTOR’S INTENTIONS:**

*By Nicole Horanyi*

I have made this film primarily because I am interested in what it is like to be deceived by a con artist. And how easy it is to be misled on social media, where we spend several hours on a daily basis.

It was never my intention with the film to seek to explain why Casper Rieper-Holm does what he does. Because you only have to spend a short time with him to realise that it is practically impossible to get a sincere answer out of him.

Thus, I am more preoccupied with trying to understand the psychology of what happens to the person who is being deceived. Human beings are fundamentally trusting, so what does it take? Could I be deceived, if a fake narrative was designed to fit all my needs?

To me, it was questions like these that gave the story about Amanda and Casper Rieper-Holm universal appeal and made it film material. Especially because we live in a time where fake profiles and identity theft are everyday occurrences.

The real main character in the film is Amanda Kastrup. She immediately made a big impression on me. She is a very unique young woman, who with great courage and integrity comes forth to tell a story that would have left many other people feeling bitter, a story, that most people would not have wanted to share publically. In the eyes of others, a story like this could easily make her seem naïve and gullible. But Amanda is far from gullible or naïve, she is in fact a highly intelligent and likeable young woman, who fell in love with a man and the idea of a happy life with him.

Following her experiences with Casper Rieper-Holm, Amanda has bounced back with great strength. Twice, first with the podcast *(In a relationship with…)* and now with the film, she has used re-narration as a therapeutic exercise to work through and make peace with the time she spent with Casper Rieper-Holm. But to Amanda, the most important thing is that her story could perhaps help others. She has expressed this desire several times during this process.

When I was researching the film, I soon realised that Casper Rieper-Holm is like a piece of fiction himself. It is very difficult to figure out who this man really is. He has spent his entire life creating a wide range of "amazing" personas, which he has then impersonated and used to deceive *everyone* on his way – rich as poor, men and women. Therefore, I concluded that it would make sense to have an actor ”play” the role of Casper.

It was a big challenge for me to make this film and having to direct it based on principles of fiction, since I have never previously worked with fiction or with actors.

When we were casting Esben Dalgaard, I quickly sensed that we had to do with an exceptional human being, who was willing and able to go above and beyond the script and the lines. He approached our film project with a lot of energy and sincere curiosity about Casper and Amanda’s story. Esben agreed to work with not only an amateur, Amanda, but also with a director, who had never before directed a professional actor. I am forever grateful for the tolerance and patience he showed us.

Two very different worlds meet when a professional and an amateur act together. But right from the outset, Amanda and Esben had great chemistry. And Esben successfully channelled a version of Casper, who made the re-enactment possible for Amanda and the other participants.

The scriptwriter, Krister Moltzen and I knew that Amanda would not work well with scripted lines. She is not a professional actress. But as it turns out, Amanda had a special talent for becoming engaged with the reconstruction of her own story, which the film is based on.

We developed a method which allowed Esben to ”take charge of” the scene and at the same time allowed Amanda to be herself and simply react to what ”Casper” was doing.

The style – a hybrid of documentary and fiction – was developed in the process. A number of elements had to be tested before the final film could be recorded. This took place in close cooperation between Krister Moltzen and myself, but Amanda and Esben also contributed to the final style of the film. Together, we developed a method where a very detailed script (based on years of research as well as Krister Moltzen’s Third Ear podcast) was broken down into improvised recordings, which almost resembled a documentary. We managed to create a framework for Amanda and the other participants, which allowed them to interact in a sort of memory space. We shot on the actual locations, used authentic props including having the participants wear the same clothes that they did when they met Casper.

This 1:1 reconstruction was important to Amanda and enabled her to appear authentic.

During the entire process, I have worked with Amanda and the other participants on one important pre-condition: the participant is the expert on their own story. It is the participant who knows exactly what happened and how it felt.

Therefore, the film is Amanda’s story the way that she recalls it, but the re-enactment is not just a memory, it takes engagement and a real feeling of experiencing the events again in order to come across as an authentic form. Creating a feeling of experiencing the same events again does, however, not necessarily mean that we recall situations exactly as they played out. Despite the qualities of experiencing the same events again, memories are by and large reconstructions, which are influenced by our present situation and the interpretations that we currently have of the past.

In other words, memories are not set in stone but change over time and are altered by reflection. Which is why *The Stranger* first and foremost is Amanda and the other participants’ version of reality, even if all the external events in the film are based on actual events.

**ABOUT CASPER RIEPER-HOLM:**

**Casper Rieper-Holm, b. 1979**

Casper was raised by his grandparents in the small Danish village, Præstbro in the northern part of Jutland, where he also took his grade nine exams. He speaks several languages and is quick to acquire knowledge on such a high level that it enables him to engage in conversations as ”an expert”. Therefore, he was very believable when he for instance pretended to be a Canadian ice hockey player, a pilot, or a true Danish aristocrat.

He has been convicted for fraud 14 times.

Casper’s scams can be traced back to his early teenage years at the bars in Frederikshavn. Back then Casper would go to the bars and pretend to be a professional athlete or the son of a millionaire, who had a summerhouse in Skagen. He would hang out in the bar for a few hours, run up a considerable tab and revel in the spotlight he had created for himself, only to suddenly disappear again.

His scams have grown in complexity since then. In addition to pretending to be a professional ice hockey player, various sons of millionaires, an MTV-host, an ex-member of a hard core biker gang, Lars Ulrick’s best friend and manager, a sushi-chef, a racetrack driver, a Greenpeace-diver, a drug trafficker and a navy officer – Casper Rieper-Holm has charmed his way into the lives of a large number of women – promising them the world – only to suddenly vanish from their lives again.

One of Casper Rieper-Holm’s most famous stunts was when he in 2009 ”saved” the handball club, Slagelse FH from bankruptcy. He pretended to be the grandchild of the owner of a large American fund and ”transferred” 1.5 million DKK to the club’s account. The story was covered by the press, but the so-called ”shy, anonymous donor” later turned out to have used a demo-programme from his bank in Switzerland, and the transfer never really happened.

After some time spent in Spain, Casper Rieper-Holm is now back in Denmark again where he is detained by the police.

Casper Rieper-Holm and his lawyer have been presented with the accusations raised in *The Stranger* but do not wish to comment.

**SHORT BIOGRAPHIES:**

**Director, Nicole N. Horanyi**

Nicole N. Horanyi graduated from the National Film School of Denmark in 2007 as a documentary film director.

With a sharp eye for clever and spectacular main characters, her films primarily portray strong women, who are not afraid of tackling difficult situations in modern society.

For her latest film *Motley’s Law,* Nicole N. Horanyi won the following awards: Grand Jury Prize Award at New York’s documentary film festival DOC NYC and the EDA Award from Alliance of Women Film Journalists/IDFA.

**Scriptwriter, Krister Moltzen**

Krister Moltzen has a background in the experimental radio programme *Ultralyd* at the national Danish radio station P1. Together with Tim Hinmann, he is the co-founder and co-editor of Denmark’s largest independent podcast Third Ear. He is famous for his concisely narrated real-life stories and for excellent in-depth interviews.

**Producer, Helle Faber**

CEO and creative producer of **made in copenhagen,** currently releasing the film *The Stranger.* Next year the film will be adapted to a TV-series format for TV2 and NRK.

Faberhas, amongst other things, produced the award-winning films *The Wait,* 2017, *Who We Were,* 2016, *Motley’s Law,* 2015, *Warriors from the North,* 2015 and *Shady Chocolate,* 2012, *Putin’s Kiss,* 2011, *Enemies of Happiness, 2007.*

**About made in copenhagen:**

**made in copenhagen** is one of the most prominent documentary film production companies in Denmark. The company produces films for both the Danish and the international markets. The films primarily focus on complex stories, which challenge the audiences’ preconceptions.

**made in copenhagen** collaborates with some of the best directors in Denmark and is proud to produce thorough and strong films, which can move the audiences as well as stir debate.

**made in copenhagen** was founded in 2010 by producer Helle Faber, who is also the CEO of the company. During the last couple of years, the company has produced award-winning films such as *Who We Were, The Wait, Motley’s Law, Warriors from the North* and *Me and My Dad.*

[www.madeincopenhagen.dk](http://www.madeincopenhagen.dk/)

**THE STRANGER IS PRODUCED WITH THE SUPPORT OF:**

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