

**PHOENIX**

A film by Camilla Strøm Henriksen



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Certificate: tbc / Running time: 86 minutes

**LOGLINE**

Jill’s world is turned upside on the eve of her 14th birthday in this gripping family drama from Norwegian writer-director Camilla Strøm Henriksen.

**SHORT SYNOPSIS**

From a young age, Jill has been the responsible adult in her small family. Caring for her loving, but mentally unstable mother Astrid and her younger brother Bo, she looks forward to her 14th birthday, just two days away. When her estranged father calls with the news that he’ll visit, Jill stops at nothing to have the best day – even if it means keeping a secret that could rip her family apart.

**SYNOPSIS**

Caring for her mentally unstable mother Astrid (Maria Bonnevie) and younger brother Bo (Casper Falck-Løvås), teenager Jill (Ylva Bjørkaas Thedin) has acted like the adult in her family. Living together in a small apartment in Oslo, the two children walk a constant tightrope, avoiding anything that could provoke their mother’s volatile behavior.

When Astrid lands a job interview at the local art gallery and it seems like the things could be looking up. As Jill works hard to prepare her mother, their estranged father Nils (Sverrir Gudnason) calls to say he’ll visit them on her 14th birthday, just two days away. But when tragedy strikes, Jill decides to bury the truth. Nothing will ruin her birthday - not when it’s a matter of survival for herself and Bo.

Featuring a breakout performance from Ylva Bjørkaas, this striking chamber drama marks Norwegian writer-director Camilla Strøm Henriksen as a one to watch.

**DIRECTORS STATEMENT**

*Phoenix* is above all about children who take the role of adults. It’s about the conflict between the responsibility they take, and the unanswered needs they have, as children. It’s about the complex dynamics within a family where the roles are reversed: where the children become the small adults.

The subject matter is of great concern to me and why I’ve felt it’s important to make the film. I have had experiences that made me want to tell a story that explores this theme, in a way that felt relevant to others.

Growing up, I took the responsibility in my family from an early age. My younger brother and I lived with a mentally unstable mother, whilst our father was absent. My main focus was how to make the family function. Phoenix is also about a mother and a father who fail in their parental roles. What mechanisms are triggered in a child when the parents lose the grip on their life? What happens in the relationship between a teenage daughter with the future ahead of her, and a mother who can’t cope with her existence? Who takes the responsibility for this relationship?

Over the years, while working on the script and then the film, I’ve found that the themes resonate. I think many parents can relate to having put a too heavy burden on their children, perhaps while going through a difficult period. Their children will always be loyal. The main character in Phoenix, Jill, makes an exceptional decision, but her motivation is familiar: Children will often hide the truth about what is going on at home. They will do almost anything to protect their family. Jill takes the responsibility for her own and her brother’s fate, which is a responsibility that’s too much for a young person. In a strange way, she succeeds in this. There is no simple solution to the dilemma that Jill faces. Who takes the responsibility when the parents don’t? Jill makes brave choices, and by doing them, she finds her inner strength. This strength comes at a price. It’s a desperate realisation when Jill understands that they will have to cope without their parents. Phoenix is a tribute to children who are confronted with a harsh reality and meet their fate, brave, and with dignity. It’s also a film about a sibling relationship. The love between Jill and her brother is what will give them the strength to survive. They are not alone.

**Camilla Strøm Henriksen**

**CAST**

**Maria Bonnevie - Astrid/mother**

Bonnevie was born in Sweden but grew up in Oslo. She had her screen debut in *The Polar Bear King* in 1991. Her big breakthrough came in the film *Jerusalem* in 1996, and in the following years she had significant roles in *Insomnia*, *Dragonflies*, *I Am Dina*, and the Russian film *The Banishment* (featured in Cannes). She won a Gullruten Award for her role as Queen Maud in the NRK TV series *Harry & Charles*. She also won an Amanda Award for *I Am Dina*, and has had powerful roles in such films as *The Angel* and *All That Matters Is Past* (world premiere in Toronto in 2012). Her latest roles have been in *The Shamer’s Daughter*, *A Second Chance*, directed by Susanne Bier, and *Becoming Astrid*, a film about Astrid Lindgren (directed by Pernille Fischer Christensen). Maria has also had a number of roles at The Royal Dramatic Theater in Stockholm and is considered one of Scandinavia’s finest actors.

**Sverrir Gudnason - Nils/father**

Gudnason is a Swedish actor of Icelandic origin. He has been in a number of major film productions and series, and has won Guldbagge Awards for *Blowfly Park* (2015) and *Waltz for Monica* (2013). He portrayed Pontus Höijer in the *Wallander* series, and has had leading roles at both Gothenburg and Stockholm City Theater. He played Björn Borg in the film *Borg vs. McEnroe*, which opened the Toronto International Film Festival in 2017. There he also won the IMDB Award as Breakout Star. He starred in *The Girl in the Spider’s Web*, where he played Mikael Blomkvist oppposte Claire Foy (*The Crown*) as Lisbeth Salander.

**Ylva Bjørkaas Thedin (b. 2002) – Jill**

Ylva is from Nesodden, and *Phoenix* is her film debut.

**Casper Falck-Løvås (b. 2008) – Bo**

Casper is from Oslo, and *Phoenix* is his film debut.

**FILMMAKERS**

**Camilla Strøm Henriksen - Director & Writer**

Phoenix is an original story by Camilla Strøm Henriksen and is her first feature. As an actress she has appeared extensively in Norwegian films, TV and theatre productions. She studied at London Film School and graduated with an MA degree in directing in 2004. She has since directed multiple episodes of the longest running series in Scandinavia, *Hotel Caesar*, as well as the drama series Hvaler. She’s currently developing a TV drama series and a feature film, as writer-director.

**Gudny Hummelvoll – Producer**

Gudny Hummelvoll has many years of experience in film and TV production. In 2011, she established the production company Hummelfilm AS. In recent years, she has produced the TV series Occupied in collaboration with Yellow Bird. She has previously produced films like *Buddy*, *Mirush*, *Limbo*, *Underdog* and *Wakolda*.

**David Yates - Executive producer**

David Yates is known for numerous prolific movies including the four last *Harry Potter* movies (*The Deathly Hallows: Part 1 & 2*, *The Half-Blood Prince*, and *The Order of The Phoenix*), as well as the TV series *State of Play*. He is also known for *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, and *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald*, the latter released November 2018. Yates has been assisting Phoenix in a creative capacity, providing support for the director Camilla Strøm Henriksen throughout the process. In his own words: “I came across Camilla’s script after completing work on Harry Potter while looking for new projects. I immediately fell in love with it and felt compelled to help this film to the screen.”

**Paulina Rider Wilhelmsen - Executive producer**

Paulina Wilhelmsen has, in addition to extensive business experience, broad knowledge of TV production, through several years of working for the Norwegian national broadcaster, NRK. After moving to the UK, she founded Wilstar, a social impact venture which is focused on supporting projects in the areas of education, human dignity, women’s rights and maritime conservation. She joined Hummelfim in 2014 as an executive producer and partner.

**Annika Hellström - Co-producer**

Annika Hellström is an industry veteran with more than 25 years’ experience from the industry and the producer of the award winning feature films as *Beyond Dreams* (2017), *Flocking and Underdog* (2015). Annika is also the co-producer of *And Breathe Normally* (Isold Uggadottir, 2018) which was awarded Best Director at Sundance 2018 and the Fipresci Award at the Gothenburg Film Festival 2018. She is an EAVE graduate (2008) and also participated in their marketing & distribution workshop in 2013.

WRITTEN and DIRECTED by

**Camilla Strøm Henriksen**

CAST

**Maria Bonnevie** as ASTRID/MOTHER

**Sverrir Gudnason** as NILS/FATHER

**Ylva Bjørkaas Thedin** as JILL

**Casper Falck-Løvås** as BO

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

**David Yates**

**Paulina Rider Wilhelmsen**

CO-PRODUCERS

**Annika Hellström**

**Ramunas Skikas**

MUSIC by

**Patrik Andrén**

**Johan Söderqvist**

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

**Ragna Jorming**

EDITOR

**Sverrir Kristjánsson**

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

**Eva Norén**