

## INTERVIEW WITH JENS HULTÉN ABOUT JAMES BOND & HIS ROLE IN SKYFALL (November 2012)

*By Anders Frejdh, Founder of From Sweden with Love. Photo: Mikaela Tidlund*

**[FSWL:] How did you end up in the film industry?**

I worked as a bouncer in the 1980s around Stockholm. I met an actor who was older than me, we sat in his apartment and drank whiskey and suddenly I heard myself say that I wanted to be an actor. I grew up in a musical family - dad is an old jazz musician - so I had a bit of that in me even though it was not until I was 25-27 years old before I really came into acting.

I have always liked the movies but not really known what it is exactly that I like. Until I decided to become an actor, I had not had any thought of it. An old friend came up to me at Café Opera a long time ago and told me I should become an actor, I thought he was joking!

I have been doing a lot sports, ranging from ball sports, such as football and tennis, to boxing, gym, karate and kung-fu. Now it's just at a level of "lubricating the machine," not the same interest as I had before.

Since 2003, when [Swedish TV show/film] "Graven" was filmed, it has become my profession. Slowly but surely, but it has taken time. As a freelance actor, I take different types of jobs, both in the theatre, TV and film. Last time I stood on a stage was in 2007 when I did the last season of *Cabaret* starring **Peter Jöback**.

If I have to choose, I take film, because it is better paid and once you do the job is done. Meanwhile the nerves before going up on stage because it is live, makes it very exciting. Then I want to not only be at the theatre for fun - here's so much absurd theatre - but I want to be where people will portray someone's dream.

**How did you get the role as one of Silva's men in "Skyfall"? (FSWL was the first in the world to officially reveal Jens' involvement in the film.)**

I met **Tusse Lande** (who cast the film in Stockholm) at an airport in Hamburg by accident the summer of 2011 when I was there to do a job. We had ended up on the same shuttle bus between the airport and the terminal. She said she had a good thing going for me, James Bond... "Let's give it a try," I said. [Laughs]

Then I called her after the weekend and then she said **Debbie McWilliams** would come to Sweden the next day. Tusse asked if I could read three pages. I said it will be tough because it is in English, but I gave it a try. **Mads Mikkelsen's** monologue from *Casino Royale* when he questioning and beats Bond with the rope: "How much pain can a man endure?" etc etc.

I sat with the text for 16 hours but it still went to hell. I was completely blank and I could not remember a word, embarrassing to say the least. I was instead forced to sit there with reading glasses, reading the script and act.

They said nothing about the role, only that it was action part, and asked if I was interested. Then I do not know what was going on but it took several months before anything happened. Then my agent got a phone call, they had first picked out **Ola Rapace** the one they were originally most interested in, then they had me and another guy from somewhere in Europe.

I then went down to Pinewood Studios for stunt training and met **Gary Powell's** stunt team. Gary was there and oversaw it all. The fights we did were to test the physical ability. It was easy for me because I know these things and is used to fighting. While being there, I realized they were really interested to hire me.

I think it then stood between me and Ola. I am taller than Ola, blonder, more like Craig in hair colour; I'm almost 50, while Ola is more in the 40's. But since I was there and was fight training with them, they were probably impressed and said I did it splendidly. I fight like in real life - they would have fought in a more cinematic way. **Sam Mendes** asked me how tall I was. That was certainly had something to it, why I was cast. Anyway, [Ola] got his role and I got the other one. They wanted to use me as much as they could because they considered me as a competent guy. In the end Ola and I got the same type of role, even if he has more "screen time" than me.

#### **How much did you work with Sam Mendes?**

Sam was not involved so much in what I did, he'd just gave his preferences really. First there was the scene where I was going to be fighting on the ice, and that I would use my martial arts, karate and boxing skills, before Bond would beat me to death on the ice.

We worked for four days with the scene, even if **Daniel Craig** was only there for one day. The three days prior I spent was with body doubles (I even had my own) and the second unit team.

#### **Apart from the last scene with Craig in the water, I have heard that you also did scenes in the subway, tell us about them.**

That's right, I leave a package to Silva (**Javier Bardem**), along with another guy. It was actually the first scene I did for the film, just before Christmas last year and I did not know if I would come back. When I left, I was pretty disappointed because I had not found out if I would be coming back.

#### **What are your impressions of Barbara Broccoli & Michael G. Wilson as producers?**

I met both Barbara and Michael and I got a nice and professional impression.

### **How was it like working with Daniel Craig and Javier Bardem?**

Unfortunately, I did not get to know Bardem, he was very focused on the job, but he seemed very nice, low key, humble, a really nice man.

Daniel felt like a real "lad", a nice and simple football guy from Liverpool, not at all that fancy. He was almost like an athlete, very professional.

### **What do you think about your participation in Skyfall?**

"Dumb Muscle guy becoming disheartened at the end." Joking aside, a huge production with amazing resources, an honour to have been part of it, especially now that it has become so successful. None of my scenes have been cut, which is great. I am now of course very eager to do more films abroad after being involved in this one.

### **Do you have an personal anecdote from Skyfall filming?**

[Laughs] When we would surround the Skyfall lodge, **Sam Mendes** took the lead to show how he had planned the shooting. He only said: "I'm going to take you through this. Javier is going first and the rest of you is kind of turning up behind him."

Then he says: "And my thought is that Javier, you drop the first guy off here, keep on walking, drop this guy off there, keep on walking, drop that guy off there, keep on walking, drop the next guy off there, and Jens you drop off through the ice..."

Okay, I thought, "drop off", it's a purely technical matter. The lodge will stand in flames and nearly a thousand people were involved. Before shooting, I thought it good to double check what Sam says so I do not make any mistakes. So before giving the instruction to "drop off" so I asked him: "What do you mean 'drop off'?" And then Sam answers: "What do you mean, 'What do you mean'?" And looks blankly at me. This became even fuzzier and I say "Okay, let me put it this way, shall I stop acting?" And Sam replies "You never stop acting! When the camera is rolling you act! And move on."

It all got pretty absurd, it really was "Lost in translation". My question was how Sam was going to shoot it, and he interpreted it as I did not understand that I would act as long as I was in front of the camera. Looking back at it, I can now laugh about it, but at the time I was quite confused.

### **Have you read any of Ian Fleming's Bond novels?**

No, unfortunately I have not.

Five quick questions about Bond:

**- What is your favourite Bond film?**

Pure cinematic it is undoubtedly the last three with Daniel Craig though *Goldfinger* of course is a very entertaining film.

**- Best Actor as James Bond?**

**Daniel Craig**, but I also liked Timothy Dalton (Roger Moore, I see more as "The Saint".)

**- Favourite among the Bond villains?**

**Javier Bardem's** there because he's such a fierce actor. As for the cliché of a villain, I say Oddjob (played by Harold Sakata).

**- Favourite amongst the title songs?**

"Live and Let Die" by Paul McCartney & The Wings is great.

**Do you remember of James Bond when you grew up?**

I've always loved the Bonds, think they are really cool movies, and have seen all. Craig's Bonds are the best cinematically.

**What advice would you give to someone who wants to be an actor?**

Focus on the work and hope that you have the talent that you think you have. Talent that works will always succeed in the end.

**Do you have any personal favourite movies?**

Loads, ranging from the first two *Godfather* films and *Taxi Driver* to modern drama as the French movie *Polisse* (directed by Maïwenn) they are really good movies. And all Paul Thomas Anderson's films from *Magnolia* and so forth.

**This year marks 50 years since the first Bond movie came, why do you think the series has lasted so long and are still so popular?**

I do not know what the attraction really is; it is almost like a brand that nobody questions.

**What is in your near future, any projects in the pipeline?**

It seems to be another season of Johan Falk, it's best to give them a go-ahead from Germany who pumps in the money. The idea is that my character "Seth Rydell" is to get a more important role in the future, which he got in the second season now that "Frank Wagner" (Joel Kinnaman) leaves the series.

**MANY THANKS TO JENS HULTÉN FOR TAKING TIME TO DO THIS INTERVIEW & HELENA STENBERG (SF) FOR ARRANGING IT.**

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