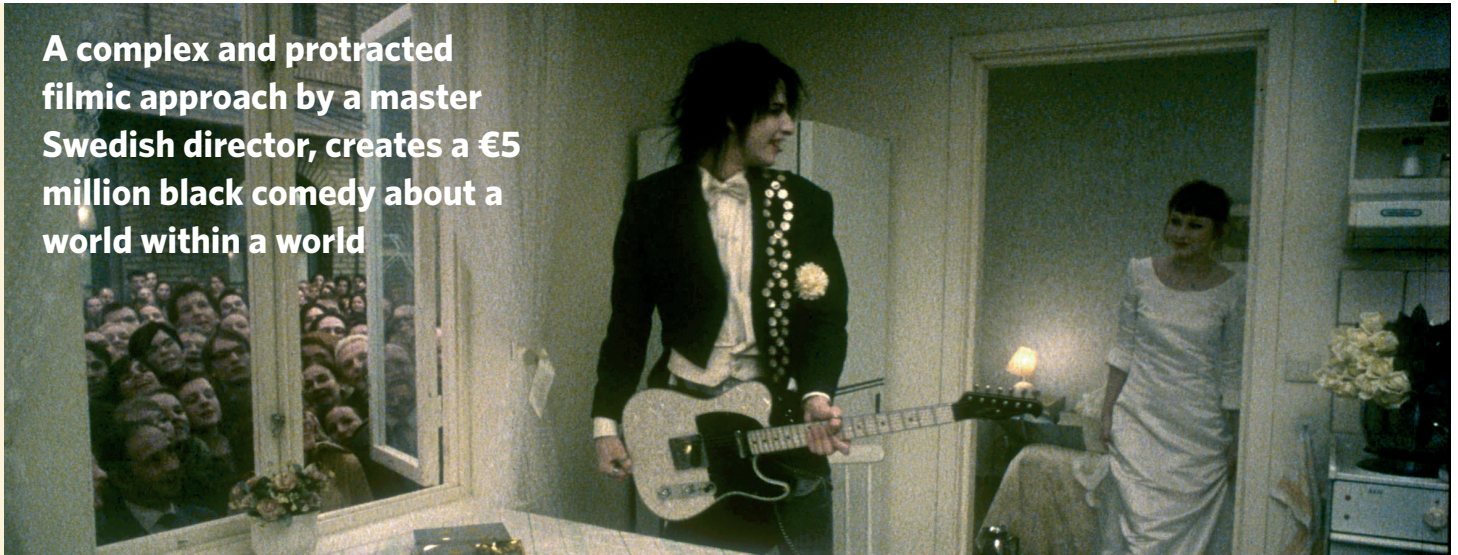


Four years in a room - the making of **Du Levande**

A complex and protracted filmic approach by a master Swedish director, creates a €5 million black comedy about a world within a world



You, the Living, (Du Levande) began test-shooting in 2003 and was completed, on time ... in January 2007. That is the opportunity Swedish DP Gustav Danielsson found himself offered as he worked on a commercial with Cannes Jury prize winning director, Roy Andersson. The envious groans of cinematographers battling contracting production schedules are deafening.

"I knew it would take a long time," comments Danielsson, "His last work took four years too." As that film, *Songs from the Second Floor*, won Andersson international acclaim and the Cannes trophy in 2000, Danielsson jumped at the offer.

What exactly is this director's time-munching methodology? "We approach each scene individually, starting with some sketches, then some photographs, and use these images to create everything in the studio," explains Danielsson. "We started working on this film in 2003 and did 35 tests or so but serious shooting didn't start until October 2005." Andersson's own studio in Stockholm is the location, even for the exteriors. "Next some models are built and we make tests first on video and then on 35mm," continues Danielsson. Only then, three to four weeks after the initial sketches, are the sets built with interior and exteriors to scale - no digital mattes allowed, just good old Baroque *trompe l'oeil*.

Abstract world

The creative driver for the director is his phrase 'the man in the room'. "The environment, the room, is so important because

it says something about the people who are in the room," says Danielsson. To achieve this, the filmmakers decided that there should be no digital intermediate; "It is an analogue film - that's why we have to build everything in the camera not afterwards in a telecine. It gives the film a very specific - some people call it a look - but I prefer to call it a world. We create a world that is an abstraction of the real world."

When all of the initial research and tests are finished, the director is ready to shoot the scene. "The first week to a week-and-a-half there may be big changes, then it is just a matter of getting the perfection on light levels and tones," continues Danielsson. "When we get close to the shooting day we only do small finishing touches." Ten tests for every scene was the normal count on the film. Not surprisingly when the dailies are viewed there are not a lot of changes required. The stock of choice to maintain this 'abstract reality' was KODAK VISION 500T 5279.

As befits their retro approach to filmmaking, the DP chose to use an old ARRIFlex 35BL. His director's motivation to use the camera as an observer meant that Danielsson shot no close-ups and only used a 16mm lens, apart from once venturing to the 18mm. "Apart from a couple of scenes all are one take and nearly everything is absolutely still," continues Danielsson. "We have ultra-slow dolly movements - ½cm per second." These movements are hardly visible to the eye but allow slightly different compositions at the start and end of the scene to reflect a change in the character in his environment.

'The grandeur of existing' is how Andersson describes his film. The irony of the humdrum, set against the minutiae of perfection also suitably describes his DP's four year investment in the film and his pursuit of excellence in his craft.