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INTERVIEW WITH RUBEN ÖSTLUND

SACC-LA HAD THE HONOR OF MEETING WITH RUBEN
DAYS BEFORE THE ACADEMY AWARDS® 2023

SACC-LA: How does it feel to be Oscars® nominated again and this time for Best Film, Best Original Screenplay and Best Director?

Ruben Östlund: *It feels great of course, it's exciting to compare this time with the previous experiences since I've been in this Oscars® race three times before with "Involuntary", "Force Majeure" and "The Square". Once I got some experience from the past trips, I feel a little more at home this time around. The first time I was here, I thought it was far away from home, but now I have some friends here and I don't spend as much energy as I did the first time. Now I've learned where to put my energy, and I've had a lot of fun!*



Photo Courtesy: SACC-LA

SACC-LA: In addition to this year's historical Oscars® nominations for you and the "Triangle of Sadness" team, you were also recently chosen as the President of the Jury for the 2023 Cannes Film Festival! This is an enormous prestigious assignment, how excited are you to head the jury, especially since you have won the Palme d'Or twice?

SACC-LA: Describe "Ruben Östlund" in three words.

Ruben Östlund: *Envis, retsticka & självgod (in Swedish) // Stubborn, teasing & self-righteous (in English).*

Ruben Östlund: *I actually feel really honored! I thought it happened a bit quickly, usually it's directors who are at the end of their career that get this honor, so I hope they don't see me like that (says Östlund and laughs). It proves in some way that they think I represent the same kind of view of films and the art of cinema that the Cannes Film Festival represents, and that makes me very proud! I have always looked up to Cannes and the kind of films and directors that have been shown in Cannes.*



Poster Courtesy: SF Studios & NEON.



Photo Courtesy: SACC-LA

SACC-LA: Your films are known for dealing with subjects such as power, hierarchies and social structures. Which aspects of these themes fascinate you the most and why?

Ruben Östlund: *In a way, they belong together in this film and it's some sort of behavioral aspect of humans. Instead of psychologizing and looking at individual deviations and saying that this is why we humans act the way we do, I have taken an interest in putting the characters in a power structure, that the positions you have in an economic social structure is what change your behavior. So if you are at the top you behave in a certain way and if you are down at the bottom you behave in a different way.*



Photo Courtesy: SACC-LA

We removed the individual focus a bit, and I feel that we live in a time where we try to find the answers to our actions far too much in the individual and not as much in the material environment and circumstances that we deal with. It is a very neoliberal view of humans that has colored us because of, among other things, the type of entertainment culture that the Hollywood and the American film industry has rolled out for us. I was born in the 70s, and if you watch the kind of films I grew up watching, it changes our view even though we have a social democratic government in Sweden. It changes our view of people and our behaviorism, I think that is why we are where we are today in Sweden.

SACC-LA: Speaking of social structures, do people treat you differently now compared to when you started in the film business because of your success?

Ruben Östlund: *I don't understand why everyone is so nice - everyone laughs so hard at my jokes (says Östlund and laughs). No, but of course that's the way it is!*

SACC-LA: Speaking of “Triangle of Sadness”, and the tension about paying the bill in the beginning of the film - do you or do your wife pay the bill when you're out eating at a restaurant?

Ruben Östlund: *We have an app where we split the bill, so we avoid that thing. We come from very different cultural backgrounds, so there was some friction about it in the beginning. But we have solved it with an app, totally unromantic (says Östlund and laughs). When it's my birthday though, she pays for me and today it's her birthday, so today I pay for her!*



SACC-LA's interns Lisa and Vendela with Ruben.
Photo Courtesy: SACC-LA.

Ruben Östlund is a Swedish filmmaker best known for his black comedic and satirical films “Force Majeure” (2014), “The Square” (2017), and “Triangle of Sadness” (2022), all of which have won numerous awards around the world including two prestigious Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival for “The Square” and “Triangle of Sadness”. The most recent film “Triangle of Sadness” has also, this year, earned him three historic Academy Awards® nominations for Best Director, Best Original Screenplay and Best Film.

Thank you very much Ruben Östlund!
We hope to see you again soon, in Los Angeles.