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PROFILE SØREN SVEISTRUP

Noir specialist goes global

The Killing creator Søren Sveistrup tells Peter White about the indie he has set up with *Borgen* creator Adam Price and its ambitions to produce scripted series for an international market

The *Killing* (*Forbrydelsen*) and *Borgen* are two of the most successful and critically acclaimed television series to emerge from Scandinavia.

So there will be high expectations for SAM Productions, the StudioCanal-backed production company set up by *The Killing* creator Søren Sveistrup and the man behind *Borgen*, Adam Price, with Meta Louise Foldager, producer of Lars Von Trier movie *Melancholia*.

Sveistrup first met Price when the pair were young writers at Danish broadcaster DR. Working on Copenhagen-set soap *Taxa* (*Taxi*), they both enjoyed free meals at fancy restaurants thanks to Price's sideline as a restaurant critic.

The new firm will develop scripted series – both drama and comedy – for the global market, as well as local Scandinavian series and feature films.

"We have the liberty to develop whatever we feel like," says Sveistrup. "One of the ingredients was that we were allowed to do local shows and movies. Some of our shows are Danish, or Swedish or Norwegian, and some are in German, English or French. It's an international platform.

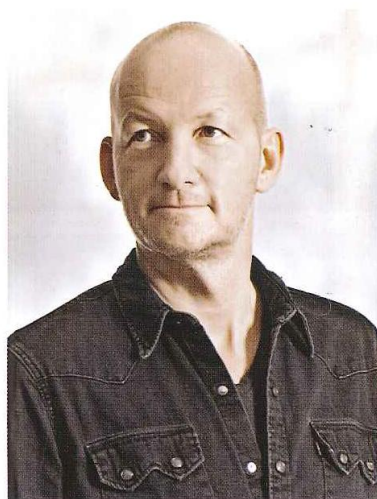
"It can be very difficult to convince international partners about some stories, and these might be very important for Scandinavian people. On the other hand, it's important to think globally because that's the way the world works now."

The Killing, which was commissioned by Danish public broadcaster DR in association with Germany's ZDF Enterprises, ran for three series and belatedly became a huge global hit. It was picked up by broadcasters in more than 120 countries, including the BBC, and was remade by US cable network AMC.

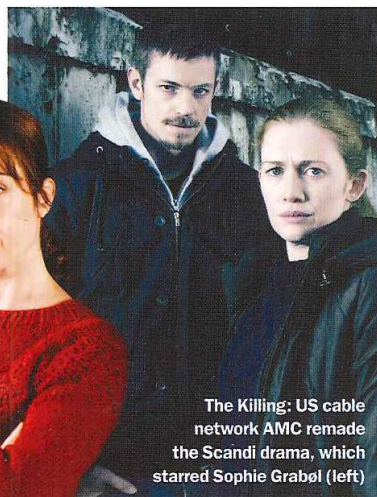
But Sveistrup says that although it was a Danish show, it was never intended to be local.

"Copenhagen was the arena, the background for the story, but it was about the loss of a child and how to overcome that and fight the struggles," he says. "It doesn't matter if that story is Danish or Swedish or English or South African – there's something universal about it."

Sveistrup admits that there is pressure,



'It is important to think globally because that's the way the world works now'
Søren Sveistrup



The *Killing*: US cable network AMC remade the Scandi drama, which starred Sophie Grønbøl (left)

albeit mostly self-imposed, to follow up a show that successful.

His current development slate looks beyond police procedurals to a number of genres. "I don't only have to do crime stuff," he says. "I could do a romantic comedy, or even something more sinister than a crime story. If I want to write a historical piece about children in certain situations, I can do that too."

Prior to *The Killing*, Sveistrup created *Nikolaj Og Julie* (*Nicholas And Julie*), a romantic comedy that starred Sofie Grønbøl before she took on the role of taciturn detective Sarah Lund. It is currently being remade by NBC as *Love Is A Four Letter Word*, starring *The Hunger Games*' Meta Golding.

SAM Productions is now in discussions with broadcasters in the US, UK, Scandinavia and across Europe. Sveistrup says he is writing a number of scripts in English and really hopes to win a commission from a UK broadcaster. "The British are the masters of television shows," he says.

Drama development

The indie could potentially tie up with *Happy Valley* producer Red Production Company, run by Nicola Shindler and Andrew Critchley, now they are part of the same StudioCanal family.

StudioCanal is keen for both SAM and Red to develop and produce high-end drama series for its premium sister broadcaster Canal+.

Separately, Sveistrup has penned a number of feature screenplays since he stopped writing about Sarah Lund. *The Day Will Come* is a period drama about two young brothers stuck in a children's home. The film stars regular collaborator Lars Mikkelsen and is produced by Lars Von Trier's Zentropa.

Sveistrup is also writing the screenplay for *The Snowman*, an adaptation of Jo Nesbø's novel featuring detective Harry Hole, who must capture a serial killer who kills unfaithful wives and turns them into snowmen.

Scandinavia has been somewhat usurped recently by buzzy dramas from Israel, such as *Homeland*, and Germany, such as *Deutschland 83*, but Sveistrup says the rise of Nordic noir wasn't just a fad.

"The tradition of Scandinavian storytelling is very solid and won't just erode because the media goes on to another continent. It was there before and it will be there for many years to come."