



Nattevagten

Nightwatch

Ole Bornedal

DENMARK, 1994

105 minutes ■ Colour/35mm
Production Company: **Thura Film**
Producer: **Michael Obel**
Screenplay: **Ole Bornedal**
Cinematography: **Dan Laustsen**
Editor: **Camilla Skousen**
Art Director: **Soeren Krag Soerensen**
Sound: **Michael Dela**
Music: **Sort Sol, The Sandmen, Joachim Holbek**
Principal Cast: **Nikolaj Waldau, Sofie Graaboel, Kim Bodnia, Lotte Andersen, Ulf Pilgaard, Rikke Louise Andersson**

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Like a gently climbing rollercoaster, *Nightwatch* lulls you into a contented sense of security, its *Repulsion*-like paranoia creating a tense but static ambiance. And then, whoosh, you catapult down, barely pausing for breath as the scalpel comes out, the blood starts to fly and this thriller really starts to thrill.

In that sense, this is two movies, both equally satisfying on their own terms. The first 40 minutes or so sees Martin, a cute young Dane, take a job as a night watchman in a morgue. Unsettled by the corpses around him and the tales of fellow workers, Martin is easily disturbed. His unease is made worse by an extended game of truth-or-dare played with his buddy, Jens. Soon he is getting blown by a hooker, whose best friend was just scalped by a psycho, in a restaurant, while his long-term, supportive relationship with the lovely Kalinka is crumbling. Could Jens be orchestrating all of this? And who is scalping all of these Copenhagen prostitutes?

When some of these questions are answered, fairly early on, the real trouble starts for Martin. It is here that the film turns very dark, with physical violence replacing the imagined "boo" scares of before. Hints of necrophilia also whisper here and there.

Director and writer Ole Bornedal knows how to set a mood. The morgue sequences are all shot in unsettling yellows and barely-noticed tracking shots keep the pace moving. Nikolaj Waldau as Martin is also a find

– he has enough charisma to keep us wondering what lies behind his pretty-boy face until the very end.

Denmark isn't known for producing bloody thrillers with a kinky pop and great performances. But with this explosive start it's a welcome trend.

– *Noah Cowan*

Ole Bornedal was born in 1959. His career within media began with radio feature programmes for which he won international repute. He directed 10 individual programmes between 1982 and 1987. He wrote comedy and television shows for Danish television, hitting success there before turning to filmmaking. His work in theatre in the nineties is also considered outstanding. *Nightwatch* (94) is the writer-director's first feature film.