

# BIG TIME

*- A documentary by Kaspar Astrup Schröder*



## **CHICAGO FILM FESTIVAL – US PREMIERE**

Sat, October 14th – 6pm – AMC Theatres, River East 21

Sun, October 15th – 3pm – AMC Theatres, River East 21

## **DOC NYC**

Wed, November 15th – 9.15pm – Cinépolis Chelsea 5

Thu, November 16th – 10.30am – IFC

### **Publicity**

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

*Nothing in this world is free.*

This might be the mantra by which the Danish architect Bjarke Ingels lives. Bjarke is a proclaimed genius worldwide, but nevertheless, he leads a life, which leaves little room for privacy. Perhaps because of this, he values it highly and works hard to protect it.

The Danish director Kaspar Astrup Schröder has followed the Danish star-architect over the course of five years. Most people know Bjarke Ingels for his work, but the film *BIG TIME* gets up and close to the person that is Bjarke Ingels.

What has been the cost of his success? With whom has he chosen to share it? What about love? Does his life leave any room for it? These are some of the questions that the film focuses on - questions that surround everyone in contemporary society. What happens when your health is threatened? What does the success and hard work mean then?

The director Kaspar Astrup Schröder describes the film and his work with Bjarke Ingels:

*"It has been a challenge to keep up with everything going on with Bjarke and his company. While doing so, I discovered how much pressure Bjarke was under. It was as if he had put himself in the driver's seat in a train, which could never stop, and now he had to lay the tracks while managing the steering wheel. Then, some health-related issues arose, and the pressure became even bigger - that's when I started feeling that the film had the potential of becoming even more universal. That it didn't "only" have the potential of conveying interesting architecture as well as the fascinating brain behind all of it, but it could also paint the greater picture of the modern man and the choices, he has to make in order to find happiness. A picture of how the little things in life - close relations, love and health - might be more important than we presume." (continuation in "Director's notes" below)*

**SYNOPSIS:**

Bjarke Ingels started out as a young man dreaming of creating cartoons. Now, he has been named “one of architecture’s biggest stars” by The Wall Street Journal. BIG TIME follows Bjarke during the course of 5 years (2011-2016), while he struggles to finish his biggest project so far.

We are let into Bjarke’s creative processes as well as the endless compromises that his work entails, and we are on the side when his personal life starts putting pressure on him, too.

Bjarke Ingels’ company Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG) has been given the task of designing and building one of the skyscrapers, which will replace the Twin Towers, which collapsed on the 11th of September 2001 in Manhattan. While Bjarke is creating a building, which will change the New York skyline, he is hit by health-related issues. The Film offers an intimate look into the innovative and ambitious Danish architect, whom the entire world is celebrating as a genius.

## **CHARACTERS:**

Bjarke Ingels' parents live in a classic Danish modernistic house north of Copenhagen, and this is where Bjarke grew up. It is a humble home, but with a great view of a forest and a lake to one side and the ocean to the other. This influence has been an ongoing clear inspiration in everything that Bjarke creates.

All of Bjarke Ingels' partners are some of his best friends, and he has managed to build an empire with partners, who each have their own strengths, and whom Bjarke compliments and values deeply.

**Douglas Durst** (b. 1944), the head of The Durst Organization, joined the powerful family business in 1968 while being taught by his father, Seymour, and his two uncles, Ruy and David. The Durst-family has most certainly left their mark on the Manhattan skyline, especially in the area around Midtown. Douglas is a well known environmental activist, and he is behind the construction of New York's first and most environmental skyscrapers: 4 Times Square (2000) and The Bank of America Tower (2010). He is the brother of Robert Durst, who plays a central role in the TV series *The Jinx*.

**Larry Silverstein** (b. 1931) is an investor in property and the founder of the property company Silverstein Properties Inc., which administrates 37161 square kilometers of office-, living-, hotel- and detail-space in New York, and which has been announced as "Best Places to Work in New York City" by *Crain's New York Business*. In 1997, Silverstein left his partner, Bernard Mendik, and bought several big office buildings in Midtown and Lower Manhattan, among others the World Trade Center in 2001, which he signed and purchased only few weeks before 9/11 and the collapse of the towers.

## **DIRECTOR'S INTENTION:**

*By Kaspar Astrup Schröder*

Architecture has always fascinated me. Nevertheless, I have had a hard time being fascinated by films about architecture, because I felt like they were either just pretty pictures or geeky anthropological films directed towards architects. I have wanted to convey architecture in a different and more cinematic way, making it about universal feelings and the people involved. I know Bjarke Ingels through my girlfriend, who started as an intern and later became an architect at his firm. I have known Bjarke for a long time. I met him through my girlfriend, who started as an intern and later became an architect in his company. I have a lot of friends who are architects as well as my sister. Had I not become a film director, I believe that I would have become an architect, too.

I knew Bjarke and his logical way of conveying things: a crystal clear narrative. His buildings are very much about storytelling, and thus I thought that him and his work might be a good cinematic centerpoint for a film about architecture, which would finally be more like the ones in my mind. When he told me about a possible adventure in New York and the project into which he was going to indulge fully, I followed. From then, the film evolved into a film about Bjarke's development from local Danish up-and-coming architect into one of the world's most innovative creators.

First of all, Bjarke's business in New York evolved incredibly quickly. In fact, it evolved with so much speed that I couldn't be there for everything that was happening, so it has been a challenge to follow everything that was going on at the company. At the same time, I was discovering how much pressure Bjarke was under. It was as if he had put himself in the driver's seat in a train, which could never stop, and now he had to lay the tracks while managing the steering wheel. Then, some health-related issues arose, and the pressure became even bigger - that's when I started feeling that the film had the potential of becoming even more universal. That it didn't "only" have the potential of conveying interesting architecture as well as the fascinating brain behind all of it, but it could also paint the greater picture of the modern man and the choices, he has to make in order to find happiness. A picture of how the little things in life - close relations, love and health - might be more important than we presume.

Since we already knew each other, the access had already been established, but Bjarke is generally very open, generous and giving. He is completely down to earth, and the six years in which I have been following him have not changed him one bit. One might think that all this fame and glory would get to his head, as it has with so many people before him, but that is not

the case. On the contrary, it is almost as if he puts an honor in staying grounded and listening to those around him. This is especially obvious in the office, where the best idea always wins - not the boss' personal opinions or ideas, although I would say that Bjarke usually has the key to the solution of most problems that arise.

The challenge in filming was gaining access to Bjarke when he was alone, and especially at times that he was not working. Bjarke is always working. To be able to catch him on his own, where his mind is not on all the projects, is rare, thus I had to gear myself with patience and stay close in order to get into his most intimate space.

My goal has been to give an exclusive look at Bjarke Ingels - one, which we rarely see in other, swiftly produced cinematic portraits of him. A look into his world of creation and change, where dreams can come true, but where the audience also understands just how much talent, courage and sacrifice it takes.

Furthermore, the film gives an exclusive access to one of Denmark's biggest stars and one of the world's greatest architects. We are let in under the surface, not only into his professional brain, but also his personal life. On the surface, Bjarke Ingels' life may seem like a piece of cake, but the film conveys some of the many challenges that follow with a life as one of the world's greatest living architects.

I hope the film can tell a story about architecture, where the audience is also motivated and inspired to reflect upon their own existence - not only on a materialistic level (what kind of house they live in or such), but also on a greater level - what kind of life do they want to live? What does the career really mean in relation to the close relations? I hope the film and the invitation into Bjarke's life can be a catalyst for the audience's own thoughts about life - both concretely on a daily basis, but also on a greater level.

## **STATEMENT FROM BJARKE INGELS ABOUT THE FILM:**

"I got to know Kaspar Astrup Schröder - first through his wife Em, whom I worked with in several laps both on PLOT and BIG - and then because he made a movie about Parkour, which turned out to be more about Architecture, about the city and how we use it. In this connection we met several times - Kaspar was out and filming at the Mountain and the 8-tallet and joining our Expo Pavillon in Shanghai and we had some inspiring conversations about what kind of frames the city offers our lives - how Parkour practitioners - or freebies - blow out the frames - or expand them - because they can jump higher than others. What we do at BIG is in many ways about expanding the framework by thinking them differently and making them more accommodating than you might normally do. Then when Kaspar came and asked if he could follow me for a year or two, I was in no doubt that it could only be a good thing.

Kaspar is a bit of a Renaissance man. He himself is a designer - he has done the graphics for many of his things - incl. BIG TIME - and he's a one-man army with his camera and microphones. We have now participated in other recordings, where there are sometimes 10 people present, who almost fills more than what they have to catch on film. Kaspar is always just himself and his camera - and although the production looks like a big setup job - it's only him on the spot (or a few times, René) - and because he has become such a very good friend, you are almost forgetting that he is there - and therefore he has also got some things in the box that I might not normally have thought fit for the canvas.

I think architecture is one of the most exciting things you can work with as a human being, because it basically is about how we would like to decorate the framework of our lives. What kind of life we want to live. And how do we create the best possible framework for ourselves and each other in the limited space that our planet is. But for some reason it has rarely managed to capture the majority's attention, commitment or imagination. So I was interested in how to make something that was engaging. Kaspar was interested in making something that felt like movies rather than reportage - no interviews, a chronological story, a story arch, beginning, a middle and an end. I thought it sounded like something that could be interesting for people spending an hour and a half of their lives - if we could get people to get a little deeper interest in the fact that architecture is about much more than ugly or pretty, or red Brick or gray concrete.

The film has become completely different than I imagined. First, 7 years suddenly went by! I moved to the US shortly after Kaspar started filming. I turned 40. Our drawing room grew from 80 to 440 men. My world exploded in a lot of cool ways - many of my dreams really began to come true. But also in the way that when you say, "Take care of what you wish for, you might get it," then it's also true that once you get all the opportunities you've dreamed of, your calendar gets filled up, and your head and your life. And this is also what Kaspar has tried to capture.

Now you have to remember that in the end this is a movie Kaspar has made. Kaspar has shot over 70 hours. 60,000 hours has passed since he started. And there is a 90-minute



film. So Kaspar has chosen to tell just the story - out of the many thousands of stories he could have told, which is also a true story - but it's one of many possible.

When he invited me into the editing room to see what is very close to the final result - I had NO idea what to expect. And that was not what I expected - or feared. I think it's a beautiful and authentic story - which clearly contains a part of what my world has been full of, and my mind has worked around and my heart has been beating for - over the last 7 years. I can not judge whether it will be relevant or interesting to anyone other than me and my closest who is in the film. But we will get answers soon.

My personal ambition is to make people spend 90 minutes in a world full of architecture and full of dreams and ideas and struggles and conflicts, and defeats and victories, and compromises and insistence and wishes, and sacrifices , Which must be done to get a house up. And at that time, a greater interest and respect and ownership for the physical environment of our society, which is so important to the life we live - but as we often forget – its difficult to see the forest for just trees.

I had hardly anticipated anything like that happening in the film. I had not even planned to move to New York. I had not dreamed that we should draw the last World Trade Center tower. And I certainly would not have seen a baseball bat come flying ..."

## **FACTS ABOUT BJARKE INGELS:**

Bjarke Ingels (1974, Copenhagen) is a Danish architect and the leader of the architectural firm Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG), which has created some of the most notable buildings around the world. He graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Arts in Architecture.

PLOT was founded by the two young architects Bjarke Ingels and Julien de Smedt. They first met at Rem Koolhaas' architectural firm in Rotterdam, and they subsequently founded their own firm with the goal of evolving an architectural practice based on detailed prior analysis of practical and theoretical foundations and relations.

PLOT won several competitions and Architecture Prizes. For instance, the VM Buildings were awarded with the Swedish architectural magazine Forum's Architecture prize for the best Nordic building in 2005, and it has received the Copenhagen Municipality's architecture prize in 2006. Furthermore, they created the swimming port in Islands Brygge in Copenhagen and the Maritime Youth house.

In 2005, the two founders dissolved the firm.

In 2006, Bjarke Ingels founded his own firm, BIG - Bjarke Ingels Group, which is behind further two prominent buildings in Copenhagen: The Mountain Dwellings (2008) - a ten storey living-space with an indoor parking lot, places next to the VM Buildings, trying to combine garden areas with storey buildings - and the bow-shaped 8TALLET (2010), which consists of different kinds of apartments and offices, tied together by a 1 kilometer long footpath, which meanders around and on top of the building.

Furthermore, BIG has created the Danish pavillon at the World Exhibition EXPO 2010 in Shanghai and the Maritime Museum in Helsingør (which opened in 2013).

A project of a 142 meter tall building with living spaces in Manhattan in New York (VIA West 57 project) started in 2010 and finished in 2016 - a building, which was awarded and celebrated for having redefined the New York skyline, and in 2011, the firm won competition for doing a National Gallery of Art in Nuuk, Greenland, together with the architectural firm TNT Nuuk.

Since 2009, Bjarke Ingels has won several architectural competitions. In October 2011, the Wall Street Journal named him the Innovator of the Year for Architecture. He moved to New York in 2012, where BIG, besides having designed the VIA apartments, won a design competition for improving the flood protection of Manhattan after Hurricane Sandy. Furthermore, BIG is designing the new Two World Trade Center building.

Important buildings and projects:

- VIA West 57 project including the Landmark theater, New York
- Two World Trade Center, New York
- LEGO House, Denmark
- 8Tallet, Ørestad, Copenhagen
- Odense Aqua Center
- Mountain Dwellings, Ørestad, Copenhagen
- Sjakket, Copenhagen
- Helsingør Psychiatric Hospital
- VM Buildings, Ørestad, Copenhagen
- The Maritime Youth house, Amager, Denmark
- Islands Brygge Havnebad/Swimming Port, Islands Brygge, Copenhagen
- Superkilen, Copenhagen

## **FACTS ABOUT BIG:**

BIG is a firm, which uses thorough research and analysis of practical and theoretical issues as a foundation for developing architectural solutions. BIG consists of architects, city planners, designers and other experts. The firm works with housing projects, offices, culture, education, hotels, hospitals, infrastructure and city life all over the world from their offices in Copenhagen, New York City and London.

They create buildings, which are both functional and innovative, while being very aware of costs and saving resources. BIG always starts out with a thorough analysis of the place, the context and the program, as a starting point for further work. BIG has recently completed projects like West 57th - a housing building with 750 apartments in Manhattan (2016), The Maritime Museum of Denmark (2013), Superkilen in Copenhagen (2012), 8TALLET in Copenhagen (2010), all of which have received international praise as well as prizes for their visionary architecture. The firm's first project, the Copenhagen Swimming Port (Københavns Havnebad, 2003) played a crucial part in transforming the city space around Islands Brygge in Copenhagen, from one of the worst industrial areas of the city into a recreational and social center.

Selection of current projects: Vancouver House - a development project in Canada, the masterplan for Smithsonian Campus in Washington D.C., an educational center in the Faroe Islands, Shenzhen Energy Mansion in China, the Museum Center Blåvand, LEGO House in Billund and Amager Bakke in Copenhagen - an energy center, which also functions as a ski slope.

## **SHORT BIOGRAPHIES:**

### **Director Kaspar Astrup Schröder**

Kaspar is an autodidact film director, who also works in the areas of graphic design, art and photography. Kaspar was editing fiction films before his passion for documentary films kicked in, and he subsequently started editing and then directing documentaries. His films have been distributed internationally and premiered at some of the world's biggest festivals such as IDFA, Planete Doc, True/False, Full Frame, Silverdocs, It's All True, Hot Docs, SFIFF and CPH:DOX. In 2013, Kaspar won a Golden Eye Award in the category "Best International Documentary" for his film "RENT A FAMILY INC.". In 2014, Kaspar established the production company Good Company Pictures along with the directors Katrine Philip (Dance for me), Boris Bertram (The War Campaign) and the producer Katrine A. Sahlstrøm (Ai Weiwei - The Fake Case). The company is based in Copenhagen, and it produces international documentaries. The company's first film "Home Sweet Home" was nominated for a prize at IDFA in 2015. In 2017, Kaspar premieres with two new films: WAITING FOR THE SUN (World premiere at CPH:DOX 2017) and BIG TIME about the celebrity architect Bjarke Ingels.

### **Producer Sara Stockmann**

Stockmann has previously produced the Cannes Grand Prix winner "Armadillo" (Janus Metz, 2011) and the IDFA-nominated agenda-setting "Mercy Mercy" (Katrine W. Kjær, 2012). Jannik Splidsboel's "Misfits", produced by Stockmann, world premiered at the Berlin Film Festival 2015 in the Panorama section.

In 2017, Stockmann has 4 documentaries premiering, among others The John Dalli Mystery (Mads Brügger, Mikael Bertelsen & Jeppe Rønne - Special mention at CPH:DOX DOX:AWARD main competition, 2017) and "Bobbi Jene" (Elvira Lind, 2017), which will premiere at Tribeca International Film Festival 2017 as part of the main competition.

Stockmann started Sonntag Pictures in 2012 with the goal of creating a strong foundation for the director/producer collaboration on cinematographic documentaries and transcend the ambition of letting documentaries drive a special mirroring of current geopolitical issues.

Stockmann has a Master of Arts from the University of Copenhagen and the University of Amsterdam, and she was appointed by the Danish Minister of Culture as the head of the Council for short- and documentary films at the Danish Film Institute.

## **SONNTAG PICTURES:**

Sonntag Pictures is a Danish film production company with a strong focus on cinematic auteur driven documentaries for a vast Danish and international audience. Sonntag Pictures identifies with films that combine a strong artistic nerve with a global social way of thinking - often with the ambition and goal of setting the agenda.

The company is lead by the award winning producer Sara Stockmann, who has previously produced ARMADILLO (Cannes Grand Prix 2010 and Emmy award 2011) and the IDFA-nominated MERCY MERCY.

## **DOXBIO:**

Every year, DOXBIO selected six relevant films that address and reflect reality, and they distribute them to audiences all over Denmark. DOXBIO collaborates with 50 cinemas, which all show the films simultaneously on the night of the premiere. Subsequently 15 of the cinemas continue to show the films in their program. At each premiere, a special effort is made to give the audience an extraordinary experience, shaped according to the film.

Follow on [www.doxbio.dk](http://www.doxbio.dk)

## **CAFx:**

For the fourth year in a row, the festival CAFx explores how architecture affects our lives and the world - as well as how our lives and the world affect and shape architecture. The ambition of the festival is to expand the general knowledge about what architecture is and can: expanding and developing the architecture as something more than merely bricks, spaces or frames, but as something sensual, bodily, social, political and human, which enters into every aspect of our lives and existence. The festival explores how and where architecture makes a difference.

Since Copenhagen Architecture Festival started in 2014, it has been their ambition to convey architecture to a big audience by being informal, curious and casting a new light on architecture. creating new meetings between subjects, people and thoughts in the space of the city. Thus, the name of the festival is CAFx - x for the unknown and the cross area. The intention is for the architecture to get its own meaning in the meeting, through the experience and the personal story. This is how architecture is for everyone, not only for the architect.

Through film screenings, exhibitions, lectures, debates, city walks, bike rides, concerts and conferences, CAFx attempts every year to show the wide and diverse variety of the architectural field. Showing how architecture contributes to creating qualities in everyday life, or how and where there is a lack of that, both locally, nationally and globally. This year, the festival has chosen BIG TIME as their opening film.

[www.copenhagenarchitecturefestival.com](http://www.copenhagenarchitecturefestival.com)

### **SUPPORTED BY:**

The Danish Film Institute by consultant Cecilia Lidin and by the Danish Broadcasting Corporation and editor Anders Bruus as well as former editor Mette Hoffmann. Furthermore, several Danish foundations and international TV-stations.

## CREDITS

Production Company: Sonntag Pictures  
Co-Production Company: Good Company Pictures  
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Danish Film Institute  
DR  
Konsul Georg Jorck og hustru Emma Jorck's Fond  
Dreyers Fond  
In co-production with AVROTROS  
In association with SVT, YLE Coproductions.  
Directed by Kaspar Astrup Schröder  
Produced by Sara Stockmann  
Editors: Bobbie Esra G. Pertan  
Cathrine Ambus  
Kaspar Astrup Schröder  
Cinematographer: René Johannesen  
Boris B. Betram  
Henrik Bohn Ipsen  
Sound design: Bobby Hess  
Music composer: Ali Helmwein  
Line-producer: Julie Leerskov  
Producer: Sara Stockmann  
Associate producer: Riina Spørring Zachariassen