

# ARMADILLO

*Armadillo* is an upfront account of growing cynicism and adrenaline addiction in young soldiers at war. Mads and Daniel are Danish soldiers serving their first mission in Helmand, Afghanistan, stationed in Camp Armadillo, right on the frontline, fighting tough battles against the Taliban.

The soldiers are there to help the Afghans, but as fighting gets tougher Mads, Daniel and their friends become cynical, widening the gap between themselves and the Afghan population. Mistrust and paranoia set in causing alienation and disillusion on both sides. In a climactic scene soldiers are seen to have possibly executed wounded Taliban fighters, calling into question their “peace-keeping” role in the country.

## WHAT THE CRITICS SAID

“It is certainly possible to believe otherwise, but the achievement of this film is to forestall and complicate easy judgment. You emerge shaken and bothered, which may sound like a reason not to see the movie. It is actually the opposite.” *New York Times*

“What’s really shocking, perhaps, is not so much the actions performed by some of these soldiers, as the fact that they seem more than equipped to sleep easy with the consequences: the film is less about Afghanistan than about the way young men’s minds work in war today.” *The Independent*

**“REVEALING BOTH  
THE HORROR AND  
ADRENALINE RUSH  
OF WARFARE, DEBUT  
FEATURE HELMER  
JANUS METZ’S GUT-  
PUNCHING DOCU  
ARMADILLO TRACKS  
DANISH SOLDIERS  
OVER THE COURSE OF  
A TOUR OF DUTY IN  
AFGHANISTAN.”**

VARIETY

THE IMPACT

**FIELD GUIDE**

& TOOLKIT

## WHO SAW IT

### **70** FESTIVALS

More than 70 international festivals including Cannes, Toronto and London Film Festival

### **2.6M** ESTIMATED GLOBAL AUDIENCE

Over 2.6 million

### **198K** CINEMA

Screened in over 18 countries with an audience of over 198,000

Top of the Box Office in Denmark for 3 weeks

### **24** BROADCAST

Shown in over 24 countries including PBS in USA and Channel 4 in UK

### **1.2M** ONLINE TRAILER

1,192,994 YouTube views

### **19K** SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

15,914 Facebook Likes

IMDB, 76%, From 4,289 users

Rotten Tomatoes, 92%, Average 7.6/10



## THE CAMPAIGN

The general media up until 2010 - seen from a Danish perspective - had failed to engage people in the war in Afghanistan. The crisis was simply slipping off the agenda and out of people's minds while the Afghans and the International Security Assistance Force soldiers were being increasingly brutalized by a war that was leading nowhere.

The filmmakers wanted to raise public awareness as well as initiate a public and political debate that could create policy change on Afghanistan. As Janus Metz says: *"The mission was to bring the war on Afghanistan back into people's living rooms and make them engaged. There was a feeling that nobody was really caring that there was a war in Afghanistan."*

### THE TEAM

This team are an extremely experienced creative filmmaking team with support from major European film funds and broadcasters, however they had the least experience of

crafting an outreach campaign of all the finalists. The film gained the critical success they may have expected but also set off a tidal wave of events they managed with great skill.

### CAMPAIGN AIMS

The aim of *Armadillo* was to instigate profound critical discussion about the war in Afghanistan

on an informed basis in order to raise general awareness and political concern of the consequences for soldiers, civilians and nations affected by it.

The team sought to achieve this through character-driven filmmaking that would have an emotional impact on viewers and move them to take a stand.

**"THE MISSION  
WAS TO BRING  
THE WAR ON  
AFGHANISTAN  
BACK INTO  
PEOPLE'S LIVING  
ROOMS"**

### HOW THE CAMPAIGN WORKED

Even before *Armadillo* premiered at Cannes, the team knew that they had an explosive and controversial film and that the challenge was



not to create interest, but to manage the media clamour around the film so that a nuanced and subtle public debate about Denmark's war in Afghanistan could be had.

The team had a general concern based on previous examples that The Ministry of Defense and The Ministry of National Affairs in Denmark would try to orchestrate spin campaigns against the film.

To this end they did not release any excerpts from the film before the Cannes premiere and organized for Carsten Jensen, Denmark's pre-eminent public intellectual, to write an essay about the film. He described *Armadillo* as "*an earthquake in a nation's self-understanding.*"

In addition, the director Janus Metz gave an exclusive interview to a leading Danish broadsheet. This meant that the film was given a context before it screened.

Hours after the premiere in Cannes, a special screening of the film was held for journalists, MPs, opinion makers, academics, high ranking members of the Danish Armed Forces and others. Due to the huge interest in the film this screening had to be moved to the largest cinema in Copenhagen (1200 seats).

In addition they courted the cultural press in favour of the news journalists, who would write about the film as a rounded whole rather than seize upon the question of whether the military in the film should be indicted for war crimes, which would have skewed the debate and allowed the military to deflect attention away from the wider issues.

To handle the large political pressure on the film, Janus Metz worked closely with Denmark's top political PR agency Geelmuyden.Kiese, lawyer Tyge Trier and communication advisor, Michael Kristiansen, who is a well known political analyst in Denmark and a former advisor to the former Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

The film screened in cinemas throughout

the Summer of 2010 and in addition Janus Metz toured 15 high schools and community halls in Denmark, talking to approximately 5000 people.

For the Danish TV premiere of *Armadillo* in January 2011, TV2 cleared the entire evening for debate on the war in Afghanistan. Before the film 1 hour was devoted to the stories of Afghan refugees, soldiers and relatives of fallen soldiers. After the film panel discussions between several MPs - including The Minister of Defense and The Minister of Foreign Affairs - as well as academics, opinion makers and other experts were broadcast. They simply called this unprecedented event "Armadillo Night".

## INTERNATIONAL - NORWAY

The film launched in Norway in 2010 with preview screening with director Janus Metz and DOP Lars Skree present. After the screening there was a panel debate with Kristian Berg Harpviken (head of PRIO - the Peace Research Institute Oslo), Finn Skårderud (psychologist) and Sverre Diesen (former Minister of Defense). This screening was covered both by the news on Norway's two biggest TV-channels NRK and TV2.

Subsequently the film was distributed in 75 Norwegian cinemas that Autumn and had the highest number of admissions worldwide after Denmark (42.500).

The film was also booked by The Norwegian Defense University College for a closed screening as part of a debate/seminar right after the film's release.

The United Nations Association held 52 screenings in Norway including an introduction to the film and post-screening debate which reached 8000 people.

In addition a 5 day school tour and talk by editor Per K Kirkegaard and sound designer Rasmus Winther Jensen in Feb 2012 reached a further 3000 students.



## **CAMPAIGN IMPACT & ACHIEVEMENTS**

### **PUBLIC OPINION**

*Armadillo* forged a space for critical debate on the war in Afghanistan, which had until then been virtually non-existent.

In Denmark alone *Armadillo* accumulated more news articles and reports than any other film ever (approx. 3000). There are strong indications that it changed people's general perception of the war and that public support to the war dropped to its lowest ever, as measured after the huge cinema release at the end of 2010.

*"After years of steady support for the Danish soldiers in Afghanistan, the mood of the people turned. For the first time since January 2008 shows a Megafon poll, a majority of Danes have had enough. 47 percent think that Denmark will withdraw its 800 soldiers home from the war zone, while only 42 percent want them to stay and fight on."* Politikien, 24 July 2010

In November 2010, 2 out of 3 Danes said they thought that withdrawal plans had to be put in place.

### **POLITICAL IMPACT**

During the film's cinema release an exit strategy was discussed publicly by politicians for the first time and a date of 2014 was set for withdrawal.

The Minister of Defense called for a consultation on the film with the other political parties in Parliament. The General Secretariat of NATO also requested the film.

The film was used in the official investigation into possible war crimes committed by the soldiers in the film. They were acquitted 6 months later as no evidence was found against them.

*Armadillo* still continues to screen to influential

opinion formers; this year it has been screened at various Danish Embassies in the run up to Danish chairmanship of the EU to start a debate about PTSD and as a showcase for Danish film.

*Armadillo* is now part of the National Curriculum choice in Danish high schools and forms a question in the compulsory exam taken by all Danish students at 16 years old.

## INTERNATIONAL

*Armadillo* was at the centre of multiple high level political discussions not only in Denmark but in a variety of other countries as well, including Finland, Poland, Holland and Sweden.

In Norway *Armadillo* became hugely referential in the Norwegian debate about Afghanistan. After a controversial incident where Norwegian soldiers were quoted saying “*War is better than sex*”, the Norwegian Minister of Defense publically announced: “*Now we have our Armadillo*”, using the name of the film as shorthand to describe political impact.

A selection of the press coverage in Norway is listed below, which indicates the range and depth of discussion around the film in the country:

### AFTENPOSTEN – POLITISK REDAKTØR OM FILMEN

The news/politics editor of Aftenposten, Norway's biggest morning paper, about the importance of the film in the Norwegian debate about the war in Afghanistan.

### AFTENPOSTEN, 17 JUNE

News story about politicians and the military's reaction to the film after a closed preview screening. The film is called a necessary eye-opener to politicians, soldiers and the Norwegian public.

### AFTENPOSTEN, 28 AUGUST

Double-page news story about Norwegian soldiers in Afghanistan and their experience in comparison to the film.

### AFTENPOSTEN NYHETSSAK, 25 AUGUST

The Minister of Defense and the Head of

## “AFTER YEARS OF STEADY SUPPORT FOR THE DANISH SOLDIERS IN AFGHANISTAN, THE MOOD OF THE PEOPLE TURNED”

the Armed Forces says that the film portrays the realities of war in a correct way.

### FORSVARETS FORUM

The Armed Forces' own magazine discusses the film and the role of the soldier in war over several pages with an editorial by the Head of the Armed Forces.

### KLASSEKAMPEN NYHETSSAK, 21 AUGUST

Norway's leading left-wing paper, a three page story about Norwegian soldiers reactions after seeing *Armadillo*.

### MORGENBLADET

Norway's biggest cultural weekly newspaper's editorial, about the importance of the film to spark the debate about the war in Norway.

### VG MAGASIN

Norway's biggest tabloid news paper – an eight page magazine cover story about the film and it's impact.

Around the release of the film, it was discussed in several news programmes; NRK had stories about the film 3 times as well as a follow up about the impact of the film post-release where they also talked to the Danish Minister of Defense.

## CAMPAIGN NUTS & BOLTS

### CAMPAIGN BUDGET

\$15,000

### PRODUCTION BUDGET

\$1,365,163

### LENGTH OF CAMPAIGN

From May 2010 to present

### PRINCIPAL PARTNERS

**Norway:** United Nations screened *Armadillo* to more than 8000 school children.

**US:** POV worked with educational institutions, and national and local organizations to build awareness for the *Armadillo* campaign by organizing screenings, discussions and panels as well as notifying their various constituencies and stakeholders about the national broadcast, screening opportunities, and campaign resource materials

**Denmark:** The Danish Film Institute advised on communications strategy.





The seismic impact of this film on a nation's sense of identity is difficult to quantify; but it's not an exaggeration to say that this film shook Denmark to the core. The complacent idea that Danish soldiers were on a peace-keeping mission in Afghanistan became untenable and the country was forced to confront the fact that they were at war.

*Armadillo* was the most seen (on television and at the box office) film in Denmark, ever, with a staggering 20-25% of the

population estimated to have watched it during its release at some point.

While no Danish politician will admit that the exit strategy from Afghanistan was formed in response to the reaction to the film, it is undeniable that *Armadillo* put this item on the political agenda, and enabled the debate that led to a public discussion about Denmark's role in the conflict.

**“THIS FILM SHOOK DENMARK  
TO THE CORE”**

# TEAM BIOGRAPHY

## DIRECTOR

Born in Denmark in 1974, JANUS METZ received a master's degree in communication and international development studies from Roskilde University.

After working as a documentary researcher, Metz moved to South Africa, where he worked on the television drama *Soul City* before making his debut documentary short *Township Boys* in 2006. Then followed *Adventurers* (2007), *From Thy to Thailand* (2008) and then *Armadillo* (2010).



## PRESS CUTTINGS

These films attracted huge press attention. Below is a small selection of press cuttings. You can read the full articles by following the links below.

### **BBC 2 NEWS SHOW**

<http://bbc.in/TH2jDY>

### **BBC WORLD SERVICE**

<http://bbc.in/RjnRsR>

### **THE GUARDIAN**

<http://tiny.cc/fcc4dw>

### **FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

<http://fam.ag/RjnXAN>

### **WNYC, BRIAN LEHRER SHOW**

<http://tiny.cc/j2c4dw>

### **ARMADILLO DESCRIBED AS AN EARTHQUAKE TO DANISH NATIONAL SELF PERCEPTION** by Danish writer

Carsten Jensen

<http://tiny.cc/wnc4dw>

### **ARMADILLO DESCRIBED AS "THE MOST IMPORTANT DANISH DOC EVER" IN DANISH DAILY JP**

<http://tiny.cc/ljf4dw>

### **"ARMADILLO-NIGHT" AT DANISH TV2.**

2 hours of political debate on Danish National TV. Short intro on youtube

<http://tiny.cc/x6g4dw>

### **INTERVIEW WITH JANUS METZ**

by "Politiken" (biggest Danish New paper): "What would you have done?"

<http://tiny.cc/eme4dw>

### **JANUS METZ ON NORWEGIAN TV (NRK)**

about the brutalizing effect of war

<http://bit.ly/RV2XOb>



# AWARDS & PRIZES

**NOMINATED FOR 4 EMMY'S.**  
**WINNER of 2012 EMMY for Best Editing.**

**CANNES 2010** - Semaine de la Critique - Grand Prix

**LONDON FILM FESTIVAL 2010** - Grierson Award

**ZÜRICH 2010** - Best Documentary

**CALGARY 2010** - Best Documentary

**EUROPEAN FILM AWARDS 2010** - Nominated Best Documentary

**IDFA 2010** - Nominated, DocU award

**MOSCOW 2IN1 2010** - Best Photography & Best Sound Design

**SVEND AWARD 2010** (Film of the Year as voted by Danish cinemas)

**THE ROBERT AWARD 2011** - Best Documentary (Danish film industry award)

**THE BODIL AWARD 2011** - Best Documentary (Danish film critics award)

**RAMDAM, TOURNAI 2011** - Best Documentary

**CINEMA FOR PEACE 2011** - Nominated

**DOCPOINT, WARZAW 2011** - Audience Award

FILM THIRD MAY 2010 KL. 09:57

## Carsten Jensen: 'Armadillo' is an earthquake



**EARTHQUAKES.** "Armadillo' rakes in so much blanket away and forcing Denmark to consider the existential and political questions that we now have for years been delayed by all possible lies and concealment", says Carsten Jensen. - Photo: DRESLING JENS

Documentaries will change the Danish self-understanding, says author.

Ad

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AF TORBEN BENNER

Armadillo is somewhat larger than a debate, movies and more than a political bomb. It's an earthquake in a nation's self-understanding. " Author and critic Carsten Jensen

CANNES 2012



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## Armadillo - Er det prisen værd - Intro..mpg

TheJerne



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Afghanistan War on Film

Friday, April 15, 2011

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Janus Metz, director of the film "Armadillo", discusses his film and the challenge of capturing this war on film.

GUESTS: Janus Metz

TAGS: film, war

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Share stories about the before-30 life experience that shaped your politics as That's My Issue continues. Plus: Nina Khrushcheva and Masha Lipman discuss free speech in the context of Russia's Pus...

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The Strand

05/04/2011  
Armadillo

An award-winning documentary trains a spotlight on the young men fighting in Afghanistan.

The Strand: 05/04/2011

The best of the world's arts, film, music and literature a brought to you every day.

00:00 / 18:00

ABOUT THIS CHAPTER:  
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with **GEORGE ALAGIAH**

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## Filming on the frontline in Afghanistan

An award-winning documentary has shocked audiences with its close-up portrayal of the Afghan war.

Armadillo follows a group of young Danish soldiers on their first tour in Helmand province in 2009.

The documentary has also sparked an official military investigation into some of the events it shows.

Naga Munchetty speaks to the director, Janus Metz about what he was trying to achieve with the film.

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### FØRKVELD

Guests, reports and music from Big studio in Bergen.

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- January 2012
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  - Førkveld 09/27/10
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    - Guest: Peter Jöback
    - Viggos world - task
    - Food by Hanne Frost part 2
    - Moose hunting in Trøndelag
    - Guest: Janus Metz, director "Armadillo"
    - Atle's useless world
    - Food by Hanne Frost part 2

### Førkveld 09/27/10

A live entertainment magazine from the studio in Bergen with topical guests, music, stories, contests, and direct reports from across the country. Presenter is Anette Evensen. Guests: Hanne Frost, Peter Jöback, Janus Metz

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Image from the film "Armadillo".



BY SØREN HOEY, KPN.DK 'S BROADCAST EMPLOYEE . PUBLISHED 16-05-2010

**Jyllands-Posten**

→ PC Health Check

## "Armadillo": The most important Danish documentary

Whether you are for or against the war is "Armadillo" radical, exciting and brutal.

"There are three men in the ditch ..."

"No, there is 4"

"Clean the ditch? NOW" (sound of automatic machine guns)

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## FOCUSING CANNES 2012

P <sup>10</sup>

OVERVIEW 2012 They won the Kim Skottes diary Grand Director columnist

FILM FIRST MAY 2010 KL. 11.18

# What would you have done as a Dane in the war?



**SHOOTING TEAM.** 'Armadillo' is close to the Danish soldiers and the Taliban. "If you want to understand what is happening, then you have to portray it without wrapping it," says director Janus Metz. - Photo: Lars Skree

Directed by Janus Metz was the first followed the Danish soldiers on quite close quarters at the front in Afghanistan.

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### AF TORBEN BENNER

They are on their way out of the zone. In the distance is a farm with mud walls around. Team 7 has been in Afghanistan for five months in Helmand Province. Specifically, the

### CANNES 2012





September/October 2011

REVIEW ESSAY

## Groundhog War

The Limits of Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan

Bing West

*Bing West is the author, most recently, of [The Wrong War: Grit, Strategy, and the Way Out of Afghanistan](#) [1]. He is a former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs and a former combat infantryman in the U.S. Marine Corps.*

In the decade after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, U.S. movie studios released more than 200 war movies. During World War II, 65 percent of Americans saw at least one movie a week. Theaters showed newsreels with patriotic music prior to the feature film, delivering both information and entertainment to the American public to boost the collective commitment to winning the war.

In the 1960s, weekly movie attendance fell to less than ten percent of the population; television became Americans' principal entertainment medium, as well as their window onto the war in Vietnam. And as the war escalated, so did the negative tone of the nightly broadcasts: this was the era of network television news that stressed, "If it bleeds, it leads," an attitude that, in contrast to the movies of the 1940s, helped erode public morale.

After the Vietnam War, the Pentagon concluded that it was self-defeating to let cameramen ride military helicopters so that they could capture 30 seconds of gory footage and then broadcast it without context. Thus, beginning with the invasion of Afghanistan after 9/11 and then continuing in the war in Iraq, the U.S. military allowed correspondents onto the battlefields only if they embedded with military units. This practice created bonds between correspondents and soldiers that mitigated the journalists' impulse to focus on covering the violence and carnage alone. Embedding also helped limit regular nightly news broadcasts about the wars. Considering the large overall number of units deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq, firefights were relatively rare; in fact, most U.S. units experienced long periods of boredom. And for many networks in a television news

## Armadillo: the Afghanistan war documentary that shocked Denmark

In Denmark, the press and public have been stunned by Armadillo, Janus Metz's documentary about a UK-Danish base in Afghanistan, and the actions of the soldiers based there

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**Geoffrey Macnab**

[guardian.co.uk](#), Thursday 3 June 2010 21.45 BST

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Armadillo, Janus Metz's documentary about Danish soldiers in Afghanistan

Guess which film knocked *Prince of Persia* off the top spot at the Danish box office this week. *Sex and the City 2*? *Valhalla Rising 3*? Wrong: it's a new film called *Armadillo*, by young Danish director Janus Metz, that has provoked a furious debate in Denmark since its premiere in Cannes last week. The film, its director calculates, has already been the subject of 300 to 400 articles in the Danish press. The Danish minister of defence, Gitte Lillelund Bech, has seen it, as have many other politicians and senior members of the military, who have now commissioned an inquiry into events it shows. There has been such a clamour among the public to see it that the film has been rushed into cinemas this week, almost two months in advance of its original release date.