

The Midnight Sun

ScanFest 2006 - Bigger and Better Than Ever!

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Calendar of Events

- **ScanFest Committee Leader Meeting**
Sanna Tucker's house
4064 Ancestry Circle
Matthews, NC 28104
Friday, January 5
7:00 pm
- **Checkers Game**
Charlotte Bobcats Arena
333 East Trade Street
Saturday, February 10
7:30 pm
- **ScanFest 2007!**
Wachovia Atrium
301 S. Tryon Street
Charlotte, NC 28202
Saturday, November 3
11 am - 5 pm

The Scandinavian community in Charlotte put its best foot forward at ScanFest 2006, held on Saturday, November 4. Blue-topped vendor booths transformed the Wachovia Atrium into a festive venue in which to showcase our proud Scandinavian culture.

Sanna Tucker, Mistress of Ceremonies, opened the festivities at noon by introducing the flag ceremony, which was followed by the playing of the national anthem of each Scandinavian country as their flag was presented. For most people in attendance, it was the first time they had heard these anthems.

Throughout the day there was so much activity that visitors never lacked for something to do, see, or hear. From the native costume fashion show on stage to product demonstrations, there was something new happening to grab the interest of everyone regardless of when they first arrived at ScanFest.



During her many announcements, Sanna greeted everyone with the theme of the festival, "Skål Y'all." Vendors were busy all day showing and selling their unique wares. Café Scandinavia was busy serving cakes,

cookies and cinnamon rolls washed down with Scandinavian coffee or glögg. Bids for items at the Silent Auction table were brisk. Who could blame anyone for bidding on Fjord Design Flatware valued at \$300 or Beer for a Year, courtesy of Carlsberg? There

were many other items offered at the Silent Auction including Scandinavian jewelry, cookbooks, slippers, as well as a handcrafted knife. The lucky high bidders were announced from the stage an hour before the festival closed. And, there was a raffle that offered a variety of items from a \$200 leather handbag to Kransekake (cake). Two sets of winners were announced during the day.



The Scandans Dancers from Raleigh were a big hit of the festival. People gathered around the dance floor as the dancers, dressed in native costumes, performed a variety of fast-moving dances.

Children are always a big part of any kind of Scandinavian celebration, and ScanFest 2006 was no exception. Children of the

Finnish School sang traditional songs in the native language. The children of the Swedish School performed Sankta Lucia, a memorable highlight.

We were honored to host Marianne Fosland, Cultural Attaché to the Norwegian Embassy, and Pam Burgess, Mayor Pro-Tem of the City of Charlotte, who presented Marianne with the key to the city.

If you were unable to get to this year's ScanFest, you'll have another chance next year and it will be bigger and better than ever. Skål Y'all!

Submitted by Harvey Cohen

Join Us For a Checkers Game!

SAGA of the Carolinas will be hosting a social event at the Charlotte Checkers home game versus the Texas Wildcatters on Saturday, February 10, at 7:30 pm. Details about

ticket prices and online purchasing will be distributed via email to our distribution list and in the next issue of *The Midnight Sun*. So mark your calendars



and invite your friends - we'll have tons of fun cheering on our Charlotte Checkers!

Christmas in Scandinavia

Christmas is a special time of year in many parts of the world, and Scandinavia is no exception! In this month's issue of *The Midnight Sun*, we are highlighting a few of the traditions that make the holidays special in the Nordic countries.

Finland's Most Important Day of the Christmas Season

Unlike many other countries, the most important celebration in Finland is Christmas Eve, December 24. This includes Christmas saunas, preparation of Christmas dishes, and then the enjoyment of traditional delicacies such as herring, salmon roe, rosolli (a vegetable salad with beetroot, carrot, potato and gherkins), casseroles of carrot, rutabaga and potato, ham, gingerbread cookies and a cold soup made of pureed plums.

Some of the families cut down their Christmas trees the morning of Christmas Eve. The trees are usually found at the forest owned by the family.

At noon of Christmas Eve "Christmas Peace" is proclaimed at the city of Turku which is the oldest city in Finland. The bells of the over 700 year old Turku Cathedral ring in many Finnish homes as people view the age-old ceremony on TV. It is then that people usually begin their Christmas festivities.

The highlight of the evening is of course when Santa knocks on the door. He always visits the children who have been nice and brings them some gifts. Children usually have prepared a song or a short performance for Santa in exchange for the gifts.

Christmas Season ends after the Twelfth Night after Christmas Eve which is January 6.

Submitted by Sanna Tucker

Iceland's Yule Presents

Yuletide gifts are not new to Iceland, but they are only about one hundred years old in the form in which we know them today. In the Saga era, chieftains regularly gave gifts to their guests at Yule. These were most often of a practical and serviceable nature.

In past centuries everyone received an article of clothing from their employer, along with a pair of ornate shoes known as *Jólaskór*, *Yule Shoes*. These were not considered presents but a bonus for work well done.

Early in the last century it became customary to give

Denmark's Yummiest Traditions!

Food has always been an important part of the Christmas celebrations in Denmark, and even though you can buy all you need in shops and grocery-stores, at least some of it is made at home. Normally cookies and sweets are made together with the children and are part of the Christmas preparations. Traditional Christmas cookies are vanilla wreaths, brown cookies with cardamom, cinnamon and candied peel, "klejner" which are cakes cooked in oil or fat, and small, hard biscuits called pepper-nuts. Some people also make honey-cakes in all kinds of shapes decorated with white icing. These may even be used as Christmas decorations.

Sweets are also made at home in many families, especially chocolates. Marzipan, nuts, nougat, dried fruit, almond, liquors like brandy, rum etc. are typical ingredients. You then make your own chocolate covered marzipan bars and all other kinds of small sweets.

Another Christmas time event taking place throughout December is having people over for glögg and "apple-pieces". Glögg is originally Swedish and basically hot red wine and a squeeze of brandy or snaps, and with cinnamon, cardamom, raisins and pieces of almond. Glögg is served with a small hot cake of batter called "apple-pieces" even though they do not contain apple anymore. It is eaten with jam and sugar or icing sugar. In some families glögg and apple-pieces is a "Little Christmas Eve" tradition. The "Little Christmas Eve" is the evening before Christmas, in Denmark the evening before December 23.

each child, or even everyone in the house, a candle at Yule. This was no small thing in the dark of the winter nights in Iceland, as the light from the candles was much brighter than the light from the ordinary oil lamps in which liver oil was burned. Later on it became customary to add a deck of cards to the candle.

As everywhere else in the world, Yule presents grew in size and quantity, and just over 100 years ago merchants start advertising their goods as Yule presents during December. Today this starts in November, with the Yule season getting longer, presents continuing to grow in size and in terms of cost, and the reasons for giving them fading quickly from memory.

In the Saga era the chieftains gave gifts at Yule to cement friendship, which seems to be a pretty good reason to give gifts.

Other traditional Christmas food eaten throughout December are oranges, clementines, nuts and apples. For lunch liver paste, meatballs, Christmas ham, herrings, sausages and pate are common dishes. As for drinks and beverages, a special Danish tradition is the various Christmas beers brewed and sold only at Christmas time. Every single brewery has their own special Christmas beer with names like "snow beer", "X-mas", "Christmas brew" etc. Snaps is also a major Christmas liquor, and like the Christmas beers, a special Christmas snaps is produced every year.

The day of Christmas Eve, December 24, Christmas dinner is served and it too has a lot of traditions attached to it.

Some families start with rice pudding. A whole almond is hidden in the pudding and whoever gets the almond receives the almond present, traditionally but not necessarily a marzipan pig. Afterwards most people have either duck, roast, turkey or goose served with potatoes, gravy, and cooked red cabbage. If you did not start with rice pudding, you have a kind of cold rice pudding for dessert along with cherry sauce and, of course, the whole almond. Christmas beer, a sweet beer with very little alcohol, or juice is served with the porridge and red wine is common with the main course.

After the Christmas dinner it is time to light the tree, walk around it and sing the Christmas carols, some of which are known all over the world like "Holy Night, Silent Night," "Jingle Bells," "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer." Finally the presents are opened, and when the unwrapping is done, it is time for coffee and sweets before bedtime.

Nowadays most Yule gifts are supposed to show our friendship too. Sadly this is often overshadowed by burgeoning commercialism.

In Iceland, as I suppose is the case the world over, children like to receive toys as Yule presents, and the "soft" packages that grandparents tend to give are not always popular as they are likely to contain clothes. But a new piece of clothing is considered necessary as a Yule present in Iceland.

Another constant of every Yule in Iceland are the books. There are more books sold per capita in Iceland than in most other countries, and the bulk of those sales are before Yule. The Yule present for Father and Mother is very often a book and the children always receive a book or two.

The Norwegian "Nisse"

The Norwegian "Nisse" is not like his American relative Santa Claus. The Norwegian "Nisse" differs from both Santa Claus and St. Nicholas. In modern Norway we have really two types of "nisser".

The name "Nisse" probably derives from St. Nicholas. But "nisser" - which are elves (or gnomes) are old figures which existed long before the birth of Christ. There are several types of "nisser" in Norway. The most known is the "Fjøsnisse" which is a "nisse" who takes care of the animals on the farms. The "Fjøsnisse" is very short and often bearded and lives in a barn or a stable. He wears clothes of wool and often has a red knitted hat. The "Fjøsnisse" often plays tricks on people. Sometimes he will scare people by blowing out the lights in the barn or he will scare the farm dog at night. You can hear the dogs bark! He can become very friendly with the people that

live on the farm, but one should never forget to give him a large portion of porridge on Christmas Eve - or else he will play tricks for example move the animals around in the barn, braid the horses' mane and tail, and other tricks like that.....

Of course we also have a Christmas nisse (Julenissen) which in most homes is more or less identical to Santa Claus. The most characteristic features of the Norwegian Santa Claus "Julenisse" are his red stocking cap and long white beard. The nisse wears knee breeches, hand-knitted stockings, a Norwegian sweater and a homespun jacket. On top he wears a heavy fur coat - it can get cold in Norway in the winter. He is jolly and happy, but can also be stern. Make no mistake, the Norwegian Julenisse is real. He comes to the house with a sack of presents on Christmas Eve. When the Christmas porridge is put out in the barn on Christmas Eve, it is gone the next morning. It is best to stay on his good side. If you

forget, he can stir up a lot of trouble.

At 5 p.m. on Christmas Eve all the churches begin to ring in Christmas. After church, the family gathers for a holiday meal. Food traditions vary, but a porridge meal with an almond hidden in someone's bowl is on most menus. Not everything has changed with time. Before the family sits down to dinner a bowl of porridge with butter, sugar and cinnamon has to be put out for the nisse. Afterwards the family sit down to listen to the Christmas Gospel and then join hands to walk around the Christmas tree, singing carols. The children anxiously await the knock on the door, announcing the arrival of Julenissen with his sack full of gifts. Before he takes the presents out of the sack he always asks "Are there any good children here?" Shop-bought presents have gradually replaced the home-made presents that used to be common.

Sweden's Sankta Lucia

White gowns, stars and candles

The real candles once used are now battery-powered, but there is still a special atmosphere when the lights are dimmed and the sound of the children singing grows as they enter from an adjacent room.

Tradition has it that Lucia is to wear 'light in her hair', which in practice means a crown of electric candles in a wreath on her head. Each of her handmaidens carries a candle, too. Parents gather in the dark with their new digital cameras at the ready.

The star boys, who like the handmaidens are dressed in white gowns, carry stars on sticks and have tall paper cones on their heads. The brownies bring up the rear, carrying small lanterns.

Competing to be Lucia

Competition for the role of Lucia can be tough. Each year, a national Lucia is proclaimed in one or other of the TV channels, while every town and village worth the name chooses its own Lucia. Candidates are presented in the local newspaper a couple of weeks in advance.

Staunchly opposed to privilege, Sweden has always sought to avoid ranking people, which is why beauty contests and 'homecoming queen' events are rare. The Lucia celebration, however, has been an exception. Every year, local newspaper subscribers are invited to vote for one or other of the candidates.

You can no longer count on the blonde winning, although many a Miss Sweden has started out as the local Lucia. On Lucia Day, the winner is announced and is then driven around town, preferably in a horse-drawn vehicle of some kind, to spread light and song in food stores, factories, old-age

homes and medical centres.

Lucia - the bearer of light

Alongside Midsummer, the Lucia celebrations represent one of the foremost cultural traditions in Sweden, with their clear reference to life in the peasant communities of old: darkness and light, cold and warmth.

Lucia is an ancient mythical figure with an abiding role as a bearer of light in the dark Swedish winters.

All Swedes know the standard Lucia song by heart, and everyone can sing it, in or out of tune. On the morning of Lucia Day, the radio plays some rather more expert renderings, by school choirs or the like.

The Lucia celebrations also include ginger snaps and sweet, saffron-flavoured buns (lussekatter) shaped like curled-up cats and with raisin eyes. You eat them with glögg or coffee.

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Support Locks of Love at ScanFest 2007

It is only 11 1/2 months until next ScanFest and we are challenging you to grow your hair for a good cause. We are a group of 5 ScanFest ladies who are already committed and we would like to see you next year at ScanFest donating your hair to Locks of Love. This year we had Great Clips taking donations and doing haircuts at ScanFest 2006. Janice Bowers gave her 3rd donation to Locks of Love with the help of Santa Claus. Here is the scoop about the program:

Locks of Love is a non-profit organization that provides hairpieces to financially disadvantaged children under age 18 suffering from long-term medical hair loss. We meet a unique need for children by using donated hair to create the highest



quality hair prosthetics. Most of the children helped by Locks of Love have lost their hair due to a medical condition called alopecia areata, which has no known cause or cure. The prostheses we provide help to restore their self-esteem and their confidence, enabling them to face the world and their peers.

We accept 10" minimum hair length (tip to tip). We cannot accept wigs, falls, or synthetic hair.

Please bundle hair in ponytail or braid.

Hair needs to be clean, dry, placed in a plastic bag, then padded envelope.

We need hair from men and

women, young and old, all colors and races.

Hair may be colored or permed, but not bleached or chemically damaged (if unsure, ask your stylist).

Hair swept off the floor is not usable.

Hair cut years ago is usable if it has been stored in a ponytail or braid.

Hair that is short, gray, or unsuitable for children will be separated from the ponytails and sold at fair market value to offset the cost of manufacturing.

You may pull curly hair straight to measure the minimum 10".

The majority of all hair donated comes from children who wish to help other children.

Layered hair may be divided into multiple ponytails for donation.

Please note: Anyone can cut

your hair as long as the above guidelines are followed.

Keep us posted during the year of your progress. If you have any questions, please contact SAGA at info@scandinavianconnection.org.

Sanna, Arja, Jenn, Emma and Emily

Committee Leader Meeting for Scanfest 2007

We welcome everyone who are interested in hearing more about the "behind the scenes" action of Scanfest 2007 and would like to be involved more in planning the upcoming events.

Scanfest is looking for enthusiastic people in helping with following:

- Signage
- Audiovisual
- Layout
- Stage Decorations/Staging
- Children's section
- Vendor and Volunteer Hospitality
- Entertainment coordinator
- Vendor's Support
- "Gofer" - pick this, pick that! And then some...
- Thank you Dinner planning and reservation

RSVP to Sanna by January 1, 2007: 704-846-9070



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Happy Birthday, Queen Silvia!

Queen Silvia of Sweden turns 63 this December 23, and we are publishing the Silvia Cake recipe in her honor! This cake was the most popular item at Café Scandinavia during UNCC's International Festival in September. We hope you enjoy it!

Silvia Cake (makes 30 servings)

Preheat oven to 350°F

Cake:

2 eggs + 1 egg white
 1 1/4 cup sugar
 1 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
 3 teaspoons baking powder
 1/2 cup cold water

Grease a 15x10x2-inch pan. In a bowl combine sugar, eggs, and egg white. Beat with electric mixer until almost white in color. Combine baking powder with flour. Add to the egg mixture in small portions, alternating with water. Pour in baking pan. Bake in

350°F oven for 10-12 min. Done when toothpick inserted in center comes out clean

Icing:

10 tbsp butter
 1/3 cup sugar
 1/4 cup powdered sugar
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract or 3 teaspoons vanilla sugar powder
 1 egg yolk
 Coconut flakes or chocolate sprinkles

Melt butter and sugar in a saucepan. Add egg yolk and vanilla. Stir over low heat till smooth. Drizzle icing over warm cake, spreading with spoon. Sprinkle with coconut or chocolate shavings.

Swedish City Strives to Safeguard Straw Goat

For 40 years it has been torched, vandalized, had its legs cut off and even been run over by a car.

But officials in the Swedish city of Gavle are guaranteeing that this year's giant straw Christmas goat -- the victim of Sweden's most violent yule tradition - will survive unscathed.

The 13-metre-high goat -- a centuries-old yule symbol that predates Santa Claus as the bringer of gifts to Swedish homes - has been burned down 22 times since it was first set up in Gavle's square on Dec. 3, 1966.

But for its 40th anniversary Sunday, officials think they have finally outsmarted resourceful vandals by dousing the battered ram with flame-resistant chemicals normally used on airplanes.

"It is impossible to burn it to the ground

this year, although you might be able to singe its hooves," said Anna Ostman, a spokeswoman for the committee in charge of building the goat. "After 40 years, we think we finally found the solution."

The company providing the fireproof treatment is so sure of its resilience that its spokesman Freddy Klassmo told newspaper Aftonbladet that "not even napalm

can set fire to the goat now." For those who want to follow its fate, a 24-hour web cam has been set up to film the straw goat where it stands on the central square in Gavle, 145 km north of Stockholm.

"We can sleep very soundly at night now," she said. "The goat can too."

While the origins of the Christmas goat are unclear, the symbol is believed to date to Norse mythology and the two goats that

drew the carriage of Thor, god of thunder.

Many Swedes place a small straw goat underneath their Christmas tree, or hang miniature versions on the branches.

Since 1966, just 10 of Gavle's giant goats have survived beyond Christmas Day. Aside from being burned, several were beaten down and the 1976 goat was hit by a car.

The vandals are seldom caught, but the 2001 culprit -- 51-year-old American Lawrence Jones -- was convicted and spent 18 days in jail.

The 2005 vandals -- who witnesses said were dressed up as Santa Claus and the Gingerbread Man -- remain at large. The pair fired flaming arrows at the goat, reducing it to its steel skeleton.



Finland's Road to Independence

On the 6th of December, Finland celebrates its 89th year of independence. The Finnish nation went through a great deal before it became a country often finding itself as a battlefield between the two mighty northern powers, Sweden on one side and Russia on the other.

The destiny of the Finns and their need for a national identity started in the beginning of the 18th century when they were once more being used as a battlefield between the Sweden's King Charles XII and Russia's Czar Peter the Great. This war became an endless issue between the two armies with the Finns in the middle and the only ones who were paying the cost in every sense.

The worst part was that the Finns stopped entrusting their defense to the Swedish who let them be victims Peter the Great's plans. Around the end of the 18th century the Finns began realizing the need of an independent state, especially after the increased Finnish industry in Turku and Tampere, plus the expansion of Finnish commerce with Finnish ships sailing from the northern seas to the Mediterranean.

Czar Alexander I used this separation and distance between the Finns and Swedes by invading Finland once more in 1808. The Swedes didn't send any help to the weak Finns, who had to withdraw to

Lapland, and by September 1809 Sweden resigned from any right they had in Finland surrendering their province to

Russia. Finland became a Grand Duchy with its own government and parliament, and fifty years later minted its own currency, the Finnish marka.

Over the next hundred years the relationship between the Russians

and the Finns was turbulent, with the best period was Alexander II, who supported Finnish nationalists and opposed Russian bureaucrats based in Finland. He even gave the seat of philosophy in the University of Helsinki to the promoter of Finnish independence Schnelman. The worst period was just before the Russian revolution during Czar Nicolas II reign, with the Russian army acting more as an occupation army than anything else.

At the beginning of Bolsheviks revolution in February 1917, the personal union that Czar Nicolas II had signed between Russia and Finland according the Finns, lost its legal base and on November 5th, the same year, the Finnish parliament declared itself to be 'the possessor of supreme state power' in Finland, based on

Finland's constitution, which had been enacted by the Estates after Gustav III's coup.

On December 4th the Senate of Finland came to the parliament with a new republican institution to govern and a declaration, so technically that was the beginning of Finland's independence. The declaration reads:

The people of Finland have by this step taken their fate in their own hands; a step both justified and demanded by present conditions. The people of Finland feel deeply that they cannot fulfill their national and international duty without complete sovereignty. The century-old desire for freedom awaits fulfillment now; Finland's people step forward as a free nation

among the other nations in the world.

(...) The people of Finland dare to confidently wait how other nations in the world recognize that with their full independence and freedom, the people of Finland can do their

best in fulfillment of those purposes that will win them a place amongst civilized peoples.

On December 6th Parliament adopted the declaration, which is why this day is celebrated as a national holiday, also known as Finland's Independence Day.





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We're on the Web!

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Mission Statement

SAGA of the Carolinas, a non-profit organization, is organized to promote cultural exchange between the United States and the Nordic Countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden; to preserve and enjoy the Scandinavian traditions, customs, history and cultural heritage; to increase understanding of the Nordic people and societies among Americans; and to provide a forum where people interested in Scandinavia can meet and enjoy Nordic culture and activities.

Calling all Scan-Am Groups!

If your group or organization would like to have your events or news included in the next issue of The Midnight Sun, please send your submission of 100-200 words to Jenn@ScandinavianConnection.org by Friday, December 29.

Mads Mikkelsen Takes Hollywood By Storm

In his home country of Denmark, Mads Mikkelsen is big. George Clooney big. He's been voted "sexiest man in the world," won the Danish equivalent of an Oscar and is the one star who consistently packs 'em in at theaters - reports Variety.

But as the James Bond franchise reinvents itself with "Casino Royale," Mikkelsen will be transforming his international profile as well, thanks to a highly visible role as 007 archvillain Le Chiffre (played by none other than Peter Lorre and Orson Welles in previous versions).

"Nobody knows who I am here, so it's definitely starting over in the sense of being known. But I've been doing this for a while now, so that's fine," says Mikkelsen, who also will be courting U.S. auds as a dreamy humanitarian whose sex appeal gets in the way of his change-the-world ideals in "After the Wedding," Denmark's official Oscar selection.

Since his American film debut in Antoine Fuqua's "King Arthur" in 2004, the 41-year-old former dancer has just skirted Hollywood fame. His demo reel has made the rounds of top Hollywood casting directors, and the thesp was seriously considered for co-starring roles in "The Da Vinci Code" and "North Country."

It was his part in Dogma 95 film "Open Hearts" that caught "Casino Royale" producer Barbara Broccoli's

attention. "We had to be sure that he could be a worthy opponent to James Bond," says Broccoli, who uses words like "flawless" and "electrifying" to describe Mikkelsen's performance. "I saw Mads in 'Open Hearts' and was impressed with his power and strength onscreen."

"It definitely put him on the radar with people who didn't already know him," says his L.A. rep, Sandra Chang of Industry Entertainment. "The way this town works, everything is by list, and suddenly you wind up higher on the list."

But Bond films don't usually make stars out of their villains, says Box Office Mojo publisher Brandon Gray, adding that "Casino Royale" could serve as a nice platform to launch Mikkelsen in more traditional roles.

"A good example is Sean Bean," says Gray. "He played the villain in 'GoldenEye,' Pierce Brosnan's debut as 007. He didn't go on to be a leading man in America, but he continues to be a very prolific actor, doing a lot of big movies."

According to Mikkelsen, who has yet to choose another American project, finding the right material is



more important than the fame. "I still have Denmark, and I'm definitely going to live and work there for the rest of my life," he says.

"Whatever happens outside of Denmark is just icing on the cake for me."

The actor made his film debut in 1996 as a small-time hood/junkie in "Pusher." For the next several years his films -- including "Flickering Lights," "Wilbur Wants to Kill Himself" and "The Green Butchers" -- made the festival circuit. Back in Scandinavia, it was his perf in the 2000 gritty police

drama "Unit One" that catapulted him to Clooneylike star status.

In addition to "Casino Royale" and "After the Wedding," Mikkelsen has had a busy year abroad, starring in Peter Lindmark's Swedish action thriller "Exit" and relationship drama "Prague" by Ole Christian Madsen.

"I've never thought about having a career, to be honest," says Mikkelsen. "I've always tried to focus on the jobs and, hopefully, eventually that will become a career later on."