

emil möller



A utilização deste artigo

*After years of patient tracking, director inspector **Stephen Whelan** finally lands his man, a Swedish talent who puts his heart and soul, and childhood memories, into each of his award-winning shots*

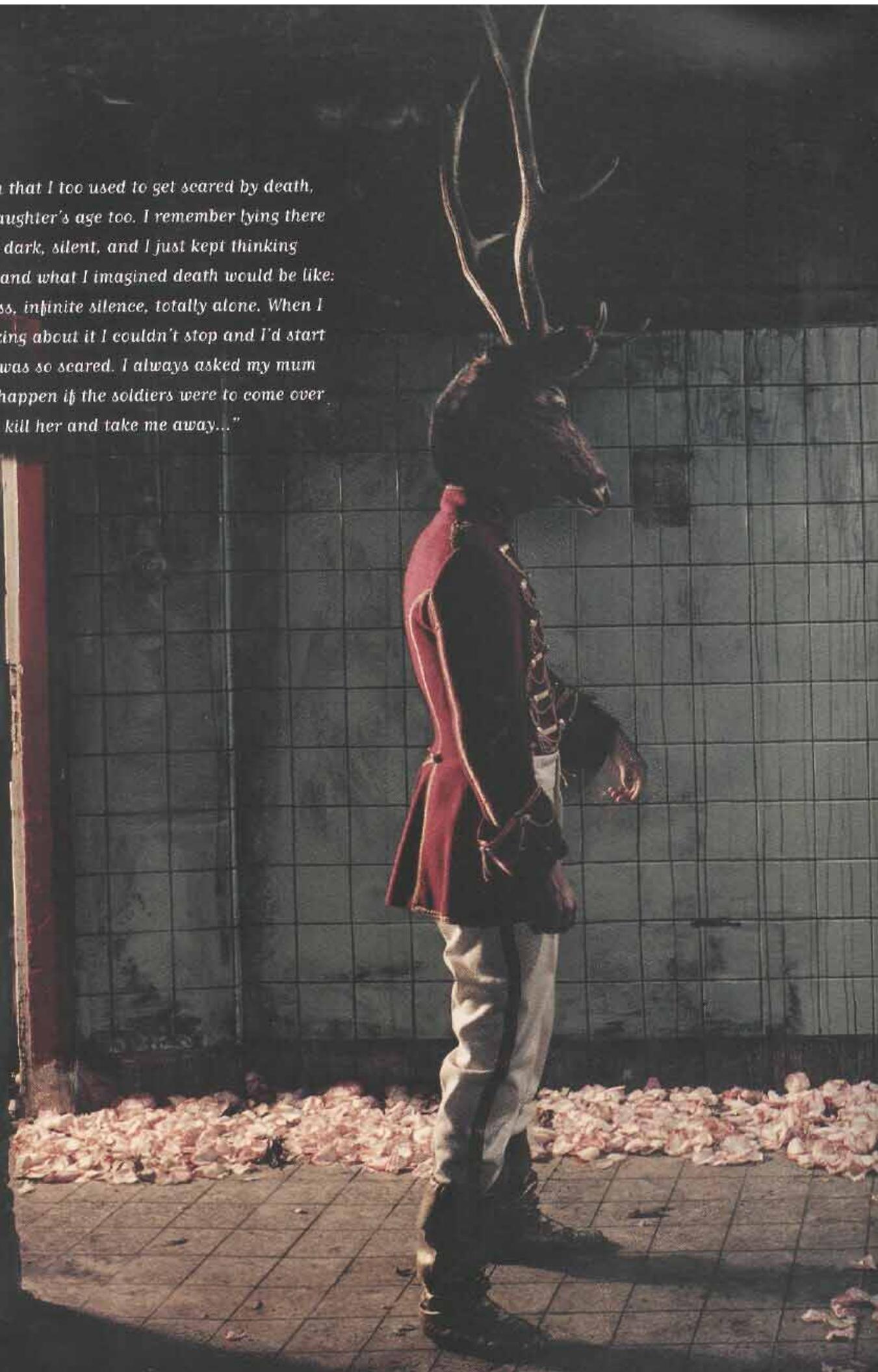
To put it mildly, our interest in Emil Moller has been bordering on the obsessive for a while now. We first started hunting him in the autumn of 2006 when reports of an original new talent from Sweden began filtering through to us. Then his alarmingly accomplished spec spot Play Your Own Game for sportswear brand Andl - for which he then won the cfp-e/shots Young Director Award - led to an appearance in shots in January 2007. There then followed rumours of a brief sighting at our November Evolution bash. Appetites were whetted. Then... nothing. The trail went cold. But our baited traps remained set..

With the first buds of spring 2007 came word that Fredrik Bond had split from MJZ to sire Sonny, a new London-based production company, with executive producer Helen Kenny, Blank months slipped by with neither sight nor sound of Moller until May rolled round, and the unstoppable Cannes ©



Work on this issue's DVD:
(from top) Levi's Guitars,
Friends Mean Words, TFL Signs
and Remember Card Impulses

"I'd forgotten that I too used to get scared by death, and at my daughter's age too. I remember lying there alone, in the dark, silent, and I just kept thinking about death and what I imagined death would be like: total darkness, infinite silence, totally alone. When I started thinking about it I couldn't stop and I'd start panicking. I was so scared. I always asked my mum what would happen if the soldiers were to come over the hills and kill her and take me away..."





"When you ask me questions about my work, in my mind I always go back to childhood. I go back to my parents maybe, to my brother and sister, to memories. But at the same time, so much of my thought process now comes from my wife and being a dad to two beautiful daughters."

behemoth was advancing over the horizon. Then, as if from nowhere, came Moller's Signs, for Transport for London - his first 'proper' commercial since his debut spec outing, and the first spot released by Sonny. Signs was a glorious case study in balancing concept with execution, artfully photographed and emotionally underscored by the soon-to-be-trademark Moller folk tune. From promising beginnings the tentative first steps of a new creative talent were evident. Originally intended for Bond, the script fell to Moller when it transpired his mentor was busy with another project. Somewhere, butterflies were flapping their wings.

Smash-cut to August 2007 and there's a shots.net Hotshot, Sania, for Sony Ericsson. Pan across commercials for E-on, Re: Member and ATG. Focus in on a gut-wrenching, powerful charity spot for anti-bullying organisation Friends that earns Moller his second Hotshot and a place on shots' DVD (issue 107), Then comes Guitar, for Levi's Unbuttoned campaign. It's September 2008. Inside two years, Moller's gone from nothing to something very special indeed. If his story was a script the clients would reject it. Then again, let's not forget who's been directing this story from the beginning.

October 2008. Moller's just finished shooting his latest spot in the UK and we meet for lunch at Soho House, second home/canteen to London's media daahlings. Glimpsing him across a room, virtually engulfed by a burgundy Chesterfield chair, first impressions are: smaller than expected, nervous, young. Then he starts to speak, and the ball of string unravels.

Unusually, Moller's asked to see a list of questions prior to our meeting. It's got nothing to do with certain subjects being off limits, I discover, and everything to do with a young man who's not entirely come to terms with life in the limelight. "When you ask me questions about my work, in my mind I always go back to childhood," he explains by way of an introduction. "I go back to my parents, maybe, to my brother and sister, to memories. But at the same time so much of my thought process now comes from my wife and being a dad to two beautiful daughters."

Born in Gothenburg, Moller grew up on a small island on the west coast of Sweden. "We moved there in the early 1980s and at the time there were only about 1,500 people on the island," he says. "It was quite an insular community. Now there's a bridge to the mainland, but when I was a boy you had to take a ferry to school when you got past sixth grade."

Moller paints an idyllic picture of his childhood. "I loved the island," he reminisces, between mouthfuls of a chicken club sandwich. "There were lots of other kids there, so we formed our own group. My mum and dad were really into nature, so I was outside a lot during those years. We used to go on picnics in the forest and spot birds. We had a small boat, too."

Moller says his upbringing was rather bohemian. With no TV or VCR in the house, the children found alternative ways of entertaining themselves. "My



mum would always encourage us to make things and to draw. I was into drawing comics and detailed pictures in pencil. Always very detailed. We didn't buy bread or cake or anything - all food had to be home made." He's caught on an undercurrent of nostalgia. "We'd play games a lot. I loved Consequences. On Fridays, we'd have popcorn and watch Super 8 footage that my Dad had shot on our holidays. I didn't shoot anything at that age though, but I've still got the camera at home."

Over the course of an hour or so Moller jumps from topic to topic, allowing himself to be carried this way and that by waves of recollections. Questions that prompt memories to rise to the surface end tangentially with vivid descriptions of childhood experiences. In the middle of explaining how he used to be into football and was offered a place on the regional team, the story transitions unexpectedly. "I have

some really good memories of winter in Sweden," he says. "Even though you'd get home at 3pm, it would already be dark. I remember me and my brother and my sister would pack our backpacks with hot chocolate and cinnamon rolls and we'd hang ice-skates and hockey sticks off our bags and go trudging over the snow and up to the mountains to find the perfect pond that hadn't been touched." He doesn't stop for breath.

Suddenly, past tense switches to present and the look in Moller's eyes makes you think he's back in the forest. "It's pitch black and there's total silence and you find a perfect pond and you go skating the whole night long. Other kids join in and you've got teams and you play for hours. I remember those moments so well because of the silence. Hearing your heart beating and looking at the moon and feeling so alive, you realise you're just a human being with a short time on this planet."

There's something beguiling about the way Moller describes these memories; the way he speaks makes facts seem less important. But let's look at the facts, anyway. His first attempt at filming came when he was 15 years old. "I started doing courses at school that meant me and some friends could fool around with a camera. We made some weird films that we'd edit and put music to, and our teacher was really into it."

After high school, Moller's mother encouraged him to join film school in Gothenburg. "I had to talk my way in because I didn't really have anything significant to show them," he says. It was during an internship while studying that Moller realised his interest lay in directing and not producing, where the

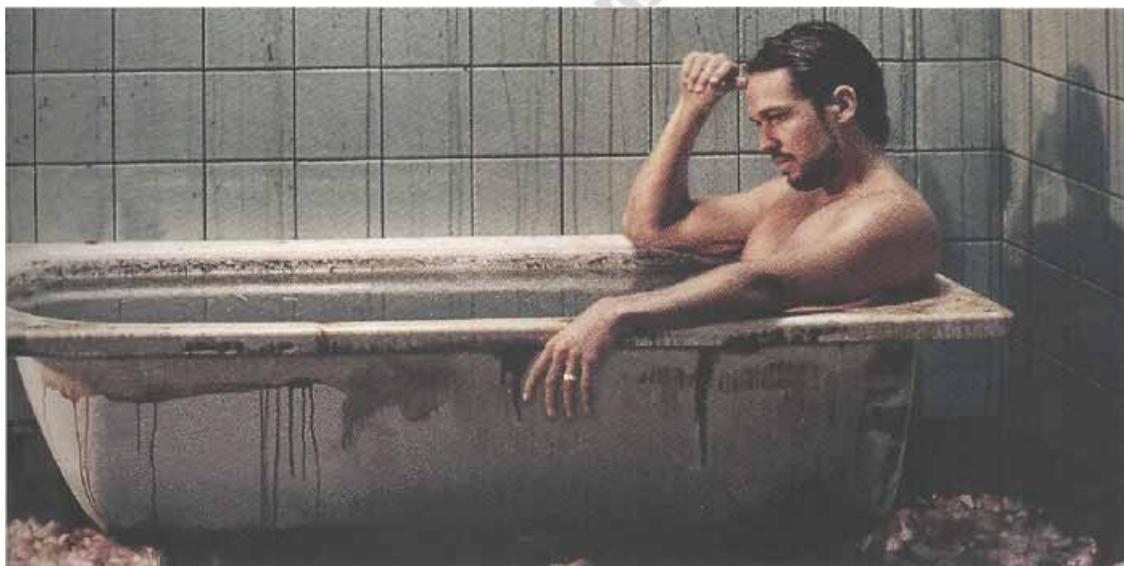
course was leading him. "Although I was working as a production assistant I'd find a way to be with the director. I'd be there, sitting on my hands and biting my tongue, stopping myself commenting on the shot."

Having finished his studies, Molier moved to Stockholm to be with his then girlfriend, now wife, Malin. "I was trying to find directors who I could assist, taking jobs as a production assistant and as a first AD. Not long after that I met Fredrik Bond at Malin's father's houseboat on Christmas Eve. Fredrik opened a whole new world to me, especially to the idea that commercials could be something more than a cold sell. Meeting him made me realise that I needed to shoot a spec spot."

Over the course of an unbearably hot summer spent cooped up in a sweaty apartment, Molier dedicated hours to drawing hundreds of sketches, covering the walls of his study with ideas for what would later turn out to be the And1 spot. "The location was the first thing I got. There was a basketball court a couple of blocks away which I found really intriguing. The concept came to me that there'd be this kid on his own, playing against all these imaginary players, like he's battling against an invisible force."

Enlisting the help of DP Klas Hjertberg and inferno artist Quentin Olszewski, Molier set about dipping his toes into the world of professional directing.

"It was basically a bunch of us trying to get something together for our reels," he explains. "We borrowed things from everywhere and went to production companies and begged them for left-over 35mm stock. In the end we wound up with a shooting schedule broken down into 13-minute slots which was dictated by the length of the film we had." A year or so later, Molier found himself introduced in *Shots* magazine as a new director, having just signed at FLX for the Swedish market.



Molier now has two children, and I'm interested in finding out how this has influenced his perception of things, or how it may affect his work. But I'm worried that I may be straying too far on to personal territory. It's not a problem, though. "I grew up quite fast when we had kids," Molier reveals. "It makes you reconsider your relationship with things, makes you push yourself forwards." And then comes a story...

"I remember this one time I had with my oldest daughter. She went through a spell where she'd get really upset at bedtime and would start crying. When I asked her what was wrong she said she that was worried about death. But I'd forgotten that I also used to get scared by death, and it was at my daughter's age too. I remember lying there alone, in the dark, silent, and I just kept thinking about death and what I imagined death would be like: total darkness, infinite silence, totally alone. When I started thinking about it I couldn't stop and I'd start panicking. I was so scared. I always asked my mum what would happen if the soldiers were to come over the hills and kill her and take me away. I was so worried. I think I saw some news stories about the Iran-Iraq war, and the images just stuck with me. I couldn't separate all that from my own world."

As he's sharing this incident from his childhood, I can tell he's physically uncomfortable at the thoughts swirling in his head. Shaking himself from the past and back into the bustling present, Molier bounces off another tangent, slipping into an unrestrained flow of consciousness.

"When I get back to memories like that, it's quite interesting because it makes me conscious that creativity for me is so closely tied up with looking for something in my past, in my childhood. You always remember the strongest feelings, the most powerful moments, and even though they're

not always peaceful, beautiful or optimistic, maybe those feelings are aiming for something, looking forward. That's what's in me, and every time I get a script I try and translate it into something ! can give my personal touch to. "To make a script genuine and to make it my spot, it has to come from inside." Like someone offering themselves up for scrutiny, Molier looks up from the floor and smiles with an openness that makes everything seem possible. "That's all I have." 🗣️

"I was trying to find directors I could assist, taking jobs as a production assistant... Not long after that I met Fredrik Bond. He opened a whole new world to me, the idea that commercials could be something more. Meeting him made me realise that I needed to shoot a spec spot."