

Peterborough Arts Cinema

Films that make you think

Thursday 1st March at 7:30 pm

A Man Called Ove

(2015) Norway

En man som heter Ove (original title)

PG-13 | 1h 56min

Director; Hannes Hom

Stars; Rolf Lassgard, Bahar Pars, Filip Berg

Ove, an ill-tempered, isolated retiree who spends his days enforcing block association rules and visiting his wife's grave, has finally given up on life just as an unlikely friendship develops with his boisterous new neighbours.

Nominated for 2 Oscars



New York Times, Oct 2016

Fredrik Backman got tepid responses when he sent out the manuscript for his debut novel, "A Man Called Ove." Most publishers ignored him, and several turned it down. After a few months and a few more rejections, he began to think perhaps there wasn't a market for a story about a cranky 59-year-old Swedish widower who tries and fails to kill himself. "It was rejected by one publisher with the line, 'We like your novel, we think your writing has potential, but we see no commercial potential,'" said [Mr. Backman](#), 35, who lives outside Stockholm with his wife and two children. "That note I kept." In hindsight, that critique seems wildly, comically off base. Four years later, "A Man Called Ove" has sold more than 2.8 million copies worldwide, making the book one of Sweden's most popular literary exports since Stieg Larsson's thriller "The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo." "Ove" became a blockbuster in Sweden, selling more than 840,000 copies. It was adapted into a successful stage production and an award-winning Swedish feature film, which recently [opened in the United States](#). Translation rights have sold in 38 languages, including Arabic, Turkish, Latvian, Thai and Japanese. Mr. Backman has gained a passionate fan base in South Korea, where the novel became a huge best-seller.

"No one really knows why," Mr. Backman said in a recent telephone interview. "Not even the Korean publisher understands what the hell is going on."

Peter Borland, who acquired United States rights to "Ove" for Atria, said he was struck by the book's pathos and humour. "It had a great voice, and it was different from everything else I was reading," he said. "It wasn't Scandinavian noir; it was Scandinavian" — he paused, searching for the right description — "something else." Mr. Backman didn't fit into any obvious genre mould, and there was no guarantee that his whimsical, oddball sense of humour would appeal to Americans. Atria was cautious at first and printed 6,600 hardcover copies, a decent run for a debut novel in translation.

The novel got a boost from independent booksellers, who placed big orders and pressed it on customers. The Book Bin in Northbrook, Ill., has sold around 1,000 copies, largely based on word-of-mouth recommendations. "I passed it around to the rest of the staff and said, I think this is absolutely wonderful, am I crazy?" said Nancy Usiak, a bookseller at the shop. "There are 10 of us, and this was one of the rare occasions where we all agreed."

Mr. Backman got the idea for "Ove" five years ago, when he was freelancing for the Swedish magazine Cafe. A college dropout, he once worked as a forklift driver at a food warehouse, taking night and weekend shifts so that he could write during the day. A colleague at Cafe wrote a blog post for their website about seeing a man named Ove explode with rage while buying tickets at an art museum, until his wife intervened. "My wife read the blog post and said, 'This is what life is like with you,'" Mr. Backman said. "I'm not very socially competent. I'm not great at talking to people. My wife tends to say, your volume is always at 1 or 11, never in between." Mr. Backman realized that he had the blueprint for a compelling fictional character, and the novel began to take shape. "There's a lot of me in him," he said of Ove. "When we get angry, it's about a principle, and we get angry because people don't understand why we're angry."

