YOUNG & ACCLAIMED DIRECTORS
Ulrike Grote, Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck

AWARD-WINNING ACTING TALENT
Sandra Hueller, Ulrich Muehe

PRODUCERS & SELLERS
SamFilm, Bavaria Film International, Sola Media

SPECIAL REPORT
At Home Abroad: German Film and Migration
# german films quarterly 3 / 2006

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In the objective language of the encyclopedia, the word “migration” means “the itinerant motion of human individuals or groups resulting in a change of residence that is more than short-term.” In addition, a division is made into “emigration” (leaving a country), “immigration” (entering a country) and the rarer form “permigration” (passing through a country); finally, political law distinguishes between legal and illegal migration. Seen from this point of view, migration is a movement in history expressed by figures and laws, and illustrated by brightly-colored arrows on maps. But for the individual, migration means no less than destiny; a life between fear and hope, between alienation and integration. These are stories that must be told, to aid understanding and the understanding of self, or because migration is mankind’s story per se, with all its perceptions and feelings, with all its dramas and grotesques. And there are few media as capable of describing migration and its consequences in such a precise, sensual way as the cinema.

In France, England and Italy during the sixties and seventies, a cinéma du métissage, a “cinema of the in-between”, developed; a cinema of migrant cultures. This cinema, which used both documentary and fictive means to retell the stories of migration in a more realistic, precise and “biased” way than ever before, had a stimulating effect on European film. What emerged was a new, critical and even affectionate view of ways of life that the mainstream in each of those countries preferred to overlook.

And in this respect, the cinema of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) again occupies a special position. Here, the migrant viewpoint was realized comparatively late and within a cinematography traditionally operating in rather uniform codes. In the FRG, “guest workers” were welcome to promote economic upturn, but this migration group remained more or less “invisible” and, above all, it had no voice of its own within the culture of its host country. This was still charac-
teristic of the first wave of films examining migration in the FRG: young German filmmakers made themselves into the champions of working migrants and refugees. Of necessity, therefore, their viewpoint – beginning with Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s *Katzelmacher* (1968) – concentrated on external conflicts between German society and the “guests”, who were welcome as a workforce, but not as people. Long before a true cinema of migration became possible, there was a “cinema of foreignness” here, which described migration as a specific experience of social coldness, indifference and exploitation, and which prepared the ground for a new, authentic cinema of migration by filmmakers with a migrant background.

Very different narrative forms developed from the seeds of this cinema of foreignness; besides radical accusations of isolation and suppression created by Tevfik Basher (*40 m² Deutschland*) or Sohrab Shahid Saless (*Utopia*), the range extended from the hard ghetto-film (such as Fatih Akin’s *Kurz und schmerzlos*) to the Romeo and Juliet story between the cultures (Hark Bohm’s *Yasemin*) and the multiculti comedy à la *Erkan & Stefan*. For by the middle of the 80s at the latest, migration in Germany was no longer a uniform narrative; a migrant background could turn into a social stigma, but elsewhere it could also be a cultural opportunity, as the German director of Turkish origin, Fatih Akin, explains: “I see it as an advantage to have grown up in two cultures: it gives me security. I am neither compelled to put across a message of tolerance, nor to deny one of my cultures. I simply combine them. In my person and in my films.”

In her documentary films like *Deutsche Polizisten* (1999), Aysun Bademsoy shows that such a life between the cultures does not emerge without conflicts in everyday working life: the policeman with Turkish origins is regarded as a “traitor” among his old friends, while to his German colleagues he always remains one “of them”. These divisions, sometimes creative and sometimes painful, continue in one way or another throughout all generations and social situations. The story of the German migration film now encompasses four decades, a number of waves and some changes in perspective. And it is not over yet, by a long way.

**THE SEVENTIES**

German film’s first investigations into the new “minority” in the country stemmed from a humanist-educational impulse in the post-political cinema of the seventies. As yet, there were no filmmakers who came from the families of guest workers themselves, who could have introduced a tone of authenticity into the genre. This meant that the construction of the characters reflected the traditional outsider in New German Cinema – the attractive loser –, but it also served as a comprehensive metaphor of suppression: in *Shirins Hochzeit* (1975), Helma Sanders tells of a village in Anatolia, where young Shirin is to be married to the local landowner, as this is the only way to secure economic survival for her and her family. Shirin flees to Germany, to Mahmud, to whom she was promised as a child; he is living here as a guest worker. Shirin faces the classic trap – without a job she is unable to get a residence permit and, vice versa, without a residence permit she cannot find a job. But she cannot return to Turkey, either, not only because the money she earns is now her family’s only means of survival. Finally, she meets a pimp in Cologne and agrees to work for him. The film is not entirely free of head-scarf and
gangster clichés, but films such as this at least began to reflect on a life in several cultures.

And this was the signal given by a number of German films at that time, one even a paraphrase of Romeo and Juliet, for example, in Hark Bohm’s Yasemin. It is true that both cultures remained more or less ciphers and could only be experienced as different milieus of suppression, against which the films protested in the name of the individual. While in France there was already a cinema beurre, a cinema between the cultures, and directors like Rachid Bouchareb and some years later Mehdi Charef were able to present their films successfully at festivals, it was to be a long time here until the third generation from the guest worker families would be able shoot their own films.

Before this, certainly, there was the cinema of foreignness, the guest worker as an existential hero, as in Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s Katzelmacher (1968) about the exclusion of a young Greek guest worker, or in Sohrab Shahid Saless’ In der Fremde (1974), the story of the Turkish guest worker Husseyin, who – like many others – lives in a dilapidated, shared flat in Kreuzberg and comes into contact with German culture without encountering understanding. This is the image of a radical alienation, a film, as the director says, “about the word misery that originally meant no more than ‘living in another country’, then ‘living as a stranger’, and gradually developed a much worse tone.” Neither film sees any hope in the miserable life led in a foreign country. Being a stranger remains the theme of films by Sohrab Shahid Saless, which represent precisely the opposite of métissage for this very reason; any mixing, or so it seems, can only be misunderstanding. Time endures indefinitely in the films of a person who has experienced the threat of deportation, and who sees only the foreignness in himself from the point of view of his host country’s culture (but this all the more clearly). Before the cinema of métissage, there is a cinema of foreignness and of exile. And only the cinema of métissage, strange as that may seem in face of its sometimes violent, miserable or absurd subjects, can be regarded as a new form of "Heimatfilm".

Three films from three decades show that an almost despairing tone was dominant for a long time: Guenther Wallraf’s documentary film made with a hidden camera — Ganz Unten (1968), in which he himself pretends to be a guest worker — evidences the exploitation of the guest workers’ economic potential and health. The drama Palermo oder Wolfsburg (1979, Werner Schroeter) shows the complete alienation between German and Italian culture; there is not even a scrap of common understanding regarding law and morality in a court case dealing with manslaughter. By contrast, the cruel consequences that isolation can have for the individual are shown in Tevfik Basher’s 40 m² Deutschland (1985): it is the story of a Turkish woman whose husband locks her into their apartment because he is afraid that she will be ruined by the world outside. Ultimately, she can only free herself in death.

After, and parallel, to the guest workers, other migrant groups came to Germany and met with living conditions offering little hope: people seeking asylum because of political or religious persecution and their
destinies are described using the example of a Chilean emigrant to Germany in a film like *Aus der Ferne sehe ich dieses Land* (1977) by Christian Ziewer. Fassbinder’s *Angst essen Seele auf* (1974), which depicts a love affair between an older German woman and her Moroccan lover, twenty years younger, offers no hope for a positive outcome, either. It was not until the cinema of the third generation in Germany that filmmakers succeeded in seeing the utopian moments in the misery of foreignness.

**THE EIGHTIES**

In the eighties, therefore, the cinema of emigration, the cinema of foreignness has to be separated from the cinema of métissage, a cinema that tells of the irreversibility of cultural blending in a life within two cultures (at least), and not – like the Swiss film *Das kalte Paradies* (1986, Bernard Safarik) – of the acceptance or (above all) the rejection of people seeking refuge. Conditions had intensified and the majority of the German public now took an interest in the fate of migrants and, above all, of political refugees. The accusation of double suppression and isolation was now compared to the situation of the refugees, who – by contrast to the working migrants and their families – had been robbed of even the slightest hope of home. *Jannan – Die Abschiebung* (1984/86, Tim van Beveren) tells the story of a Kurd, Jannan, who is able to flee persecution in Turkey and make his way illegally to Germany. After experiencing racist violence and exploitation in illicit work, he is involuntarily involved in a drug deal and finally ends up in the hands of the police in Bonn, whose means appear rather shady. Before he can be deported to Turkey, where torture and death await him, Jannan ends his own life by jumping from a window. In a roundabout way, the film gives an account of the life of Cemal Altun, who committed suicide before his deportation in the year 1983. However, it dresses up the theme in the form of a rather sensational crime story and thus became the model for treatment of similar themes in the big police TV series such as *Tatort* and *Polizeiruf*, which often concerned flight and migration, especially at the end of the eighties and beginning of the nineties – although their typology of perpetrators and victims was often oversimplified.

*Das kalte Paradies* describes the situation of refugees in Switzerland on the basis of the story of a Pole, Jan, and a South American woman, Elba, who get to know each other in a reception center for those seeking asylum. But the two are treated with cold bureaucracy by the authorities, even when Elba is expecting a baby. Finally, Jan is deported and Elba finds a place to stay and hide in a lonely mountain hut. By contrast to the films of the previous decade, which were indebted to a humanist outlook, the films of the eighties strove for political precision and solutions. As a result, they also saw the possibilities of migration and exile as an opportunity: a return home is the subject of the film *Frankfurt – Conakry* (1985, Malte Rauch), which was a German-Guinean co-production. It is the documentary story of a man who returns home after a long stay in Germany, even becoming a member of the government in a country that has not yet recovered from Colonialism.

It was not until the end of the eighties that the cinema of foreignness was followed by a cinema of migration, the primary concern of which was to consolidate the self-confidence of the migrants and to move on from the misery of foreignness to social debate. It was probably...
Fatih Akin who best succeeded in depicting métissage as “a choir of many voices”, while Thomas Arslan’s films provide the clearest definitions of social place. Where can people go from the culture of métissage? This is the question posed at the beginning of the eighties. Almost anywhere, say Fatih Akin’s films. Hardly anywhere, say films by Thomas Arslan. And in films like Lola + Bilidikid by Kutlug Ataman, we glimpse a subculture of the subculture: as far as the Turkish-German transvestites in this film are concerned, they do not live in two cultures, but are rejected by two cultures. Only the construction of their own, third culture is capable (temporarily) of signifying home. Here, it is true, the cinema of métissage disintegrates once again; the misery, the strangeness is a state that no one can escape, unless he establishes his own culture.
Women are the double strangers in the culture of métissage. And they have the furthest to go on the road to self-determination. “Woman always fear” says the heroine of Shirins Hochzeit, who is threatened by the men of her own culture as well as by those of the new. In Bashers’s 40 m² Deutschland, she is literally locked in by her husband; although he is not so much an evil man as frightened out of his own mind. Films like Yasmine or Die Kuemmeltuerkinnen gehen concern Turkish women’s involuntary return to their home country, which is no longer home (or the fact that this return is a threat hovering over the life of migrant women). But in the films of Fatih Akin and Thomas Arslan, we again find women who have won the struggle for independence.

For a short time, hope for a change of perspective within the European context also emerged: Turkish and German producers, for example, collaborated to make the film Oelmez Agaci (The Eternal Tree, 1985, Yusuf Kurcenli), the story of 26-year-old Bahar, who lives with her older brother Kemal and his family in a suburb of Aachen. The two work in a factory, where Bahar meets the Greek man Niko. When he separates from his wife and a marriage would be possible, it is the brother – bitter after losing his job for health reasons – who forbids the relationship and forces his sister to return to Turkey. And while the brother’s family appears to manage this reintegration into rural society, Bahar remains a stranger no longer capable of enduring patriarchal control over her life. In the end, she renounces her family and returns to Germany to begin a new life with Niko. Films like this were characterized by a hope for individual emancipation in face of all cultural barriers; a hope that democratic society would ease tensions through tolerance, education and economic progress and would accept migrant biographies. By contrast, the next decade confronted society with new, radical economic changes, with structural unemployment, the development of fresh ghettos and a general intensification of the struggle for survival, in which the migrant background became more visible as a political and social problem than as a cultural issue: migration as destiny can no longer be handled by living a creative life in two cultures when the opportunities in both are shrinking.

THE NINETIES

Like cinema beure in France and films by Hanif Kureishi in England, third generation cinema – with a delay of one decade – experienced a heyday in Germany during the nineties. The filmmakers formed networks and a number of films also succeeded in gaining acknowledgement at the center of (cinema) culture. Even the cinema of foreignness was developed into a kind of mainstream variation during the nineties; as in Eine unmogliche Hochzeit (1996, Horst Johann Szerba), it combined elements of situation comedy with issues of asylum, or as in amusing comedies such as Lupo und der Muezzin, it described minor cultural clashes in the German provinces. Despite the comic tone of such films, they are far from any illusions of trouble-free integration.

Thomas Arslan’s austere films, reminiscent of the French director Robert Bresson, perhaps offer the most precise definitions of social place at that time. They investigate the possibilities of development from métissage: criminality (Dealer, 1999), adjustment, return home (Geschwister, 2000), or the search for self-determination (Der schoene Tag, 2002). His heroines and heroes always encounter the limitations of what is intended by society. Where is it possible to go from the culture of métissage in Germany? Anywhere, or no place at all? That is the question posed in the films of the nineties.

At that time, Turkish-German filmmakers had become the motor of the cinema of métissage – among other things, perhaps, because it had developed from this, the largest and most noticeable group of migrants in German public life, in which problems characteristic of a
wide range of migrant destinies are heightened by history, religion and tradition. A vague longing for a return home or to "arrive" is a subject of films during the nineties, but the general viewpoint is directed towards isolation. Ayşe Polat succeeded in making a road movie about a pair of outsiders with Auslandstournee (1998); the film features a young girl and an aging variety-artist traveling through Europe in search of their roots. And the attention is on a subculture in films like Lola + Bilidikid (1998): the cinema of the third generation, therefore, not only reproduces authentic images of a way of life between the cultures, it also enquires into new, open forms of cohabitation. And so the cinema of métissage, on the one hand, is a continuation of the cinema of foreignness, but at the same time it formulates a contradiction of that trend. For where foreignness becomes a mode of life, reality itself is lost, as is shown in a film like The Crossing (1999, Nora Hoppe), the story of an applicant for asylum who is haunted by the shadows of his past: in the miserable situation of exile, he no longer knows how to distinguish between nightmare and reality. The other extreme is life in the new, growing ghettos of métissage in German cities, where complete individual isolation is opposed by a new social prison. Thus films that were made in the first years of the new millennium, like Christian Wagner’s Ghetto Kids (2002) have to enter into this terra incognita once again, perhaps in order to rescue individuals, knowing full well – in the words of a social worker in this film – that the majority of children in the culture of métissage on the urban peripheries will be unable to grasp any of the few chances that they are offered.

HIGH POINTS & A NEW BEGINNING

Towards the end of the nineties and in the first years of the new millennium, the cinema of métissage in general and Turkish-German cinema in particular experienced another boom, both with regard to their artistic pretensions and to acceptance in cinemas and the media. In the meantime, however, the motif also appeared to have become somewhat canonized; it was difficult to continue finding new aspects employing the means of classical feature film.
The film that kept closest to genre criteria was *Elefantenherz* (2001, Zueli Aladag), which took up the boxer film as a metaphor illustrating a young man’s escape and rise from social obscurity. The story is defined by the genre, using motifs familiar from many films – the father is an alcoholic, while the mother stands by her son no matter what (the son is played by Daniel Bruehl, who lends the film his own potent image). The manager, who promises support through his fatherly, friendly attitude, is actually a selfish criminal, and the first fights are not won because of the young boxer’s technique, but because an anger that has been held back for so long is discharged; to re-channel this into purposeful action and self-discipline is the next great task in the young hero’s life. It is certainly remarkable that migration only appears as a distant echo in Marko’s original situation and hatred for his humiliating life on social security, for the depressing high-rise flats of Duisburg-Hochheide and a future that offers him no perspectives on the normal social ladder. While the films of the seventies were concerned with existential foreignness and those of the eighties with a demand for tolerance and humane politics, in the nineties this cinema examines the self-confidence and self-questioning of migrant cultures. Now economic fate determines the life of the protagonists, the migrant background underlines contradictions and – here and there – seems to offer a solution, or at least an aid to identification.

This feeling of life is taken up more consistently by *Urban Guerillas* (2003, Neko Celik), a dramatic game with social and gender roles within an urban action culture shaped by the media, American ghetto culture and individual impulses. Jade Klee, known as Danger, meets the graffiti-sprayer Kasper. Both of them have just been excluded by their own crews and so they decide to get together to realize a graffiti project in honor of a sprayer who has died. Danger is aware that Kasper takes her for a boy, and because she is experiencing friendship and respect for the first time in this role, she keeps it up (and suppresses her own erotic feelings). Meanwhile, B-Boy Buelent is concentrating on his ambitions as a break-dancer, although his fiancée Pepsi sets him an ultimatum; he must pay more attention to their wedding and to the wedding dress that she longs for. Here, identification in the ghetto-culture has become visible as a web of generation, gender, culture, religion and biography interwoven with elements of street culture.

This reflection in media myths is also taken up by the culture clash comedy *Kebab Connection* by Anno Saul. In addition, the film...
involves an unusual love story between a crazy Bruce Lee fan and a self-confident, up-and-coming wannabe actress. The medium is reflecting upon itself here: Ibo dreams of making Germany’s first Kung Fu film, but all that can be realized is an advertising spot for his uncle’s Kebab stand. Surprisingly, this actually does make him into a local star, but his dream of a career is dampened when his girlfriend tells him that he is going to be a father. Ibo’s own father, who radically rejects any relationship with a German girl, throws him out and the next commission for an advertising spot leads him into even more conflict with the Turkish community.

The documentary film *Was lebst Du?* (2004, Bettina Braun) again leads deeper into the new situation of métissage, which must be described, primarily, as confusing: the ways out and the ways deeper down lie very close together. This film describes the everyday life of young people between the youth center, school and job training, between traditionally oriented homes and a western lifestyle on the streets, their self-image oriented on media clichés and dreams of a completely different life. In this phase of opportunities, every decision – but also a stupid coincidence – may have a lasting influence on biography, whether this is a break in education, an encounter with the police, or – an example here is a musical production – any attempt to drag oneself out of the ghetto.

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Finally, the greatest success has been Fatih Akin’s 
**Gegen die Wand**, which was not only awarded 
the **Golden Bear** in Berlin and the **European Film 
Award**, but also acclaimed as a masterpiece by 
German and international critics. On the one hand, 
the film again brought together motifs and pro-
blems of the German cinema of migration using an 
emotional pictorial language, on the other hand, it 
went much further than this film genre: **Gegen 
die Wand** not only tells a very concrete story in 
a very concrete environment, it also touches on 
fundamental personal and social relationships.

It is perhaps no coincidence that the director ori-
ginally planned the film as a comedy. The fact that 
the material then developed itself into a very 
powerful and sometimes grim melodrama may 
have something to do with the mood of the age. 
Relationships – those between the cultures as well 
as within them – have become harder, and it has 
become considerably more difficult to discover 
individual ways of life and cultural niches than it 
was only a decade earlier. There is now a new internal and external 
pressure bearing on the people of the third and even fourth genera-
tion of métissage-culture; in **Gegen die Wand**, it is repeatedly 
clear that situations can suddenly become hopeless and that violence 
is a phenomenon by no means restricted to the genre-typical “perpe-
trators” and “victims”. But perhaps the radical individualism of 
**Gegen die Wand** is also a blow for liberation in an age when clas-
sifications have lost their clarity and perhaps become threatening for 
that very reason. Yet at the end of the most recent cycle of German 
migration films we find hope for love and friendship in a world in 
which everyone is a stranger.

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Georg Seesslen, film critic and author
Ulrike Grote studied Acting from 1985-1989 in Hamburg. She performed as an actress at the Schauspielhaus Hamburg and in numerous television series and films, including Mammamia (dir: Sandra Nettelbeck), Gloomy Sunday (dir: Rolf Schuebel), Moerderinnen (dir: Pepe Danquart), Eine öffentliche Affaire (dir: Rolf Schuebel), and Weihnachten in September (dir: Hajo Gies). Since 2000, she has been instructing at the Academy of Music & Theater in Hamburg. From 2002-2004, she completed post-graduate studies in Film at Hamburg University, and is now preparing her first feature. Her film The Runaway (Ausreisser, 2004) was nominated for an Academy Award in 2006 in the category Short Film – Live Action. Her other films are Himmelfahrt (2003) and All in All (2004).

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Winning an OSCAR has to be a life-changing experience. At the very least it must mean all sorts of mind-boggling offers blocking the inbox, surely? So Ulrike Grote’s reply came as a surprise.

“No, life didn’t change,” she says between sips of coffee and bites of her jam sandwich. No Hollywood histrionics? No super agents fighting in the shrubbery to sign her up? “No. But it certainly helped me get money for my feature!”

In 2004 Grote won the MPAA Student Academy Award for her graduation film, The Runaway, a twenty-minute father-son story. “It’s a drama with a bit of The Sixth Sense,” she explains. “It’s a bit spooky and also amusing.” Entered by her teachers, The Runaway then became eligible for automatic submission for, says Grote, “the real OSCAR, in the short film category.” While that award escaped her grasp it was still a superb triumph for a woman who originally lacked the confidence to enter the film business.

“I wanted to,” says Grote, “but didn’t trust myself. So I became an actress instead.” The next eleven years she trod the boards, mostly at the Schauspielhaus in Hamburg, before she moved into directing. “After a while,” she says, “a friend suggested I go to film school.” From 2002 to 2004 she studied in the film department of the University of Hamburg under Hark Bohm.

Grote is now working on her debut feature, Herzschlag (WT, translation: “Heartbeat”). “It’s a drama-comedy,” she explains, “a series of episodes about death, how people are confronted by it and how they deal with it, with a group of characters aged end-thirty, early forties.”

A portrait of Ulrike Grote

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In 2004 Grote won the MPAA Student Academy Award for her graduation film, The Runaway, a twenty-minute father-son story. “It’s a drama with a bit of The Sixth Sense,” she explains. “It’s a bit spooky and also amusing.” Entered by her teachers, The Runaway then became eligible for automatic submission for, says Grote, “the real OSCAR, in the short film category.” While that award escaped her grasp it was still a superb triumph for a woman who originally lacked the confidence to enter the film business.

“I wanted to,” says Grote, “but didn’t trust myself. So I became an actress instead.” The next eleven years she trod the boards, mostly at the Schauspielhaus in Hamburg, before she moved into directing. “After a while,” she says, “a friend suggested I go to film school.” From 2002 to 2004 she studied in the film department of the University of Hamburg under Hark Bohm.

Grote is now working on her debut feature, Herzschlag (WT, translation: “Heartbeat”). “It’s a drama-comedy,” she explains, “a series of episodes about death, how people are confronted by it and how they deal with it, with a group of characters aged end-thirty, early forties.”
“I wrote the script together with my producer, Ilona Schulz,” she says. “We studied together and always wanted to work together but we never managed it until now. We’re a good team and it’s working well.”

As a director, Grote is “interested in daily life, its humor, its brutality, its hopes.” But there’s also a strongly romantic vein in the woman’s body as she admits, citing Ang Lee and Emma Thompson’s Sense and Sensibility. “I love love-stories, but serious ones. Not the superficial kind! I’d love to make something historical, along English lines, such as Jane Austen with all that mud and mess, when life was hard, but that still plays very modern.”

How does it feel to be making her first feature? “Exciting,” Grote replies. “We have a lot to do. And since it plays in a hospital I’m visiting a nightshift soon to make sure I get it right. I also soon have to cast children, which is very difficult.”

Talking of casting, as befits an actors’ director, Grote writes with specific thespians in mind. “With this material I wanted to write about women,” she says, “and my son accused me of stealing his best lines! There’s one role for Monica Bleibtreu, another for Victoria Trautmannsdorfl and one for Peter Jordan.”

Grote doesn’t hide her enthusiasm for stage actor Jordan, calling him “my favorite, favorite, favorite actor. He was in my short. He’s the reincarnation of Hanns Lothar, the comic heel-clicker in Billy Wilder’s One, Two, Three.”

Other actors who tick Grote’s boxes are Sean Penn (“He’s great, has such a range”) and Benicio del Toro, while of the women “Nicole Kidman is glorious, she’s always very different. Naomi Watts is unbelievable, 21 Grams is one of my favorite films, and also Charlotte Gainsbourg who plays Sean Penn’s wife.”

Ask Grote about her favorite directors and it’s obvious where her (sense and) sensibility lies. “Ang Lee is unbelievable with actors; Sense and Sensibility, The Ice Storm, Brokeback Mountain. I see simplicity of composition, beauty. He really gets into the story to bring it to the fore. He’s different every time and he never lets himself get typecast. That’s what I want to do.”

“I love Billy Wilder,” Grote continues. “And Clint Eastwood, who also started as an actor. Look how he’s developed from Play Misty for Me, his first film, and now look at Million Dollar Baby. That is so pure.”

Among her local heroes are Fatih Akin (“He stays true to himself and won’t sell out”), Tom Tykwer (“Wonderful”), Detlev Buck (“great”), Andreas Dresen (“also great”) while Nicolai Albrecht, with whom Grote has worked as an actor, is “exact, he has pure understanding, he’s conscientious, a great actor’s director.”

As for her plans beyond Herzschlag, Grote wants “to make something international. I’m writing a script for an international actor I know and want to do it with him. He wants to do it with me, too!”

And who might that be? “I can’t name the country,” she replies, “or you’ll guess!” Despite my employing every trick learned in many years of interviewing, despite resorting to the ultimate fallback, begging, Grote remained firm. It looks like we’re just going to have to wait and see!

Simon Kingsley spoke with Ulrike Grote
Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, offspring of an old Silesian family of noble lineage, was born in Cologne in 1973. He was two years old when the family moved to New York. In 1981 they returned to West Berlin. This was “crass” for the eight year old; as he recalls, the difference between the USA and West Germany at that time could be compared to the gap in the state of development between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. In 1984, everything had to be packed up again when the family moved to Frankfurt and, three years later, to Brussels. After graduating from school (dream job: bestseller writer or German Chancellor), he set out for Leningrad to study Russian, wanting to enjoy his favorite literature in the original language. The next stage: Oxford, where he studied Politics, Economics and Philosophy. He is particularly enthusiastic about Oxford’s “visual self-containment, the fact that you live within specific aesthetics, as if in a film.” Whether in an apartment or a text – he loves an attractive, well thought-out concept. It is also a desire for consistency that stimulates him as a filmmaker: the possibility of creating something that is visually and dramatically perfect, a paradise of his own. Sir Richard Attenborough, professor of Drama in Oxford at that time, advised the talented storyteller to become a director, so Donnersmarck went on to study Film at the Academy of Television & Film in Munich. There he devotedly read and learned everything that he could about film dramaturgy. He cites directors like Peter Weir (Dead Poets Society) or Robert Zemeckis (Forrest Gump) as his role models; his favorite films include Groundhog Day – entertaining, but with philosophical depth. “You can’t change the world, but you can change yourself – and that way you do change the world. That is the message that can be found in it.” And the same message can be sensed in his highly-acclaimed and award-winning debut The Lives of Others (Das Leben der Anderen, 2005, four Bavarian Film Awards, seven German Film Awards: ‘Lolas’). His other films include the shorts: Midnight (Mitternacht, 1996), For the Rest of Our Lives (Das Datum, 1997), Dobermann (1999), The Crusader (Der Templer, 2001), and What the Witness Saw (2002).

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XXL in every respect. A man two meters tall, equipped with boyish charm, Prussian-blue eyes, gold-blond hair, the best of manners, great sensitivity and outstanding ambition: Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. He makes remarks such as: “I have respect – for life and for art.” And he promises: “No matter what films I make, I will never deliver anything that seems amateur.” He is not interested in spiritless films for the critics. His aim is to shape his own character convincingly, so that his films are also good. He wants to reach his audience emotionally, and if he does not succeed in that, he is the one who has made the mistake.

He is a debutant who has proven himself a professional in the best sense of the word with his first feature The Lives of Others. Aesthetically consistent, moving, great narrative cinema from a youngster – this is something we have missed for a long time. His complex material about dictatorship in the GDR has even outdone – with seven Lolas – the trophy count of Tom Tykwer’s Run, Lola Run. Up until then, he had only been known in the world of short films, where, however, he had collected almost all the prizes available in the field. And as one can see from his short film Dobermann, for example, Donnersmarck certainly possesses a talent for comedy as well.

The film world was surprised: Who is this man who stands out among so many, who has demonstrated such mastery with his first film for the cinema? He is no master from out of the blue. He began practicing early, consuming narrative European literature with tremendous enthusiasm: an “addiction to education” that came upon him as puberty developed (“compensation for a lack of coolness”). He discovers the whole canon of literature – Thomas Mann, Stefan Zweig, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky – and loses sleep at night because he knows no
more than a couple of essays by Kleist. He needs the complete works!

The desire for perfection has remained; the desire to think everything through, to reach everything and everyone. The audiences came in droves (1.3 million by June), the German parliament went to the cinema en block, and even the German President Koehler flew to the old capital city Bonn to view the film together with school children.

The 33-year-old filmmaker was aware that the topic of Communist dictatorship would give rise to discussion, and what is more – that is exactly what he wanted. No system of spies in the world, the director knows, is as comprehensive as that of the GDR was: more than a quarter of a million people were employed by the “State Security” (Stasi) to sound out their fellow citizens. This is a bitter truth that has now – in the 17th year after German reunification – been examined in a feature film for the first time. Donnersmarck did not make his material into a didactic film, but backed a technique of emotionalizing personification. Peter Schneider, German author and member of the German Film Award jury, summed this up: “For a long time, there was a tendency to portray the GDR as a state where no one really suffered and the Stasi was regarded as something of a joke.” He went on to say that The Lives of Others was the first serious attempt at showing how the Stasi terrorized millions of GDR citizens. Even though the Stasi officer and the poet that he keeps under surveillance were not taken directly from official files, Donnersmarck insists that his film plot is very close to reality. “Everything could have happened that way at that time in GDR history.”

The director experienced the Stasi-debate “as something necessary for Germany, but also as something sad. I can imagine that the success of, shall we say, Run Lola Run was a reason for pure celebration for Tom Tykwer. For me, there is also a sense of despair over The Lives of Others and its victory march. Daily, I receive letters from people who tell me how they were mistreated and how they recognize themselves in the film. And the poet Guenter Ullmann sent me one of his volumes of poetry, with a grateful dedication. He was the one who – after endless, brutal Stasi interrogations – had all his teeth pulled, because he was convinced that bugs had been implanted in them (in fact, his closest friend was an IM – an unofficial Stasi employee – something he simply could not fathom). And the next day, the actor Henry Huebchen tells an audience of millions that people in artists’ circles laughed at the Stasi rather than anything else. That is the kind of roller-coaster ride I have experienced over the last 4 months. I will be glad to leave the subject behind me. I have just turned down a big American project because it would have brought me considerable sums” at the market in Cannes: this almost satisfies even someone like Donnersmarck, who sets himself the highest possible standards in every respect.

Donnersmarck currently lives in Berlin, but he does not belong to the so-called ‘Berlin School’. “I don’t believe that there are ‘schools’ for good directors. Of course, Robert Zemeckis has more affinity with Steven Spielberg than with Oliver Stone, but ‘school’ would still be the wrong word. Directing means establishing one’s own taste as the sole measure of everything. And not that of any school members or of some teacher or other. The very nature of the profession means that a director has to be an extreme loner. The term ‘Berlin School’ is a forlorn attempt to use Berlin’s ‘hipness’ in order to create a virtue out of necessity: the aesthetics of underfinanced (and for that reason often underrated) films.”

When Donnersmarck received his Lola for the Best Direction, he said rather succinctly: “Somebody had to get it.” He feels quite comfortable among his fellow prize-winners: “Actually, all those that I regard highly have also won this prize: Tom Tykwer for Run Lola Run, Josef Wilsmaier for Comedian Harmonists, Wolfgang Becker for Good Bye, Lenin!, Caroline Link for Beyond Silence. No, they have forgotten at least one. Rainer Kaufmann for Cold is the Evening Breeze.”

Of course, he is now among the most frequently wooed directors in the country, receiving invitations here and there, and compliments like a good placing in BUNTE’s list of the 55 most lovable Germans. That is all very nice, but not important. “The only thing that has really changed in my life,” he says, “is that I have left behind that Don Carlos feeling; a sense that my life is passing year after year without me being able to create and find my audience. I have lost the fear that I am composing poetry for the hard-drive. And that was a terrible anxiety.”

The Lives of Others has a star-studded cast. The leading actors Sebastian Koch, Ulrich Mühe and Ulrich Tukur came from the grande dame of dramatic agents, Erna Baumbauer. More than eighty years old, she upholds unerring standards of quality, and when she read Donnersmarck’s screenplay, she was moved to tears. Then he knew: I will be able to make the film now. She is my Delphi,” he says. “On 13 January 2006, she advised me: ‘Don’t accept any offers in the next twelve months, and don’t make any decisions about what you are going to tackle next.’ And those who defy the oracle arouse the anger of the gods.” For quite some time now, he has been haunted by the material for an erotic thriller. And because he is anxious for “true eroticism” to stay alive despite the current omnipresence of porno-websites and ads for telephone sex, he may well decide in favor of that material on 14 January 2007.

A man of stature, in every sense of the word: we can be quite sure that Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck will make many more very different films for us, for the audience.

Annette Maria Rupprecht, film and theater critic, Stern-author, spoke with Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck
Ewa Karlstroem and Andreas Ulmke-Smeaton initially met when they were accepted as the first intake for the new Production and Media Economy course established by Klaus Keil at Munich’s Academy of Television & Film in 1989. However, upon completing their studies, they went their separate (and successful) paths towards gaining a foothold outside the HFF in the harsh reality of the film industry: Ewa founded a production company with fellow student Katja von Garnier and produced the medium-length film Making Up which was a box office hit in Germany and garnered a Student OSCAR, while Andreas had attracted his own OSCAR nomination with the production of Miguel Alexandre’s About War in 1993. They had both subsequently gathered invaluable experience overseeing the production of TV series and TV movies when the decision came to set up shop together as SamFilm in 1997.

SamFilm’s managing shareholders and producers Ewa Karlstroem and Andreas Ulmke-Smeaton both studied in the Production and Media Economy department at Munich’s Academy of Television & Film (HFF) from 1989-1992. After graduation, Karlstroem founded Vela-X Filmproduktion with film director Katja von Garnier and produced the OSCAR-nominated box office success Making Up (Abgeschminkt) in 1993. She then served as a co-producer on several episodes of the Kommissar Beck series for pubcaster ARD before co-producing von Garnier’s feature film Bandits in 1996. Ulmke-Smeaton had produced the OSCAR-nominated student short About War by Miguel Alexandre in 1993 and then oversaw the production of a number of TV movies for ProSieben before joining forces with Karlstroem in 1997 to set up their own production outfit SamFilm GmbH. Their collaboration with writer-director Joachim Masannek on The Wild Soccer Bunch (Die Wilden Kerle) brought them the VGF Newcomer Producer Prize at the Bavarian Film Awards in 2003 and the KIDZ Golden Gryphon at the Giffoni Youth Festival in 2004. Another Golden Gryphon was picked up in 2005 for the second installment of the Soccer Bunch franchise. In addition, the first two Wild Soccer Bunch films were nominated for the German Film Awards in the category Best Children’s and Youth Film in 2004 and 2005. SamFilm’s modern Christmas fairytale A Christmoose Carol (Es ist ein Elch entsprungen) then received the Bavarian Film Award for Best Children’s and Family Film at the ceremony in January 2006. Their other films include: Love Scenes From Planet Earth (Das merkwuerdige Verhalten geschlechtsreifer Grossstaedter zur Paarungszeit, dir: Marc Rothenmund, 1998), Der Kuss (dir: Werner Kranvetvogel, 2000, image film), Exit To Heaven (Der Himmel kann warten, dir: Brigitte Mueller, 2000), Hotze (dir: Toby Genkel, 2001, animation pilots, TV), Die Liebe meines Lebens (dir: Niki Stein, 2002, TV), The Wild Soccer Bunch 1, 2, and 3 (dir: Joachim Masannek, 2003, 2005, and 2006), and Noch einmal lieben (dir: Anna Justice, 2006, TV). They are currently working on a fourth part of The Wild Soccer Bunch.
TIME TO PAIR

“There wasn’t any particular concrete project which made us decide to found the company,” Andreas recalls. But it didn’t take long before the new young outfit had its first project rolling. “Screenwriter Peter Gersina came to us with the idea for Love Scenes From Planet Earth [which has the tongue-twister of an original German title: Das merkwuerdige Verhalten geschlechtsreifer Grossstaedter zur Paarungszeit] and we picked Marc Rothemund to make his debut feature with this film. It was shot very quickly and was a great success with over 1.3 million admissions. It was a great start for the company.”

Someone up there has evidently looked kindly on Ewa and Andreas with the success of the series of The Wild Soccer Bunch films and A Christmoose Carol: the first Wild Soccer Bunch film just missed out on the 1 million mark, while the second film attracted more than 1.5 million cinemagoers, and the third outing has been seen by over 2 million and was the most successful German release in the first six months of 2006.

The first two Soccer Bunch films were sold to 25-30 territories and had built up such an awareness amongst buyers that the sales agent [Telepool] was able to sell the third film to Brazil and Russia purely on the strength of the trailer at this year’s European Film Market in Berlin. Since then, Telepool sealed another eight deals with distributors from territories as far apart as Belgium, Cambodia, Portugal, Thailand and Malaysia. However, SamFilm’s top-seller has so far been veteran Dutch director Ben Verbong’s A Christmoose Carol which was sold to an impressive 40 countries around the globe.

But it hasn’t all been roses, as Andreas is ready to admit: “Yes, we have had success, but we have also known the feeling of disappointment. Exit To Heaven, the feature debut by Brigitte Mueller, could unfortunately only entice around 24,000 cinemagoers to buy a ticket.”

OPEN FOR ANY GENRE

While SamFilm’s success has latterly been based solely on family entertainment, Andreas stresses that the company is “open for any genre, but they have to be things which we believe in and have fun doing. We always keep the market in mind when choosing our projects because we think they should have a chance of being successful.”

“At the same time, we are a small company – there are five people including an intern – and we want to stay this way,” he notes. “We have remained resolutely independent and there hasn’t been any pressure to become associated with a larger company. I see it as a certain privilege to be an indie.”

SamFilm takes its independence to the point where, unlike the practice of some of its contemporaries wanting to forge strategic alliances and agreements, it does not have any kind of first-look deal or output arrangement with Buena Vista International who has distributed all of SamFilm’s feature films in Germany so far.

NEW AVENUES

As Andreas points out, the company’s future output will not be restricted only to family entertainment: “I think after The Wild Soccer Bunch 4 – which begins shooting this summer – we will be exploring other genres. We don’t just want to be making sequels although it is nice to have that continuity of work. A change in direction for us is to be involved now in a small low budget film called *WWGW –*Weisst’ Was Geil Waer...?!, directed by Mike Marzuk and starring Axel Schreiber, Isaak Dentler with Nadja Bobyleva and Nicolas Reinke. And we are also developing Joachim Masanek’s long-cherished adaptation of the novel Tuareg by the bestselling Spanish writer Alberto Vazquez-Figueroa.”

“At the moment, the family film genre is functioning very well in Germany,” he adds, “but now everyone is making a film in this genre. Personally, I am afraid that this could lead to an overkill, which is something that happened before with the romantic comedies.”

With the box office success and kudos of awards enjoyed by SamFilm’s productions, one might be forgiven for thinking that producing gets easier for the duo with time. “I wouldn’t say so,” Andreas counters. “You still need to take the same care in preparing the projects, the work is the same. In fact, the pressure increases through the past successes because we set ourselves standards that don’t diminish. Of course, we have gained a certain standing in the meantime, and, as a company, it is easier than, say, 5 or 6 years ago because people know what we do and can do.”

“Moreover, we complement one another as a team,” he says about the partnership with Ewa. “Looking at a project with two pairs of eyes is better than with just one pair, and we are both jointly responsible for our projects. It is not a case that only one of us is responsible for a project – we work on them together.”

PART OF THE UPSWING

Together with other dynamic young production companies like Claussen + Woebke Filmproduktion, Goldkind Film or Rat Pack Filmproduktion, SamFilm has played a significant role in the current renaissance of German cinema. “German films certainly seem to be on an upswing,” Andreas remarks. “I believe that this is primarily due to a desire from the audience for authenticity: the cinemagoers can better identify with these stories because they are nearer to their own reality than in other films.”

At the same time, he suggests that there is an “urgent need” for new financial incentives such as those being mooted by State Minister for Culture Bernd Neumann to give a boost to the German film industry and bring it onto an even keel with its international competitors. “After the film funds were stopped, an equivalent has been needed,” he argues. “Financing film projects has never been easy – and it won’t be any easier in the future – but we need incentives like those existing in other countries.”

Andreas Ulmke-Smeaton spoke with Martin Blaney
2006 certainly started off well for 28-year-old Sandra Hueller as the German film industry discovered a glittering new star in its firmament.

It all began in January with the Bavarian Film Award for the Best Newcomer Actress for her performance as Michaela Klingler in Hans-Christian Schmid’s new feature film Requiem and, a month later, she was the toast of the Berlinale when the International Jury headed by the legendary British-born actress Charlotte Rampling awarded her its Silver Bear in the Best Actress category.

Then, in mid-May, the 750-plus members of the German Film Academy voted Sandra as the winner of this year’s German Film Award (Lola) in Gold for Best Actress — along with four other Las for Schmid’s film that evening.

While she was hailed as an exciting new addition to German cinema’s roster of stars, Sandra already has quite a track record in the German speaking theater world despite her young years. She was named the Newcomer Actress of the Year by Theater heute in 2003 and has gone from one triumph to the next in her four years at the theater in the Swiss city of Basel.

A STAR IS BORN

A portrait of Sandra Hueller

Sandra Hueller was born in Suhl/Thuringia in 1978 and studied at the Ernst Busch Acting Academy in Berlin from 1996 to 2000. After graduation, Sandra initially appeared on stage at the Theaterhaus in Jena before accepting an engagement at the Schauspiel in Leipzig in 2001. She has been a permanent member of the ensemble at the Theater Basel since 2002. Sandra was praised in the highest terms by theater critics and named Newcomer Actress of 2003 by the Theater Heute magazine for her outstanding performances as Shakespeare’s Juliet (dir: Sebastian Nuebling) and as the retarded Dora in Die sexuellen Neurosen unserer Eltern (dir: Barbara Frey). She also appeared on stage in Basel as Gretchen in Goethe’s Faust (dir: Lars-Ole Walburg) and as Rosalinde in As You Like It (dir: Barbara Frey). In November 2005, she was feted by the critics and audiences for her performance as Medea in The Golden Fleece (dir: Lars-Ole Walburg). Sandra’s last role which attracted considerable attention was as Dido in Dido und Aeneas, a production by Sebastian Nuebling which had its premiere in the Theater Basel in April. Hans-Christian Schmid’s Requiem was the feature film acting debut for Hueller who had previously appeared before the camera in a few short films. Her performance as Michaela Klingler brought her the Bavarian Film Award as Best Newcomer Actress, a Silver Bear for Best Actress at the 2006 Berlinale, and a Golden Lola for Best Actress at this year’s German Film Awards. A selection of her other films includes: Nicht auf den Mund (dir: Kathrin Feist, 1998, short), Kleine Schwester (dir: Thomas Adamicka, 2003, short), Kuehe laecheln mit den Augen (dir: Johanna Icks, 2004, short), and Madonnen (dir: Maria Speth, 2005).

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The fact that she would one day make a profession out of acting was not part of any grand plan when she was growing up in Thuringia. “I took part in the theater workshop at school and really enjoyed it,” she recalls, “but I never thought that it could be a profession for me. It was more of a hobby.”

Sandra admits that she did not have any great talent on the sports field or other subjects, but she had evidently succumbed to the acting bug because she subsequently sent away for information about courses at drama schools. She applied to the Ernst Busch Acting Academy in Berlin and was accepted to begin studies in 1996.

“It was a very hard regime, but a good preparation for perfecting one’s craft as an actor,” Sandra says looking back at her time at Ernst Busch, which she then followed with her first engagement under Claudia Bauer at the Theaterhaus Jena for two years. She spent one year not committed to any particular theater – and appearing on stage at the Schauspiel Leipzig – before becoming a member of the ensemble in Basel in 2002 where she has played such roles as Gretchen in Faust I, Juliet in Romeo & Juliet and Medea in The Golden Fleece.

Since her drama student days, Sandra has made the occasional foray into film acting with parts in short films by students at the Film Academy Baden-Wuerttemberg in Ludwigsburg, Berlin’s dffb or Babelsberg’s HFF “Konrad Wolf” on such productions as Kathrin Feistl’s Nicht auf den Mund or Johanna Icks’ Kuehe laecheln mit den Augen. “In the theater’s summer breaks I used the time to get some experience of working in front of the camera,” she explains. “The contact to the filmmakers either came from my agent or through friends who had also worked on student films.”

“I came to Requiem by the classic way,” Sandra continues. “The film’s casting director Simone Baer had tapes of me and then approached the agent. I was sent the screenplay and met up with Hans-Christian Schmid on several occasions over the summer to talk about the role.”

Outsiders viewing this film might think that the work on this film would be particularly harrowing for the actress given that her character has epileptic attacks and frightening onrushes of grotesque faces and voices as she increasingly believes that she is possessed.

“There was no particular scene that posed a special challenge,” Sandra observes. “The challenge was always there throughout the whole film, but I remember the shoot as a very pleasant time and with an incredible team of people that Hans-Christian has gathered to work with him on each of his films.”

She was full of praise for the young Polish cinematographer Bogumil Godfiejow, who spun around the set with his hand-held camera fixed on the action. “You could always rely on him getting everything,” Sandra points out. “He is always there, but he didn’t impose himself on you the way you sometimes feel with other cameramen. And he was extremely fast and didn’t need much time to get the camera set up for the next scene.”

Such a demanding role where her character was on camera in practically every scene of the film meant that she was on set for the duration of the shoot – and yet was also appearing on stage in Basel in the evenings! “Looking back, I don’t know how I did it, but it seemed to work out with a driver taking me back and forth,” she says.

Speaking about this first spate of prizes for her performance in Requiem, Sandra remarks that “I can’t really say how this has changed my life. I was at the prize ceremonies in Munich and at the Berlinale, but I had so little time to take it all in because of my obligations in Basel.” Indeed, she had the premiere of a new play, Stadt der Zukunft – Die Vergaenglichkeit, on May 12, the evening of the German Film Awards in Berlin where she was named winner of the Best Actress Lola. “I am incredibly proud that the film functions and I see the awards as a confirmation of the direction I have taken and of my way of working. It was also a great honor to have the Silver Bear come from a jury headed by Charlotte Rampling.”

Moreover, later this year, we will be likely to have the opportunity of seeing Sandra in her second feature film, Madonnen by HFF “Konrad Wolf” graduate Maria Speth, where she plays a mother of five children with a criminal past who is spending time in prison. Last year, Speth recalled that she had searched for a long time to cast an actress for this complicated role before deciding that Sandra would just right for the part.

In the meantime, it is her mesmerizing performance in Requiem that has made German producers aware of her talent. Various inquiries and films offers – many with characters of ailing young women – have winged their way to the actress in the months since the Berlinale. But she is not intending to plunge straightaway into any more work for the time being.

Her engagement at the theater in Basel came to an end in June, and the next item on the agenda was to take some time off to review the direction she wants to take in the future with a mixture of work in the cinema and on the stage – and also to have a well-deserved rest and holiday after working almost non-stop for the past ten years.

After spending the last four years in Basel, Sandra will be making tracks to be at last again with her family and friends in Thuringia … and be spoiled by her mother’s good old home cooking! (Sandra Hueller spoke with Martin Blaney)
Whenever conversation turns to the actor Ulrich Muehe, one inevitably hears the word “versatile” used to describe his skill in being able to change seemingly effortlessly from one kind of role to the next and feel at home on the stage or in front of the camera for a TV series or a feature film.

While Muehe did not have any family background in acting – his father was a master furrier –, “my choice of profession was there very early on and I doggedly pursued this goal,” he recalls.

After an apprenticeship in the construction industry and 18 months military service, Muehe enrolled at the Hans Otto Theater Academy in Leipzig in 1975 where two years were spent in the academy and another two gathering practical experience in professional theaters.
This is where he came to appear on stage at the Staatstheater in Chemnitz in plays by Friedrich Schiller, Bertolt Brecht and Thomas Wolfe and he returned there after graduation in 1979 for his first engagement, debuting with the role of Lyngstrand in Henrik Ibsen’s The Lady from the Sea.

In 1982, the dramatist Heiner Mueller cast him in a Volksbuehne production of Shakespeare’s Macbeth and, a year later, Muehe had become a member of the ensemble at the Deutsches Theater in East Berlin. “I wouldn’t say that I have any particular preference between the theater, film or television,” Muehe explains. “I am lucky to have a situation where I am able to work in every media, although the film roles have definitely increased percentage wise in recent years. It is often difficult to coordinate the acting commitments because films often happen at short notice. Suddenly, a production company has got the money together and you then have to shoot very quickly. Theater is more long term in its planning.”

“Working in these media is about different ways of practicing ones profession,” he suggests. “In both cases [theater and film], it is about energy, but the difference is just the degree of energy. In the theater, for every thought I have for a role, I need to translate this into physical and vocal form so that it is transported back to the last row in the theater. Standing in front of the camera, though, it is sufficient in the ideal situation if I just think this thought. I don’t need to make that translation.”

Muehe’s training in Leipzig had been a classical one for stage actors, so his first encounters with film and television at the beginning of the 1980’s “opened up a completely new world to me. My first dealings with the camera came with the television productions of theater classics. We would record a take or an act and then look at the footage. By being able to repeat the performance and see it, one could learn a lot about the effect one is having.”

Over the years, Muehe has worked with several of the most respected directors in the industry such as Bernhard Wicki (he won a Bavarian Film Award in 1989 for his performance in Spider’s Web), Frank Beyer (Das letzte U-Boot), Helmut Dietl (Schtonk!) and Constantin Costa-Gavras (Amen) and no less than three times with Michael Haneke (on Benny’s Video, Funny Games and Das Schloss). Muehe said that he would have welcomed the opportunity to continue the collaboration with Haneke, but that line was broken when the Austrian director began shooting his films in the French language.

As a conscious strategy to make himself better known to the up-and-coming generation of film directors, Muehe accepted the role of the forensic expert Dr. Robert Kolmaar in the ZDF crime series Der letzte Zeuge. The strategy clearly paid off for he was then approached by debut filmmaker Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck to play the role of the Stasi officer Gerd Wiesler in his feature The Lives of Others.

“When I first read the script, it was in such an outstanding condition, that I was very keen to meet this young director,” Muehe recalls. “The film describes a period I know very well, so I thought it was really great that a young man had come along who was already able to capture that atmosphere in his screenplay to begin with. I was extremely pleased that one could do this.”

“Naturally, we talked for a long time about individual scenes and I was able to make a few changes to some dialogue. But, in principle, the script was so good and Florian was so into the material. However, it was important for him that I gave it one more read through as a kind of lector.”

As Muehe points out, one probably needed more than fifteen years after the end of the GDR before such a film could be made. “Of course, Florian had the advantage that he isn’t anchored ideologically on one particular side. He has been able to act very freely and impartially, but I think one just needed a certain amount of time before being able to address the issues in a more intelligent way. There were often victims of the Stasi in the screenings and in the discussions they said how very grateful they were for this film. We were pleased that we hadn’t insulted or attacked anybody in their biography, and so that’s why I am also so happy with this film which has achieved so much and stimulates discussion.”

With the controversy of clandestine phone-tapping in Germany, the USA and elsewhere constantly grabbing the headlines, it is not surprising that the story of The Lives of Others has a potential appeal outside of the borders of Germany. Indeed, at this year’s Cannes Film Festival, the film’s sales agent Beta Cinema reported that the film had already been sold to 30 territories, including to Sony Picture Classics for North America.

“I think that is the characteristic feature of a great artistic achievement when one goes beyond the concrete to arrive at a universal generalization. For us, the film is very important concerning the Stasi, but it also has a universal side. It is not just about the Stasi or the GDR, it is also a crime story and a thriller. I believe that the film offers many ways for the spectator to find access to the story.”

With Muehe’s track record of working with such veterans as Haneke, Beyer or Costa-Gavras, he might have been forgiven for being slightly wary of working with a first-time feature filmmaker and young producers. But far from it.

“Florian didn’t make any impression of being a raw beginner,” Muehe notes. “He directed with such incredible energy and professionalism, and it was remarkable how he managed to shoot the film with the days we had. He just relentlessly held on. The thing is, there isn’t anything hard-boiled about him and he really has brought his all into this film. What other directors might achieve after twenty years, he has done with just this one film.”

Muehe is not resting on his laurels despite bagging the Bavarian Film Award and a Golden Lola as Best Actor for his performance as Gerd Wiesler. He says that he would like to try his hand at directing for the cinema – he directed Heiner Mueller’s play Der Auftrag at the Haus der Berliner Festspiele two years ago – but still hasn’t found a story idea he would like to commit to celluloid.

In the meantime, we will be sure to see Muehe on a big – or small – screen in the coming months thanks to his busy work schedule this year: he started 2006 playing a Jewish actor coaching Adolf Hitler (played by alternative comedian Helge Schneider) in the art of public speaking in Dani Levy’s satirical comedy Mein Fuhrer – Die wirklich wahrste Wahrheit ueber Adolf Hitler, and followed this with Nicole Mosley’s low-low-budget HD-shot thriller Nemesis, a two-hander between a German couple in their holiday home in Tuscany.

Martin Blaney spoke with Ulrich Muehe
Last summer, the future of Munich-based Bavaria Film International (BFI) was placed jointly in the experienced and trustworthy hands of Thorsten Schaumann (Head of Sales) and Thorsten Ritter (Head of Marketing) who have both been with the company since 1997 and 1999, respectively.

In the past, the two had worked on the successful international marketing of such German films as Run Lola Run, Nowhere in Africa, Good Bye, Lenin!, Head-On and Sophie Scholl – The Final Days. In addition, they had built up an impressive reputation with non-German, international titles with such films as Aki Kaurismäeki’s The Man Without a Past, Kim Ki-Duk’s Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring and Carlos Sorin’s Bombon – El Perro.

However, it wasn’t time to rest on their laurels, for with the new management came a re-orientation and restructuring of BFI’s activities.

“One of our strengths now is that we both have our core responsibi-
More International

Moreover, the two have built up an experienced sales and marketing team to underpin the company’s drive towards an even more international approach. Sales manager Stefanie Zeitler has been joined by Anagret Eckl and Klaus Rasmussen (formerly of Nordisk Film) on Schaumann’s sales force, while, in Ritter’s division, marketing manager Sebastian Kiesmueller was entrusted with even more responsibilities and Evelyn Holzendorf was recruited as junior marketing manager.

Last autumn also saw the appointment of Olaf Aschinger, who had previously managed the Mannheim Meetings at the Mannheim-Heidelberg International Film Festival, as acquisitions manager. “Olaf monitors all the scripts and the contacts with producers, keeps us informed about the status of projects and helps us to prioritize them,” Ritter says. “This professional monitoring is important because we have more and more international producers coming to us with projects as a result of the way we work.”

More Hands-On

“Moreover, we are adopting a new approach to our acquisitions,” Schaumann notes, “because we want to accompany the work of the producers and filmmakers and get to the point where we are involved, say, in an exchange on the screenplay and giving suggestions for improvements.”

This more “hands-on” approach during the development and production phases saw them, for example, making script suggestions for Robert Thalheim’s next feature project Am Ende kommen die Touristen, to be produced by 23|5 Filmproduktion in Poland this summer; traveling to Belgrade to see the rushes and rough cut of Serbian director Srdan Golubovic’s The Trap, or hiring a publicist as early as the shoot of Milcho Manchevski’s Bones which began principal photography in Macedonia in mid-June.

First Year’s Highlights

The new management started well last August with their first new pickup, Philip Groening’s Into Great Silence, which had its world premiere at the Venice Film Festival and became a favorite on the international festival circuit. Groening’s film has since been sold to several territories including the UK, Australia, Canada, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Austria as well as the Benelux.

Another highlight was definitely this year’s Berlinale where Schaumann and Ritter were handling Hans-Christian Schmid’s Requiem, Michael Glawogger’s Slumming and Matthias Glasner’s The Free Will in the Official Competition, and were also offering Dominik Graf’s The Red Cockatoo and Vanessa Jopp’s Happy As One, screening in the Panorama section.

As in the past, Bavaria Film International’s catalogue covers a broad spectrum of cinema — from the films by home-grown German talents through to interesting new works from filmmakers hailing from other parts of Europe to productions from Latin America or Asia.

The recent series of pickups reflect this eclectic acquisition policy. Among the new German films in Bavaria’s slate are Didi Danquart’s psychological, noir-drama Offset, Rolf S. Wolenstein’s coming-of-age story Paradizers, Marcus H. Rosenmüller’s sports comedy Schwere Jungs, and Felix Randau’s psychological drama Die Anruferin, while its new international titles include Nana Djordjadze’s romantic fairytale The Rainbowmaker, Milcho Manchevski’s mystery love story Bones, and Melinda Jansen’s quirky tale about friendship A Recipé for Hendrik Hadders.

Ambition and Emotion

After their positive experience with the handling of Into Great Silence, Ritter and Schaumann believe that documentaries will feature more strongly in Bavaria’s lineup in the future and thus play a greater role in their acquisition strategy.

The most recent acquisition in this segment is The Big Sellout by the Cologne-based production house Discofilm. “This is the kind of film we like to handle – ambitious and emotional cinema,” Ritter declares.

“In fact, the emotional component always plays a central role in the films we take on, whether it is a classical arthouse drama, family entertainment, animation, or a documentary,” Schaumann adds. “It sounds simple, but we believe that films must move the audience. These emotions don’t necessarily have to be only positive ones, they can be disturbing or irritating, but it should be a cinema of emotions and cinema that derives from a certain urge and passion of the filmmakers rather than one that is didactic.”

Thorsten Schaumann and Thorsten Ritter spoke with Martin Blaney
After around ten years experience in sales and distribution, Norwegian-born Solveig Langeland "came to the conclusion that it made sense to start up on my own" with her Stuttgart-based world sales outfit called Sola Media GmbH in January 2004.

"Over the years I had seen a lot of inefficient sales companies that provide very little return to producers. So my goal was to create a lean, profit oriented and efficient sales company," she explains. "The company today has low overhead costs, takes calculated risks and is financially healthy. We strive to provide very competitive cash reflows and profits for the producers we work for."

Before taking the plunge with her own company, the MBA graduate from the University of Southern California had worked in sales and marketing for BVIP, IBM, BV Film, California Federal Bank and General Motors.

She worked on Mika Kaurismaeki's film Moro No Brasil which was successfully sold to more than 20 territories and also sold Kevin McDonald's OSCAR-winning documentary One Day In September to several European territories. In addition, Langeland played an instrumental role in the financing of several features including the Ian McKellen-starring Emile, Tony Vitale's One Last Ride.

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Owner and managing director: Solveig Langeland

Founded: 2004

Catalogue includes:

and Rick Elgood and Don Lett’s One Love, starring Ky-Mani Marley, in her capacity as head of sales at BVIP. She also acquired the sales rights to Jonathan English’s Minotaur which was pre-sold to Lions Gate.

As far as Sola Media’s sales lineup is concerned, Langeland doesn’t focus on any particular genre: “We represent family films, documentaries and features and our main criteria is that we like the films ourselves and see that we can exploit them commercially in the international marketplace.”

“As a mother of two, I find it very rewarding to work with family/children films, even though they tend to be less commercial than features or docs,” she adds, pointing out that Sola Media “at the moment represents films and works with producers from the German-speaking world, Scandinavia, Benelux, UK and the Baltic States. We are open for films from other markets, but are not actively pursuing producers in other regions.”

An idea of the eclectic nature of Sola Media’s catalogue of commercial or award-winning features, edgy documentaries and high-quality children’s films can be seen by the films she was doing business with at this year’s Cannes Film Market.

For example, a series of deals were closed on the animated film Lotte from Gadgetville, directed by Janno Poldma and Heiki Ernits, featuring Lotte the dog, Bruno the cat, Albert the rabbit, and Susumu the Japanese bee in a town where inventing new things is a hobby. The Estonian-Latvian production will be released theatrically first in Estonia in September, followed by Latvia and the Benelux. Other territories sold include Norway (Coriander Films), Sweden (Folkets Bio) and Germany (MFA Film Distribution) and Sola is considering producing an English-language version of the film.

Meanwhile, Wolfgang Murnberger’s black satirical crime comedy Silentium added a French distributor, Les films sans frontiers, to a long list of buyers including Spain (Civita), Greece (Ama Film), and the Czech Republic/Slovakia (AQS) – while a last-minute pickup before Cannes, Jan Verheyen’s Belgian box office hit Gilles, was described by Langeland in an interview as “the typical type of film that we love, a very moving quality family film.” The film was sold to Turkey in Cannes and negotiations were underway with several other territories.

Furthermore, Sola Media is handling veteran Czech director Juraj Jakubisko’s period film Bathory, based on the legends surrounding the life and death of Countess Elizabeth Bathory of Transylvania, which stars Anna Friel, Karel Roden and Hans Matheson. One of the most expensive ever projects in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Bathory is being produced by Jakubisko’s Czech and Slovak-based companies with the UK’s Film & Music Entertainment and Lunar Films Ltd., and Hungary’s Eurofilm Studio.

At the same time, Langeland’s sales activities are supplemented by her collaboration with Beatrix Wesle’s Munich-based sales outfit Atrix Films to handle fare as varied as Goetz Spielmann’s Antares, Simon Aebly’s historical adventure Shadow of the Sword, and Rick Elgood and Don Letts’ romantic drama One Love.

Ask Langeland about the fortunes of German films at home and abroad, and she gives a very upbeat response. “I think that German films are doing much better internationally than they used to,” she argues. “International successes like Downfall (Der Untergang) make a foreign audience more prone to view German-language films in general. I also think that we can be very pleased with the results of the student films produced here in Germany such as The Story of the Weeping Camel (Die Geschichte vom weinenden Kamel), Malunde, and The Forest for the Trees (Der Wald vor lauter Baeumen).”

Moreover, she doesn’t see herself as being isolated in Baden-Wuerttemberg from the main clusters of world sales agents in Munich and Berlin. “Stuttgart has proven to be a good location for us,” Langeland explains. “MFG has supported the sales activities of several films of ours. In addition, we have found that certain services are much less expensive in Baden-Wuerttemberg than is the case in Munich.”

Solveig Langeland spoke with Martin Blaney
"THE NINTH DAY" PREMIERE IN PRAGUE

On 5 April 2006 the Czech distributor BELTFILM organized a big premiere for the release of The Ninth Day in the Czech Republic. The director of the film, Volker Schloendorff, personally attended the event and had the pleasure to meet representatives from the Czech TV and film scene as well as from the church and government, including the president of the Czech Republic, Václav Klaus. The big premiere and the presence of Volker Schloendorff was made possible with the help of German Films’ funding scheme Distribution Support which was set up in 2005 to support cinematic releases of German films abroad. Apart from the Czech release, The Ninth Day was also granted Distribution Support in Argentina and Spain.

SUPPORT FOR SUPPORT

As one of a total of five European institutions, the FilmFoerderung Hamburg has been selected by the Alfred Toepfer Foundation F.V.S. for its new fellowship program. The project – “Development and Construction of Alternative Support Structures for Digital Films with an Emphasis on Low Budget Films in Hamburg” – is based on Till Hardy’s Masters Thesis “Changes in the Market and Product Through Innovation Using Digital Film as an Example”. The Cultural and Business Studies scholar, whose salary will be paid for 18 months by the Alfred Toepfer Foundation, joined the FilmFoerderung Hamburg team in July to plan and construct an innovative support model for the further development of digital film. "We are looking forward to the cooperation with Till Hardy,” commented FilmFoerderung Hamburg’s executive director Eva Hubert. “The support of our institution is, especially in current times, an important impulse. We too have to go down new paths and develop new ideas. This pilot project could really profit the German film industry as a whole, and of course our location Hamburg in particular.”
PIG ON THE RUN

For eleven years they’ve kept us waiting, finally the sequel to Peter Timm’s successful *Rennschwein Rudi Ruessel* is on the way. Once again at the heart of this family comedy is the piglet, who brings wind into little Nickel’s life and helps him get over his mother’s death and open up to a new family. While the casting for the “title role” has yet to be finalized, other, more human characters, have already signed on: Maurice Teichert, Sina Richardt, Sebastian Koch, Sophie von Kessel, Andreas Schmidt, Dominique Horwitz and Wolfgang Voelz will all be on parade in front of Achim Poulheim’s camera. Producers Guenter Rohrbach and Heike Wiehle-Timm from Relevant Film/Hamburg are producing the *Filmstiftung NRW*-funded and WDR co-produced film fun-for-all from June to September in Cologne and surrounding areas as well as in Brandenburg.

GERMAN FILMS DOWN UNDER

The fifth Festival of German Films in Australia, which was organized together with the Goethe Institutes in Melbourne and Sydney and with support from the main sponsor Audi Australia from 20 – 30 April 2006, echoed the admission figures of the previous year. Around 14,000 festival-goers attended a total of 80 screenings in four cities. Sixteen feature films, a documentary and a short film program of 17 titles were presented.

The festival opened in Melbourne and Brisbane with Sophie Scholl – The Final Days (Sophie Scholl – Die letzten Tage) by Marc Rothemund in the presence of screenwriter and co-producer Fred Breinersdorfer. In Sydney, the festival was launched with the Berlinale title The Red Cockato (Der Rote Kakadu) by Dominik Graf while Canberra’s program opened with Summer in Berlin (Sommer vorm Balkon) by Andreas Dresen. The opening event was held in all four cities in the presence of leading representatives from the worlds of politics and business.

Apart from the opening films, there were large crowds for The White Masai (Die Weisse Massai) by Hermine Huntgeburth, Barefoot (Barfuss) by Til Schweiger, The Fisherman and His Wife (Der Fischer und seine Frau) by Doris Doerrie and About the Looking For and the Finding of Love (Vom Suchen und Finden der Liebe) by Helmut Dietl. In particular, the school-screenings of Wild Chicks (Die Wilden Huehner) by Vivian Naefe and Ed Herzog’s Almost Heaven – which was personally introduced by Heike Makatsch – took the young people’s hearts by storm. Heike Makatsch also happily answered the audience’s questions at the screenings of No Songs of Love (Keine Lieder über Liebe) by Lars Kraume and Against All Odds – Margarete Steiff (Appolonia Margarete Steiff) by Xaver Schwarzenberger. There were also positive reactions for the varied short film program “Leaps in Time” (“Zeitensprunge”), which was compiled in cooperation with the German Short Film Association (AG Kurzfilm) and personally introduced by the short film director Till Nowak (Delivery) to a very enthusiastic audience.

“PINGPONG” IN NEW YORK & LOS ANGELES

Within the framework of the exclusive industry screenings German Premieres for American buyers in June, German Films presented PINGPONG by Matthias Luthardt, which had its world premiere in Cannes’ Critics’ Week in May. Producer Niklas Baeumer (JUNIFILM) and world sales Media Luna Entertainment’s US representative Andrew Chang were on hand to present this debut film in New York’s Tribeca Cinemas in SoHo as well as at the first German Premieres in Los Angeles in the screening rooms of the Directors Guild of America.
89 MILLION EUROS FOR GERMAN FILMS

The German Federal Film Board (FFA) had a support budget in 2005 of some €88.7 million. Revenues from film levies amounted to €40.6 million (21.3 million from the film industry and 19.3 million from the video branch); the public and private broadcasters contributed to the funding with a total of €23 million in monetary and media services.

“During this ambivalent cinema year, the FFA stood up to the increasing challenges of the market and utilized the funding for screenplay development and production support,” commented FFA-CEO Peter Dinges. “The allocation committee endorsed a total of 43 film projects with a record sum of €16.8 million.” And the results of the FFA’s Reference Support for 2005 rouses an outlook for promising, new German productions. Producers and distributors received a total of €24.9 million in support for their new projects.

Other emphases of the 2005 FFA funding included sales promotion in the sum of €13.1 million (7.3 million of which were media services), movie theater support of €10.4 million and video promotion to the tune of €7.5 million.

FROM POTTER TO ZORRO – 2005’S AUDIENCE FAVORITES

A new FFA study examines the top 50 film titles in Germany in 2005. This new study rounds off the complex analyses of German cinemas of 2005. Which occupational group was most interested in last year’s No. 1 film Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire? How many female and how many male cinemagoers saw the most successful German film The White Masai? Which film accounted for the most Internet ticket purchases?

How high was the average food and beverage consumption during the screenings of The Legend of Zorro (No. 50)? These are but a few of the numerous and interesting questions to which the new FFA study offers answers. The analysis of the 50 most-frequented films of the past year is based on the data of the consumer panel of the German Society for Consumer Research (Gesellschaft fuer Konsumforschung, GfK) and takes into consideration the socio-graphic as well as film and theater specific criteria of cinemagoers (i.e. according to age groups, week days, film starts or even according the number of accompanying persons).

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR EAVE PARTICIPANTS

MFG Filmfoerderung Baden-Wuerttemberg is the competency and information center for the film scene in the South West German state of Baden-Wuerttemberg and has been supporting exceptional and cultural film production in the area since 1995 – from script development and production to distribution and film theater support. Now they are proud to publish an agreement between EAVE – European Audiovisual Entrepreneurs and MFG Filmfoerderung Baden-Wuerttemberg, Mitteldeutsche Medienfoerderung and Filmfonds Wien titled “Scholarships for Central and South-Eastern European EAVE Participants”.

The three partners will fund a maximum of two scholarships to EAVE 2007 participants and will each contribute a total of €8000 to achieve this objective. The selection of participants to be offered scholarships will be conducted by EAVE. Only participants from the following countries will qualify for the scholarships: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the following countries outside EU/MEDIA: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro. Priority will be given to participants from non-EU/MEDIA countries.
GROWING SUCCESS OF GERMAN SHORT FILMS

German short films have booked a string of festival successes in the last few months and will remain on course with their success story in the coming months at various other internationally renowned festivals.

Stefan Mueller’s animated short Mr. Schwartz, Mr. Hazen & Mr. Horlocker won the second prize of Cannes’ Cinéfondation while Christoph Girardet and Matthias Mueller’s experimental film Kristall picked up the Grand Prix Canal+ Award in Cannes. Till Nowak received two more honors (the Jean-Luc Xiberras Award in Annecy and the MADE IN GERMANY Award in Hamburg) for his animation Delivery, which has also been invited to the Message to Man Festival in St. Petersburg and to the Flanders International Film Festival. Other films going to St. Petersburg in competition include: Katharina Pethke’s Anophtalmus, Till Passow’s Mast Qalandar, Marc Brummund’s Heim, and Jan Koester’s Our Man in Nirvana, which won this year’s Berlinale Silver Bear.

The documentary Motodrom by Joerg Wagner received the ZDFdokukanal Prize in Hamburg and has, together with Daniel Nocke’s Kein Platz fuer Gerold, also been invited to the international competition at the Curtas Vila do Conde festival in Portugal, to FanTasia in Montreal, as well as to Edinburgh and Los Angeles. Kerstin Nickig’s Lieber Muslim won the FIPRESCI Award in Cracow and a Special Mention from the international competition jury. Wolfstram by Maria-Anna Rimpfl picked up the Audience Award for experimental film at the Brooklyn film festival.

The Anima Mundi festival in Brazil has invited 23 German short films to its various competitive sections, including Mr. Schwartz, Mr. Hazen & Mr. Horlocker, Lena Meyer’s Rue des Légendes, and Apple on a Tree by Astrid Rieger and Zelijko Vidovic. Vuk Jevremovic’s new film Close Your Eyes and Do Not Breath, the experimental film Quietsch by Baranbo Odar, and Peter Ladkani’s Tradition will be screening at Montreal’s World Film Festival.

Further information and dates are available at www.ag-kurzfilm.de and www.shortfilm.de.

SPOTLIGHT ON GERMANY: GERMAN SHORTS IN CANADA

The German Short Film Association (AG Kurzfilm) together with the Goethe-Institut Toronto, presented 3 short film programs within the framework of the “Spotlight on Germany” during the Worldwide Short Film Festival in Toronto in June. But the main program also showed the strengths of the German “short form”: six German short films were shown in the international competition while a further four films were shown in various other sections of the festival. A total of 37 German short films were shown in Toronto, one of the most prominent short film festivals in North America, which is, with numerous buyers in attendance, also a very important market. The German Short Film Association’s first big appearance in North America was accompanied by great interest from industry professionals and festival-goers: thanks to support from German Films and the Goethe-Institut, the filmmakers Susanne Seidel, Anja Struck, Maximilian Erlenwein and Jan Thuering as well as AG Kurzfilm’s Jutta Wille were in Toronto to represent the German short film scene, particularly at the German Short Film Roundtable. Ingo Grell from the Short Film Agency in Hamburg as well as Doina Popescu from Toronto’s Goethe-Institut and the German filmmaker currently living in Toronto, Oliver Hussein, also participated in the roundtable. Competently yet easy-going, they discussed such topics as production conditions, the festival scene, the market situation and education in Germany with festival director Shane Smith and the audience.

BERLIN-BRANDENBURG MEDIENWOCHEN 2006

The new media season is off to a smashing start. From 30 August to 9 September 2006 the entire media industry will cross paths in the German capital at the Berlin-Brandenburg Medienwoche. With major events including the Medienforum (30 August - 1 September), the IFA (1-6 September), the M100 Sanssouci Colloquium (8-9 September) in Potsdam and an array of other industry programming, the Medienwoche is one of Germany’s largest media conferences. Joining the many leading national and international experts are Germany’s most prominent politicians. Berlin’s mayor Klaus Wowereit will speak at the conference’s opening ceremonies, and both Brandenburg Minister-President Matthias Platzeck and German Chancellor Angela Merkel are expected to attend the M100 Sanssouci Colloquium at the end of the Medienwoche.

To set the tone for the Medienforum, the Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg and the mbb will be hosting a media conference at the European School of Management and Technology (esmt). The three-day event will focus on recent industry developments and the implications they have on classically structured media companies and content producers. It’s all about new competitors, new means of distribution and new content. Supplementing the program are events covering developments in German filmmaking policies, the new framework of the international news business, the future of radio as well as the European Forum for Mobile TV 2006. Further detailed information on the Berlin-Brandenburg Medienwoche, including scheduled events and accreditation information can be found at www.medienwoche.de.
Auf der anderen Seite des Lebens

Type of Project Feature Film Cinema Genre Melodrama
Production Company Corazón International/Hamburg, in co-production with Pan Film/Istanbul With backing from BKM, Filmfoerderungsanstalt (FFA), FilmFoerderung Hamburg, Filmstiftung NRW, MSH Schleswig-Holstein, Nordmedia Producers Fatih Akin, Klaus Maeck, Andreas Thiel Director Fatih Akin Screenplay Fatih Akin Director of Photography Rainer Klausmann Editor Andrew Bird Music by Stefan Hantel (Shantel) Production Design Tamo Kunz Principal Cast Nurguel Yesilcay, Baki Davrak, Hanna Schygulla, Patrycia Ziolkowska, Tuncel Kurtiz, Nursel Koese Casting Monique Akin Format 35 mm, color, 1:1.85, Dolby SR Stereo Shooting Languages German, Turkish, English Shooting in Hamburg, Bremen, Luebeck, Istanbul, Filiyos, Trabzon, July - September 2006 German Distributor Pandora Film/Cologne

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Andreas Thiel and Klaus Maeck, partners with filmmaker Fatih Akin in his production company Corazón International, describe his latest feature Auf der anderen Seite des Lebens (translation: “On the Other Side of Life”) as “a great opportunity and a great challenge” since expectations are running high after the overwhelming success of Head-On (Gegen die Wand) which won the Berlinale’s Golden Bear and the European Film Award, among many other prizes, in 2004.

Auf der anderen Seite des Lebens is intended as the second part of Akin’s planned trilogy of Love, Death & The Devil. “Whereas love was the central motif in Head-On, the core element of this story is death,” Thiel and Maeck explain. “Death brings loss, grief, revenge, recognition, guilt, and forgiveness into life, and that’s what our story is about.”

For Akin, whose music documentary Crossing The Bridge - The Sound of Istanbul was in the cinemas last year, his new project is “the philosophical and political sequel to Head-On. The film deals with what I’ve observed over the past three years. It is my way of coming to terms with the events on the world stage – from 9/11 and the resulting fear of all things oriental, to the discussion on Turkey’s possible membership to the European Union.”

“The relationship between Turkey and the EU seems to me almost like a difficult love story between two individuals,” he suggests. “The encounters between Ayten and Lotte; Ayten and Susanne; Nejat, Ali and Yeter [in the film] could be parables for this unique bilateral relationship. Forgiveness is the key because forgiving means accepting someone despite their mistakes and flaws.”

“The poetry of the film is based on my own personal development,” Akin explains, pointing out how his recent discovery of Latin American cinema and meeting some of its makers have played a major role in this process. Guillermo Arriaga, screenwriter of such films as Amores Perros and 21 Grams, inspired him and changed his cinematic perspective, while films like Y Tu Mama Tambien and The Motorcycle Diaries “have shown me that political, unconventional cinema can be a commercial success worldwide.”

“The birth of my son and my wife’s pregnancy made me think a lot about life and death,” Akin continues. “I like the idea of making a positive film about death. In dreams, death represents change, a transition to a new stage of life, a metamorphosis. In many cultures, the idea of death is not repressed, doesn’t have such negative connotations, but stands for hope. I want my story to show how two deaths solve complex dramas and seemingly insoluble conflicts.”

“I hope to take all these philosophical and political ideas and make them into an exciting, entertaining and commercially successful film,” he concludes. “And I think that’s possible.”

MB
Bloede Muetze!

Type of Project Feature Film Cinema Genre Children’s Film, Coming-of-Age Story, Family Production Companies Kinderfilm/Erfurt, schlacht & ergreifend Filmproduktion/Munich, in co-production with BR/Munich, RBB/Potsdam-Babelsberg With backing from Mitteldeutsche Medienfoerderung, BKM, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, Kuratorium junger deutscher Film, FilmFernsehFonds Bayern, First Movie Program Producers Ingelore Koenig, Johannes Schmid, Philipp Budweg Director Johannes Schmid Screenplay Philipp Budweg, Johannes Schmid, Michael Demuth Director of Photography Michael Berti Commissioning Editor Friedenke Euler (BR) Editor Thomas Kohler Music by Michael Heilrath Production Design Angelica Boehm Principal Cast Inka Friedrich, Andreas Hoppe, Stephan Kampwirth, Claudia Geisler, Inga Busch, Johann Hillmann, Konrad Baumann, Lea Eisleb Casting Annekathrin Heubner, Daniela Tolkien Format Super 16 mm, blow-up to 35 mm, color, 1:1.85, DTS Stereo Shooting Language German Shooting in Erfurt, Soemmerda, Weimar and Jena, June - July 2006 German Distributor Stardust Filmverleih/Munich

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Growing up is not so easy to do, as 13-year-old Martin is just finding out – the hard way! A sheltered only son, somewhat short and weedy for his age, his life is altered radically when his parents move to the sleepy village of Bellbach. A new home means a new school, which is bad enough, but what really turns Martin’s life upside down are the strange feelings he suddenly gets in his stomach when he sees Silke. It’s just a shame there’s the super cool Oliver who is also her good friend. In no short order Martin is struck both by love and Oliver’s fists! But Martin starts to fight, for Silke, against Oliver and finally for the friendship of them both.

Bloede Muetze! (translation: “Stupid Hat!” – a reference to the kind of insults children shout at each other) is, says debut feature director, co-writer and producer Johannes Schmid, “a realistic, amusing and moving story about friendship, family and the big adventure that is growing up.” An exciting film for children and adults, Bloede Muetze! is in the Scandinavian or Dutch tradition, so there’s no Disney-like kitsch and fake sentimentality here! Based on the novel by Schmid’s brother, Thomas, “the themes are close to both of us,” says Johannes. “We adapted it relatively freely to the extent that we ended up forgetting who came up with which idea!”

As for working with children (something every sane director is apparently advised to avoid, that and animals), Schmid is interested “in the gap between the way kids see reality and the way adults see it. The film examines it from the kids’ perspectives but I’m also still connected to the problems of twelve- and thirteen-year-old children because we never forget our own childhoods. Environments change but the emotional problems of growing up, first love, getting on with your parents, establishing your own identity don’t.”

Founded by Schmid and partner Philipp Budweg in 2000, schlacht & ergreifend is best known for A Pass from the Back (Aus der Tiefe des Raumes) and most recently Four Windows (Vier Fenster). Kinderfilm was also founded in 2000 to specialize in quality theatrical features and TV-series of all genres for children and young people. Among the company’s previous productions are the award-winning films The Blind Flyers (Die Blindgaenger) and Secondhand Child (Wer kuesst schon einen Leguan?).

Das Fliehende Pferd

Type of Project Feature Film Cinema Genre Literature, Romantic Comedy Production Company Gate Film/Munich, in co-production with Clasart Film/Munich With backing from FilmFernsehFonds Bayern, Filmfoerderungsanstalt (FFA), MFG Baden-Wuerttemberg Producer Rikolt von Gagern Director Rainer Kaufmann Screenplay Ralf Hertwig, Kathrin Richter, from a novel by Martin Walser Director of Photography Klaus Eichhammer Production Design Renate Schmaderer Principal Cast Ulrich Noethen, Katja Riemann, Ulrich Tukur Casting An Dorthe Braker Format 35 mm, color, 1:1.85, Dolby SR Shooting Language German Shooting in Lake Constance, August - September 2006 German Distributor Concorde Filmverleih/Munich

World Sales
Tele Muenchen Gruppe · Bernd Schloetterer Kaufinger Strasse 24 · 80331 Munich/Germany phone +49-89-29 09 30 · fax +49-89-29 09 31 09 email: marketing@tmg.de · www.tmg.de
A mid-life crisis comedy, **Das Fliehende Pferd** (translation: “Runaway Horse”) is the story of Helmut (Ulrich Noethen) and his wife Sabine (Katja Riemann) spending their usual annual holiday at Lake Constance. This time an old school-friend of Helmut’s, Klaus (Ulrich Tukur) appears, accompanied by his much younger girlfriend, Helene. Old rivalries come to the fore, erotic temptations beckon, tensions rise and long suppressed wishes and desires stir. Things come to a head when, during a sailing trip, Kurt falls overboard and vanishes. But it’s the catalyst that enables them to finally take their lives into their own hands and make the necessary changes. Then Helmut discovers Klaus’ secret …

Based on the best-selling novel by Martin Walser, **Das Fliehende Pferd** came together very quickly. "It turned out," says producer Rikolt von Gagern, "that Rainer Kaufmann knew the story. He’d already proven with *Talk of the Town* (*Stadtgespräch*) he could do this kind of thing and we were both on the same wavelength as to how to make this film. We got together in the spring and started shooting in the summer."

Von Gagern "wanted the best German actors for the roles" and he got them! From the A-list of today’s local talent, Noethen’s credits include *Downfall* (*Der Untergang*) and he is soon to be seen in Tommy Wigand’s *TKKG*. Riemann starred recently in Dany Levy’s upcoming Hitler-comedy *Mein Fuhrer* while her other credits also include *Agnes and his brothers* (*Agnes und seine Bruder*), *Rosenstrasse*, Comedian Harmonists and *Maybe, Maybe Not* (*Der bewegte Mann*). Tukur’s most recent credit is Florian Henckel von Donnersmark’s *The Lives of Others* (*Das Leben der Anderen*).

"Rainer and Ulrich [Noethen] have wanted to work together for ages," explains von Gagern. "We needed a good counterpart actor and both decided on Ulrich Tukur. We’d seen him at a reading, gave him the novel and script and he said ‘yes’. Katja has already worked with Rainer many times and Petra Schmidt-Schaller, who plays Helene, we discovered during the casting process. This is her first major role and we’re convinced by her."

Although filming a novel does involve making changes, **Das Fliehende Pferd** stays very true to its source. "The script has more humor," says von Gagern, "and it’s more visually oriented since the novel has internal monologues, and the ending has been written to be better suited to the cinema, but otherwise it is the same."

Given the novel has been translated into twenty-four languages and sold over a million copies, there should be a ready and eager audience waiting.
Hoefflin admits that it was “a handicap” not having any public funding, but points out the film’s plot required that the shoot had to take place during the World Cup championship.

“We decided that we just had to do it,” he explains. “Fortunately, there was the advantage that these were friends who wanted to make a film together – Justus and the other actors know each other from films or work in the theater – and so there is a quite different atmosphere on the production.”

Since they had a limited budget (around €700,000 including deferrals) the team was kept small, often with no more than 12 people on the set, and the film was shot on HDV with plans for a later blow-up to 35 mm.

“We chose HDV, firstly, to be very flexible and also because cameraman Matthias Schellenberg has experience of working in this medium on films like Kroko and The White Sound (Das weisse Rauschen),” Hoefflin notes.

“The World Cup is not at the forefront of the story although the film’s action begins on the day of the opening game and ends on the day of the final,” he says. “Nevertheless, we have been out capturing the atmosphere of euphoria in Germany during the event, although we have made sure that we don’t get any official logos in frame. It’s often enough to film the people’s reactions to the matches at the open-air public viewings.”

Hartz 4.2 is element e’s second feature film after Gernot Kraa’s family film Paula’s Secret (Paula’s Geheimnis) which is currently in post-production and will have its premiere this year at the beginning of October.

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Move over Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance! Here comes Zen and the Art of a Good Meal! Doris Doerrie, fresh from her recent theatrical success, the carp-lover’s wet dream and relationship comedy The Fisherman and His Wife – Why Women Never Get Enough (Der Fischer und seine Frau – warum Frauen nie genug bekommen) turns her attention to Buddhism and that age-old saying, you are what you eat. In How To Cook Your Life, Doerrie enlists the help of the charismatic Zen Master Edward Espe Brown to explain the guiding principles of Zen Buddhism as they apply to the preparation of food as well as life itself.

“How a person goes about dealing with the ingredients for his meals” explains Doerrie, “says a lot about him. How To Cook Your Life teaches us to be attentive in our everyday dealings with the most mundane things and also open our eyes to one of the most beautiful occupations there is: existing in the here and now. And cooking is also an integral part of this.”

Edward Brown has been practicing Zen for over forty years, teaching in San Francisco as well as across the USA and Europe. And in case you think this is all New Age, California, touchy-feely, 800 years ago Master Eihei Dogen Zenji, the founder of the Japanese Soto-Zen school, wrote a cookbook in which he taught that it is possible to discover Buddha in even the simplest of kitchen duties, such as washing rice or kneading dough, and so reflect on one’s own actions and behavior in the world.

The multi award-winning Doerrie and her unique take on life as seen...
through a camera lens needs no introduction to fans of contemporary German cinema. Her previous credits include Men (Maenner, 1985), Am I Beautiful? (Bin ich schoen?, 1998) and “Naked” (Nackt, 2001).

Producer Fidelis Mager runs megaherz together with the filmmaker Franz X. Gernstl who has won, among others, the German Film Award in Silver in 2003 for co-producing Doerrie’s “Naked” and both the 2000 Adolf-Grimme-Award and 2001 Bavarian Television Award for his TV series, Gernstl unterwegs.

Der lange Weg ans Licht

Type of Project Documentary Cinema Production Company Douglas Wolfsperger Filmproduktion/Berlin, in co-production with 3sat/Mainz, WDR/Cologne With backing from Mitteldeutsche Medienfoerderung, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, MEDIA Producer Douglas Wolfsperger Director Douglas Wolfsperger Screenplay Douglas Wolfsperger Directors of Photography Igor Luther, Ute Freund Editor Jean-Marc Lesguillons Format 35 mm, color, cs, FAZ from HD Shooting Language German Shooting in Meerane, Chemnitz and Tanzania, May – June 2006

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Four midwives from the eastern part of Germany with their different personalities and backgrounds are at the center of Douglas Wolfsperger's latest project, Der lange Weg ans Licht (WT), which is described as a “cinematic voyage of discovery through the human round of love, life, suffering and death.”

"In all my films, I look for a framework within which I can portray people telling us something about their lives. That is how it was with the riders of the sacred blood and their relics, and the Bellaria cinema with its regulars, and the same goes for the midwives,” says Wolfsperger who came upon the idea of shooting in eastern Germany after the Mitteldeutsche Medienfoerderung (MDM) regional fund’s chief executive Manfred Schmidt expressed interest in working with him after seeing Riders of the Sacred Blood.

Wolfsperger points out that funding from MDM was only one reason why his film is located in the region: “I began researching and soon realized that it is just an interesting area for such a subject. To begin with, the birth rate in Germany is very low, in fact, one of the lowest in the whole world. And that is more concentrated in eastern Germany where the people are leaving the towns for the West because they have a better chance of getting work there. You’ll see complete towns dying out in the future. Those were all ingredients for a film where I thought it would be a great idea to tell this in this part of Germany.”

As in his previous award-winning feature documentaries Bellaria – As Long As We Live! (Bellaria – so lange wir leben, 2001), Riders of the Sacred Blood (Die Blutritter, 2003) and Did You Ever Fall In Love With Me? (War’n Sie schon mal in mich verliebt?, 2005), the dividing line between documentary and fiction film becomes blurred, with Wolfsperger managing to create his own hybrid genre that combines the comical with the reflective. "I want to ensure that it isn’t an educational film or a reportage; we are wanting to make a film for the cinema,” explains Wolfsperger who is working for the third time here with the veteran Czech-born cinematographer Igor Luther (The Tin Drum). “We have a different approach from a journalistic one. We are interested in the people, the atmosphere and the images as a way of taking stock of the situation in the East.”

The German end of the shooting at locations in Meerane and Chemnitz following the four midwives in their daily work was then followed by a two-week shoot in Tanzania in the second half of June. The focus here was on accompanying one of the women, Edeltraut Hertel, to places where she has also worked for many years training a new generation of midwives.

According to Wolfsperger, there is already serious interest in the project from a leading international sales company and he would welcome the opportunity to have the film premiered at next year’s Berlinale. “That would be nice because when Bellaria was shown at the Berlinale [in a special screening in 2002], it opened many doors for us and led to several invitations from foreign festivals.”
Old Love

Type of Project Feature Film Cinema Genre Literature Production Company zero west filmproduktion/Cologne, in co-production with zero fiction film/Berlin, DOR Film/Vienna With backing from Filmstiftung NRW, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, BKM, Oesterreichisches Filminstitut Producers Kai Kuennemann, Martin Hagemann, Jan Schuette Director Jan Schuette Screenplay Jan Schuette, based on short stories by Isaac B. Singer Director of Photography Edward Klosinski Editor Katja Dringenberg Production Design Amanda Ford Principal Cast Otto Tausig, Tovah Feldshuh, Rhea Perlman, Barbara Hershey, Elisabeth Pena Casting Heidi Levitt Format Super 16 mm, blow-up to 35 mm, color, 1:1.85 Shooting Language English Shooting in New York and Florida, June – July 2006

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Five years ago, Jan Schuette made a short film based upon one of Isaac Bashevis Singer’s short stories entitled Old Love. The 25-minute film of the same name, which featured the veteran Austrian actor Otto Tausig and American actress Tovah Feldshuh, premiered to critical acclaim at the 2001 Venice Film Festival and was shown at several festivals around the globe.

This summer, Schuette returned to Singer and Old Love for his new feature film which he sees as “a tribute to [Singer’s] body of work, to the actor Tausig and to the power of love. In three attempts, the main character tries to influence and vary his fate, but, ultimately, reality breaks into the world of his dreams.”

“Of course, already through the casting of Tausig, Old Love picks up where my previous film Bye Bye, America left off,” Schuette admits. “Yet, while my previous film dealt with the tragic-comical re-conquest of a lost homeland, this film explores the redemptive powers of the unending dream of love.”

Though approaching his eighties, Max Kohn (played by Tausig) shows no signs of slowing down. He pursues his love life – both real and imagined – with youthful vigor, thereby risking his relationship to Reisel (Feldshuh), the woman he loves but neglects. Set in the world of European Jewish immigrants in the USA, Old Love is a film about imagined longings and the dream of love; about death and sex. It speaks of New York, its immigrants and the timelessness of the city.

“Although Old Love has no singing and no Streisand, it will be a poetic, human and entertaining film,” producers Kai Kuennemann and Martin Hagemann observe, “filled with Singer’s trademark of warm and intelligent humor: qualities grown-up audiences desperately seek and rarely find in current popular cinema.”

“While Tausig is the connecting link between the three stories – and he will appear five years younger in some scenes –, this is not a classic omnibus film,” stresses Kuennemann of Cologne-based zero west filmproduktion. “The film has a continuous plotline running through all three parts.”

Apart from the reunion with Tausig, Old Love also sees Schuette continuing his collaboration with the veteran Polish cinematographer Edward Klosinski – whose credits include Man of Marble, Dekalog, Three Colours. White – after they worked together on the director’s last two features The Farewell (Abschied, 2000) and SuperTex (2003).

Plan B

Type of Project Feature Film Cinema Genre Tragicomedy Production Company credofilm/Berlin, in co-production with RBB/Potsdam-Babelsberg, MDR/Leipzig With backing from Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, Mitteldeutsche Medienfoerderung Producers Susann Schimk, Joerg Trentmann Director Franziska Meletzky Screenplay Elke Roessler Director of Photography Ngo The Chau Commissioning Editor Cooky Ziesche (RBB) Editor Juergen Winkelblech Music by Eike Hosenfeld, Moritz Denis Production Design Susanne Abel Principal Cast Dagmar Manzel, Corinna Harfouch, Kirsten Block, Robert Gallinowski, Christine Schorn, Robert Kersten, Otto Mellies Format Super 16 mm, color, Dolby SR Shooting Language German Shooting in Saxony-Anhalt, Brandenburg, May - June 2006

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A tragicomedy that knows how to balance its bittersweet elements to achieve just the right flavor, Plan B (WT) tells the story of Anne, who returns to her home village to celebrate her mother’s 70th birthday. Her two sisters still live there: the older one with the mother in an emotionally-charged sharing arrangement while the younger one can choose the path that leads to happiness. Plan B, indeed!

“This is a film about love, obligations, family, loneliness, dependence and the search for one’s own happiness,” says director Franziska Meletzky who, according to her CV, gave up a promising career as a waitress at Manchester City football club to direct at the Theater Oberhausen before studying film in Potsdam-Babelsberg.

It is a tribute to the strength of script, director and producers that Plan B features no less a person than Corinna Harfouch in the role of Iris, the oldest daughter. One of Germany’s A-list thespians, her list of credits includes Downfall (Der Untergang, as the chilling Magda Goebbels) and Oskar Roehler’s Elementary Particles (Elementarteilchen). And she is soon to be seen in Tom Tykwer’s Perfume: The Story of a Murderer.

Susann Schimk and Joerg Trentmann both studied film and television production in Potsdam-Babelsberg before founding credofilm in 2001. They, and thus the company, place their emphasis on individual story telling, looking to tell personal stories that are driven by emotion. Among their previous credits are Jagdhunde and Valerie, both for the renowned ZDF Das kleine Fernsehspiel, as well as Mirko Borscht’s Kombat Sixteen (Kombat Sechzehn).

Reine Geschmackssache

Type of Project Feature Film Cinema Genre Comedy, Tragicomedy, Road Movie Production Company Noirfilm/ Karlsruhe, in cooperation with Knudsen & Streuber Filmproduktion/Berlin, in co-production with SWR/Baden-Baden With backing from MFG Baden-Wuerttemberg Producers Kristine Knudsen, Boris Michalski Director Ingo Rasper Screenplay Tom Streuber, Ingo Rasper Director of Photography Marc Achenbach Editor Patricia Rommel Music by Martina Eisenreich Production Design Christian Strang Principal Cast Edgar Selge, Florian Bartholomaei, Franziska Walser, Roman Knizka, Traute Hoess Casting Marquardt & Koch Besetzungsburo/Berlin Format Super 16 mm, blow-up to 35 mm, color, 1:1.85, DTS

Shooting Language German Shooting in Stuttgart, Baden-Wuerttemberg, July - August 2006

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First-time feature director and co-author Ingo Rasper hits the road with Reine Geschmackssache (translation: “Purely a Matter of Taste”), a buddy comedy about a father and son who are no longer able to avoid each other and really get into trouble.

This is the story of Wolfgang, an ’old school’ sales agent, who sells clothing to ’Best Ager’-boutiques, catering to women aged thirty-five and above. When he loses his driving license he commandeers his brother-in-law and causing her older sister to question her previous ability to avoid each other and really get into trouble.

What nobody except Wolfgang knows, is that he’s both bankrupt and under threat from a younger and increasingly successful rival. What nobody knows is that Karsten is not only desperate to leave the family home and party in Spain, but he also has a very big secret of his own. Things come, as they must, to a head.

“The film’s inspired on my own experience,” says Rasper. “My father was a sales rep and I had to drive him. We, Tom and I, wanted to make a comedy by taking this setting and dramatizing it.”

Co-writer Tom Streuber studied with Rasper at the Film Academy Baden-Wuerttemberg. Although he majored in Production, Streuber wrote several scripts while Rasper went for Directing. “Even at film school we worked closely together,” says Rasper. “We’re both on the same wavelength and our strength is that we have the same sense of humor.”

It’s taken two years for Reine Geschmackssache to come to fruition. Rasper first hooked up with producer Kristine Knudsen who developed the project with him and Streuber. Together they looked for an experienced production company prepared to take on a debut feature. They found Boris Michalski of Noirfilm, whose previous credits include Offset and the Berlinale Golden Bear 2006-winning Grбавica.

The region around Stuttgart is home to many fashion designers, factories and boutiques making it the perfect location for a film that features women’s fashion. “We had lots of support,” says Rasper. “We also have Bettina Marx doing the costume design and she won this year’s German Film Award for her work on Requiem. We’re working with great people who know how to do lots with little money! The production value is the maximum possible.”

SK
Rennschwein Rudi Ruessel 2

**Type of Project** Feature Film Cinema **Genre** Children’s Film, Comedy, Family  
**Production Company** Relevant Film/Hamburg  
**With backing from** Filmstiftung NRW, Filmfoerderung Bayern, FilmFernsehFonds Berlin-Brandenburg, FilmFonds Bayern  
**Producers** Guenter Rohrbach, Heike Wiehle-Timm  
**Director** Peter Timm  
**Screenplay** Peter Timm, in collaboration with Karsten Willutzki  
**Director of Photography** Achim Pouilheim  
**Editor** Barbara Hennings  
**Music by** Marcel Barsotti  
**Production Design** Monika Bauert  
**Principal Cast** Rudi Ruessel, Sebastian Koch, Sophie von Kessel, Maurice Teichert, Sina Richardt, Andreas Schmidt, Dominique Horwitz  
**Casting** Franziska Aigner-Kuhn  
**Special Effects** Gerd Voll, Chris Creatures FilmEffects, Frank Schlegel  
**Format** 35 mm, 1:1.85, color, Dolby DTS Surround  
**Shooting Language** German  
**Shooting in** Cologne, Berlin-Brandenburg, June - September 2006  
**German Distributor** Warner Bros./Hamburg  

**World Sales**  
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Everybody’s favorite racing pig, Rudi Ruessel, returns for more madcap mayhem! This time it’s the original Rudi’s great (to the power of nineteen!) grandson who provides the thrills and spills as he helps nine-year-old Nikel get over the death of his mother and joins him in his fight to prevent his father from forming a new family; especially with a girlfriend who has such a horrible daughter like thirteen-year-old Felicitas!

What’s that saying about never working with kids and animals? Writer-director Peter Timm couldn’t care less! “Child actors and real animals – I love it!” he says. “It’s the biggest challenge of them all. Not only that, I was also doubly challenged because, as writer-director, there is always a bit of mistrust! Is it funny and original enough? And the writer wants to know if the director can direct!”

Given that Timm can proudly claim a feature film and TV-movie track record that includes Go Trabi Go, Pauline in Between (Ein Mann fuer jede Tonart) and the first Rudi Ruessel film, as well as winning the Ernst-Lubitsch-Award and the Bavarian Film Award for his first feature, Meier (1986), it’s safe to say this director’s up to the task! But how did he go about updating what is not only a very successful film but also a book all German children read in primary school?

“In the first film,” Timm explains, “the question was how does a harmonious family live with a pig? This time it is how can a family come together despite, or rather with a pig? This is a patchwork family, like so many, with a new love and new constellation. The pig’s the aggressor the children use against their parents. But at the end Rudi brings everyone together.”

Once again, Timm and producers Guenter Rohrbach and Heike Wiehle-Timm have assembled an excellent cast, including Sebastian Koch, who won the Adolf-Grimme-Award and the Bavarian Television Award for Speer und Er, and Sophie von Kessel, who is much acclaimed for her numerous TV movies. As for the star, Rudi himself, he’s only just been born! As Timm says, “He’s famous and he doesn’t even know it yet!”

Relevant Film was founded in 1993 by Heike Wiehle-Timm and Peter Timm, and specializes in high quality theatrical and broadcast drama. Among the company’s credits are Blueprint, Der Zimmerspringbrunnen, The Cleaning Ladies Island (Die Putzfraueninsel) and Andrea and Marie (Andrea und Marie).
“At one stage, the project was planned as a much more expensive project with US partners and Val Kilmer cast as von Richthofen,” recalls writer-director Niki Muellerschoen whose filmmaking career saw him spend 13 years working in Hollywood. “But then we went back to the original basic idea of thinking that it must be possible to produce big cinema out of Germany, to make a summer movie about our history in a form that is internationally marketable. With this new strategy we would be able to keep the project under our control which would not have been possible if we had continued pursuing the project with a US cast and a budget of $50 million.”

The project took a decisive step further when Muellerschoen became a partner with Roland Pellegrino, Thomas Reisser and Dan Maag in the company Niama Film which is producing Der rote Baron. “The financing for the film has come 100% from the producers and investors in a structure similar to a private placement,” Pellegrino explains. “The investors are predominantly from Baden-Wuerttemberg and new to cinema, but they see this involvement in the film as an entrepreneurial investment. It is a brand new variant of financing exclusively geared to making a return for the investors who participate in all stages of the film’s exploitation. What is important here is that there are no fees or soft costs, and we are always looking to find the most cost effective solutions.”

“Thus, it made financial sense to locate the production in the Czech Republic because the film can be shot at much more favorable prices and there are not the kind of shooting restrictions as in Germany,” Pellegrino adds, pointing out that the CGI part will be done by Pixomondo in Ludwigsburg with up to 60 people being employed for the special effects. “They are being recruited from all over the world and many have experience on big Hollywood films. I see this as contributing to the development of the film industry infrastructure in and around Stuttgart.”

Casting the central role of von Richthofen wasn’t a problem for Muellerschoen after he saw Matthias Schweighofer in Tomy Wigand’s Polly Eye’s. “I knew straightaway that he would be the right person for the Baron. And Til Schweiger had already been attached to the US scenario,” says Muellerschoen. “Von Richthofen is a real legend outside of Germany, he’s a superstar in places like the USA and China. Though, it’s a bit like the ‘Titanic syndrome’: most people know the Baron, but they don’t know the details.”

“A meticulous reconstruction of the Baron’s life and the historical setting was not uppermost in mind, that didn’t interest me so much,” he stresses. “It is more important to see what is relevant for people today. I saw no sense in making the film like a well-researched documentary. However, during my preparation on the film and looking into the story of his life, the man seems to be more like how I thought he should be.”

“At the end of the day, the film is an extremely modern film: these pilots were in love with the technology and slaves to the modern age,” Muellerschoen adds. “Their main goal was to master this age with skill, fun and technical know-how. In fact, they are not much different from my sons sitting in front of a computer and communicating in a chatroom. The airplanes with their garish colors and logos are in some ways like the world of skateboarding and extreme sports and the Red Bull generation of today.”

“It will be a great adventure film, combining action with a love story, coming-of-age, and a character piece,” he concludes. “I see the film as being a great historical drama that will also entertain in a light and exciting way.”

Spielverderber

Type of Project Documentary Cinema Production Company busse & halberschmidt Filmproduktion/Duesseldorf, in co-production with Sehstern Filmproduktion/Frankfurt With backing from Hessische Filmfoerderung, Filmstiftung NRW Producers Marcelo Busse, Markus Halberschmidt, Rainer Krausz, Christian Vizi, Olaf Wehowsky Directors Henning Drehcslr, Georg Nonnenmacher Screenplay Henning Drehcslr, Georg Nonnenmacher Director of Photography Henning Drehcslr Editor Anika Simon Music by Werkstatt Raben Principal Cast Kevin Proesdorf, Herbert Fandel, Oreste Steiner Format DV/DVC-Pro, color, blow-up to 35 mm, 1:1.85, Dolby SR Shooting Language German Shooting in Cologne, Dortmund and Frankfurt, April 2005 - April 2006

Contact busse & halberschmidt Filmproduktion GbR Kurze Strasse 2 · 40213 Duesseldorf/Germany phone +49-2 11-8 62 85 98 · fax +49-2 11-8 62 85 95 email: marcelo@bussehalberschmidt.de www.bussehalberschmidt.de

With the 2006 football World Cup in full swing at the time of writing this report, millions of people world-wide were not only glued to their television sets rooting for their favorite team but also asking themselves pertinent questions such as “What does the referee think he’s doing?” and “Is he blind or what?” followed by thoughts of murder and mayhem. Don’t believe me? Let’s talk about Maradona and his so-called “Hand of God” in THAT match against England!

Yes, there’s no doubt about it, being a referee is not exactly a path to popularity and when the whole stadium’s chanting, “Maim the ref!” then it can be very lonely out there on the pitch.
In Spielverderber (translation: “Spoilsports”), Henning Drechsler and Georg Nonnenmacher take a look at life as a referee, how they do the job, the skills and qualifications needed, how they cope with the insults, hidden fouls, difficult and sometimes wrong decisions, the threats (death and otherwise) and, above all, the question: why am I doing this to myself?

Working together with the German Football Association, the filmmakers accompany three referees. There is Herbert Fandel, forty-years-old, a concert pianist who’s been blowing his whistle for sixteen years in any number of matches at league and international level. Kevin Proesdorf is still at school, about to take his refereeing exam and has still to oversee a match while Orestes Steiner, seventy-years-old and still far from sitting in a comfy chair with his feet up, is, with fifty-two years’ experience, still active at local league level.

“Like the sport itself,” says Henning Drechsler, “the film has the dynamic of an exciting football match – the opponents sound each other out, the tension builds, there are moments of relief, calm, sudden stress, and luck.”

Proving that documentaries can be just as entertaining as dramas, Spielverderber combines images and personal stories to bring the featured referees’ emotions to the fore. The audience will gain a new and unusual perspective on the world’s most beautiful game. Then they can go main the ref!

Die wilden Huehner und die Liebe

Type of Project Feature Film
Cinema Genre Family
Production Company Bavaria Filmverleih- und Produktion/Geiselgasteig, in co-production with Lunaris Film/Munich, Constantin Film Production/Munich, ZDF/Mainz
With backing from FilmFernsehfonds Bayern, Filmförderunganstalt (FFA), Filmstiftung NRW
Producer Uschi Reich
Director Vivian Naefe
Screenplay Maria Graf, Uschi Reich, Vivian Naefe
Director of Photography Peter Doettling
Editor Hansjoerg Weissbrich
Music by Anette Focks
Production Design Anette Ingerl
Principal Cast Michelle von Treuberg, Lucie Hollmann, Paula Riemann, Zsa Zsa Inci Buerkle, Jette Hering, Jeremy Mockridge, Veronica Ferres, Doris Schade, Thomas Kretschmann
Casting Maria Schwarz, An Dortha Braker
Format 35 mm, color, 1:1.85, Dolby

Digital Shooting Language German
Shooting in Munich, Cologne and Xanten, July – September 2006
German Distributor Constantin Film Verleih/Munich

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It was a case of ‘never change a winning team’ when producer Uschi Reich decided to follow up the success of her first feature film based on Cornelia Funke’s bestselling Wild Chicks series with another adaptation, Die wilden Huehner und die Liebe (translation: “Wild Chicks In Love”).

When the first Wild Chicks film took over €5.5 million at the German box office this spring and was seen by more than 1.1 million cinema-goers, Reich didn’t need much persuading to be able to reunite director Vivian Naefe, DoP Peter Doettling, editor Hansjoerg Weissbrich and composer Anette Focks along with the young cast who make up the coolest girl gang of the pre-teen set.

“What I like about Cornelia Funke’s books is the realism and the wonderful dialogues,” Reich explains. “At the same time, this story is quite unconventional with flashbacks and visions, but there is a cheerfulness and lightness together with a serious element.”

In the new film, Sprotte, Melanie, Frieda, Wilma and Trude each have their own ways of experiencing these new feelings and then suffering from the pangs of first love. Moreover, there is a love triangle between Sprotte’s mother (played by Veronica Ferres), father and a new suitor. But the Wild Chicks come through together in spite of all their emotional turmoil …

“We had agreed with Cornelia Funke before the first film came out that we might do a second film, and I could imagine making a third film as well,” Reich says. “What’s more, the girls have all become good friends through their working together on the first film.”

This year is indeed a busy one for Bavaria Film, with Reich putting the finishing touches on the family film TKKG about the four young sleuths Tim, Karl, Kloesschen and Gaby for release at the end of September and having several other projects in development such as the feature film version of Heinrich Breloer’s adaptation of the Thomas Mann novel Buddenbrooks, the German-US comedy Suppenkueche, and a second TKKG and a third Bibi Blocksberg feature.

Meanwhile, Reich may find time this year to squeeze in the shoot of her daughter Marie’s feature debut Summertime Blues, a coming-of-age story based on the Yorkshire-set teenage novel by British writer Julia Clarke, which will be co-produced with Munich’s Academy of Television & Film.
Die Wilden Kerle 4

**Type of Project** Feature Film Cinema  
**Genre** Family  
**Production Company** SamFilm/Munich  
**With backing from** Filmförderungsanstalt (FFA), FilmFernsehfonds Bayern, Bayerischer Bankenfonds  
**Producers** Ewa Karstroem, Andreas Ulmke-Smeaton  
**Director** Joachim Masannek  
**Screenplay** Joachim Masannek  
**Director of Photography** Benjamin Dernbecher  
**Saffeels Music by** Bananafishbones (Peter Horn, Sebastian Horn, Florian Rein)  
**Production Design** Manfred Doering, Maximilian Lange  
**Principal Cast** Jimi Blue Ochsenknecht, Sarah Kimi Gries, Wilson Gonzalez Ochsenknecht, Leon Wessel-Masannek, Claudia Michelsen, Uwe Ochsenknecht  
**Casting** Agentur Extras & Actors (Stefany Pohlmann, Anne Walcher)  
**Format** 35 mm, color, 1:1.85, Dolby Digital  
**Shooting Language** German  
**Shooting in** Bavaria, Summer 2006  
**German Distributor** Buena Vista International (Germany)/Munich

Football fever gripped the Masannek household in the weeks running up to the production of the fourth installment of *Die Wilden Kerle*, which – conveniently – began shooting in Bavaria on 11 July, just two days after the World Cup final in Berlin’s Olympic Stadium.

Masannek couldn’t really afford to watch many matches, but he was sure to catch the German games along with his sons who have been part of the the *Wild Soccer Bunch* ever since the first film came onto the cinema screens in 2001 and became increasingly popular with audiences with each new episode (No. 3 was seen by over two million cinemagoers this spring).

While the lads were up against the Beastly Beasts in the wildest soccer competition ever in film No. 3, the fourth outing sees them being challenged to a match by the White Wolves from Ragnaroeck. The ensuing game turns out to be more like a tournament from the days of medieval knights as events take on a rather fantastical and mysterious dimension.

As Masannek points out, the boys have become progressively older in the books he writes about the *Wild Soccer Bunch* (now at volume 13), and the same is the case for the films as well: whereas they had bicycles in the first films, now they will have motorbikes as their favored form of transportation.

Naturally, the *Wild Soccer Bunch* actors have also grown older with each film – mirroring their big brother of sequels *Harry Potter* –, but Masannek doesn’t want to forget the younger fans of the books and the cinema films.

This is where the character of Nerv comes in: he was introduced into the last film with the actor Nick Reimann, who had initially set his heart on getting a part for the fourth film before he was “recommended” by fellow director Caroline Link to the production for *The Wild Soccer Bunch 3* at the age of seven.

Masannek says that “it is an incredible gift to be able to work with children and I would be quite happy for there to be further sequels”, but he is aware that a time could come when he has gone through all of the possibilities with this age group. Thus, he could imagine in the future developing the franchise with a new, young *Wild Soccer Bunch* around the character of Nerv and is also playing with the idea of thinking up other adventures with the older boys for a teenage audience. “They are real stars with a drawing power,” he explains. “They are now coming into a ‘problem’ age, but I have always thought that puberty is an extremely interesting subject.”

Yella

**Type of Project** Feature Film Cinema  
**Genre** Mystery  
**Production Company** Schramm Film Koerner + Weber/Berlin, in co-production with ZDF/Mainz, ARTE/Strasbourg  
**With backing from** Filmförderungsanstalt (FFA), BKM, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, Nordmedia  
**Producer** Florian Koerner von Gustorf  
**Commissioning Editors** Caroline von Senden (ZDF), Andreas Schreitmueler (ARTE)  
**Director** Christian Petzold  
**Screenplay** Christian Petzold, Harun Farocki  
**Director of Photography** Hans Fromm  
**Music by** Stefan Will  
**Format** 35 mm, color, 1:1.85, Dolby Digital  
**Shooting Language** German  
**Shooting in** Hanover and Wittenberge, May – July 2006  
**German Distributor** Piffl Medien/Berlin
Christian Petzold’s latest feature Yella is his sixth collaboration with the Berlin-based production outfit Schramm Film Koerner + Weber after such successes as The State I Am In (Die Innere Sicherheit) and the Berlinale 2005 competition film Ghosts (Ge- spenster).

“For the first time, Christian has tried his hand at a genre film with a mystery story,” says producer Florian Koerner von Gustorf. “There are real irritations in the film because one is left in the dark; you just have to go along with the story for the resolution at the end.”

Yella (played by Nina Hoss) tries to get away from her failed marriage and the desolate nature of her small town in eastern Germany by starting anew on the other side of the River Elbe. Life already takes a dramatic turn before she has even left when her husband is killed in an accident bringing her to the railway station. Once in Hanover, she meets Philipp who works for a private equity company and becomes his assistant. Everything seems to be going well and she has hopes that they may now have a future together. But strange voices and noises keep plaguing her from the past – she is afraid that this new life may not be real, that she is in fact dreaming it all.

Petzold explains that the idea for this latest project came to him during the shoot of Something to Remind Me (Toter Mann) in and around Wittenberge five years ago when he first worked with Hoss (Wolfsburg was the second collaboration before they came together again for Yella). They were both fascinated by the Elbe meadows landscape near Wittenberge and the sad fact that the town is slowly draining of life as people move away to the West to look for work. Many of the houses in the town are now standing empty as the traditional industry has closed down and, in a bitter irony, film crews of TV movies are more likely to be the (temporary) inhabitants of some of the old villas now past their glory.

Both Petzold and Hoss felt that Wittenberge would make an ideal setting for another film, and Petzold combined this with his memories of an American book he had read with a horror story set in the Civil War.

“This film is different from my other films in that it isn’t just a portrait of the main character; she is someone who stands outside of the events, a dreamer in a dream world.”

The €2 million budget was made up of production support from the Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, Nordmedia, the German Federal Film Board (FFA), BKM, broadcasters ZDF and ARTE, and guarantees from Petzold’s “regular” German distributor Piffl Medien and world sales company The Match Factory.

In addition, Koerner is very happy that fellow producer Nico Hofmann of teamworX chipped in the German Film Award nomination premium for Petzold’s Wolfsburg: “he’ll be sure to get a mention in the acknowledgements in the closing credits for that!”
**Absolute Wilson** chronicles the epic life, times and creative genius of Robert Wilson, intimately revealing for the first time one of the most controversial, rule-breaking and downright mysterious artists of our era. More than a biography, the film becomes an exhilarating exploration of the transformative power of creativity itself and the inspirational tale of a boy who grew up as a troubled and learning-disabled outsider in the American South only to become a fearless artist with a profoundly original perspective to share with the world. The probing yet playful narrative reveals the deep inter-connections between Wilson’s childhood experiences and the haunting beauty of his monumental works, which include the theatrical sensations *Deafman Glance*, *Einstein on the Beach* and *The CIVIL WarS*. Along the way, the film introduces an array of admirers, friends and critics – ranging from musician David Byrne to the late writer Susan Sontag to composer Phillip Glass and singer Jessye Norman, among others – who add insight as the film peels back layer after layer to get to a raw, forthcoming and uniquely moving view of how Wilson’s work emerged from an extraordinary life and a ceaseless yearning to communicate.

**Genre** Art, Biopic  
**Category** Documentary Cinema  
**Year of Production** 2006  
**Director** Katharina Otto-Bernstein  
**Screenplay** Katharina Otto-Bernstein  
**Directors of Photography** Ian Saladyga, Eric Seefranz  
**Editor** Bernadine Colish  
**Music by** Miriam Cutler  
**Producers** Katharina Otto-Bernstein, Penny CM Stankiewicz  
**Production Company** Film Manufacturers/New York, in co-production with Alba Film Productions/Hamburg  
**Length** 105 min, 2,992 m  
**Format** 35 mm, color, 1:1.33  
**Original Version** English  
**Subtitled Version** German  
**Sound Technology** Dolby SR 5.1  
**German Distributor** Kinowelt Filmverleih/Leipzig

The journalist Silvia Reinert travels to the Democratic Republic of Congo to make a documentary film about the current situation in the country right before the elections. After the first day of her research, she is confronted with an unexpected reality. Rebels are still running around and indoctrinating children for war. Her trip becomes a personal nightmare when her driver runs over a child. As a result, she cannot escape what is happening and uses her journalistic abilities as the only way out, adhering to an old Congo saying: help yourself!

The filmmaker chose an unusual narrative form in which the dividing line between documentary and fiction is dismantled. He questions media and democratic power and tells a tale of humanity, beyond the borders of Africa.

Genre: Drama
Category: Docu-Fiction
Year of Production: 2006
Director: Markus Passera
Screenplay: Markus Passera
Director of Photography: Markus Passera
Editors: Nina von Guttenberg, Markus Passera
Music by: Hannes Seidl
Production Design: Mumbere Kwambasa
Producers: Markus Passera, Jens Metzler
Production Company: Markus Passera Filmproduktion/Dortmund, in co-production with Fachhochschule Dortmund
Principal Cast: Silvia Fink, Richard Kasareka, Muhindo Bonne-Année, Kamere Mwangaza
Length: 95 min, 2,735 m
Format: HD
Blow-up: 35 mm, color, 1:1.85
Original Version: French/German/Nande
Subtitled Versions: English, French, German, Italian
Sound Technology: Dolby SR/DTS Analog

With backing from Filmstiftung NRW

Markus Passera was born in 1973 in Hamburg. After his schooling and a year abroad, he completed an internship in an advertising photography studio, followed by work as a photographer and assistant. In 1998 he enrolled at the Dortmund Academy to study Film, Television and Cinematography and began making his first shorts and music videos. He also works as a freelance video artist and DoP for various theater and film productions, music performances and exhibits. His films include: the shorts Soso (1999), Black Box (2000), Grund und Boden (2000), Citizen Subway (2001), Letzte Reise (2003), XChild (2006), and his graduation film Débrouillez-Vous (2006).
Two old pals lose their work as inland navigators on the River Elbe. While the vernacular Gero tries to regain his footing, the reckless Kowsky keeps gambling with friendship and life, over and over again. For all that, together they set out from Dresden for Hamburg, hoping to find a new job, a new love, a new life. For old time’s sake, their road is the Elbe.

Genre  Drama, Road Movie  Category  Feature Film  Cinema
Year of Production  2006  Director  Marco Mittelstaedt
Screenplay  Holger Nickel  Director of Photography  Andreas Hoefer
Editor  Vincent Assmann  Music by  Lars Loehn
Production Design  Pierre Alexandre Brayard  Producer  Gudrun Ruzicková-Steiner
Production Company  Luna Film/Berlin  Principal Cast  Tom Jahn, Henning Peker, Steffi Kuehnert, Gabriela Maria Schmeide
Length  86 min, 2,500 m
Format  HD  Blow-up  35 mm, color, 1:1.85  Original Version
German  Subtitled Version  English  Sound Technology  Dolby SR
Festival Screenings  Munich 2006  With backing from  Filmfoerderungsanstalt (FFA), Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg
German Distributor  ZORRO Filmverleih/Munich

Marco Mittelstaedt was born in 1972 in Berlin. After studies in Photography, he worked as a projectionist and cinema programmer in Berlin and traveled throughout Europe as a photographer. From 1997-2004 he studied at the German Academy of Film & Television in Berlin and has served as a director’s assistant on numerous television and film projects. His films include: Uferlos (short, 1997) which won the Panorama Short Film Award in Berlin, Ein Tag zurueck (short, 1998), his feature debut Jena Paradies (2004), and Down the River (Elbe, 2006).
After getting the bad news that he is soon to die of cancer, Max wants to escape to the most beautiful place in the world – Mexico. When he accidentally lands at Emma’s pig farm, he realizes that true happiness waits just around the corner …

Emma is a pig-breeder at a shabby and indebted farm. She slaughters the pigs in her own way: she treats them lovingly till the last day; the lethal cut shows something like tenderness and in Emma’s strong arms the dying animals cease bleeding, calmly and submissively. But Emma is lonely. The missing man in her life is replaced by her motor-bike. But the loneliness stays. Until one night when a Jaguar crashes on her farm. Inside the wrecked car lies an unconscious man and a bag full of money. Emma’s luck seems to be perfect: fate has thrown money – and a man, Max – into her lap. Suspecting that he has stolen the money, Emma hides the man in her bed and the money under her bed. But soon Hans, Max’s best friend and employer, turns up and wants his money back.

In an attempt to reconcile, Hans brings Max to a nearby hospital. Emma overcomes her shyness and finally brings him back home to the farm. Their last days together are sweetened by happiness, but Max’s days are numbered. Finally, he takes an example from the pigs and surrenders to Emma’s tender nature.
Set in the frozen steppelands of Mongolia, *The Colour of Water* tells the mythical story of Bagi, a 17-year-old shepherd faced with his destiny of becoming a shaman. When a plague hits the land, all the animals are killed and the nomads are forcibly relocated to mining towns. Bagi subsequently discovers that the plague was a lie to eradicate nomadism. With the help of Zolzaya, a beautiful young coal thief, he provokes a revolution.

**Genre** Adventure, Coming-of-Age Story, Drama, Ecology, Love Story  
**Category** Feature Film Cinema  
**Year of Production** 2006  
**Directors** Peter Brosens, Jessica Woodworth  
**Screenplay** Peter Brosens, Jessica Woodworth  
**Director of Photography** Rimvydas Leipus  
**Editor** Nico Leunen  
**Music by** Altan Urag, Dominique Lawalrée  
**Production Design** Ariunsaikhan Davaakhuu  
**Producer** Heino Deckert  
**Production Company** MA.JA.DE. Fiction/Leipzig, in co-production with Bo Films/Brussels, Lemming Film/Amsterdam, Cinepartners Belgium II/Brussels, ZDF-ARTE/Mainz  
**Principal Cast** Khayankhyarvaa Batzul, Dagvadorj Dugasuren, Byamba Tsetsegee, Banzar Damchaa, Dashnyam Tserendarizav, Enkhtaivan Uuriintuya, Namsrai Otgontogos  
**Length** 105 min, 2,873 m  
**Format** 35 mm, color, 1:1.85  
**Original Version** Mongolian  
**Subtitled Versions** Dutch, English, French, German  
**Sound Technology** Dolby SR

**Awards** Best Script Award Masterschool Script Berlin 2004  
**With backing from** Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, Mitteldeutsche Medienferderung, Vlaams Audiovisueel Fonds, Nederlands Fonds voor de Film, Centre du Cinema et de l’Audiovisuel de la Communauté française de Belgique et les télé-distributeurs wallons  
**German Distributor** MAJA.DE. Fiction/Leipzig

Peter Brosens started making films in Ecuador with the award-winning documentary *The Path of Time*. Between 1993 and 1999 he directed and produced his internationally acclaimed Mongolia Trilogy consisting of the documentaries *City of the Steppes* (1993), *State of Dogs* (1998) and *Poets of Mongolia* (1999), which were awarded 23 times, screened at over 100 festivals (including Venice and Toronto) and distributed around the globe.

Jessica Woodworth began working in television in Paris in 1994. She then became a stringer/producer in Hong Kong and Beijing for news, documentaries and magazines. She shot her first film *Urga Song* in Mongolia in 1999. She then directed *The Virgin Diaries*, a documentary shot in Morocco in 2001 which was nominated for the *FIPRESCI Award* at the IDFA in 2002.
You are in a space with no entrance, no window, and no ventilation system. How do you feel? "Then how do I get in?" asks Irene evasively. Her friend Paula insists: "How do you feel in this dark space?" But Irene doesn't answer. She knows this space. It is hers.

The space in which Irene lives encased in emptiness. Sitting with Paula in a bar. Walking down the long hallway at the university. Walking along the wall that separates her apartment from the prison next door. Standing at the window of her room looking over at the prison. A space Irene lives in, as if waiting.

One day the doorbell rings. Irene hesitantly opens the door. A man charges in, quickly shutting the door behind him. A fugitive from the prison next door, now making himself at home in her apartment. And Irene is unable to get away. Only, it slowly becomes more and more evident that she doesn't want to get away. On the contrary: Irene has lured the stranger, sent him letters in prison. Now he is here holding her captive like a hostage, observing how she lives.

A dark space that has no doors, no windows, and no ventilation system. How do you feel?" she asks him. Both of them have the same answer to this question. Slowly they become closer. But then Paula shows up unexpectedly. The situation escalates and Irene must make a decision. She descends ever deeper into the space with no exit. And yet this is at once liberation from her prison.

Did André Douzet, after 40 years of painstaking research, finally discover the tomb of Jesus Christ? Dan Brown’s novel The Da Vinci Code now seems much closer to the truth than many had previously believed. While the character played by Tom Hanks searches for the sarcophagus, with its symbol of the Holy Grail, French researchers recently discovered precisely such an object in the south of France. Does this mean that we have finally found an explanation for the mysterious tale of the Pyrenean village, Rennes-le-Château?

The Da Vinci Code toys with certain elements of the true story concerning the village priest Abbé Saunière (1852-1917). Accompanied by reputable researchers, this documentary follows the footsteps of the real Abbot. The 95-minute film shows not only the most important aspects of the quest for Solomon’s Temple, but also unveils Saunière’s underlying secret: the alleged tombs of Jesus Christ and Joseph of Arimathea, the first custodian of the Holy Grail. Saunière made a landscape model of the precise location on his estate. Step by step, Douzet shows the audience how the individual pieces of this fascinating puzzle fit together, what brought Saunière to the tombs, and why they are the true legacy of the Holy Grail.

Erik Borner has been working as a director since 1987. He started with short fiction films and won the Main Prize at the 8th Frankfurt Youth Film Festival with one of his first films Schlagneun (1994). He then started directing industry films and commercials. After directing a pilot for the TV series Nur fliegen ist schöner (2002), he co-founded Tellus Film in 2005. His documentary films include: The Grail’s Traces in France (Mythos Heiliger Gral, 2005), and Tomb of Christ (Das Grab des Christus, 2006).
Heimat – Fragmente is the story of Lulu, the 35-year-old daughter of the musician Hermann Simon. The film reports, in 40 scenes, of her search for something which she calls “the old future of childhood.” At the same time, the film sketches in each of the 40 fragments the lives and dreams of the women of a century.

The spirits Lulu calls actually appear. We see old and forgotten war scenes in which her father’s brothers were involved; we experience absurd scenes at fairs; at the farm Grandmother Maria’s last cow is taken away; and Hermann, once again a schoolboy in shorts, experiences the beauty of first love with little Klara.

Lulu stumbles into a flush of discoveries: The scenes in which she finds herself are strange, heartbreaking, wild, romantic, magical or completely homey. It is a flood of never-ending love stories, career dreams and competitions for a place on the sunny side of life. Lulu is transported in a baby carriage, on Hermann’s arm or in a rickety old car through this magic world, at times a baby, and at other times a curly-haired girl.

When Lulu finally finds the door out of this dream world, back into reality, reality is no longer what it used to be.

One of the old paradigms of film art is the topic of Heimat – Fragmente: With Lulu we experience the perfect turnaround of perspectives in time. Her view into the past signals not only the end of her youth, but also the beginning of a new freedom.

**Genre** Family, History, Literature, Melodrama

**Category** Feature

**Film Cinema Year of Production** 2006

**Director** Edgar Reitz

**Screenplay** Edgar Reitz

**Director of Photography** Christian Reitz

**Music by** Michael Riessler

**Production Design** Franz Bauer

**Producers** Edgar Reitz, Christian Reitz

**Production Company** Reitz & Reitz Medien/Munich

**Principal Cast** Nicola Schoessler

**Casting** Petra Kiener

**Length** 145 min, 4,364 m

**Format** 35 mm, color/b&w, 1:1.85

**Original Version** German

**Subtitled Versions** English, Italian

**Sound Technology** Dolby Surround 1.5

**Festival Screenings** Venice 2006 (Orizzonti) With backing from Rheinland-Pfalz-Stiftung fuer Kultur/Mainz

Kobja has bought a piece of land in New Zealand to start a new life. He got the money by stealing cars. The estate agent tells him that he has received a better offer and the price has gone up. He has three days to get the money.

Kobja breaks into a BMW parked at a hotel. But he does not know that Russian car thief Goran has already stolen the car. The drunken actress Mikitsch, just fired by her producer from a film set nearby, takes Kobja for her driver. Kobja flees from Goran with Mikitsch in the car. They get lost in the middle of the “Spreewald”.

At night a man with a dog suddenly appears and thinks Mikitsch is some sort of a ghost. After convincing the man, Hanusch, that she isn’t, he offers them both a place to stay. Kobja is stuck in the middle of nowhere while his time is running out. Eventually he is able to leave Hanusch’s farm but the Russian car thief has tracked him down. Both get into a fight that leaves Kobja wounded …

**Genre**  Road Movie  
**Category** Feature Film  
**Year of Production** 2005  
**Director** Bernd Heiber  
**Screenplay** Bernd Heiber  
**Director of Photography** Konstantin Kroening (BVK)  
**Editor** Haike Brauer  
**Music by** Steve Binetti  
**Production Design** Angelika Wedde  
**Producer** Tanja Ziegler  
**Co-Producer** Frank Evers  
**Production Company** Ziegler Film/Berlin, in co-production with RBB/Potsdam-Babelsberg, Cine Plus/Berlin  
**Principal Cast** Xaver Hutter, Katja Flint, Paul Fassnacht, Max Volker Martens, Kathrin Kuehnel  
**Casting** Johanna Waller  
**Special Effects** BFFX, Bjoern Wiese  
**Length** 105 min, 2,881 m  
**Format** 35 mm, color, 1:1.85  
**Original Version** German  
**Sound Technology** Dolby Digital  
**World Sales** (please contact)  
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Bernd Heiber was born in 1964 in Cottbus. After two years of national service, he worked at the Theater Cottbus as a stagehand. From 1986-1989, he was a director’s assistant at the Theater Senftenberg. He co-wrote and directed his first play, *Kaenguru*, in 1989. From 1992-1998 he studied Direction at the “Konrad Wolf” Academy of Film & Television in Potsdam-Babelsberg. His films include: the documentary *It Is It* (1993), the shorts, which he wrote and directed, *Wind* (1994), *Scheissleben* (1996), and *Das Klopfen* (1998), as well as the erotic tales series, and *Heartbreaker* (2005).
A group of young cineastes. Their dream to make their own film. The constant rejections by various funding bodies. A break-in into the Babelsberg Film Studios. The shoot that has to be completed in one night. A film about a friend who is falsely accused of murder, and a film about an angel who wants to save and protect him. Then the fear of being caught. The reporters of the press who discover them. The police who catch them in the end. The real murderer ... “the real murderer”? And somebody who could help them, but who is not understood. The story of a grand vision that turns into a dogma and ends in a tragedy.

Genre  Drama  Category  Feature Film  Cinema  Year of Production  2006  Director  Giorgis Fotopoulos  Screenplay  Giorgis Fotopoulos, in cooperation with Orestis Salinger  Director of Photography  Marco Uggiano  Editor  Stefan List  Music by  Torsten Sense  Production Design  Zoppe Voskuhl  Producer  Elke-Marei Weickert-Fotopoulos  Production Company  Fotopoulos Filmproduktion/Berlin  Principal Cast  Andreas Christ, Anja Taschenberg, Azin Feizabadi, Christian Apel, Giorgis Fotopoulos, Ibrahim Demirtas, Pedro Stirner  Casting  Giorgis Fotopoulos, Sandro Schwichtenberg  Special Effects  Olaf Krueger, Franzisca Puppe  Studio Shooting  Studio Babelsberg/Potsdam  Length  76 min, 2,166 m  Format  DV  Blow-up  35 mm, color, 1:1.85  Original Version  German  Subtitled Version  English  Sound Technology  Dolby Stereo

Giorgis Fotopoulos was born in Berlin in 1964 and grew up in Athens. After studying Philosophy at the Free University in Berlin, he started making his first short films. Also active as a film critic, director’s assistant, production manager, and instructor at various universities and academies, his films include: the shorts Hetze (1985), Umsonst (1988), Sehnsucht (1993), Casting (1995), Deserteure (1996), Das Drehen der Stille (1998), Staub (1999), and his feature debut Listen (Horch, 2006).
In the past 70 years, Interdom, an elite boarding school in the former Soviet Union, educated children from all five continents in the Communist ideology. They were children from conflict areas or children of political leaders.

They all have one experience in common: the collapse of Communism has altered the direction of their predetermined fates. After 14 years they meet again in Russia for the school’s 70th anniversary.

Nasir Al-Jezairi was born in 1971 in Iraq. In 1979 his family escaped Saddam Hussein to Lebanon, but the war in Beirut in 1981 forced his parents to send him to a boarding school in the Soviet Union. In 1989 Gorbachev’s Perestroika put an end to his time there. Since then, he has been living, studying and working in Munich, London and Berlin. Interdom (2006) is his first independent film after working on various TV and film productions.
**Kristall** creates a melodrama inside seemingly claustrophobic mirrored cabinets.

Like an anonymous viewer, the mirror observes scenes of intimacy. It creates an image within an image, providing a frame for the characters. At the same time it makes them appear disjointed and fragmented. This instrument for self-assurance and narcissistic presentation becomes a powerful opponent that increases the sense of fragility, doubt, and loss twofold.

**Genre**: Experimental  
**Category**: Short  
**Year of Production**: 2006  
**Directors**: Christoph Girardet, Matthias Mueller  
**Editors**: Christoph Girardet, Matthias Mueller  
**Music by**: Susanne Wuermell, Christoph Girardet, Matthias Mueller  
**Producers**: Christoph Girardet, Matthias Mueller  
**Production Company**: Christoph Girardet & Matthias Mueller/Bielefeld  
**Length**: 15 min  
**Format**: 35 mm, color, 1:1.85  
**Original Version**: no dialogue  
**Sound Technology**: Dolby SR  
**Festival Screenings**: Oberhausen 2006 (In Competition), Cannes 2006 (Critics’ Week)  
**Awards**: Grand Prix Canal+: Best Short Cannes 2006  
**With backing from**: Filmförderung NRW, Nordmedia  
**German Distributor**: arsenal experimental/Berlin

**Christoph Girardet** was born in 1966 in Langenhagen and studied in Braunschweig. He has been working as a video, film and installation artist since 1987. A selection of his works includes: **Schwertkampf** (1991), **Release** (1997), **Scratch** (2001), **Delay** (2001), **7:48** (2001), **Absence** (2002), and **Fiction Artists** (with Volker Schreiner, 2004), among others.

**Matthias Mueller** was born in 1961 in Bielefeld and studied in Bielefeld and Braunschweig. He has been working as a filmmaker, video artist, photographer and independent curator since 1981. He is currently teaching at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne. A selection of his works includes: **Aus der Ferne – The Memo Book** (1989), **Home Stories** (1990), **Sleepy Haven** (1993), **Alpsee** (1994), **Vacancy** (1998), **nebel** (2000), and **Album** (2004), among others.

Jose Antonio Gutierrez was one of the 300,000 soldiers sent by the US Army to war in Iraq. A few hours after the war began, his picture was broadcast all over the world: he was the first American soldier to be killed in the war. He was there as a so-called green-card soldier – one of approximately 32,000 fighting in the ranks of the US Army for a foreign country.

The film tells the moving and nearly unbelievable story of a one-time street kid from Guatemala, who headed north along the Pan-American Highway – full of hopes and desires for a better future – ultimately to die an American hero far from home. Searching for the images and stories that made up this life, we set out to retrace José Antonio’s path – from Guatemala through Mexico and into the USA. This story is told by the people who knew José Antonio: his friends from the street, the social workers at the orphanage, his sister, his foster family, his comrades at Camp Pendleton in the United States Marines.

But the narrators of the film are also the people we encountered as we were repeating José Antonio’s odyssey from the world of the poor to the world of the rich. People who day after day join the endless stream of emigrants – with no identity, no papers – equipped with nothing but their ability to work and their willingness to turn their backs on home and family forever.

Jose Antonio’s story is no adventurer’s tale. It is the story of an attempt to survive – on both sides of the world.

Genre Biopic, Society Category Documentary Cinema Year of Production 2006 Director Heidi Specogna Screenplay Heidi Specogna, Erika Harzer Director of Photography Rainer Hoffmann Editor Ursula Hoef Music by Hans Koch Producer Gerd Haag Production Company TAG/TRAUM Filmproduktion/Cologne, in co-production with PS Film/Zurich, Specogna Film/Berlin, ZDF/Mainz, ARTE/Strasbourg Length 90 min, 2,580 m Format DigiBeta Blow-up 35 mm, color, 1:1.66 Original Version Spanish & English with German commentary Subtitled Version English Sound Technology Dolby SR Stereo Festival Screenings Sundance 2006, Djerba 2006, Munich 2006, Locarno 2006, LALIFF 2006 With backing from Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, BKM, Filmstiftung NRW, Bundesamt fuer Kultur (Switzerland), UBS Kulturstiftung, Migros Kulturprozent

A burning sun and the deep blue sea – it’s there for the taking on paradise island! And that’s what they’re here for, Elisa, Richie, Florian, Daniel … They’re young. They’re hungry for life. And they’ve left the cold, gray North behind for fun and adventure on a Mediterranean island. Elisa: rich, spoiled, fleeing from daddy and his stifling upper-class morals. Richie: the sexy drifter for whom every woman is a potential meal ticket; Florian: sensitive, gentle, the type not only girls gravitate to; Daniel: stuck between adolescence and small-mindedness. But even in paradise there are some dark corners that never get any sun. It’s where you can lose your way, or your bearings… where you can discover love or refuse to see it… where you realize that you haven’t really left the cold, gray North behind – but that it’s inside you – and that this is real life.

*Genre* Drama  
*Category* Feature Film  
*Cinema* Year of Production 2006  
*Director* Rolf S. Wolkenstein  
*Screenplay* Rolf S. Wolkenstein, Christian Kux, Stefan Eckel  
*Director of Photography* Peter Drittenpreis  
*Editor* Sandra Trostel  
*Mus除去* by Thies Mynther  
*Production Design* Rita-Maria Hallekamp  
*Producers* Sandra Harzer-Kux, Christian Kux  
*Line Producer* Tina Mersmann  
*Production Company* intervista digital media/Hamburg, in co-production with WDR/Cologne  
*Principal Cast* Zoë Weiland, Jennifer Ulrich, Manuel Cortez, Sebastian Achilles, Tom Lass  
*Length* 94 min, 2,690 m  
*Format* DV Blow-up 35 mm, color, 1:1.85  
*Original Version* German/Spanish  
*Subtitled Version* English  
*Sound Technology* Dolby Digital 5.1  
*With backing from* FilmFoerderung Hamburg, Filmstiftung NRW

The Last Train accompanies a small group of Jews from the point of being arrested to their foreseeable end in a concentration camp. In the last days of the Second World War they were penned up in cattle cars of a “special train” and carried off to Auschwitz, like thousands of Jewish people. In the course of this agonising journey more than half of them die of thirst. The episodes from some of the families’ previous lives shown in flashbacks are in stark contrast to what they are enduring. Yet the doomed occupants’ will to live in spite of their claustrophobic and shattering situation in the cattle car is central. But will it be strong enough for anyone to survive this hell on rails?

Genre Holocaust Drama
Category Feature Film Cinema
Year of Production 2006
Directors Joseph Vilsmaier, Dana Vávrová
Screenplay Stephen Glantz
Director of Photography Joseph Vilsmaier
Editor Uli Schoen
Music by Chris Heyne
Producer Artur Brauner
Production Company CCC-Filmkunst/Berlin, in co-production with Diamant Films/Prague
Principal Cast Gedeon Burkhard, Lale Yavas, Sibel Kekilli, Brigitte Grothum, Juraj Kukura, Lena Beyerling, Roman Roth, Hans-Juergen Silbermann, Sharon Brauner
Casting Miroslava Hyzikova
Length 122 min, 2,200 m
Format 35 mm, color, 1:1.85
Original Version German
Subtitled Version English
Sound Technology Dolby SRD
With backing from Filmförderungsanstalt (FFA)

German Distributor Concorde Filmverleih/Munich

Joseph Vilsmaier was born in 1939 and grew up in Munich and Pfarrkirchen. He undertook an apprenticeship at Arnold & Richter (ARRI) from 1953 to 1961 and studied Music at the Munich Conservatory. In 1961, he became a camera assistant at Bavaria and has been a director of photography since 1972. He made his directorial debut in 1988 with Autumn Milk (Herbstmilch), followed by Rama Dama (1990), Stalingrad (1992), Charlie & Louise (1993), Brother of Sleep (Schlafes Bruder, 1995), Comedian Harmonists (1997), Marlene (1999), Leo & Claire (2001), Rock Crystal (Bergkristall, 2004), and The Last Train (Der letzte Zug, 2006).

Dana Vávrová was born in Prague in 1967 and was already a child star when she was cast in the lead of the German TV series Ein Stueck Himmel. Since then, she has won many prizes for her roles in films like Autumn Milk (Herbstmilch, 1988), Rama Dama (1990), Stalingrad (1992), Brother of Sleep (Schlafes Bruder, 1994) and Comedian Harmonists (1997). She has also made regular appearances in TV films by directors like Marian Vajda and Peter Lehner. In 1995, she co-directed Wia die Zeit vergeht, a documentary on the Alpine rocker Hubert von Goisern, and made her directorial debut with Hunger – Addicted To Love (Hunger – Sehnsucht nach Liebe, 1997), followed by Bear on the Run (Der Baer ist los, 2000).
Der Mann von der Botschaft

THE MAN FROM THE EMBASSY

Herbert is a German embassy official in Tbilisi/Georgia doing his job by the numbers and living an empty existence, immersed in fantasy computer games. Even his Georgian lover Nana can’t bring back his zest for life.

It is an encounter and subsequent friendship with a young refugee girl, twelve-year-old Sashka, which enables him to rediscover laughter and a sense of responsibility for another person. Sashka lives, like most of her fellow-sufferers, desolate in a refugee camp outside Tbilisi.

But their close friendship brings suspicions, corruption and violence and finally Herbert is no longer able to deal with the situation.

Genre  Drama  Category  Feature  Film  Cinema  Year of Production  2006  Director  Dito Tsintsadze  Screenplay  Dito Tsintsadze, Zaza Rusadze  Director of Photography  Benedict Neuenfels  Editor  Katja Dringenberg  Production Design  Vaja Jalagania, Alexander Scherer  Producer  Christine Ruppert  Production Company  TATFILM/Cologne  Principal Cast  Burghart Klaussner, Lika Martinova, Marika Giorgobiani, Irm Hermann  Length  98 min, 3,070 m  Format  35 mm, color, 1:1.85  Original Version  German/Georgian  Subtitled Version  English  Sound Technology  Dolby Digital  Festival Screenings  Locarno 2006 (In Competition)  With backing from  Filmstiftung NRW, MDM, and distribution support from MFG Baden-Wuerttemberg

Astronaut Paul flies to the moon. Lisa, a scientist, accompanies him. Every afternoon, the 12-year-old has an appointment with her brother Paul (6). He is suffering the incurable “Disease of the Moon” and has to stay inside the house. As a pastime, Lisa has invented a fantasy game, and in their imagination Paul is a spaceship captain, traveling around, lost in space. But when Lisa falls in love for the first time, another appointment is getting in the way and becoming more and more important. Brother and sister have to learn to adapt with the new reality.

Genre Coming-of-Age Story, Drama
Category Feature Film
Cinema with Animation sequences
Year of Production 2006
Director Manuela Stacke
Screenplay Katrin Milhahn
Director of Photography Alexander Sass
Editor Dirk Schreier
Music by Nicolas Nohn, Emmanuel Hoisl
Production Design Tom Hornig
Producer Gudrun Ruzicková-Steiner
Production Company Luna Film/Berlin, in co-production with RBB/Potsdam-Babelsberg, SWR/Stuttgart, BR/Munich, Hochschule fuer Fernsehen und Film Muenchen/Munich, Hochschule fuer Film und Fernsehen ‘Konrad Wolf’/Potsdam-Babelsberg
Principal Cast Leonie Krahl, Lucas Calmus, Lucas Hardt, Renate Kroessner, Walter Kreye
Casting Manuela Stacke, Ulrike Hennecke
Special Effects Reinhard Kleist, Marplon4 Formforschung, Cologne D-Eye
Length 87 min, 2,600 m
Format HD Cam
Blow-up 35 mm, color, cs
Original Version German
Subtitled Version English
Sound Technology Dolby SR
Awards Audience Award Saarbruecken 2006, GFP Promotion Prize Emden 2006
With backing from Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, FilmFernsehFonds Bayern, BKM
German Distributor Piffl Medien/Berlin

Manuela Stacke was born in 1970 in Heidelberg. After studies in Theater, Film, and Media as well as Education Science of Art in Erlangen and Frankfurt/Main, she enrolled at the Munich Academy of Television and Film to study Documentary Film and TV Journalism. From 2003 through 2004, she worked as an assistant director to George Tabori, Peter Zadek, and Rolf Krieg at the Berliner Ensemble. As a freelancer, she writes and directs for the German TV broadcasters RBB, SWR, and BR. Children of the Moon (Mondscheinkinder, 2006) is her first feature and graduation film from the Munich Academy of Television and Film.
Bucharest may still be the Paris of the East, but it is now a sepia-toned metropolis, aching with nostalgia for its grand boulevards and proud architecture, for its cosmopolitan graces and humanity – all violated by a long reign of fear and repression. It is here that the story of Felix, Brindusa and Nicu unfolds. Nicu Iorga, the middle-aged entrepreneur and uncontested lord of his fiefdom, a large printer’s shop … Felix, a young German engineer who has come to install a new offset machine in Nicu’s shop … Brindusa, Nicu’s translator, secretary and former mistress, who falls in love with Felix … The young German wants to marry Brindusa and take her back to Germany with him. It could be so simple if it weren’t for Nicu, who simmers with an explosive mixture of rage and envy towards his country, the West, and, above all, Felix …

A tale of misunderstandings – linguistic, cultural, and emotional – that reflect the fears and prejudices of individuals from different nations as they tentatively come together.

Genre Drama Category Feature Film Cinema Year of Production 2006 Director Didier Danquart Screenplay Cristi Puiu, Razvan Radulescu Director of Photography Johann Feindt Editor Nico Hain Music by Klaus Buhlert Production Design Urs Beuter Producer Boris Michalski Production Company Noirfilm/Karlsruhe, in co-production with Integral Film/Berg, Unlimited/Strasbourg, C Films/Zurich, in cooperation with ARTE/Strasbourg, ZDF/Mainz, SWR/Baden-Baden, SF DRS/Zurich Principal Cast Alexandra Maria Lara, Felix Klare, Razvan Vasilescu, Katharina Thalbach, Manfred Zapatka, Bruno Cathomas, Anna Stieblich, Valentin Platreaunu Length 108 min, 3,100 m Format 35 mm, color, 1:1.85 Original Version German/Romanian/English/French Subtitled Version English Sound Technology Dolby SRD With backing from Filmförderungsanstalt (FFA), BKM, MFG Baden-Württemberg, CNC, Region Alsace, Bundesamt fuer Kultur, MEDIA i2i Audiovisuell German Distributor ems new media – 3L Filmverleih/Dortmund


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Polymnia was the muse of sacred hymns. Six of her “children”, prize winners in a contest, meet at Rheinsberg in northeast Germany to take part in an international festival supporting young opera singers. From six different countries – Russia, Poland, Germany, Austria, Bulgaria and Japan – they have come together to devise and perform an opera by Georg Friedrich Haendel, in German, under the direction of the famous 70-year-old master of musical theater, Prof. Harry Kupfer.

Who are these six young singers? Will they master the challenge? Can these novices come up to their mentor’s expectations? How will they bring this wealth of musical material to life on stage? And what does “career” mean to them? Have they truly been kissed by Polymnia, or merely seduced by her?

This film delivers an insight into the world of modern musical theater. It follows six young talents as they take their first steps on stage. And it shows us the passion of a great director, passing his expertise on to the next generation with love, humor and irrepressible energy. Polymnia’s Children is a film about a mentor, his pupils and the passion for music which they share.

Genre  Music  Category  Documentary  Cinema  Year of Production  2005

Director  Dirk Richard Heidinger  Screenplay
Dirk Richard Heidinger  Directors of Photography
Thomas Janze, David Suenderhauf, Oliver Wolff  Editor  Dirk Richard Heidinger
Music by  Bert Wrede, Frank Bredow  Producers
Thomas Janze, Dirk Richard Heidinger  Production Company
Totho CMP/Berlin, in co-production with Dirk Richard Heidinger Produktion/Berlin  With
Harry Kupfer, Kurt Masur, Siegfried Matthus, Jochen Kowalski  Length 80 min
Format  DigiBeta, color, 16:9 Letterbox  Original Version  German  Subtitled Version  English
Sound Technology  Stereo  With backing from E-Plus, Kammeroper Schloss Rheinsberg, Preussisches Kammerorchester Prenzlau, Hotel Deutsches Haus Rheinsberg

Dirk Richard Heidinger was born and raised in 1966 near Brandenburg, former East-Germany. He studied Acting in Leipzig and worked as an actor for some ten years and later as a stage director in several German theaters. After working as an assistant director, he made his first documentary Polymnia’s Children (Polymnias Kinder, 2005).

World Sales
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After an exhausting long trip, Jonathan Fischer arrives at the guest house of Annabella Silberstein and Isabella Goldberg to ask for a room. However, Isabella is away and Annabella is busy with her daily garden work. Jonathan has to wait a few hours and fill out an endless, and indiscrete, questionnaire before he will be accepted as a guest. In the course of the next few days, he encounters his 14-year-old daughter Jade and falls in love with Annabella: it’s just like it should be in paradise, love at first sight. For her, he goes to work to improve the savaged estate with a few new constructions and builds a big pond. But the happenings of the world soon fall upon this idyllic existence. A god commits suicide and a princess is shot and killed. Looking for the murderer, the police ravage through the estate. But the landscape gardeners continue with their work on the pond as though nothing had happened. Isabella and Annabella decide to give the deceased a final resting place at the bottom of the pond. Later, when the pond is full of water, the full moon and cliffs reflect on the surface while Annabella and Jonathan celebrate their wedding on a boat.

Smoke Signs

Rudolf Thome was born in Wallau/Lahn in 1939 and studied German, Philosophy and History in Munich and Bonn. He began writing film reviews in 1962 for various newspapers and magazines. In 1964, he collaborated with Max Zihlmann and Klaus Lemke on his first short film, Die Versoehnung. He then became managing director of the Munich Film Critics’ Club in 1965 and founded his own production company, Moana-Film, in 1977. He received the 2nd place Guild Award in the category Best German Film for Berlin – Chamissoplatz in 1981, and the International Film Critics’ Award in Montreal in 1989 for his film The Philosopher. In 1993, he went on to establish his own distribution company, Prometheus. His film Paradiso (1999) won a Silver Bear at Berlin in 2000. A selection of his other films includes: Stella (1966), Red Sun (Rote Sonne, 1969), Supergirl (1971), Made in Germany and USA (1974), Love at First Sight (Liebe auf den ersten Blick, 1991), Das Geheimnis (1995), Just Married (1998), Venus Talking (2001), Red and Blue (Rot und Blau, 2002), Woman Driving, Man Sleeping (Frau faehrt, Mann schlaeft, 2003), You Told Me You Love Me (Du hast gesagt, dass Du mich liebst, 2005), and Smoke Signs (Rauchzeichen, 2006).

Genre Drama Category Feature Film Cinema Year of Production 2006 Director Rudolf Thome Screenplay Rudolf Thome Director of Photography Ute Freund Editor Doerte Voelz-Mammarella Music by Katia Tchemberdji Production Design Susanna Cardelli Producer Rudolf Thome Production Company Moana-Film/Berlin Principal Cast Hannelore Elsner, Karl Kranzkowski, Adriana Altaras, Serpil Turhan, Joya Thome, Nicola Thome Length 125 min, 3,415 m Format 35 mm, color, 1:1.85 Original Version German Subtitled Version English Sound Technology Dolby SR Festival Screenings Munich 2006

World Sales

Cine-International Filmvertrieb GmbH & Co. KG · Lilli Tyc-Holm, Susanne Groh Leopoldstrasse 18 · 80802 Munich/Germany phone +49-89-39 10 25 · fax +49-89-33 10 89 email: email@cine-international.de · www.cine-international.de
Moments repeat themselves in Seven Heavens. Words resound and images reappear. Johann knows he has seen Jenny before. He can predict her movements and imagines where they will take him before he arrives there. Director Michael Busch recreates Johann’s déjà vu for audiences as he takes them through an aesthetically and intellectually intriguing puzzle that explores memory, spirituality and desire.

Johann is a recluse who is studying the way of the Carthans and learning to free himself from the ego. Jenny’s a gothic beauty who strips for an online webcam. In the summer, the two have a love affair that will echo into their present. Come wintertime, Jenny lives at home with her parents, while Johann suffers a fever in his isolated cabin. Unable to escape the memory of their brief love, Jenny makes a fateful visit to the lake where he lives and where their passionate memories took form.

With its unsettling eeriness and haunting beauty, Seven Heavens plays out like a dark dream. It plunges into the human psyche and resonates long after the screen goes black. (Jens Hussey, Cinequest)

Genre Drama, Erotic, Fantasy, Love Story

Category Feature Film Cinema

Year of Production 2005

Director Michael Busch

Screenplay Michael Busch

Director of Photography Marcus Winterbauer

Editor Ute Schall

Music by Christoph Engelke

Production Design Susanne Abel, Stefan Hauck

Producer Jan Peters

Production Company LUXUS FILM/ Berlin, in co-production with Abbildungszentrum/Hamburg, ZDF Das kleine Fernsehspiel/Mainz

Principal Cast Daniela Schulz, Christoph Bach, Inga Busch, Lars Loellmann

Length 92 min, 2,670 m

Format 35 mm, color, 1:1.66

Original Version German Subtitled Version English

Sound Technology Dolby SR

Festival Screenings Turin 2005 (In Competition), Cinequest San Jose 2006, Edinburgh 2006

With backing from FilmFoerderung Hamburg

Michael Busch was born in 1966. He studied Fine Arts at the Universitaet der Kuenste, Berlin (in the experimental film class of Heinz Emigholz). He is a founding member of the media theater group LUXUS BERLIN and also works as a film music composer, script writer, and editing consultant. His films include: Words For Windows (short, 1996), Hyperbooks (short, 1998), Virtual Vampire (1999), and Seven Heavens (Sieben Himmel, 2005).
Slow Space takes the viewer on a visual trip through places of glass architecture in Chicago. Filmed entirely within the urban constructed environment that makes up this contemporary North American city, Slow Space is a visually arresting investigation into how space is described, defined and ultimately experienced. Berlin filmmaker Klaus W. Eisenlohr commutes this relationship with the outside ‘world’ via an array of constructed transparencies in the glass domes and atriums that formed so much of architecture’s modernist preoccupation for a constructed inside/outside dialectic. Descriptions and ultimately opinions on the status of public space in Chicago form part of the film’s identity via a series of interviews conducted from the participants’ private domains. Street scenes with performers complement this film essay.

With his project in Chicago, the artist Klaus W. Eisenlohr has investigated the relationship between the body and the urban architectural environment over the time period of three years.


Klaus W. Eisenlohr was born in Tuttlingen and has been living in Berlin since 1989. He studied in Berlin and Chicago. The main focus of his works, many of which have received prizes at exhibitions in Germany, France and the USA, is on photography, experimental film and media art. A selection of his films includes: Self Berlin-London (Selbst Berlin-London, 1991), A Hand on Alexanderplatz (Die Hand am Alex 1 & 2, 1993), Mother’s Kitchen (Mutters Kueche, 1993), Courrour Station (1997), Hair – Non Hair (1998), Local Time plus 2 1/2 (Ortszeit plus Zweieinhalb, 1999), Center of Urban Periphery (Stadtrandzone Mitte, 2005) and Slow Space (2006), among others.
Sebastian, a young male prostitute, is one of Georg’s few remaining chances to break through his hermit-like everyday life in exchange for a few fleeting moments of being together with someone – at least for a few hours. Georg loves Sebastian’s easy-going and playful manner. He loves the absurd stories that the boy spontaneously comes up with and Georg never knows whether to actually believe all of them or not. And it looks like today Georg’s long cherished dream will finally come true: this time the boy asks him if he can stay overnight – of his own free will.

Georg does everything to fully enjoy the rare and valuable moments – he hopes for more. Yet the more Georg dares to get closer to the boy, the more Sebastian breaks off contact with him. Within a short space of time, the boy seems to age by many years. He is looking for help. Georg’s hopes are shattered. They start arguing.

However, that very same evening, Sebastian is standing in front of his door again. He has come to say goodbye. By the light of a torch, the last remaining night becomes a declaration of love to the time they spent together and to all the people encountered for a short and fleeting moment – a moving revolt against life’s transitoriness!
“What is public space today?” Filmmaker and artist Klaus W. Eisenlohr poses this question at the beginning of his research with reference to the city of Hannover. The resulting film takes the viewer on a trip through a number of public spaces in Hannover’s metropolitan area. Devised as a series of portraits with varying urban qualities, the film dwells not only on the visible urban attributes but also on the activities and connectedness that ‘make-up’ a public space.

Undertaking an array of spatial explorations, the film seeks to find out as to what kinds of interference or interventions can activate public place(s). Eisenlohr proposes that to entice or provoke responses, one such activation can be drawn ‘out of’ art performances. Interviews with city planners interwoven with scenes of everyday occurrences with young people, together, form a complement to Eisenlohr’s photographic vision – a film essay of the everyday and its places inherent in Europe’s modern cities.

Klaus W. Eisenlohr was born in Tuttlingen and has been living in Berlin since 1989. He studied in Berlin and Chicago. The main focus of his works, many of which have received prizes at exhibitions in Germany, France and the USA, is on photography, experimental film and media art. A selection of his films includes: Self Berlin-London (Selbst Berlin-London, 1991), A Hand on Alexanderplatz (Die Hand am Alex 1 & 2, 1993), Mother’s Kitchen (Mutters Kueche, 1993), Courrour Station (1997), Hair – Non Hair (1998), Local Time plus 2 1/2 (Ortszeit plus Zweieinhalb, 1999), Center of Urban Periphery (Stadtrandzone Mitte, 2005) and Slow Space (2006), among others.
Can a single person change the course of history? Hardly. Such legends are born at a later time. But a single person can be the catalyst for a powerful development.

Agnieszka is a small woman. She was an orphan, is the mother of an illegitimate child, Catholic, a Socialist Workers hero, a welder and a crane operator in the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk. Life hasn’t been easy on her. Her husband died shortly after their marriage, her son distances himself from her. She works hard and diligently, and expects the same sense of diligence from others, but particularly from party members. Quick-witted and with humor, she is able to forge her way past the fat cats and masters, but eventually they get her and she is fired on a false pretense. Showing their solidarity, her colleagues strike in order to force her reinstatement. Suddenly the whole shipyard is striking, and then all Polish factories. Solidarnosc is born.

The actions of a single worker set the strikes in the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk in motion, which brought about the independent labor union Solidarnosc, which lead to Perestroika and, finally, to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Genre Drama Category Feature Film Cinema Year of Production 2006 Director Volker Schloendorff Screenplay Andreas Pflueger, Sylke Rene Meyer Director of Photography Andreas Hoefer Editors Peter Przygodda, Wanda Zeman Music by Maurice Jarre Production Design Robert Czesak Producer Juergen Haase Production Company Provobis Film/Berlin, in co-production with Mediopolis/Berlin, BR/Munich, ARTE/Strasbourg, PAISA Films/Warsaw Principal Cast Katharina Thalbach, Dominique Horwitz, Andrzej Chyra, Andrzej Grabowski, Wojciech Solarz Casting Ewa Brodzka Length 104 min, 3,107 m Format 35 mm, color, 1:1.85 Original Version Polish Dubbed Version German Subtitled Version English Sound Technology Dolby 5.1 With backing from FilmFernsehfonds Bayern, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, Filmförderungststalt (FFA), BKM German Distributor Progress Film-Verleih/Berlin

Tradition

A little boy is honored at a party, but he seems rather apathetic. His sister on the other hand is wallowing in a flush of love with her fiancé. She decides to follow a new path in life, against all unspoken family rules! Both of them receive a present that will prove to have fatal consequences for their future lives …

Peter Ladkani studied at Munich’s Academy of Television & Film. His award-winning films include: Kleine Gauner, Grosse Gauner (short, 1992), Duell im Labyrinth (short, 1994), Tanzalarm (TV, 2005), Tradition (short, 2006), and numerous image films.

Genre Children and Youth, Drama, Family Category Short Year of Production 2006 Director Peter Ladkani Screenplay Christoph von Zastro, Peter Ladkani Director of Photography Winnie Heun Editor Nathalie Puerzer Music by Darius Rafat, Alex Klier Production Design Daniel von Volckamer Producers Peter Ladkani, Wolf Moelter, Nick Conradt Production Company Friends Production/Munich Principal Cast Konstantinos Batsaras, Rosetta Pedone, Swen Mai, Sebahat Uenal Casting Marco Licht Length 9 min, 230 m Format 35 mm, color, 1:1.85 Original Version German Sound Technology Dolby SR Festival Screenings Montreal 2006 (In Competition)
Joerg, Guenther and Ulf, three swim-crazy gay men who do not want to swim straight ahead any longer. Of all sports, the trio has found the ultimate challenge in synchronized swimming and nothing can spoil their euphoria, their fantasy and their courage for self-irony. Their path is arduous; however they manage to gain an edge in the competition.

Barbara Graeftner’s first feature film My Russia won the Max-Ophuels Prize for Best Film in Saarbruecken in 2002. Her documentary The Way Home received the Austrian Romy award in 2005 for Best Documentary on Austrian television.
August 1984. The summer is maddening hot. The 23rd Olympic Summer Games are taking place in Los Angeles. On a radio show, Ronald Reagan makes a joke about bombing Russia. A catastrophic drought causes a bad harvest in over twenty African countries; every month over 20,000 children are dying in Ethiopia. None of this really matters to a young boy named Victor, who is wrapped up in his own world …

During the summer vacation, Victor is sent for the weekend to his aunt and his cousin’s. This shouldn’t be that special, if it wasn’t for his infatuation with his 15-year-old cousin Denise or the terrible neighbor’s dog he was attacked by years ago. Perhaps the incident at the bridge would have never happened …

**Genre** Drama  
**Category** Feature Film Cinema  
**Year of Production** 2006  
**Director** Baran bo Odar  
**Screenplay** Baran bo Odar  
**Director of Photography** Nikolaus Summerer  
**Editor** Mike Marzuk  
**Music by** Oliver Thiede  
**Production Design** Heike Lange, Sarah Jablonka  
**Producers** Maren Luethje, Florian Schneider  
**Production Company** Luethje & Schneider Filmproduktion/Munich, in co-production with Hochschule fuer Fernsehen und Film Muenchen (HFF/M)/Munich, Cine Plus Media/Berlin, ZDF/Mainz, ARTE/Strasbourg  
**Principal Cast** Maximilian Waldmann, Janina Stopper, Astrid M. Fuenderich, Alexandra von Schwerin, Kristian Wanzl, Uwe Rohde  
**Casting** Anja Dihrberg  
**Length** 60 min  
**Format** 35 mm, color, cs  
**Original Version** German  
**Subtitled Version** English  
**Sound Technology** Dolby Digital  
**Festival Screenings** Ophuels Festival Saarbruecken 2006, Montreal 2006  
**Awards** Studio Hamburg Newcomer Award 2006 (Best Direction)  
**With backing from** FilmFernsehFonds Bayern, BKM  

Baran bo Odar studied at the Munich Academy of Film and Television and participated in the 2003 Berlinale Talent Campus. He also completed the Masterclass of Commercial and Image Films. In addition to numerous video clips and commercials, his other films include: 216 (short, 1998), Und wir suchen nach dem Glueck (documentary short, 2002), Mr. Schmidt & Mrs. Kowacek (short, 2002), Kill Your Stereo (short, 2003), Squeak (Quietsch, short, 2005), and Under the Sun (Unter der Sonne, 2006).
Vivere

Three women on the run, saving each other, saving themselves.

On Christmas Eve, Francesca’s taxi breaks down again, just as her little sister, Antonietta, is running away to Rotterdam with her musician boyfriend. On the way, Francesca picks up Gerlinde, a suicidally lovesick woman; now she has two lives to save. With the paths of three lost souls crisscrossing in Rotterdam, it soon is hard to tell who is saving whom …

Genre Drama, Road Movie Category Feature Film Cinema Year of Production 2006 Director Angelina Maccarone Screenplay Angelina Maccarone Director of Photography Judith Kaufmann Editor Bettina Boehler Music by Jakob Hansonis, Hartmut Ewert Producer Anita Elsani Production Company Elsani Film/Cologne, in co-production with Revolver Film/Rotterdam, Screenart/Berlin Principal Cast Hannelore Elsner, Esther Zimmering, Kim Schnitzer, Egbert-Jan Weeber Length 93 min, 2,410 m Format 35 mm, color, 1:1.85 Original Version German Subtitled Version English Sound Technology Dolby Digital 5.1 With backing from Filmstiftung NRW, Filmfoerderungsanstalt (FFA), Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, Nederlands Fonds voor de Film, Rotterdam Film Fund

Angelina Maccarone was born in Cologne in 1965 and studied German and American Literature and Film at the University of Hamburg. She made her directorial debut in 1994 with the coming-out comedy Kommt Mausi raus? (script/co-direction) and followed this with Everything Will Be Fine (Alles wird gut, 1997) which received Audience Awards in New York, Toronto and Los Angeles, An Angel’s Revenge (Ein Engel schlaegt zurueck, 1997), Unveiled (Fremde Haut, 2005) which received numerous awards including the Hessischer Filmpreis for Best Feature, Jury Grand Prize at the International LGBT Festival in Montreal and the Jury Award for Best Narrative Feature at the Seattle L & G Film Festival, Hounded (Verfolgt, 2006), and Vivere (2006).

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Sarajevo 2005, the war has been over for years, but it still holds 30-year-old Senada hostage. Her daughter, Aida, has been "missing" for nine years, but Senada has not yet forsaken the hope that she is alive. She clings in despair to a vague sign, in spite of the fact that her ex-husband and her friends encourage her to finally let go and try to build a new life. But Senada refuses to give up. When she finds out that the Red Cross flew children to Germany during the war, she follows the trail immediately and arrives after a long journey in Ulm. She is rewarded there for her stubborn determination: Aida had actually been brought to Germany. However, the then two-year-old girl was given up for adoption, under the assumption that her parents were dead. The life of the German family, Heinle, and their 12-year-old daughter, Kristina, is suddenly shaken by its roots when they learn that the mother they thought was dead is indeed alive and wants her daughter back. The Heinles are confused. They love their daughter more than anything and cannot conceive of losing her. Senada is reunited with her daughter, who is happy, firmly rooted in her new life, and no longer even able to speak the native language of her natural mother. Senada is confronted with a difficult decision: should she insist on the return of her daughter, wrenching her from her social circumstances and life in Germany, or return alone to Bosnia with the knowledge that her daughter is alive and doing well?


Original Version German/Serbo-Croatian Subtitled Versions English, Slovenian, Serbo-Croatian Sound Technology Dolby Digital Festival Screenings Montreal 2006 (In Competition), LIFFE Ljubljana 2006 Awards Bavarian Film Award (Special Jury Prize) With backing from MFG Baden-Wuerttemberg, FilmFernsehFonds Bayern, BKM, Slovenian Film Fund, Eurimages German Distributor Movienet Film/Munich

American football is not only played in the US but also in Germany. Four young amateur football players from Berlin are the main focus of the film. For them this all-American sport is more than just a hobby and more than just a game. Football gives them guidance in life and a boost to their masculine ego. **Weekend Warriors** portraits Herbie – the mama’s boy, Tilo – the show-off, Johnny – the young and confused, and Thomas – the thinker, during one football season with the “Berlin Adler”. The film explores in a humorous way how personal goals, moral values and rituals from the football fields are applied to real life and vice versa.

A sports film at its finest, capturing what it means for a man to be a winner – not only in sports but also in life.

**Genre** Contemporary Society, Gender Identity, Sports  
**Category** Documentary Cinema  
**Year of Production** 2005  
**Director** Alexa Oona Schulz  
**Screenplay** Alexa Oona Schulz  
**Director of Photography** Dirk Heuer  
**Editor** Jenny Allmendinger  
**Music** by Robert F. Trucios  
**Producer** Alexa Oona Schulz  
**Production Company** blue moon film/Berlin  
**With** Sascha (Herbie) Herberg, Tilo Hoelscher, Thomas Jonietz, Johnny Schmuck, Petrus Penkki, Kent Anderson, Shuan Fatah  
**Length** 93 min  
**Format** Digital Video, color, 16:9 Letterbox  
**Original Version** German/English  
**Subtitled Version** English  
**Sound Technology** Stereo  

**Festival Screenings**  
Big Sky Montana 2006 (In Competition), Sport Movies & TV Festival Mumbai 2006 (In Competition), Grenzland Filmtage Selb 2006, FICTS Sport Movies & TV Milan 2006 (In Competition)  
**Awards** Silver TEN Award Mumbai 2006  
**German Distributor** blue moon film/Berlin

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German Films Service + Marketing is the national information and advisory center for the promotion of German films worldwide. It was established in 1954 under the name Export-Union of German Cinema as the umbrella association for the Association of German Feature Film Producers, since 1966 the Association of New German Feature Film Producers and the Association of German Film Exporters, and operates today in the legal form of a limited company. In 2004, new shareholders came on board the Export-Union which from then on continued operations under its present name: German Films Service + Marketing GmbH.

**Shareholders** are the Association of German Feature Film Producers, the Association of New German Feature Film Producers, the Association of German Film Exporters, the German Federal Film Board (FFA), the Association of German Television Producers, the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek, the German Documentary Association, FilmFernsehFonds Bayern and Filmstiftung NRW representing the seven main regional film funds, and the German Short Film Association.

Members of the **advisory board** are: Alfred Huemer (chairman), Peter Dinges, Antonio Exacoustos, Ulrike Schauz, Michael Schmids-Ospach, and Michael Weber.

German Films itself has 13 **permanent members of staff**: Christian Dorsch, managing director; Mariette Rissenbeek, public relations/deputy managing director; Petra Bader, office manager; Kim Behrendt, PR assistant; Sandra Büchta, project coordinator/documentary film; Myriam Gauff, project coordinator; Christine Harrasser, assistant to the managing director; Angela Hawkins, publications & website editor; Nicole Kaufmann, project coordinator; Michaela Kowal, accounts; Martin Scheuring, project coordinator/short film; Konstanze Welz, project coordinator/television; Stephanie Wimmer, project coordinator/distribution support.

In addition, German Films has nine foreign representatives in eight countries.

German Films’ budget of presently €5.5 million comes from film export levies, the office of the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, and the FFA. The seven main regional film funds (FilmFernsehFonds Bayern, FilmFörderung Hamburg, Filmstiftung NRW, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, MFG Baden-Wuerttemberg, Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung, and Nordmedia) make a financial contribution – currently amounting to €300,000 – towards the work of German Films.

German Films is a founding member of the European Film Promotion, a network of 27 European film organizations (including Unifrance, Swiss Films, Austrian Film Commission, Holland Film, among others) with similar responsibilities to those of German Films. The organization, with its headquarters in Hamburg, aims to develop and realize joint projects for the presentation of European films on an international level.

**German Films’ range of activities includes:**

- Close cooperation with major international film festivals, including Berlin, Cannes, Venice, Toronto, Locarno, San Sebastian, Montreal, San Francisco, Karlovy Vary, Moscow, Tribeca, Shanghai, Rotterdam, Sydney, Goteborg, Warsaw, Thessaloniki, and Turin, among others.
- Organization of umbrella stands for German sales companies and producers at international television and film markets.
- Providing advice and information for representatives of the international press and buyers from the fields of cinema, video, and television.
- Providing advice and information for German filmmakers and press on international festivals, conditions of participation, and German films being shown.
- Organization of the annual NEXT GENERATION short film program, which presents a selection of shorts by students of German film schools and is premiered every year at Cannes.
- Publication of informational literature about current German films and the German film industry (German Films Quarterly and German Films Yearbook), as well as international market analyses and special festival brochures.
- An Internet website (www.german-films.de) offering information about new German films, a film archive, as well as information and links to German and international film festivals and institutions.
- Organization of the selection procedure for the German entry for the OSCAR for Best Foreign Language Film.
- Collaboration with Deutsche Welle’s DW-TV KINO program which features the latest German film releases and international productions in Germany.
- Organization of the “Munich Previews” geared toward arthouse distributors and buyers of German films.
- Selective financial support for the foreign releases of German films.
- On behalf of the association Rendez-vous franco-allemands du cinéma, organization with Unifrance of the annual German-French film meeting.

In association and cooperation with its shareholders, German Films works to promote feature, documentary, television and short films.
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ISSN 1614-6387

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hofer filmtage

40. Hof International Film Festival

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