

PRESS KIT
DER SCHWIMMER

(THE SWIMMER)
14:50 min., 35mm, Colour

Screenplay and Director
KLAUS HÜTTMANN

starring

LISA MARIA POTTHOFF
FLORIAN PANZNER
VOLKMAR KLEINERT

Cinematographer: JÜRGEN JÜRGES
Production designer: CLAUD-JÜRGEN PFEIFFER
Editor: CHRISTINE BOOCK
Music: THOMAS HOPF
Producers: RUDI TEICHMANN, KRISTOV BRÄNDLI
and KLAUS HÜTTMANN

Sponsored by Filmboard Berlin-Brandenburg

SUMMARY

This is the story of a betrayal.
An absurd escape from former
East Germany mirrors the tragic cul-de-sac of love:
if love helps to realise one lover's dream,
the couple will be separated. But, if love does not help,
he will have to give up his only dream –
and love will be bound to fail.

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Content of press kit

1. Synopsis
2. Director
3. Cinematographer
4. Cast
5. Producers
6. Crew
7. The shoot
8. Background

1. SYNOPSIS

The final years of the GDR. JULIA and MARKUS are heading north to the beaches of the Baltic Sea in Julia's parents' small East-German Trabant car - without having asked them. The lovers are high-spirited and excited about their holiday trip. Western rock music blares from the radio, much too loud for this kind of radio. The first shadow is cast over the trip when they are stopped and controlled by a policeman. Ice cold repression. Then, happy to have got away, their pent-up tension breaks out on a clearing beside the road. Their regained joyful spirits lead to a declaration of love - and a reassurance: their journey is nothing but a holiday trip. A second shadow?

Later, on a cliff high above the Baltic Sea - among only seagulls, wind and a distant horizon - the lovers' different intentions become visible: Markus, driven by something hidden and very strong, is blind to the beauty of the moment; a moment which Julia would have loved to savour more intensively. Instead, they look for a place to stay overnight and find what they are looking for at an OLD MAN's house. He understands much more than they do and notices how far the couple have already drifted apart. He sees how Markus is dominated by the idea of escape, something Julia also can no longer ignore when they are on the beach and she observes Markus' yearning look towards the ships off the three-mile zone. Disappointed and furious about his false promise of a simple weekend at the seaside, she confronts him. He apologises and says that he just has to try out a few things. But his apology does not really satisfy her. They argue and their quarrel reveals a humiliated competitive swimmer, whom the ruling party has prevented from competing. It also reveals Julia's love, her readiness to stand behind Markus' dreams. But the argument creates a rift between them which cannot be closed by sex. On the following day, unable to cross the chasm between them, they go to the beach. Their conversation remains awkward as Markus slips into his swimming gear. When he enters the water, Julia's wave is nothing more than a reflex. As he swims out into the open sea, her eyes follow him without any visible movement. He disappears. She sits motionless on the quiet beach and looks out onto the empty sea. Waiting. Just waiting. For hours on end, in which only the clouds move across the sky. Until the end of the day, when her inner world collapses in absolute silence. Without the slightest visible movement. And only the clouds continue to move across the sky.

2. DIRECTOR

KLAUS HÜTTMANN

“DER SCHWIMMER“ is Klaus Hüttmann’s first film as a director.

Most important works (summary):

2003 DER SCHWIMMER, Screenplay and Director
2002 GEGEN JEDES RISIKO, Screenplay
2001 LIEBE UND VERRAT, Screenplay
2000 DER SCHÖNE TOD, Screenplay
1999 MENSCHENTIER, Screenplay
1998 COLD SEASON, Screenplay
1996 BERLIN-MOSKAU, Screenplay

Prior to 1996:

Assistant director:

Jiri Menzel

Gerhard Klungenberg

Actor at: Renaissance-Theater (stage)

Jungen Theater (stage)

Theatermanufaktur (stage)

Dubbing: screenplay, director, editor

Education and Workshops:

"Directing the Film", Eric Sherman, LA Film School

"Project development and production supervision", Schlesinger/Cunningham

"The Frank Daniel Script Workshop", Frank Daniel

"Screenwriter as Storyteller", Schlesinger/Cunningham

3. CINEMATOGRAPHER

JÜRGEN JÜRGES

Awards:

Deutscher Kamerapreis (German Camera Award): 1986, 1988, 1998, 2000, 2002

Adolf Grimme Award: 2001

Deutscher Filmpreis in Gold (German Film Award in Gold) 1980, 1994, 2000

Most important works (summary):

2003 LE TEMPS DES LOUPS, Director: Michael Haneke
1998 SAWDUST TALES, Director: Baris Pirhasan
1997 FUNNY GAMES, Director: Michael Haneke
1993 IN WEITER FERNE SO NAH, Director: Wim Wenders
1981 CHRISTIANE F., Director: Uli Edel
1974 EFFI BRIEST, Director: R.W. Fassbinder
1974 ANGST ESSEN SEELE AUF, Director: R.W. Fassbinder

4. CAST

LISA MARIA POTTHOFF as JULIA

Recent films:

- 2003 LATTENKNALLER, Film, Director: Sherry Hormann
- 2002 SOLOALBUM, Film, Director: Gregor Schnitzler
- HEXENTANZ, TV Crime Series, Director: René Heisig
- DER TOD IST KEIN BEWEIS, TV film, Director: Dagmar Hirtz
- 2000 DIE TOCHTER DES KOMMISSARS, TV film, Director: Christine Hartmann
- BEI KLINGELZEICHEN MORD, TV Crime Series, Director: Andreas Kleinert

FLORIAN PANZNER as MARKUS

Recent films:

- 2003 KLEIN RUPPIN FOREVER, Film, Director: Carsten Fiebeler
- NETAJI, Film, Director: Shyam Benegal
- 2002 TAL DER AHNUNGSLOSEN, TV film, Director: Branwen Ocpaka
- WOLFSBURG, TV film, Director: Christian Petzold
- 2001 TATTOO, Film, Director: Robert Schwendtke
- 2000 DER TUNNEL, TV film, Director: Roland Suso Richter

VOLKMAR KLEINERT as OLD MAN

Films (Selection):

- 1999 HELDEN WIE WIR, Director: Sebastian Peterson
- 1996-98 DER CLOWN, two TV films and series
- 1987 HASENHERZ, Director: Gunter Friedrich
- 1983 DIE SCHÖNE UND DAS TIER, Director: Rainer Bär
- 1981 DAS GROSSE ABENTEUER DES KASPAR SCHMECK; Director: Gunter Friedrich

Stage actor since 1960

5. PRODUCERS

KRISTOV BRÄNDLI

RUDI TEICHMANN

Both have produced around 100 films since the mid-eighties: TV series, films and TV films.

Main activity: films for theatrical release, mostly European co-productions.

Recent films:

- 2002 SCIENCE FICTION, Film, Director: Dany Deprez, Co-production with Belgium and the Netherlands
- 2001 RIPLEY'S GAME, Film, British/Italian Co-production, Production Service, Director: Liliana Cavani
- 2000 CONSPIRACY, TV Film, British/US Production, Production Service, Director: Frank Pierson
- 1999 THE BALL, Film, Director: Dany Deprez, Co-production with Belgium and the Netherlands
- 1998 THE WAITING TIME, 2x90 Min. TV film, Line production for Carlton TV, Director: Stuart Orme

6. CREW

Assistant Director
Cinematographer
1st Assistant to DoP
2nd Assistant to Dop
Grip
Production Design
Props
Sound
Sound assistant
Lighting

Costumes
Make-up artist
Music
Casting
Driver
Caterer
Runner
Editor
Assistant Editor
Sound Editor
Dubbing
Sound Mixer

Musicians:
Vocals

Guitars
Organ
Bass
Drums

KARIN SCHERER
JÜRGEN JÜRGES
JÖRG GÖNNER
ARITE SZADKOWSKI
DANIEL HORN
CLAUS-JÜRGEN PFEIFFER
ALEX GUTSCHKE
JURI VON KRAUSE, MARC WITTE
SEBASTIAN LUKA
MICHAEL DIETZE
ALEX LAMBRIEV
BETTINA WEISS
SONALI CHATTERJEE
THOMAS HOPF
CHUN MEI TAN
ALEX MÜLLER
MATTHIAS HALLER
DIETER SCHÜTT
CHRISTINE BOOCK
PETRA KADER
CLEMENS GRULICH
MILES KANN
RALF KRAUSE

PRINCE DEAN ROBINSON
STEFANIE BOLTZ
THOMAS HOPF
FRED SAUER
MATHIAS GEBLER
CHRISTIAN FALK

7. THE SHOOT

June 17, 2003 at about 4 am. The crew is heading north from Berlin to the Baltic Sea. The first day of the shoot is spent at different locations en route in the 'Mecklenburgische Seenplatte' (Mecklenburg Lake District) before reaching the coast.

The crew spends the second day shooting on location on a cliff high above the Baltic Sea and on the beautiful old bridge crossing the 'Bodden' to the Darß peninsula. It is one of only two roads leading to the peninsula. Local policemen offer their help without being asked and simply block the bridge for the time of the shoot, causing a huge traffic jam - but nobody complains. The third day: storm. And, even worse: heavy rain. At noon, the rain finally stops and we hurry to finish that day's shooting on time: the final scenes on the beaches north of Ahrenshoop. Heavy winds, gale force 8. At 11 pm the final scenes are shot. As the set is dismantled, the rain starts again. Heavy storms, the roaring sea and driving rain. A very tired crew drives back to base.

Two more days of shooting are scheduled - the Old Man's house by the sea, the night scenes and the bike at the beach.

Five days shooting for a short film. Five very long days. A tour de force.

Nevertheless, after having completed the shoot, there is kind of sadness among the crew. This is only a short film, but everyone could have continued for a few weeks, working with cinematographer Jürgen Jürges, the stabilizing element of the shoot, and Klaus Hüttmann, who, aware of this being his first film as director, leaves nothing to chance. Matthias Haller, the caterer, worked magic for the tired crew: despite his small budget. Help received from outsiders like the aforementioned policemen, Anett Bierholz of the local tourist administration and Heinz Götze, mayor of Ahrenshoop was invaluable, as was the assistance of the coast guard, which sent a patrol ship to location. Local people helped us out in different ways, for example by letting us use their pick-up truck or giving us some of their time.

On June 22 the crew and actors returned to Berlin.

The shoot of DER SCHWIMMER was over and post-production had already begun.

October 2, 2003: Premiere of the film at the Arsenal Cinema, Potsdamer Platz, Berlin.

8. BACKGROUND

Why this film?

Sommer 2002. B&T Films in Berlin receives a call from screenwriter Klaus Hüttmann. He wants us to read his 13 page-long screenplay for a short film. We read it. It is an intensive story with big, powerful images. He tells us that he wants to direct the film himself in order to avoid the usual dependency of others. We like his story and his visually strong and consequent script with top-class actors like Lisa Maria Potthoff and Florian Panzner in the lead roles. A short while later, Volkmar Kleinert commits to playing the Old Man.

But a short film? What for? How to finance it? There is no market for such a film and financial support is limited. We should have rejected his offer out of plain common sense. But we didn't, we decided to take on this project that very day. Others rejected it. The first three sponsors turned us down. But nobody stopped working for this small film. Then the first sponsors gave us the green light for small amounts and following that the project gets off the ground fast. Then there is another surprise: a call from Calcutta, India. Cinematographer Jürgen Jürges has read the script and wants to do it. He will be shooting in India until end of May and will be available in June. Others come on board: production designer Claus-Jürgen Pfeiffer, assistant director Karin Scherer. And the Filmboard Berlin-Brandenburg awards us a small but vital amount. Klaus Hüttmann commits his own funds to the film; we talk to the crew and cast again, secure high-quality catering and raise THE issue: there is no money for anybody's fees. Not a cent. But everyone stays on board. So we start shooting with less than 30 thousand euro. A big risk.

Why? Why would actors and a professional film crew commit to such a shoot? Why would Jürgen Jürges want to shoot this film right after his tiring shoot in India? He surely would have wanted a bit of a break, right? There is certainly more than one answer to that question. But one answer is the same for everybody.

They all love this little story. This direct, clear and sincere love story. And for more than one of them, this small story probably equalled the kind of film that inspired them to begin a career in the film industry. And us, the producers? Why the hell would we commit ourselves to this kind of production? There are two reasons: First of all, the story. The script: its style, its visual potential. Secondly, Klaus Hüttmann: someone who never gives up, who follows his dream. A man who stands for a certain kind of film. Stories which move the audience, like magic. But that are nonetheless sincere stories. In DER SCHWIMMER we see an opportunity which does not often arise in Germany. And, if this 14 minute film is successful, we will go on to create the next story; to develop the next film with Klaus Hüttmann: a 90 minute film. To touch and captivate the audience again: like magic.

(Rudi Teichmann)

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