

Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH
ZDF / Das kleine Fernsehspiel
Germany

Forgetting Dad

a film by Rick Minnich & Matt Sweetwood



If your father no longer remembers you, does he stop being your father?

Genre: Human Interest – **Running Time:** 84 minutes – **Format:** HD et al.
World Premiere: Nov. 2008, IDFA Joris Ivens Competition, Amsterdam
Theatrical Release (Germany): 3 June 2010
Prizes: Special Jury Award – IDFA; Honorable Mention – Achtung Berlin – New Berlin Film Award; 2nd audience award – Ippokratis 1st International Health Film Festival (Kos, Greece); William Dieterle Filmpreis (Special Prize) Germany: Grand Jury Prize – GZDOC Guangzhou, China; Honorable Mention – Dallas Video Fest (USA); Short list – German Film Prize ('Lola' – Oscar equivalent)
URL: www.forgettingdad.com



Synopses

(24 words / 137 characters) Rick Minnich goes in search of his father, who, at the age of forty-five, lost his memory forever following an apparently minor car accident.

(53 words / 312 characters) One week after a seemingly harmless car accident, a 45-year-old man suffers total amnesia. Christening himself the "New Richard," he embarks upon a new life with a new wife far away from his family. Sixteen years later, his oldest son returns with a camera to investigate why his father's memory never returned.

(190 words / 1127 characters) One week after a seemingly harmless car accident, Richard Minnich - a California data processing executive and father of five - wakes up with total amnesia. He no longer recognises his wife and children and has a great deal of difficulty with the simplest daily tasks. The doctors are baffled, as there is no evidence of brain damage or other physical causes. For the family, the event marks the beginning of a never-ending nightmare.

Sixteen years later, filmmaker Rick Minnich - the oldest son from Richard's first marriage - returns to California with a camera in search of answers to why his father's memory still hasn't returned. He talks with his family members and a former colleague of Richard's, and reconstructs in detective-story fashion the period of time before and the years following the accident. Along the way, Rick not only discovers many deep-rooted emotions that had never been dealt with, but also uncovers startling facts that shed a very different light on his father's memory loss. Was Richard really struck by a horrible affliction, or was he perhaps trying to escape from a life he could no longer lead?

The Story

(537 words / 3107 signs) May 21st, 1990: A mini-van is turning into the parking lot of a shopping centre in Sacramento, California, when a car crashes into it from behind. The driver of the van gets out, examines the damage, and is obviously relieved to see that it is not serious. He then continues on his way with his wife. Seven days later he wakes up in a strange bed next to a woman he's never seen before. Looking into the mirror, he sees a totally unfamiliar face. Within a few seconds the first forty-five years of this man's life are erased forever. During the eighteen years that have passed since the fateful accident, a new person has developed: From the "Old Richard," as the man calls his former self, emerges "New Richard." He leaves his family and, together with a new girlfriend, embarks upon a completely new life very far removed from his old existence.

Filmmaker Rick Minnich is "Old Richard's" eldest son from his first marriage. Sixteen years after his father's "new start," Rick, who now lives in Germany, returns to his California roots to investigate why his father's memory still hasn't returned. With the help of his extended patchwork family and old Super 8 home movies, he makes inquiries into his father's illness and examines the suspicions and rumors that soon arose after the amnesia began. Not only did Richard leave behind a large family and countless memories, but also the distinct impression that something was awry. For years the family had been led to believe that Richard lost his memory due to an injury caused by the car accident. But as the story unfolds and previously unseen medical documents surface, an entirely different picture emerges. Independently of each other, two different doctors came to the same conclusion one year after the amnesia began. They diagnosed Richard

with a psychological disorder caused by emotional trauma. But what was the trauma and what caused it?

Gradually, from the stories various family members and an old colleague tell him, Rick forms a picture of a father he hardly recognises: an unfaithful man who couldn't hold down a job, who beat his children and who was entangled in a bank fraud. With all the pressure Richard was apparently under during the years leading up to the car accident, trauma-induced amnesia begins to seem entirely plausible. Or was he consciously fleeing his old life?

Nobody knows what really happened to Richard after the accident. Neither the family of his second wife nor his old family. They are all confronted with an event they had difficulty coping with then, and which continues to haunt them. To this day, Richard has refused to give his son an interview and lives far away in a remote corner of Oregon with his new wife. Now, together with his half-brother Justin, Rick embarks upon the long journey to "New Richard" to find out what really happened, and to pose the decisive question: Does he really not remember them at all?

Rick Minnich's search for his father and his father's story are multi-faceted, subtle, and as enthralling as a detective story. The film leaves a strong emotional impact on viewers thanks to the very direct and personal insight it gives into the feelings of a family dealing with this traumatic situation in very different ways. But this is more than a family film: Using the personal story of this man and his family as a vehicle, the film investigates the universal themes of the construction of one's own reality and identity.

Contributors (in order of appearance)

Rick Minnich	Richard's oldest son
Loretta Minnich	Richard's 2nd wife
Lora Young	Richard's step-daughter
Justin Minnich	Richard's second son
Pam Shields	Richard's sister
Jan Emamian	Richard's daughter
Payman Emamian	Richard's son-in-law
Anne Minnich	Richard's daughter
Karen Sutton	Richard's 1st wife
Harlan Butters	Richard's former colleague
Steve Young	Richard's step-son
Larry Minnich	Richard's brother

Crew

Written, directed and edited by
Director of Photography

Additional Cinematography

Original Score composed and conducted by

Performed by the

Sound Recordists

Sound Design

Foley

Online Editor

Color Graders

HD Post-production

Graphic Design

Medical Consultants

Story Consultant

Production Accountant

Production Assistant

Production Manager

Producer

Associate Producer

Consulting Producer

Commissioning Editor
(ZDF/Das kleine Fernsehspiel)

Production

**Rick Minnich, Matt Sweetwood
Axel Schneppat**

**Matt Sweetwood, Markus
Winterbauer, Rick Minnich, Doug
Hawes-Davis**

Ari Benjamin Meyers

Deutsches Filmorchester Babelsberg

Matt Sweetwood, Rick Minnich

Raimund von Scheibner

Takis Cristos Sariannides

Björn Vollbrecht

Gunter Puszkar, Daniel Nestler

Post Factory Berlin

Makks Moond (livin.room berlin)

Prof. Dr. Med. Walter Christe

Dr. Michael D. Grecius

Dr. Richard G. Pellegrino

Susan Scharwies

Sherry Shoemaker

Dr. David Spiegel, M.D.

Martin Duffy

Anne Fasshauer

Christoph Sturm

Peter Effenberg

Olaf Jacobs

Rick Minnich

Robert Hawk

Christian Cloos

**Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH
in co-production with
ZDF/Das Kleine Fernsehspiel & in
co-operation with Rickfilms**

Production facts

Original Title	Forgetting Dad
English Title	Forgetting Dad
German Title	Forgetting Dad – Vater ohne Vergangenheit
Shooting formats	HD-Cam, HDV, mini-DV, Video 8, Super 8, 8mm film, VHS-NTSC
Screening formats	HD-Cam, DigiBeta (PAL or NTSC)
Ratio	16:9
Length	84 minutes / 59 minutes (TV version)
Shooting locations	California, Oregon, Missouri, Kansas
Shooting period	Oct. – Nov. 2005, March 2006, December 2006
World premiere	Nov. 2008, IDFA Joris Ivens Competition, Amsterdam
Festivals	IDFA (Netherlands) Göteborg (Sweden) Max Ophüls Festival (Germany) True/False (USA) Full Frame (USA) É Tudo Verdade - It's All True (Brazil) Belfast (N. Ireland) Achtung Berlin – New Berlin Film Award (Germany) Hot Docs (Canada) Planete Doc Review (Poland) Doc Aviv (Israel) Doxa (Canada) Guth Gafa (Ireland) Stranger Than Fiction (Ireland) Biografilm (Italy) Ippokratis 1st International Health Film Festival (Greece) Sidewalk Moving Picture Festival (USA) Docúpolis (Spain) Ourense (Spain) Heartland Film Festival (USA) Hot Springs (USA) St. Louis (USA) Denver (USA) GZ DOC, Guangzhou (China) Sedona International Film Festival (USA) Documentary Edge (New Zealand) Cleveland International Film Festival (USA) Shanghai TV Festival - Magnolia Awards (China) Dallas Video Fest (USA) Nonfiktionale (Deutschland)
Prizes	Special Jury Award – IDFA – Joris Ivens Competition Honorable Mention – Achtung Berlin – New Berlin Film Award 2nd audience award – Ippokratis 1st International Health Film Festival (Kos, Greece) William Dieterle Filmpreis - Special Prize (Germany) Grand Jury Prize – GZDOC Guangzhou (China) Honorable Mention – Dallas Video Fest (USA) Short list – German Film Prize ('Lola' – Oscar equivalent)

Television broadcasts **Belgium:** Canvas, 28 October 2009
Brazil: TV Cultura, 21 October 2010
Finland: YLE FST5, 3 August 2009, 21:50
Canada: Knowledge Network, British Columbia, 19 January 2010, 21:00
Sweden: SVT2, 18 July 2010, 22:00, 21 + 23 July 2010.
Israel: Noga Communications Channel 8, 30 March 2010, 21:05
India: NDTV 24 x 7, 10 April 2010 – 15:00, 11 April 2010 – 13:00, 17 April 2010 – 15:00, 18 April 2010, 13:00,
Brazil

Seal of approval (FBW-Prädikat) **Highly recommended (Besonders Wertvoll)**

Production funding provided by Kuratorium Junger Deutscher Film and Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg. This film was developed in part with the help of the Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung GmbH, Babelsberg Media Prize, and during a residency at the Villa Aurora, Pacific Palisades, California.



Festival jury statements about "Forgetting Dad"



In this documentary home movies show us an ordinary happy family in twentieth century America. However, not all is as it seems. The father in the movies is still alive but he does not remember anything. Or does he? Rick Minnich made a documentary about his own father, who says he lost his memory after a car accident but the doctors cannot find anything wrong with him and the members of the family are not convinced either. Memory loss might be an act of will.

In the risky genre of the personal documentary Rick Minnich and Matthew Sweetwood managed to do everything right. The structure gives the film a beautiful sense of suspense. The notion of the possibility to escape from your own life permeates the film and makes the movie not only touching but also exhilarating. *(statement of the Joris Ivens Jury, International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam IDFA 2008)*



"Rick Minnich tells the story of his father, who lost his memory at the age of forty-five and became an unapproachable stranger to his family, in a way that has all the excitement of a detective story. Minnich's

carefully crafted documentary impresses the viewer due to the very direct and personal insight it gives into the feelings of a family who are dealing with this traumatic situation in very different ways. It is above all Minnich's love of craftsmanship that helps him make a film that goes beyond the private to attain universal significance. An eerie, impressive film that is deeply moving." *Reasons given by the FBW-Filmbewertungsstelle Wiesbaden [Wiesbaden film assessment centre] for giving the film its highest seal of approval (Prädikat "Besonders Wertvoll").*

The documentary "Forgetting Dad" begins as a forgotten son's very personal search for his father, and climaxes in a criminal case, only to wind its way back to a personal drama in the end.

In virtuostic cinematic fashion, Rick Minnich and Matt Sweetwood delve into the biographies of father and son. The film gains its thriller structure, which could compete with any narrative film, from a tale of illness, the truth of which is questioned up until the very end of the film. (*Statement of the jury of the William Dieterle Film Prize, Ludwigshafen, Germany, Oct. 2009*)



"The film captures a private issue which seems to be restricted to a family. Dad lost his memory because of a car accident. The director takes a step-by-step way to tell a story which is closely related to everyone of us. Everyone has the right to choose their lifestyle. Respecting their choice is respecting ourselves. The film is warm and thought-provoking." (*Jury statement at GZDOC, Guangzhou, China upon bestowing the Grand Jury Prize on "Forgetting Dad," Dec. 2009*)

Press

"A bizarre blend of business thriller and family drama." ([Spiegel Online](#))

"A film which questions Richard Minnich's amnesia with great sensitivity and suspense." *_Christine Ritzenhoff, FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE* [\[Read Full Article\]](#)

"A Fascinating Film." *_Gil Whiteley, DENVER DAILY NEWS* [\[Read Full Article\]](#)

"Another pick for one of the top independent docs of the decade. The filmmakers' dad develops amnesia, and rejects the relationship they once had. Both fascinating and heartbreaking, this is why we love CINEMA." *_HOT SPRINGS DOCUMENTARY FILM INSTITUTE* [\[Read Full Article\]](#)

"...a clever allegory about the United States of Amnesia, wherein wind-blown men can remake themselves in an instant." *_Paul Sturtz, TRUE/FALSE FILM FESTIVAL* [\[Read Full Article\]](#)

Thumbs up: "A thrilling and moving film..." *_CINEMA.DE* [\[Read Full Article\]](#)

"An incredibly bizarre journey across America with increasingly surreal imagery." *_Martina Knoben, SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG* [\[Read Full Article\]](#)

"Breathtaking documentary." *_Joachim Kurz, KINO-ZEIT.DE* [\[Read Full Article\]](#)

"An unparalleled, touching documentary." *_Matthias Wannhof, SCHNITT.DE* [\[Read Full Article\]](#)

"Incredibly fascinating." *_Alexandra Seitz, TIP, Germany* [\[Read Full Article\]](#)

In Conversation with Rick Minnich

Are you in contact with your father these days?

We haven't spoken for about a year now. He's decided to break off our relationship.

Do you know why?

Not really, it was a long process. When I began working on the film, my intentions were very different. I wanted to make a film about my father's amazing recovery, about how he'd built himself a new life despite his amnesia and all the difficulties it brought with it. To me, it seemed like a miracle. That was the starting point for the film.

"I couldn't shake the feeling that the old Richard, my father, was still stuck inside this familiar looking stranger."

So I wrote some proposals and began filming with him and his wife. Both of them were very enthusiastic at first, but then they suddenly backed out of the project. He offered no explanation why. He just said it felt funny, and that I was merely a friend he'd known for the past ten years, i.e. since the birth of "New Richard." I was, of course, shocked. After all, I've known him my entire life. It was as if he were denying that he was my father. At the same time, I couldn't shake the feeling that the old Richard, my father, was still stuck inside this familiar looking stranger who called himself "New Richard." Shortly before cutting off all contact, he sent me a message that became the key to the film that eventually came to be: He wrote that he couldn't give me the answers I was looking for, and that I would have to look elsewhere; perhaps the film was not really about him, but about something else. This, of course, came as a blow. But it also led me to turn the camera on my family and myself.

Were you happy to do so?

Hmm, I didn't expect it to be so excruciating. I completely underestimated what would happen to me and the others on an emotional level. After all, all of us kids are adults now. My two half-brothers are in their early twenties. They were the hardest hit of anyone because they were really young when it all took place. But my sisters and I were much older then. I thought enough time had passed for us to be able to deal with this rationally and from a distance. That's why I wasn't prepared for my relatives to break down on camera time and time again. The same thing happened to me while filming, too. I was very surprised by how emotional it was.

"I completely underestimated what would happen to me and the others on an emotional level."

Has this changed your relationship to your family? You've been in Europe since 1990 and say yourself that you'd had very little contact to your second family before shooting.

Yes, we'd hardly seen each other or spoken in ten years. When my father and Loretta split up, I was very angry with Loretta. I was absolutely convinced that she'd treated him badly, and I was completely on his side. It wasn't until the relationship between my father and me became more and more strange that I became interested in her situation at the time. I flew to my half-brother Matt's high school graduation in Sacramento, and saw my step-

"I realised that there was a lot I didn't know about what happened after my dad's amnesia began."

mother for the first time in ten years. It was hard. My step-sister Lora, Loretta and I sat around talking, and during the course of the conversation I realized that Loretta wasn't the wicked step-mother I'd always thought she was, and that she'd been through an incredibly traumatic experience. We spoke for quite a while, and I realised there was a lot I didn't know about what happened after my dad's amnesia began - that they'd suffered a lot more than I'd been aware of in the past - and that this was often completely at odds with what my dad had always told me. Over the next few years, I visited them several times, and tried to gain their trust. Today we're quite close. That's the best thing that the film has brought about so far.

Do you have the feeling that talking about all this helped both your family and yourself?

In some ways, yes, but it was very difficult, too. I re-opened some pretty deep wounds with all this, like with my sister Jan, who cries on camera towards the end of the film while reading the doctors' reports. I thought this would be the end of the story, but we're still talking about it to this day. No matter how hard we try to avoid it the subject just keeps on surfacing. Jan doesn't have any relationship to our father now either. She just doesn't know how to deal with him. Like me, she'd like to have a grandfather for her children, but this "grandfather" keeps trying to set the rules and refuses to talk about what's on our minds the most – his amnesia.

"No matter how hard we try to avoid it the subject just keeps on surfacing."

You resemble your father closely. Do you have anything else in common?

Yes, everyone said that while we were filming. We occasionally met old neighbors or colleagues of my dad's. None of them knew me back then and they hadn't seen my father in fifteen or sixteen years. For some of them, meeting me was like seeing a ghost. The resemblance is really remarkable. Another thing is that he's got five children. I have five children, too. And we both were, or are, perfectionists. We have a number of things in common.

„For some of them [neighbors or colleagues], meeting me was like seeing a ghost."

How hard was it, in the end, for you and your colleagues to make this film – particularly given how the story's so emotional?

It was pretty hard. I often got caught up in details and stories that were less central to the film. A filmmaker who wasn't involved would sense this. But if you're involved yourself, you don't notice it. I'd been in Germany so long that I sometimes just wanted to know what had been going on at home in my absence. But what counts for the film is having concentrated conversations in front of the camera. So there were these two separate worlds: Rick the family member and Rick the director, and it was hard for me to separate them. So I often went down what, in terms of the film, were dead-end streets. That caused a lot of confusion for the rest of the team and was frustrating for all of us because it cost a lot of time and money.

"There were these two separate worlds: Rick the family member and Rick the director."

But it was difficult in other ways, too, because film lives from emotion. I didn't just want to show people crying, but sometimes

you need these glimpses or instants where the viewer can sense something changing inside the person on camera. So you really have to poke around in the wounds sometimes, and getting to them is not always easy. Sometimes I didn't want to go there and didn't bring up certain topics. Sometimes I was afraid I would destroy the trust I was just beginning to earn, particularly in Loretta's case.

What changes did you notice in yourself during filming?

The biggest change came with the discovery of the file in the courthouse. That was the first time we really had a diagnosis in writing, which was what I'd been looking for all those years. I'd always wanted to know what was what, what this illness was called, whether it's psychological and whether or not it had anything to do with the accident, as my father has always claimed. It was very shocking to read the reports, and I was furious because I felt he'd been lying to us all these years. But now after talking to all these relatives and doctors, I don't think you can say for sure whether or not he's lied to us. Maybe he doesn't really understand what has happened to him. It may be that he didn't understand what the doctors explained to him. When he still used to talk about his amnesia, it sounded like hocus pocus, but maybe that's how he understands his illness.

"Maybe he doesn't really understand what has happened to him."

Are you convinced he's lying because he claims to have an illness unique to him alone?

No, no, he never claimed that. He claimed that the car accident caused organic brain damage that triggered memory loss. But the doctors' reports tell an entirely different story: They say that the amnesia has nothing to do with the car accident. It was only the trigger for a psychological illness that was bound to happen sooner or later anyway because of his psychological make-up and all the problems he was having with his life during the years leading up to the accident.

"It [the car accident] was only the trigger for a psychological illness that was bound to happen sooner or later anyway."

That is to say, your father depicted it as an unusual illness, but the doctors disagree?

They do say it's unusual but that amnesia tends to be unusual anyway. In cases of Alzheimer's or dementia you're dealing with verifiable cases of organic damage to the brain due to degeneration. But in my father's case, this is certainly not true. Sudden memory loss usually occurs in traumatic situations like war. It also happens to accident victims: The period immediately before an accident is simply forgotten. You wake up in the hospital and there's a gap that can be up to several hours long or even last a few days. This period has simply vanished. It's the body's way of protecting you from having to relive the traumatic event over and over again, and it helps prevent you from being afraid to ride a bike or drive a car again.

"Sudden memory loss usually occurs in traumatic situations like war."

Are you still convinced that your father lost his memory? Do you believe in the amnesia story?

I feel very ambivalent about the whole amnesia story, and really don't know if I believe his version of it. But something did change inside his head. What the exact causes were and whether or not it

"I don't know if I believe his version of the story. But something did change inside his head."

had anything to do with the car accident, we'll probably never know. I wanted to convey this ambivalence, this doubt. Many cerebral illnesses aren't like other illnesses where you can clearly determine the cause. Several doctors have told me that even now, despite modern technology, very little is known about the brain.

Did you have a particular goal in mind – on a personal level and with regards to the audience?

I didn't want the film to be an exercise in navel gazing like so many personal films are. I was reaching for a higher, more universal level. What does loss in its broadest sense mean? What does the loss of a close family member mean? The parent-child relationship is the closest relationship that exists. What does its loss mean? These days you hear more and more about Alzheimer's and dementia. I have a few friends whose parents have dementia. They haven't suddenly lost their memory like my father did, but it's slowly fading away. One day these friends are going to have to deal with the fact that their parents no longer recognize them. This theme is going to become more and more important in the near future as people continue to live longer and longer. How are we going to deal with this loss? So I hope that other people in similar situations will see something in this film that will help them emotionally and make them better understand their own situation.

"The parent-child relationship is the closest relationship that exists. What does its loss mean?"

Matt Sweetwood (Co-writer, Co-director, Editor) on "Forgetting Dad"

"Documentaries are hard to end," I was once told by director Michael Apter (*28 Up, Gorillas in the Mist, Enigma*), "because real life stories never end." After many weeks in the editing room, I was reminded of this unique challenge some filmmakers often face. Bringing Rick Minnich's personal family story to a close, even though the closure he had hoped for had not been achieved, loomed about this film like a dark cloud. Was this really going to be a film about "letting go" or "acceptance" of something so impossible to believe?

While shooting the film, I believe my role as an objective observer and listener helped to allow the Minnichs to finally reveal their true feelings about the effects of Richard's amnesia on the family. However, after analyzing the nearly 40 hours of discussions and interviews it became clear that the effects the accident have had on Rick was the deeper story; the growing conflicts with his father and all his unanswered questions were all issues driving the story forward. It meant having to re-structure the film from a personal investigation into a personal discovery.

The editing on paper and video constantly re-examined a relationship in ways I never imagined possible. It was an intense emotional labyrinth for us both as the story between the Minnich family and their father figure continued to change dramatically after the filming had been completed. "Forgetting Dad" truly put me in the driver's seat of that accident, trying to walk in Richard's shoes, even in times when the entire family seemed to be against him. Despite the struggles, I hope my efforts to weigh both sides of the story have been achieved, although it continues to change every day, and may never really end.

Matt Sweetwood, October 2008

About the Filmmakers

Rick Minnich (writer, director)

Rick Minnich was born in Pomona, California in 1968 and grew up in Kansas, Arizona and California. After graduating with a B.A. in English Literature from Columbia University in 1990, he moved to Berlin, where he studied directing at the Film and Television Academy "Konrad Wolf." His graduation film HEAVEN ON EARTH won the 2001 Babelsberg Media Prize for best documentary graduation film in Germany, and in 2002 it took the FIPA d'Or in Biarritz and numerous other prizes in the United States and Europe. It also screened at IDFA in 2001. Rick Minnich's films have been shown throughout Europe by such TV broadcasters as ARTE, WDR, ORF, etc. FORGETTING DAD is his third feature-length documentary. It follows HOMEMADE HILLBILLY JAM (2005, released in the US by [First Run Features](#) and in Germany by [Epix Media AG](#)) and GOOD GUYS & BAD GUYS (1997).

Matt Sweetwood (co-writer, co-director, editor)

Born in Kansas City, Missouri in 1971. He currently lives in Potsdam, Germany. Sweetwood studied film at the California State University San Diego. He has broad experience as a script writer and director in both the United States and Germany. His scripts include THE JEWISH SANTA CLAUS (Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion, Germany) and THE STROKE (Flying Moon Filmproduktion, Germany). He wrote the script and directed the documentaries THE STORY OF LIBERTY and LIBERTY AT WAR (2004). He also edited the documentaries DESERT DREAMERS (2005) and HOMEMADE HILLBILLY JAM (2005, which he also co-wrote). In 2009, Sweetwood won the BR-Telepool Documentary Competition for the treatment to his feature documentary BEERLAND, which he is currently making.

Axel Schnepapat (Director of Photography)

Born in 1971 in Rostock, Germany. 1993-2000 trained as a cameraman at the HFF "Konrad Wolf" in Potsdam. German Cinematography Award 2000 for the documentary HAVANNA, MI AMOR (Director: Uli Gaulke). Numerous feature and documentary films; HEIRATE MICH and COMRADES IN DREAMS with Uli Gaulke; SCHULZE GETS THE BLUES with Michael Schorr, EYES WIDE SHUT with Haim Tabakmann and HOMEMADE HILLBILLY JAM with Rick Minnich. Most recently, Schnepapat worked as a cameraman on the project 24 H BERLIN – EIN TAG IM LEBEN.

Ari Benjamin Meyers (composer)

Ari Benjamin Meyers is known for the amazingly wide spectrum of his musical activities – he has conducted opera and theater, has played in various rock bands, has composed operas as well as music for theater, film, and dance, and started Club Redux, a series of club events featuring his own Redux Orchestra, which brought modern music to the Berlin club scene and beyond.

Detailed Biography & Filmography of Rick Minnich

Biography

- 1968 born in Pomona, California, USA
- 1988-90 Internship at film distributor Kino International, New York
- 1990 Bachelor of Arts in English Literature, Columbia University, New York
Internship as camera assistant for Latvian Television in Riga
- 1991-92 Graduate studies in the School of Film and Video at California Institute of the Arts
- 1995-01 Graduate Studies in the directing program at the Hochschule für Film & Fernsehen "Konrad Wolf," Potsdam-Babelsberg, Germany
- 1993-97 Free-lancer responsible for making feature trailers for Deutsche Welle TV in Berlin
- since 1997 Free-lance film and translation work
- 2002 Director of the series "So gesehen" (30 x 3') for the German TV station SAT.1
- 2003 Participant in the Berlinale Talent Campus.

Filmography (selection)

- 1993 DELPHI 1830, experimental film, 3', 16mm, color
- 1994 Next Time Everything Will Be Better ("Beim nächsten mal wird alles besser"), narrative short, 9', 16mm, color
- 1993-96 The Book of Lenins, Documentary, 24', 16mm, color
- 1996 Untitled Picture ("Bild ohne Titel"), narrative short, 4', 35mm, Dolby SR, color, HFF/ARTE
- 1997 Good Guys & Bad Guys, Documentary, 73', S16, Dolby SR, color, HFF/ORB
- 2001 Heaven on Earth, Doc., 52', S16, Dolby SR, color, HFF/Hoferichter & Jacobs
- 2005 Homemade Hillbilly Jam, Documentary, 80', S16, color, Hoferichter & Jacobs
- 2008 Forgetting Dad, Doc., 84', HD-Cam, Hoferichter & Jacobs/ZDF

Grants, Fellowships, Prizes (selection)

- 1992 Graduate fellowship, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)
- 1995 Writing stipend, Künstlerhaus Schloss Wiepersdorf, Germany. 1st prize (for "Delphi 1830"), Short Attention Span Film & Video Festival, San Francisco
- 1997 Honorable mention, Leipzig Doc. Film Festival; Rector's Prize, HFF "Konrad Wolf"
- 1998 Jury prize, Cinarchea Int'l Archaeology Film Festival Kiel, Germany; Bronze Plaque, Columbus Int'l Film & Video Festival (The Chris Awards)
- 2001 Babelsberg Media Prize (best graduation film – documentary – in Germany)
Audience Award for best doc., Brooklyn Int'l Film Festival
Special Prize of the European Film School Jury, SEE Docs in Dubrovnik, Croatia
Bronze Plaque, Columbus International Film Festival (The Chris Awards)
Hans W. Geissendoerfer Young Talent Award, Germany
IDA/David L. Wolper Student Doc. Achievement Award Nomination
- 2002 FIPA d'or, International Festival of Audiovisual Programs (FIPA) Biarritz, France
- 2005 Prize of the State Film Service Rheinland-Pfalz, 22nd Video/Filmtage Koblenz, Germany
- 2006 Artist residency at the Villa Aurora, Pacific Palisades, California
- 2007 Fellowship from the DEFA-Stiftung, Berlin
- 2008 Special Jury Award – Joris Ivens Competition, International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam IDFA

- 2009 Honorable Mention – Achtung Berlin – New Berlin Film Award
 2nd Audience Award – Ippokrates 1st International Health Film Festival – Kos, Greece
 William Dieterle Film Prize (Special Prize) – Ludwigshafen, Germany
 Grand Jury Award – GZDOC Guangzhou, China
- 2010 Honorable Mention – Dallas Video Fest (USA)
- 2011 Short List – German Film Awards ('Lola' – Oscar equivalent)

Detailed Biography & Filmography of Matt Sweetwood

Biography

Born in Kansas City, Missouri in 1971, Matt Sweetwood began making 8mm animation and video films from elementary through high school. Continuing undergraduate studies at California State University San Diego, Television and Film Department in 1990, Matthew developed professional motion picture filmmaking skills with an emphasis on writing and directing. Between San Diego and L.A. worked as production manager, writer, and assistant director on various independent projects. In 1995 he moved to Berlin, Germany, starting a career as a writer with the agency Verlag der Autoren, Frankfurt, working on both narrative and documentary film productions. His feature length documentaries include "Desert Dreamers" [editor], featuring the voice of Peter Fonda, and "Homemade Hillbilly Jam" [co-writer and editor], which has toured theaters and festivals and is now in international DVD distribution. In 2009 Sweetwood won the BR-Telepool Documentary Competition in Germany for the treatment to his feature documentary "Beerland," which he is currently making in association with Hoferichter & Jacobs. Matthew Sweetwood currently lives with his German wife and three boys in Potsdam, Germany.

Filmography (selection)

- 1996-2000 "Der Jüdische Weihnachtsmann" (Edgar Reitz Film Prod.) – Co-writer
 "The Stroke" (Flying Moon Filmproduktion) – Writer
 "Havana mi Amor" (Flying Moon Filmproduktion), 80', 35mm, Dokumentarfilm – Story Editor
 "The Bet" (Stardust Entertainment GmbH) – Writer
- 2002 "Therapeutic Art" (Short Attention Span Film and Video Festival, San Francisco), 10', DV, TV Spot, Documentary – Writer, Director, Editor
- 2003 "Forget TV: Lecture Series" (UMKC Creative Studies Dept. Kansas City), 7 x 60', DV, Doc. – Writer, Director
 "The African Art Experiences" (Belger Art Center / Global Arts Fund.), 90', DVCAM, Documentary – Director / Editor
- 2004 "The Story of Liberty", "Liberty At War" (Footprints in Clay Productions, Liberty), 2 x 60', DVCAM, Documentary – Writer, Director, Editor
- 2005 "Homemade Hillbilly Jam" (Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH), 80', Super16, Documentary – Co-Writer & Editor
 "Art of Aging" (Paste-Up Productions), 45', DVCAM, Documentary – Writer & Camera

- "Desert Dreamers" (PBS, KDEQ, Tivoli Entertainment, LA/Berlin), 22' (57' DVD), DV 24p, Documentary – Editor
- 2006 "The Droogles- The Moohs Brothers" (Nolan Kids Entertainment), 26 x 10', HDTV, Animation Series – Writer & Director
- 2007 "Urban Age" (Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH), 25', Documentary – Editor
- 2008 "Robot City" (Nolan Kids Entertainment), 12 x 10', Animation Series – Writer
- "Forgetting Dad" (Hoferichter & Jacobs, ZDF / Das kleine Fernsehspiel), 84', HD, Documentary – Co-Writer, Co-Director & Editor

Detailed Biography of Ari Benjamin Meyers

Biography

Born in New York in 1972, Ari Benjamin Meyers' musical training in piano, composing, and conducting included studies at The Juilliard School, a B.A. (cum laude) from Yale University, and a M.M. from Peabody Conservatory. His teachers included Jacob Druckman, Anthony Davis, Martin Bresnick, Frederik Prausnitz, and Laszlo Halasz. A Fulbright Scholarship brought him to Berlin in 1996, where he currently resides. In 1999 his opera *Defendants Rosenberg* (recipient of a Margaret Jory Grant and an ASCAP Young Composer Award) was given its world premiere by the State Opera of Magdeburg, Germany. Further commissions followed including works for the Staatskapelle Berlin, the Euregio Music Festival, Figura Ensemble, the Jewish Museum Berlin, the Lauder Foundation, the Eberhard von Kuenheim Foundation, Harry White, and the saxophone quartet Clair-Obscur. He has also written the music for theater productions in Berlin, Hamburg, Dortmund, Darmstadt, and Freiburg. His most recent opera, *NICO. Sphinx aus Eis* (libretto: Werner Fritsch) was commissioned by the Semper Opera Dresden and given its premiere there in June of 2005 with the composer conducting.

In addition to conducting his own works and other new music, Ari Benjamin Meyers is considered a specialist for the performance of music by Kurt Weil as well as the New York minimalists. He was the conductor of the Maxim Gorki Theater's production of Brecht/Weill's *Die Dreigroschenoper*, which had a run of 108 sold-out shows. He also was music director of the only two sanctioned productions of Wilson/Glass' *Einstein on the Beach* to be performed without the participation of the Philip Glass Ensemble.

He is the founder and artistic director of Club Redux and with his own ensemble, Redux Orchestra, he gives many concerts throughout Germany and Europe.

In May 2007 he was named (with Markus Richter) as artistic director of MODEM: space for contemporary music and arts, a new 23,000 m² performance and exhibition space occupying a former power plant in the heart of Berlin.

Compositions (selection)

Nico. Sphinx aus Eis (opera) // Defendants Rosenberg (opera) // Der Kirschgarten (theater) // Bach (theater) // Die drei Schwestern (theater) // Macbeth (theater) // Sphinx aus Eis (theater) // Epidemic (music-theater) // Hure - Damit keine Stille entsteht (music-theater) // Beckman in New York (saxophone quartett) // String Quartet Nr. 2 // Gift Fish/Dead Sea (solo violin) // Millennium Daze (chamber orchestra) // Six Shakespeare Songs // L.T.I. (dance) // Three Days in September (trombone choir) // Der gute Mensch von Sezuan (theater) // Die Unzerbrechlichen (film music) // König, König (dance) // Nachtsyl (theater)

About Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH

Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH has been continuously producing documentaries and feature films since 1996. Our main focus lies with contemporary topics realised in long formats. We are interested in exceptional, intriguing and fascinating stories with strong potential to reach both German and international audiences. During the past years, we've produced a wide variety of formats ranging from docu-soaps, docu-dramas and numerous hybrid forms including films on the threshold between reality and fiction.

Our current focus is on the further development of individual filmic approaches and visual styles. This entails building long-term relationships with our collaborators, where the mutual knowledge of individual strengths and weaknesses increases our chances of success. At the same time, Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH is becoming more international: In 2004, more than two-thirds of our productions were international co-productions. In this way, we can produce a number of films which would otherwise be too small for the domestic market alone. Our philosophy has garnered us numerous awards and festival invitations as well as a wealth of international sales.

The Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH team is composed of seven full-time employees. The CEO Olaf Jacobs, together with producers Carolin Scheffler and Anne Stephan, are in charge of film production. Company co-founder Matthias Hoferichter left the company in 1999. Since then, Olaf Jacobs has been the CEO. From 2003 to 2006, Hoferichter & Jacobs acted as the executive producer of the European Film Academy's master classes. The company holds shares in the Cocopelli Musikverlag GmbH, in art & pictures Medien GmbH and in the PentAlpha Verlag für Kunst und Medien GmbH, Leipzig.

About Producer Olaf Jacobs

Born in Leipzig in 1972. 1993-95, commissioning editor at public broadcaster MDR. Writer, producer and director of numerous reportages and TV documentaries. Co-founder of Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH film and television production company in 1996. Various activities as a trainer and lecturer at broadcasters, media academies and universities. His productions include such successful documentaries as GRENZE [Border] (Director: Holger Jancke, Berlinale 2004) and HOMEMADE HILLBILLY JAM (Director: Rick Minnich, HotDocs 2005), feature films such as THREE GIRLS (Director: Murad Ibragimbekvov, Moscow & Shanghai 2007) and internationally successful TV-documentaries such as the five-part series DIE MACHT DES WISSENS [The Power of Knowledge](2004), presented by Armin Müller-Stahl.

Contact

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