

DIRECTED BY ANDREAS DRESEN

STOPPED

ON

TRACK

HALT AUF FREIER STRECKE



OFFICIAL SELECTION
UN CERTAIN REGARD
FESTIVAL DE CANNES



*The doctor told the truth. The days are numbered.
Why me and why now?
A man leaves wife and children behind, parents,
friends, neighbours and yesterday's lover,
the people in his life.
Day by day a little farewell.
Words are getting rare, longer the silence.
In front of the window the year changes its colours.
Dying is a final work to do.
Not being alone while you are left behind alone,
maybe that's a good thing.*

Forty-year-old healthy Frank has been diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor and suddenly condemned to only a few months to live. It's a shock to a life seemingly on track with a steady job and a new house in the suburbs. But together Frank and his family push through with their daily life of work and school. Frank tries to cope with the difficulty of accepting the inevitable: increasing symptoms of the illness and medical treatment. He uses his iPhone as a kind of emotional diary. The decision to home care Frank puts an immense strain on loving Simone and ends up distancing the family members as much as it keeps them together.

A story about death that celebrates life.



ANDREAS DRESEN

Andreas Dresen is one of Germany's most admired directors with diverse and award-winning features such as **Whiskey with Vodka**, **Cloud 9**, **Summer in Berlin**, **Grill Point** and **Night Shapes**. Andreas' feature, **Whiskey with Vodka** was awarded for BEST DIRECTOR at the International Filmfestival Karlovy Vary and nominated for GERMAN FILM AWARD for BEST ACTOR and BEST SCRIPT. **Cloud 9** premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 2008 where it won the COUP DE COEUR AWARD in the Un Certain Regard section. The film was nominated for the EUROPEAN FILM AWARD for BEST ACTRESS and BEST DIRECTOR and was awarded the BAVARIA FILM PRIZE for BEST ACTRESS and BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER, BEST FILM in Triest 2009 and won the GERMAN FILM AWARD 2009 for BEST ACTRESS, BEST DIRECTOR and BEST FILM (bronze). **Summer in Berlin**, was awarded BEST SCREENPLAY at the San Sebastian Film Festival and BEST ACTRESS at the Chicago Festival. **Grill Point** won the SILVER BEAR – GRAND JURY PRIZE at the Berlin Film Festival, as well as BEST DIRECTOR and BEST ENSEMBLE at the Chicago Festival and BEST DIRECTOR at the Ghent Festival. **Night Shapes** won BEST ACTOR at the Berlin Film Festival and the BEST NEW DIRECTOR award at Valladolid. Andreas Dresen was born in 1963 in Gera, Germany. In the early 80s, he began working in theater and making short films. He studied directing at the HFF "Konrad Wolf" Potsdam-Babelsberg. Since 1992, he has been working as a writer and director for film, TV and theater.

2011 **Stopped on Track** (Halt auf freier Strecke)

2009 **Whiskey with Vodka** (Whisky mit Wodka)

2008 **Cloud 9** (Wolke 9)

2005 **Summer in Berlin** (Sommer vorm Balkon)

2004 **Willenbrock**

2002 **Herr Wichmann von der CDU**

(documentary)

2001 **Grill Point** (Halbe Treppe)

2000 **The Police Woman** (Die Polizistin) – TV

1998 **Night Shapes** (Nachtgestalten)

1997 **Changing Skins** (Raus aus der Haut) – TV

1992 **Silent country** (Stilles Land)



STEFFI KÜHNERT

Steffi Kühnert, born 1963 in East Berlin, graduated from the Academy of Dramatic Arts „Ernst Busch“, Berlin and since then worked at leading theaters in the German-speaking countries, including the Vienna Burgtheater, the Schaubühne in Berlin, the Deutsches Theater in Berlin, the Berliner Ensemble, Schauspielhaus Bochum and the Residenz Theater Munich. She worked with directors such as Leander Haussmann, Falk Richter, Benno Besson and Luc Perceval. In 1993, Steffi Kühnert was awarded the Federal Cross of Merit for her outstanding performances.

Before STOPPED ON TRACK she has played in Andreas Dresen's GRILLPOINT and CLOUD 9. She also played in successful high-quality productions such as Christian Schwochow's NOVEMBER CHILD, Leander Haussmann's BERLIN BLUES, Andreas Arnstedt's THE DISPENSABLES and Michael Haneke's THE WHITE RIBBON.

MILAN PESCHEL

Milan Peschel was born in 1968 in East Berlin. After graduating from the Academy of Dramatic Arts „Ernst Busch“, Berlin he worked at the Neue Bühne Senftenberg and at the Hans Otto Theater in Potsdam. From 1997 to 2008 he was a member of the Ensemble of the Volksbühne Berlin. This was followed by guest appearances on other German and Austrian theaters like the Thalia Theater in Hamburg and at the Salzburg Festival. He has worked with directors such as Dimiter Gotscheff, Armin Petras and Frank Castorf. In addition, Milan Peschel appeared in numerous film and TV productions. For his starring role in Robert Thalheim's debut NETTO Milan Peschel was nominated for Best Actor for the German Film Prize. He also seen played in Thomas Imbach's LENZ, in the episodic comedy BLACK SHEEP, as well as in Pepe Planitzer's Berlinale entry ALL GONE and Sebastian Schipper's love story SOMETIME IN AUGUST. Since 2007, Peschel staged as a director at the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin and the Theater an der Parkaue.





PAPA

MAMA

MIKA

Lili

SLZ

COMMENTS FROM ANDREAS DRESEN

ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT

The past year has not been very easy for me and some of my closest friends. It has been a time of breakups, separations and distress. This very personal feeling created the key tone of the film, if you will. Moreover, some of my friends were confronted with death, and by listening to these stories I somehow shared the experience. In this context I was amazed by how little our society reflects on this issue. Because one thing we can surely say: it concerns all of us and can affect our lives anytime. But we prefer to push that aside and go on with our everyday life. The same applies for the cinema: there are abundant and fast deaths, but without showing what death means for the people involved. Or death hides behind melodramatic dramaturgical constructions, like the famous last trip to the ocean or the like, which draws attention away from the essential. For us it was very important to stick to the everyday experience and to show the process, take a look into the abyss but also at the lighter moments. What does it really mean for a man, his family and friends, when death gets in the way of all his life plans. The title of the film is simply a metaphor describing the situation Frank and his family find themselves in. Suddenly all movement stops and you have to find your way on unfamiliar, open terrain.

THE DIAGNOSIS

It's amazing, but actually I didn't want to shoot the opening scene at all. We know that situation well enough from numerous other films: the doctor shows the x-ray and gives his devastating diagnosis. This usually only takes two

minutes. But then I thought it could be helpful for me and the actors to expose ourselves to this moment as realistically as possible. The doctor in STOPPED ON TRACK is a real-life doctor and he has to give such diagnoses 2-3 times a week, in that exact room, at that same table. The actors met him for the first time in front of the camera. The conversation lasted 40 minutes and I was deeply shattered. The actors had a similar feeling. Doctor Träger is very clear yet full of empathy. The long moments he kept silent were overwhelming. The silence allows a feeling of helplessness and leaves room to realize what's going on and to ask questions. The phone call is part of reality. He received it exactly at that moment. There are a lot of patients in a hospital, a lot of urgent cases. A neurosurgeon has to be available anytime.

COMPLETELY IMPROVISED

STOPPED ON TRACK didn't have a script in the classic sense. The dialogues were completely improvised by the actors. In the preparatory stage, Cooky Ziesche and I researched for a couple of months. For example, interviewing supporters of the hospice movement and also doctors and the bereaved of people that had died of a serious disease. We recorded each interview, compiling a database which we discussed with the actors and later on with the whole team. That's how we created the characters and developed a schedule of scenes, outlining the situations in the film. That was the basis for the work on the set, when we developed the actual scenes while shooting. It was a very small team of only seven people altogether. Sometimes there were only three on the set, which creates a very familial environment where you can open up, just give it a go without the fear of embarrassment.





THE CHILDREN

The children are excellent. How did you go about working with them? How much I'm very happy with the performances of the children, too. They were really relaxed and were on par with the adult actors. Since the character of daughter Lilly was to be a diver, I looked at all the athletes of that age group in Berlin, which were only four girls. Lilly impressed me the most. She was so precise yet full of imagination. Maybe her clearness and maturity have something to do with the fact that she has had a similar experience in her own family. The final line in the film comes from her. We found Mika, the young son, with the help of a casting agency. I noticed immediately how openly and also physically he acted with his partners. Of course the children knew what our story was about, but we always only talked about the respective situation. Since we shot mostly chronologically they could very well put themselves in the position of their characters. Like their adult partners, they invented their text depending on the situation and responded spontaneously.

AUTHENTIC MEDICAL STAFF

Your film presents to us a very frank, realistic, yet very emotional view on the. Fortunately, the story is not drawn from my personal experience, although 10 years ago my own father died of a brain tumour. But in his case everything was completely different from what happens in the film. Our work on the film is based on the descriptions of the people we met during the research and the personal experiences of the team members. And of course the tone that the „real life“ players added to it. All medical staff in our film are authentic, there are no actors. The doctors and (male) nurses have introduced their own experiences into the story. And they were the touchstone if our depiction matches the procedures in real life. For the actors, as well as for me, that was a big challenge and a big help.

HOMECARE

We had researched various cases in which families had decided to keep the sick person at home and not send him to a hospital or hospice to have him die there. Of course there are always both options, but the home care system in Germany, especially in Berlin is very well developed. There are doctors specialized on the support of people in such a constellation, as we show in STOPPED ON TRACK. To say good-bye among the members of your family in an intimate environment is a great blessing and, by the way, a tradition developed over centuries. Only the often industrialized handling of illness and death caused great alienation. This also contributes to the fact that we don't see death as a natural part of our lives.

SOLIDARITY AND DIGNITY

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross described 5 stages of dying: isolation, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Our story is also located in that area of conflict, even though the borders between the different stages are not established that sharply. In such a dramatic constellation, people go through all kinds of emotional states, which is reflected in the respective situations. Tenderness meets despair, gallows humour meets grief, helplessness meets empathy. During the shoot I became more and more aware of how precious a family is, how powerful a family's solidarity is. Despite all tragedy, Frank never is alone. Together with his family, he faces his destiny. It's all about solidarity and dignity in a desperate situation.

Simone **STEFFI KÜHNERT**
Frank **MILAN PESCHEL**
Lilli **TALISA LILLI LEMKE**
Mika **MIKA NILSON SEIDEL**

Simone's Mother **URSULA WERNER**
Simone's Sister **MARIE ROSA TIETJEN**
Franks's Father **OTTO MELLIES**
Franks Mothers **CHRISTINE SCHORN**
Stefan **BERNHARD SCHÜTZ**
Tumor **THORSTEN MERTEN**
Ina **INKA FRIEDRICH**

Director **ANDREAS DRESEN**
Producer **PETER ROMMEL**
Production Manager **PETER HARTWIG**
Cinematography **MICHAEL HAMMON BVK**
Editor **JÖRG HAUSCHILD**
Production Designer **SUSANNE HOPF**
Costume Designer **SABINE GREUNIG**
Sound **PETER SCHMIDT**
Sound Mix **RALF KRAUSE**
Story Development **ANDREAS DRESEN**
COOKY ZIESCHE

Commissioning Editors **ROSEMARIE WINTGEN**
DAGMAR MIELKE
ANDREAS SCHREITMÜLLER

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