

Rick Minnich - writer/director/producer

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Born in Pomona, California in 1968, Rick Minnich grew up in Kansas, Arizona, and California. Following completion of his undergraduate studies in English literature at Columbia University in 1990, he worked as a camera assistant for Latvian Television in Riga, at which time he travelled extensively throughout Eastern and Central Europe, finally landing in Berlin, where he worked as a kitchen helper in a Greek restaurant and as an English teacher and translator. In 1991, he began studying film at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), but returned to Berlin one year later as a graduate fellow of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) at the Film University Babelsberg "Konrad Wolf", where he completed his studies in directing in 2001. He has written and directed several narrative shorts, as well as three feature-length and two one-hour documentaries. His graduation film HEAVEN ON EARTH (about the Bible Belt show town Branson, Missouri) screened at IDFA and won the Babelsberg Media Prize for the best graduation film (documentary) in Germany in 2001, the FIPA d'Or (first prize) at the FIPA television festival in Biarritz, France in 2002, and a number of smaller prizes in the US and Europe. It was also nominated for the IDA/David L. Wolper Student Documentary Achievement Award.

Minnich's music documentary HOMEMADE HILLBILLY JAM (2005) had its world premiere at the prestigious HotDocs Film Festival in Toronto, Canada in 2005, and was the opening night film of the 2005 Hot Springs Documentary Festival in Arkansas as well as the closing night film of the True/False Film Festival in Columbia, Missouri. In the spring of 2006 it toured the UK as part of the "Sheffield International Documentary Festival on Tour" program sponsored by the British Film Institute. First Run Features released it on DVD in the US in 2008.

Minnich's next film FORGETTING DAD (about his father's bizarre case of amnesia) is his second collaboration with co-writer and editor Matt Sweetwood, and was produced in association with German television ZDF and Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH. It won the Special Jury Award at its world premiere at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) in 2008, and has won several more prizes since then, including the Grand Jury Prize at GZDOC in Guangzhou, China – the largest documentary film festival in Asia. It was also on the short list for the German Film Prize ('Lola') – the German equivalent of the Academy Awards. FORGETTING DAD was released theatrically in Germany by W-Film in 2010 and has been broadcast on TV throughout Europe, and in Canada, Israel, Brazil and India.

Rick Minnich's most recent film, the hour-long documentary THE BOMB HUNTERS (2015), follows the fevered efforts to find some 300 undetonated World War II bombs in the small town of Oranienburg, just north of Berlin. It was produced in association with German public broadcaster RBB and the Berlin production company Kloos & Co. Medien GmbH.

Currently Minnich is working on the feature documentaries THE STRAIT GUYS (about the proposed Bering Strait tunnel project) and MR . GREENFIELD (about Holocaust survivor and presidential tailor Martin Greenfield). During the fall 2017 semester, he was the Documentary Filmmaker in Residence at Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Visit Rick Minnich at www.rickfilms.de.

Selected Filmography

- 1993 **DELPHI 1830**, experimental film, 16mm, color, 3'
1994 **Next Time Everything Will Be Better** ("Beim nächsten mal wird alles besser")
fiction, 16mm, color, 9'
1993-96 **The Book of Lenins**, documentary, 16mm, color & b/w, 24'
1996 **Untitled Picture** ("Bild ohne Titel"), fiction, 35mm, Dolby SR, color, 4', ARTE/HFF
1997 **Good Guys & Bad Guys**, doc., S16, Dolby SR, col., 73', HFF/ORB
2001 **Heaven on Earth**, doc., S16, Dolby SR, col., 52', HFF/Hoferichter / Jacobs GmbH
2005 **Homemade Hillbilly Jam**, doc. S16, col., 80', Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH
2008 **Forgetting Dad**, doc., HDCam, 83', ZDF / Rickfilms / Hoferichter & Jacobs
2015 **The Bomb Hunters**, doc., HD, 52', RBB / Kloos & Co. / Rickfilms
2018 **The Presidents' Tailor**, doc., 4K, 30', MDR/InOneMedia

Awards, Grants, Residencies (selection)

- 1992 German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) grant
1995 Writer's grant, Schloss Wiepersdorf, Germany
1992 German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) grant
1995 Writer's grant, Schloss Wiepersdorf, Germany
1997 For **Good Guys & Bad Guys**: Honorable mention, DokLeipzig; Rector's Prize, HFF "Konrad Wolf"; Bronze Plaque, Columbus Int'l Film & Video Festival
For **The Book of Lenins**: Jury prize, Cinarchea Int'l Archeology Film Festival Kiel, Germany
2001 For **Heaven on Earth**: Babelsberg Media Prize—Best Graduation Film (doc.) in Germany
Hans W. Geissendoerfer Young Talent Award (Germany)
Bronze Plaque, Columbus Int'l Film & Video Festival (The Chris Awards) Audience Award, Williamsburg Brooklyn Film Festival
Special Prize of the European Film Schools Jury, SEE Docs in Dubrovnik Nominated for the IDA/David L. Wolper Student Doc. Achievement Award
Nominated for the German Cinematography Award
2002 For **Heaven on Earth**: FIPA d'Or (1st prize), FIPA TV Festival, Biarritz, France
2005 For **Homemade Hillbilly Jam**: Prize of the State Film Service Rheinland-Pfalz (Germany)
2006 Artist residency at the Villa Aurora in Pacific Palisades, California
Development grant from the DEFA-Stiftung, Berlin
2008 For **Forgetting Dad**: Special Jury Award, International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam IDFA
2009 For **Forgetting Dad**: Honorable Mention – Achtung Berlin – New Berlin Film Award
Audience Award – Ippokrates International Health Film Festival, Kos (Greece)
William Dieterle Filmpreis (Special Prize), Germany
Grand Jury Prize, GZDOC, Guangzhou (China)
2010 For **Forgetting Dad**: Honorable Mention – Dallas Video Fest (USA)
2011 For **Forgetting Dad**: Short List – German Film Award ('Lola') – Oscar equivalent

Master Classes/Panels/Lectures/Workshops/Visiting Artist

- 2009 Kickstart Panel "Writing for Documentary" - Hot Docs, Toronto
2009 Master Class - "How to Create a Film About Family Trauma," Planete Doc Film Festival, Warsaw, Poland
2009 Master Class on "Forgetting Dad" - iDocs Conference, Beijing Film Academy,

China
2009 Visiting Artist - Stephens College, Columbia, Missouri
2009 Participant on panel "Families - They Really F*** You Up" - True/False Film Festival, Columbia, Missouri
2009 Participant on Panel "Writing for Documentary" - Screen Producers Ireland, Dublin
2010 SOURCES 2 lecture on "Forgetting Dad" (together with co-director Matt Sweetwood) - workshop in Potsdam, Germany
2011 Visiting Artist in Michael Renov's documentary seminar, USC School of Cinematic Arts, and at the New York Film Academy (Los Angeles campus)
2012 Tutor for Doc Stories Black Sea workshop, Sibiu, Romania
2015 Dean of the Sabah Film Academy, Malaysia
2016 Tutor at the Sabah Film Academy, Malaysia

Film Festival Juries

2009 Documentary Jury, Interfilm Short Film Festival, Berlin
2010 Documentary Jury, Achtung Berlin/New Berlin Film Award, Germany
2010 Mid-length competition Jury, Ippokrates Health Film Festival, Kos, Greece
2012 Millenium Jury, Planete Doc Film Festival, Warsaw
2015 Sabah Pitching Forum jury, Kota Kinabalu International Film Festival, Malaysia
2018 Gdansk Documentary Film Festival, Poland