



HD, 51:30, German and English with English subtitles

Broadcast premiere: RBB, Germany, March 10, 2015, 9 p.m.

LOGLINE

A bomb victim, a small-town mayor and an intrepid bomb squad race against time to liberate their city from over 300 undetonated World War II bombs before they go off.

SYNOPSIS

What does it feel like to live atop hundreds of bombs which could explode at any moment? Such is the daily life of the 43,000 citizens of Oranienburg on the northern outskirts of Berlin. The center of Nazi efforts to build an atomic bomb, Oranienburg became the target of the heaviest single Allied bombing of World War II. Now, seventy years later, the town's charismatic mayor, his intrepid bomb disposal experts and a bomb-victim-turned-media-star are joining forces to rid their home of some 300 deadly bombs before they go off...

WHY ORANIENBURG?

An estimated 100,000 undetonated bombs from World War II still lurk beneath the surface in Germany nearly 70 years after the war ended. Most have mechanical fuses and will explode only upon impact (such as during construction work). But hundreds of these bombs, including over 300 in Oranienburg, have long-delay fuses, which were designed to not explode immediately, but several hours or days later. This was to frighten the populace from entering bombed out locations to clean up the ruins. Due to the geological situation in Oranienburg, these long-delay fuse bombs turned upward underground, preventing the normal chemical reaction from taking place. Instead, the acetone fumes in the fuse have been slowly but surely eating away at the thin celluloid membrane holding back the firing pin which would lead to a detonation.

Meanwhile, these fuses have become so sensitive that the bombs can no longer be moved and in most cases cannot be defused. The only remaining options: search for and explode the bombs under controlled conditions, or ignore the situation and hope for the best. Mayor Hans-Joachim Laesicke and the leaders of Oranienburg have chosen the first option – Oranienburg is the only city in Germany which is systematically searching for bombs.

CONTROLLED DETONATIONS

Searching for the bombs entails drilling 6 meter deep (20 feet) holes every 1.5 meters (5 feet) and lowering magnetic resonance probes into the earth to search for metallic objects. The logistics and expense of the undertaking are enormous, but the potential results of not taking action are even more frightening.

As Mayor Laesicke himself often repeats, Germany started the war, and the Allied bombings of Oranienburg helped free the city of Nazi terror. But the methods used not only helped bring an end to a dictatorship, but also severely impacted the general populace for generations to come.

THE GLOBAL LEGACY OF WAR AND UXOs

World War II may be long over, but its legacy lives on in Oranienburg in a particularly devious manner. What does this have to say about the millions of tons of ordinance the USA has spread throughout Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Latin America since then? Will future generations be as equally or even more severely affected by unexploded ordinance (UXO) for decades to come?

"The Bomb Hunters" is not only an action-packed story the search for undetonated bombs in the small German town of Oranienburg. It is also a cautionary tale about the long-term impact of war that raises the painful but unavoidable question: What are we doing to our planet ... and to ourselves?

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

As an American who has lived in the land of the 'conquered enemy' for the past twenty-four years, it is still difficult for me to imagine how my grandfather's generation could be responsible for each new nail-biting bomb find in 21st century Germany. The bombs seems like a grotesque and delayed act of revenge against the Nazis by my fellow Americans. It is almost as though the Germans may never be released from their ghastly past, which suddenly becomes tangible every time the discovery of a new bomb is announced on the morning news, and tens of thousands of people are forced to leave their homes.

Such news items often come from Oranienburg. During one of these controlled detonations one-and-a-half years ago, I interviewed Mayor Hans-Joachim Laesicke for the first time. He struck me as a feisty underdog who was doing battle against the federal government's bureaucratic defence mechanisms with lots of humor and gusto. His fight to free Oranienburg's soil of bombs is a kind of David and Goliath story I cannot resist. When Mayor Laesicke told me about a letter he once received from an American bomber pilot, I knew immediately that I had to make a film about Laesicke and his battle against the bombs. In the letter, the pilot apologized for the countless bombs he dropped on Oranienburg during World War II. Wrapped inside the letter was a \$100 bill – a touching gesture of reconciliation from the former enemy. Mayor Laesicke gave the money to the heroes of today – the bomb disposal experts, who risk their lives day in and day out in their struggle to free their city of the increasingly dangerous bombs. The mayor thanked the pilot, but also wrote that there is no need to apologize. After all, his bombing raids helped liberate the Germans from the Nazi terror.

What an anachronistic scenario: a German mayor in 2014 has the 'liberating bombs' from 1945 dug up and neutralized in order to finally free the residents of his city from the fateful Nazi terror silently looming beneath the surface. Mayor Laesicke, the three bomb disposal experts and the bomb victim Paule Dietrich will embody these historical embroilments. By placing them and their tireless battle to free their city of its bombs at the center of the film, I aim to make a thrilling piece

about the Germans and their past, to which I have a unique approach as a long-time resident of Germany and 'heir to the victors'.

Rick Minnich - Writer/Director/Producer

Rick Minnich is an American independent filmmaker based in Berlin, Germany. At age 12, he began



making Super 8 films of his baby brother Ben, and has been making films ever since. He received his B.A. in English from Columbia University and an MFA equivalent in film directing from the Film University "Konrad Wolf" in Potsdam-Babelsberg, Germany. Rick's award-winning films include: [HEAVEN ON EARTH](#) (50 min., 2001, IDFA, Fipa d'Or Biarritz), [HOMEMADE HILLBILLY JAM](#) (80 min, 2005, Premiere at HotDocs, opening night film Hot Springs 2005, closing night film True/False 2006, distributed by First Run Features),

[FORGETTING DAD](#) (84 min, 2008, Premiere: IDFA - Special Jury Award, True/False, Full Frame, Hot Docs, It's All True, Grand Jury Prize at GZ DOC in Guangzhou, China, Shortlisted for the German Film Award 'Lola' - German Oscar, released theatrically in Germany), [THE BOMB HUNTERS](#) (52 min., 2015). Rick Minnich's films have screened at film festivals, in theaters and on television on every continent except Antarctica. Rick happily passes on his more than twenty years of filmmaking experience to emerging filmmakers through his part-time job at [MET Film School Berlin](#) and at film workshops worldwide. Visit him at www.rickfilms.de.

Robert Staffl - Director of Photography

Born in 1975 in Cuxhaven, Germany. Freelance DoP for feature, documentaries, commercials and



music videos. Studied Cinematography at the University of Applied Science in Dortmund from 1998-2004. Freelance work in infrared photography in Cape Town in 2003. CEO of the production company Goldgrund Tonfilm Produktion GbR 2002-2009. Films include: *BBI - Construction Airport Berlin Schönefeld* (Dir. Holger Trocha, doc.), *Unnatural* (Dir. Daniel P. Schenk, feature, 2015), *Jakob's Brother* (Dir. Daniel Walta, feature, Super16, 2007). (<http://www.robert-staffl.com>)

César Hernández - Sound Designer

Born in Havana in 1976. Studied sound engineering and post-production at the International



School of Film and Television (EICTV) from 2000-2002 and at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne. Freelance sound recordist and designer since 2002. Films include: *Oregon Pine* (Dir. Nicolai Max Hahn, feature, 2014), *Vulva 3.0 - Between Tabu and Fine-Tuning* (Dir. Claudia Richarz & Ulrike Zimmermann, doc., 2014, Premiere at Berlinale).

Robin Lach - Editor

Born in Gelnhausen, Germany in 1987. Studied applied media sciences at the technical university in



Ilmenau from 2008-2012. Since then, he has been working as a freelance assistant editor and editor for various production companies in Berlin, including Storyhouse Productions, UFA, und Kloos & Co. Medien. Films as assistant editor include the feature documentaries *And Who Taught You to Drive* (2012) and *Away from All Suns* (2012). Robin has edited the TV versions of numerous feature-length documentaries.

Michael Mühlhaus - Composer

Born in 1966. Composer, keyboarder and producer for various artists such as Kante, Barbara



Morgenstern, Masha Qrella, Die Türen. From 1998-2005, Michael was a member of the popular German band Blumfeld. He has worked extensively in many of the most renowned theatres in Europe including Burgtheater Wien, Schaubühne Berlin, Schauspiel Stuttgart, Kammerspiele München, HAU Berlin, Deutsches Theater Berlin. Currently he is working on the soundtracks for *The Bomb Hunters* and the new feature from German director Maren Ade.

Stefan Kloos (Kloos & Co. Medien, Berlin) - Producer

Kloos & Co. Medien, founded by Grimme Award-winner Stefan Kloos and his partner Anja Dzierisk,



produces high-quality documentaries for TV and cinema. Our films have been selected by more than 100 film festivals worldwide and won awards such as the Max Ophüls Preis, First Steps and Grimme Award (German Emmy), and received awards at the Sundance Film Festival, Hot Docs and others. We successfully collaborate with international producers and broadcasters including ZDF, BR, WDR, MDR, RBB, SWR, ARTE, YLE, YES DOCU and others. We focus on creative documentaries and like to combine classic documentary work with

modern features such as cross-media concepts or animation. Our production *PLANET GALATA - A Bridge In Istanbul* was the first ever cross-media project by ZDF/ARTE. Lately, we produced the mobile app of *EVERYDAY REBELLION* for Android and ios together with our Austrian partner Golden Girls. We are members of AG DOK and EDN and regularly participate in major industry events. In 2008, Kloos & Dzierisk also founded the world sales company RISE AND SHINE, which today ranks among the top global documentary distributors.

Carole Lee Dean - Distribution and Outreach Consultant



Carole Dean created the short end business in 1970. In the 80's she produced 120 Heath Styles Shows that were sold to Oasis Cable and 30 Filmmaker shows, now in the National Archives. She created the Roy W. Dean film grants in 1992 in honor of her father and has given over 2 million dollars in donations since then. She is Executive Producer on Women Behind the Camera, BAM 6.6, American Chain Gang, Step Away From the Stone and now in production, a new documentary titled Achievers.

Carole Dean is President of From the Heart and gives consultations free to all who enter the Dean Film Grants and apply for fiscal sponsorship. She is the author of *The Art of Funding: Alternative Financing Concepts* and *The Art of Manifesting: Creating Your Future* written for filmmakers as financing educational tools. She teaches these alternative financing concepts online.

Emily Harris - Outreach Director



Originally from a small town in Devon (UK), Emily has spent the last three months studying documentary filmmaking at the Met Film School in Berlin, where she met director Rick Minnich. Emily is a recent McGill graduate with a background in International Development and African Studies. She decided to pursue documentary filmmaking after working in a student team researching environmental degradation and human rights violations caused by Canadian mining companies in Latin America for the CBC documentary *The New Conquistadors*. She has also worked as an intern, mainly in a research capacity, for a number of NGOs in the UK, Canada and Sierra Leone. She will be moving to London this year to take a course in factual TV and film production at the NFTS, but will continue to work with Rick on *The Bomb Hunters* remotely.

COMPANY PROFILE

PRODUCER: STEFAN KLOOS - Kloos & Co. Medien

Stefan Kloos, born 1968, has been trained as a print and radio journalist before joining production company MME in Hamburg as a director and producer. For ARD-documentary series “POP 2000” on 50 years of pop and youth culture in Germany, which he co-wrote, co-directed and produced, he was honoured with the prestigious GRIMME TV-Award. In 2002, he founded KLOOS & Co. MEDIEN.

The company has been producing high quality and award winning creative documentaries for TV and cinema backed by national and international film funds and major TV-channels featuring a well-balanced mix of social issues, human interest and human rights related topics, current social phenomena, pop culture and the arts. Kloos & Co. Medien have also worked on cross-media projects such as PLANET GALATA and EVERYDAY REBELLION.

Kloos and his company are one of the most active players for international documentary productions for cinema and TV in Germany. Recent award-winning films and coproductions include: THE OTHER CHELSEA, PUTINS KISS, PLANET GALATA, THE DAY WE DANCED ON THE MOON, AND WHO TAUGHT YOU TO DRIVE?, GANGSTER OF LOVE, AWAY FROM ALL SUNS, WALKING UNDER WATER and CHUCK NORRIS VS. COMMUNISM.

Kloos & Co, Medien is an established partner with most German broadcasters such as ZDF, WDR, MDR, RBB, SWR and BR and ARTE as well as with international broadcasters such as PBS, YLE, SVT, YES/DBS, VPRO and others. Productions have been funded by national and international funding bodies such as DFFF/FFA, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, FFF Bayern, Filmförderung Hamburg-Schleswig-Holstein, Robert-Bosch-Stiftung, MEDIA and Sundance Institute and others.

In 2008, Kloos received MEDIA SLATE FUNDING for the development of four documentary films. In 2011, his production THE OTHER CHELSEA won three of the most prestigious German film awards. In 2014, the docucomedy YOU DRIVE ME CRAZY was shortlisted as Best Documentary for the German Film Award. CHUCK NORRIS VS. COMMUNISM, which he coproduced, recently premiered in competition at the Sundance Film Festival.

Kloos is also the founder and managing director of RISE AND SHINE WORLD SALES, one of the leading distribution companies for high quality documentary films.

Kloos is a member of AG DOK, EDN and the GERMAN FILM ACADEMY and an alumni of the DOCUMENTARY CAMPUS MASTERSCHOOL and the SUNDANCE DOCUMENTARY FILM

PROGRAMME. He is a regular on the international and lectures at events and workshops worldwide on topics related to development, production and international distribution of documentary films.

Filmography (selection)

In Development:

OMA EXPORT by Srdjan Sadenac
Supported by MEDIA

In Production:

HOLY COW by Imam Hasanov | Co-Producer
Supported by Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg and the Doha Film Institute
LITTLE BERLIN WALL by Toma Chagelishvili | Co-Producer
Supported by Sundance Documentary Film Programme and Georgian Film Center
A MODERN MAN (Regie: Eva Mulvad), Dokumentarfilm | Co-Producer
Supported by MEDIA and Danish Film Institute

Completed:

THE BOMB HUNTERS by Rick Minnich
CHUCK NORRIS VS. COMMUNISM by Iлина Caligareanu) | Co-Producer
Sundance Film Festival 2015 (World Documentary Competition)
THE ESCAPE by Jesper Clemmensen | Co-Producer
WALKING UNDER WATER (2013) | Co-Producer
Hot Docs 2014: Special Jury Award, Planet Doc Warsaw 2014: Best Camera Award, Los Angeles
Int. Film Festival: Special Mention
AWAY FROM ALL SUNS! (2013) by Isa Willinger
GANGSTER OF LOVE by Nebojsa Slijepcevic (2013) | Co-Producer
YOU DRIVE ME CRAZY (AND WHO TAUGHT YOU TO DRIVE?) by Andrea Thiele and Lia
Jaspers (2013)
German Film Award 2014: Shortlist
IT'S MORE THAN TV by Christoph Dreher (2013)
OF SHARKS AND FISH by Rolf S. Wolkenstein (2011)
THE DAY WE DANCED ON THE MOON by Tristan Daws (2011)
THE OTHER CHELSEA: A STORY FROM DONETSK by Jakob Preuss (2010)
Supported by the Sundance Documentary Film Programme
Grimme Preis 2012, First Steps Award 2011, Max Ophüls Award 2011
PLANET GALATA: A BRIDGE IN ISTANBUL by Florian Thalhofer and Berke Bas (2010)
TIME'S UP (BREATHLESS) by Jan Peters and Marie-Catherine Theiler (2009)

ONE DAY TODAY WILL BE ONCE (BREATHLESS) by Anca M. Lazarescu (2009)
MILLTOWN, MONTANA (BREATHLESS) by Rainer Komers (2009)
NO WAVE by Christoph Dreher (2009)
PSYCHEDELIC REVOLUTION '67 by Christoph Dreher (2007)
DANCE WITH ME by Stefan Kloos & Anja Dzierk (2007)
89 MILLIMETRES by Sebastian Heinzl (2005)
FRISS ODER STIRB by Stefan Kloos (2004)
HÄTTEN SIE'S GEWUSST by Stefan Kloos (2002)
POP 2000 by Stefan Kloos, Frank Jastfelder, Tom Theunissen, Christian Bettges (1999)

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