

A Cinema Guild Release

JERICHOW

A film by Christian Petzold

Running Time: 89 minutes / 35mm / Germany / German with English Subtitles
Not Rated / Stills available at: www.cinemaguild.com/downloads

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Synopsis

Jerichow, a small town in northeastern Germany, an impoverished region where few jobs are to be had, an area of crisscrossing highways, deep forests, and cliffs that fall sharply into the sea, is the setting for an unfolding drama of three people who find themselves at a fortuitous crossroads.

Following his mother's death, Thomas, a former soldier who has been dishonorably discharged from the army, returns to his hometown. He has inherited his mother's house and plans to renovate it and look for a job.

One night, Thomas meets Ali, a Turkish immigrant who owns a chain of snack bars in the area. Always suspicious of the people who work for him, Ali takes an unusual liking to Thomas. He trusts him and offers him a job as his driver and assistant.

Laura is Ali's restless, beautiful wife. Thomas sees her whenever he drives his delivery truck to Ali's brick-fronted villa deep in the woods. She treats Thomas coolly, almost disdainfully. He's the driver her husband has chosen to befriend. And her husband is merely the man she kisses goodbye in the morning – a man who becomes frantic when he can't reach her on her cell phone.

Thomas notices Laura and Ali's strained relationship. He watches them perform everyday rituals, like any married couple, but something doesn't seem right. One day, the three of them head to the beach. Thomas sits next to Laura, while Ali dances, drunken and absentmindedly, to the notes of a Turkish tune, unknowingly setting in motion a series of events that will change the course of their lives.

Director's Statement

When we were shooting my last film, YELLA, in the Prignitz region of Germany, there was a report in the local newspaper that the police had arrested a Vietnamese man. He was found on the highway standing next to his car which had a broken rear axle. The trunk was full of coins, and that was good enough reason to arrest him. It turned out that the man owned 45 snack-bars in the region, and the money in the trunk was change and daily receipts. He had built up his business and bought a house on the outskirts of town, deep in the forest away from the other homes, for himself and his family.

Prignitz County is a region in former East Germany dying a slow death. Nothing is produced, there is hardly any work. Nevertheless, the Vietnamese man had managed to start a business, buy a house, and find a "home" here. Finding-a-home is something that interests me, as well as people who manage to get their way against all odds. Everywhere they turn, they are confronted with defeat and bankruptcy, but nevertheless they forge on.

Often these "home-builders" are withdrawn. They are like islands. They are alone. The idea of being an islander reminds me of Robinson Crusoe: trade routes, modern capitalism, the yearning of people to understand it all and to begin anew, the result is reconstruction. That is what Robinson does, he reconstructs the world again. When other people, friendship, and love intrude into his world, it all falls apart.

When the film was finished and we could view it with a bit of distance, we were surprised to see that there is not a single scene in which money doesn't play a role. As an image, as a value, as betrayal, and as a means of exchange. I had the feeling that money had slipped into the film, into the images and between the characters: that it lubricated the story.

I also noticed that it is always men who are these home-builders. That is why they need money and a woman. "You can't love, if you don't have money!" says Laura. She doesn't want to buy somebody. She doesn't need a home. She needs money to be independent. The men aren't happy with that.

So a crime has to occur in the story.

They become ever more entangled in their passions, their dreams, their interdependence and their secrets until the point where what they really want from one another only appears attainable with an act of betrayal.

Interview with Christian Petzold

We enter this trio's story via Benno Fürmann. Why did you choose to begin like this?

Thomas, the character played by Benno Fürmann, is surrounded by a void from the moment the film begins. That more or less explains his emotional state. He's trying to build something of a new life for himself and drop anchor. He wants a place he can call home and an address of his own. So at the start of the film he has to be nondescript, a clean slate that enters other people's stories. For that we needed a pictorially "flowing narrative," which is why we opted for a Steadicam set-up on the first and last day of filming. You can't get the same effect with a dolly-mounted camera: The camera keeps at a distance behind him, and we do not yet know what's happened to him as we follow him through the graveyard. Then along comes the car. We see André Hennicke and suddenly jump in front of Thomas. At this point, the Steadicam disappears from the film until the end when it returns. While we were shooting, I told him to imagine himself crossing the Bridge of Sighs. And that the cars he gets in is a prison cell of the Doge's Palace.

Concealment is a major theme in your film. Thomas and Laura hide money; even Ali conceals his illness.

In fact, there's something intentionally childish about these acts of hiding. Thomas hides some money in the tree house, a place he visited as a seven-year-old with his mother; something we see in the photo. And Laura also hides money she's swindled out of Ali in a place where children would hide things. It was important to me that there be an element of childhood regression in all of the characters running throughout the film. All the more so given that the blazing romance between the two is like that of a couple of seventeen-year-olds stealing a kiss behind the shed. They're hiding things like that, because they've missed out on life and are now trying to recapture some of it. They think they're clutching at another chance. The concealment, the hiding of money has something to do with that. They think "I'll hide it there, where I used to hide my things as a kid, and maybe this time I can start fresh and everything will turn out okay."

Is this tendency to conceal a way of counteracting the fact that everything, the characters' very lives, are at stake? It often seems like the characters want to or have to watch their backs and that even passion is constantly frustrated by other motives.

From the get go, I found the film's love story to be rather "post-Fordian." It is from an era in which blue-collar jobs have been obliterated. It's reminiscent of the realms you see in *Ossessione* or Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. Nonetheless, in present-day Germany, there are almost no real blue-collar jobs left. There are jobs in the service industry and mere remnants of the old jobs--exploitative jobs, like the cucumber harvesting work Thomas does in the film. But even they are in decline. The cucumbers that used to come from the Spreewald are now planted in China. In Germany, we no longer see the kind of exploitative, grueling farm-work like that done by B. Traven's cotton pickers. It was interesting for me to see how passion, love and intrigue work today; how you can convey these things in times when these blue-collar jobs no longer set life's pace. That was something that came up a lot during rehearsals. The characters in *Jerichow* reside in this kind of backward enclave, which quickly gets the better of them.

During the dance sequence on the beach we detect a strong sense of opposition to Ali's domineering ways, his affability, as well as how insecure he is in his relationship. To what extent do you map a scene like this in the script?

There are often scenes and days on a shoot that make everyone nervous. Our 17th day of filming, when we filmed them making love in the hallway was such day. Another was the 23rd day, when we filmed the picnic you asked about. I think it was only given about half a page in the script. I hadn't written down any directions for it, as I do to give the actors a clue of where things are going, as well as the images and metaphors driving the scene.

Two days before the scene was shot, we spent a whole evening together in my hotel room rehearsing it, this time with musical accompaniment. Hilmi Sözer felt such a strong connection to these famous Turkish songs. He realized that, for Ali, the music and the sea were a strong symbol of home, of his heritage. And there, on the beach, these two Germans make him out to be a Greek, and Laura has the audacity to laugh at it. Now he's insulted. They just snatched his revitalized identity, sense of homeland and nostalgia out from under him. This feeling is stronger than his jealousy and runs so deep that he even wants to draw the pair into his patriotic outburst. And he doesn't notice that he's basically sowing the seeds of his own downfall.

The tragedy in Jerichow is unusual, because you chose not to address the issue of who is at fault directly, which in turn intensifies the issue ...

I thought long and hard about how to end the story. And I thought about what it would be like if the person Laura and Thomas wanted to ask for forgiveness had exited their lives before they got the chance. They basically enter the very realm they've struggled so hard to avoid, namely a sort of no man's land. All of Thomas's efforts, his attempt to rebuild his mother's dilapidated house, as well as Laura's attempt to finally be financially independent and to become the woman she'd always dreamed of being... that's all gone now.

We filmed the script rather chronologically, including the final scene, which we shot on the last day. Ali sends both of them away, shouting after them. And they go as... sort of like condemned people. Then they hear the engine revving. Nina Hoss asked me... she wanted to say one last word to herself as she turns around. I asked her what word she had in mind and she said she wanted to say "Ali." I knew right away that that was it. That's what all of this is about. At that moment, I knew that the actors understood the role fault played here. And we ended the film with Ali's name.

Interview with Benno Furmann

We enter into the film with your character, Thomas, it seems he wants to start a new life. What do you know as an actor about such a character in the opening scenes?

Actually I didn't have the feeling at all that he wants to start a new life. But rather that he has arrived at the final stop, the end of a phase of his life. How will the journey continue? He is just terribly hurt and wants to retreat. I think that Thomas is on a search. To lead a full life in today's times certainly hasn't become any easier. There are more and more people who are after a kick, an adventure, since they really can't find fulfillment in everyday life any longer. That is how I saw Thomas: as a physical guy who feels stifled in narrow rooms. A guy who feels alive when the friction becomes most intense, when something is new and you confront it with burning intensity. But the flame behind the burning intensity often extinguishes much too quickly.

An interesting aspect of the love triangle in this film is that the relationship between Ali and Thomas begins almost like a love relationship. Ali seems to righteously court Thomas.

Of course the basic sympathy, especially from Ali's side, was planned. During the shoot, while acting, it was very difficult to develop: how much can Thomas open himself, how long can he play this game, which is really not a game at all but rather a serious offer of friendship by Ali. How can Thomas become involved in the game without becoming the ball itself? He is nice to Laura. He is nice to Ali. Where does he stand? That was the challenge playing Thomas: in spite of his exhaustion, he has to have an attitude that is not simply indifference but rather focused. As for his relationship to Ali, especially in the driving scenes, it was very small gestures that became rather important.

Thomas has a very strong physical presence in the film. How did you develop the physicality of the character?

The strong physical presence of the character was planned from the start. Consequently I searched for this element within myself. But the practical manner in which you present your own physicality in the context of the character is exactly the actor's job. How does someone like him enter a room, with what perception of himself? How does he perceive his own gait? For Thomas, the starting point was not to expose his intentions. He is not someone who wants to make an impression. On the contrary, we simply see a physical person, who doesn't reflect about himself and absolutely does not waste any energy trying to present a concept of himself.

Did you discuss with Christian Petzold about the background, the imaginary biography of your character, specifically regarding his East German background, as well as historical events?

Thomas was always a very concrete character for me. For certain reactions or attitudes I needed some more explanation, so I had numerous discussions with Christian in order to play the character in body and soul. It is a real treat for an actor to work with someone like Christian, who sharpens his thoughts as he speaks and who sees his films in a larger context with specific themes. The way Christian structures rehearsals, how all the actors, even those with minor roles are all involved, this is simply one of Christian's strong points. We talked a lot about a period of time, about a geographical region, about political systems, about Capitalism and how people deal with it: not simply analyzing the character but rather the character in a specific context. But of course you still have to find the character in your own way.

Interview with Hilmi Sozer

What appealed to you about Ali's character and Jerichow?

The most impressive thing about the Jerichow screenplay was Christian Petzold's rich description of the characters, who live under a guise of normality, yet perpetually plagued by their moral failings. He writes as if he himself is part of the story, a story he hasn't seemed to dream up, but rather one that adheres to a greater pattern. It's as if everyone, both the author and characters are compelled to act as they do, because it's truthful, and mirrors life.

What I liked most about Ali Özkan's character is how raw and real he is. He doesn't get bogged down in sentimentality about his Turko-German migrant roots, he's not some kind of stereotype, but rather someone whose plans, feelings and desires take a backseat to other parts of his life.

Ali is at once a take-charge leader yet incredibly vulnerable. To what extent were these character traits mapped out in the script particularly in the scene with the picnic by the beach?

It's the result of a long process that began with the first reading of the script, continued through the first discussions with the director, and on past the short conversations before and between takes. At some point along the way you get an idea, or even better a clear picture, and the script and the character just come together.

The picnic scene on the beach... that was a really fantastic day by the sea! The scene was described clearly and concisely in the script and during rehearsals in the hotel room, we were able to hammer out the nitty-gritty bits. On the beach, during filming everything went swimmingly, and it was a lot of fun. At the end of the scene the "Queen of Turkish Pop," Sezen Aksu, sings, helping our work to come full circle.

How aware is Ali beforehand of what he voices at the end of the film about "a woman that he bought and a country that doesn't want him?"

How could he have not been aware of it... Not just Ali, but the earlier generation of Turks in Germany had to deal with the same sort of thing day in day out. With Ali, of course, it's a bit twisted as he tries to keep the woman he loves by making her "indebted" to him, in the hope that she will one day wake up and realize she loves him too. I think he's aware of this. He forges his own path and works hard, but thanks to this insoluble situation ends up losing control of his life. In the end, his heart can't bear to keep the repression bottled up any longer.

Interview with Nina Hoss

Your character, Laura, lurks on the fringes of the story. Is it hard to play such a character?

Actually I rather enjoy it, if you get this chance, not having to reveal too much about the character. She simply shows up, seems a bit blunt and uninterested, and yet suddenly something intense happens to her. I found this was really logical, with Laura... she can't ponder over things too long, otherwise she'd be miserable most of the time. She has made the decision for a certain type of life, and she intends to stick to that path no matter what: there's no time for complaints. That's how I imagined her.

The film does not deal with much of the story from her viewpoint. How free is she? Is she forced into her situation?

Yes, the subjective view of the drama is seen mostly through the eyes of Thomas. But from the moment she comes home in tears, you're very close to her, and the perspective changes. Suddenly you view things from her standpoint, which I think is a very clever dramatic shift. For me, her main theme was the desire for freedom. That's why she devises her plan, without really considering the consequences. It's a search for freedom, for a little niche and a plan for betrayal... It gives you a feeling of pleasure to know that the person who thinks he has you under his thumb really doesn't know everything. So I do feel she is an obsessive rather than a reflective character who forges precise plans. What makes things awkward is that she equates freedom with having lots of money. That's how she would define freedom. Like how she says: you can't love if you don't have money. That's the bottom line, that's how she experiences it.

There's a picnic scene on the beach, where the constellation of the films shifts. How precise are the nuances of the scene described in the screenplay, and how much of the performance is developed in rehearsal and on location?

This scene was described rather precisely in the screenplay: the dance, the kiss, how it all builds up to this moment. Of course we rehearsed the scene many times. How the scene feels, whether the rhythm is right. How do you react in such a situation? Do you really dance, or are you quite stiff? I didn't know in advance, how degraded the character Laura would end up feeling at this moment. But that is what the character felt. That's why for me it felt a bit like... okay, it was Ali who positions me there, and for the first time I sense who this guy Thomas really is. Suddenly it is all out in the open. So you think, it isn't my fault that this is happening, I can continue pursuing this later. Then she comes to her senses again, but she experienced the moment, a chink in her armor.

Does the manner in which Christian Petzold constructs the characters in his films have a special appeal to you? That he does not emphasize psychological components of acting and searches for a different form for asserting a character's presence?

Yes, I think you have a point. But strangely enough, I feel we do work in a psychological manner. Since as an actress I must have a clear vision of what the character feels and where she is heading. The art, that Christian masters, is perhaps that he does this without forcing any intentions on the viewer. Even I have a totally different impression of a scene's effect when I see the film itself. Of course the skills of the both Christian Petzold and Hans Fromm make this possible, capturing a gesture, a face, etc. It is the creation of an expanse... of a space, where you can set your own imagination free. I think it is fantastic how we can end up surprising each other.

Benno Furmann, Thomas

Born in 1972 in Berlin (Germany), Benno Fürmann studied acting at the Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute in New York. In the early 90s, he started appearing in film and television roles such as in Edgar Reitz's LEAVING HOME (ZWEITE HEIMAT). In 1997, Mr. Fürmann played the title role in Roland Suso Richter's BUBI SCHOLZ STORY, a performance that garnered him the German Film Award. Further distinctions followed including the Bavarian Film Award for his work in FRIENDS (FREUNDE), a European Film Award nomination for his work in THE PRINCESS AND THE WARRIOR (DER KRIEGER UND DIE KAISERIN) and the Adolf Grimme Award for WOLFSBURG. JERICHOW marks his third time acting for Christian Petzold.

FILMOGRAPHY (Selection)

- 2008 NORDWAND | NORTH FACE Dir: Philipp Stölzl
SPEED RACER Dir: Andy & Larry Wachowski
- 2005 MERRY CHRISTMAS Dir: Christian Carion
GESPENSTER Dir: Christian Petzold
- 2003 WOLFSBURG Dir: Christian Petzold
SIN EATER Dir: Brian Helgeland
- 2002 NACKT Dir: Doris Dörrie
- 2000 DER KRIEGER UND DIE KAISERIN |
THE PRINCESS AND THE WARRIOR Dir: Tom Tykwer
ANATOMIE | ANATOMY Dir: Stefan Ruzowitzky

Nina Hoss, Laura

Nina Hoss was born in 1975 in Stuttgart (Germany). While still an acting student at the Ernst Busch Hochschule für Schauspielkunst in Berlin, she landed her career-making role in the Bernd Eichinger's A GIRL CALLED ROSEMARIE (DAS MÄDCHEN ROSEMARIE) and instantly became one of Germany's most critically acclaimed actresses of the stage and screen. Ms. Hoss has been awarded a number of prestigious honors including: the Gertrud Eysoldt Ring for her portrayal of MEDEA in the Deutsches Theater in Berlin, the Bavarian Film Award 2006 for her work in THE WHITE MASAI (DIE WEISSE MASSAI), the Adolf Grimme Award in 2003 and 2005 for SOMETHING TO REMIND ME (TOTER MANN) and WOLFSBURG respectively, as well as both the 2007 Silver Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival and the German Film Award for her work in YELLA. JERICHOW marks her fourth leading role in a Christian Petzold film.

FILMOGRAPHY (Selection)

- 2008 ANONYMA Dir: Max Färberböck
- 2007 YELLA Dir: Christian Petzold

- 2006 ELEMENTARTEILCHEN | ELEMENTARY PARTICLES Dir: Oskar Roehler
- 2005 DIE WEISSE MASSAI | THE WHITE MASSAI Dir: Hermine Huntgeburth
- 2003 WOLFSBURG Dir: Christian Petzold
- 2002 NACKT Dir: Doris Dörrie
- TOTER MANN Dir: Christian Petzold
- EPSTEINS NACHT | EPSTEIN'S NIGHT Dir: Urs Egger
- 1996 DAS MÄDCHEN ROSEMARIE Dir: Bernd Eichinger

Hilmi Sozer, Ali

Hilmi Sözer was born in 1970 in Ankara (Turkey). When he was just five years old his family relocated to the town Tönisberg am Niederrhein in Germany where he grew up. Mr. Sözer first appeared on stage as a teenager and continued to perform professionally while studying acting in Duisburg. In 1994, he landed his first feature-film role in Ralf Hüttner's comedy VOLL NORMAAL. Hilmi Sözer's filmography spans more than 50 big-screen and television productions including MANITOU'S SHOE (DER SCHUH DES MANITU), for which he won the German Comedy Award 2001. He lives in Cologne and continues to act on both the stage and screen.

FILMOGRAPHY (Selection)

- 2008 EVET, ICH WILL! Dir: Sinan Akkus
- DIE ROTE ZORA | RED ZORA Dir: Peter Kahane
- 2006 MEINE VERRÜCKTE TÜRKISCHE HOCHZEIT Dir: Stefan Holtz
- 2005 PLAYA DEL FUTURO Dir: Peter Lichtefeld
- 2004 SÜPERSEKS Dir: Torsten Wacker
- 2002 ELEFANTENHERZ Dir: Züli Aladag
- 2001 DER SCHUH DES MANITU | MANITOU'S SHOE Dir: Bully Herbig
- 2000 AUSLANDSTOURNEE | TOUR ABROAD Dir: Ayse Polat
- 1998 ZUGVÖGEL | TRAIN BIRDS Dir: Peter Lichtefeld

Christian Petzold, Director

Born in 1960 in Hilden (Germany), Christian Petzold studied German literature and theater at the Free University in Berlin. From 1988–1994, he went on to get his degree in film at the German Film and Television Academy Berlin (dffb), while working as a directing assistant to Harun Farocki and Hartmut Bitomsky. By the time he made *THE STATE I AM IN (DIE INNERE SICHERHEIT)*, Christian Petzold had earned a reputation as one of his generation's most talented young German directors. His two films prior to *JERICHOW*, *GHOSTS (GESPENSTER)* and *YELLA* were in competition at the Berlin International Film Festival. Christian Petzold lives in Berlin.

FILMOGRAPHY (Selection)

- 2007 **YELLA**
Berlinale: Silver Bear – Best Actress, Nina Hoss;
German Film Critics Award: Best Film, Best Cinematography; German Film Award: Best Actress
- 2005 **GESPENSTER | GHOSTS**
German Film Critics Award: Best Film
- 2003 **WOLFSBURG**
Berlinale: Fipresci Prize, Panorama; Adolf Grimme Award
- 2002 **TOTER MANN | SOMETHING TO REMIND ME**
Adolf Grimme Award; Biarritz Film Festival: Fipa d'Or;
German Television Award: Best Directing
- 2000 **DIE INNERE SICHERHEIT | THE STATE I AM IN | LO STATO IN CUI VIVO**
German Film Award: Best Film; Hessian Film Award: Best Film;
Thessaloniki Film Festival: Best Screenplay, Fipresci Prize;
Valenciennes Film Festival: Grand Prize
- 1996 **CUBA LIBRE**
Max Ophüls Festival: Promotional Award

Cast

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|---------------|-------------------|
| Thomas | Benno Fürmann |
| Laura | Nina Hoss |
| Ali | Hilmi Sözer |
| Leon | André M. Hennicke |
| Administrator | Claudia Geisler |
| Cashier | Marie Gruber |
| Policeman | Knut Berger |

Crew

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Director & Script | Christian Petzold |
| Director of Photography | Hans Fromm, bvk |
| Editor | Bettina Böhler |
| Production Design | Kade Gruber |
| Costume Design | Anette Guther |
| Casting | Simone Bär |
| Production Manager | Dorissa Berninger |
| Film Score | Stefan Will |
| Sound Mixer | Martin Steyer |
| Sound Recording | Andreas Mücke-Niesytka, Martin Ehlers-Falkenberg |
| Sound Design | Dirk Jacob |
| Make-Up Artist | Monika Münnich |
| Additional Make-Up Artist | Parul Banerjee |
| Script Consultant | Harun Farocki |
| Gaffer | Christoph Dehmel-Osterloh |
| Steadicam | Tilman Büttner |
| Assistant Camera | Matthias Kapinos |
| Chief Lighting Technician | Ricarda Hibbeln Florian Birch Dirk Domcke |
| Stills | Christian Schulz |
| Assistant Director | Ires Jung |
| Acting Coach | Lena Lessing |
| Script and Continuity | Frédéric Moriette |
| Props | Hanna Solms Andreas Horstmann Jutta Erasin |
| Location Scout | Reinhild Blaschke |
| Production Assistant | Clarice de Castro |
| Location Manager | Matthias Ruppelt |

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|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Set Manager | Levke Palm |
| Stunt | Buff Connection |
| Stunt Coordination | Lutz Heyden |
| | Volkhart Buff |
| SFX | Björn Friese |
| Catering | Gourmetschlitten |
| Production Accountant | Berliner Filmkontor |
| | Uli Adomat |
| Music Advisor | Aysun Bademsoy |
| Assistant Editor | Andreas Lipke |
| Sound Editing | Kuen Il Song |
| Sound Effects | Carsten Richter |
| | Hanse Warns |
| Bridging financing | Berliner Sparkasse |
| Insurances | Aon - Jauch & Hübener |
| Equipment Rental | GV Schmidle |
| Grading | Lutz Egon Heinrich |
| Colorist | Vera Jeske |
| Laboratory | Babelsberg Postproduction GmbH |
| Postproduction Supervisor | Steffi Hennig |
| Avid | Cine plus Media Service |
| | Katalin Böheim |
| Recording Studio | Elektrofilm |
| Film Stock | Kodak |
| Commissioning Editor BR | Bettina Reitz |
| Commissioning Editor arte | Andreas Schreitmüller |
| | Jochen Kölsch |
| Producers | Florian Koerner von Gustorf |
| | Michael Weber |