

GO FOR ZUCKER!

AN UNORTHODOX COMEDY

A Film by Dani Levy

Germany, 2004, 90 minutes, Color
35mm (1:185) Dolby SRD



First Run Features
The Film Center Building
630 Ninth Avenue #1213
New York, NY 10036
(212) 243-0600/ Fax: (212) 989-7649
www.firstrunfeatures.com

GO FOR ZUCKER!

Directed by **Dani Levy**

Written by **Dani Levy and Holger Franke**

Produced by **Manuela Stehr**

An



Production

CAST

Jaekie Zucker

Marlene

Samuel

Golda

Thomas

Jana

Joshua

Lilly

Rabbi Ginsberg

Irene

Henry Hübchen

Hannelore Elsner

Udo Samel

Golda Tencer

Steffen Groth

Anja Franke

Sebastian Blomberg

Elena Uhlig

Rolf Hoppe

Inga Busch

CREW

Director

Screenplay

Producer

Producer WDR

Executive Producer BR

Executive Producer arte

Camera

Editor

Music

Production Designer

Costume Designer

Make-up artist

Casting

Line Producer

Production Manager

First Assistant Director

Dani Levy

Dani Levy and Holger Franke

Manuela Stehr

Barbara Buhl

Bettina Ricklefs

Andreas Schreitmüller

Charly F. Koschnick

Elena Bromund BFS

Niki Reiser

Christian M. Goldbeck

Lucie Bates SFK

Sabine Lidl

Sabine Hehnen-Wild

Risa Kes

Marcos Kantis

Sonja B. Zimmer

Arndt Wiegering

The New York Times

ON THE WEB

March 9, 2005

New Film Lets Germans Laugh With (Not at) Jews

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER

BERLIN, March 3 - It has been a while since Germans last laughed openly at a Jewish joke, especially one that pokes fun at Jews themselves. Sixty years after the Holocaust, most Germans still feel too guilty or insecure to address any Jewish matter in a lighthearted manner. But now a new movie is encouraging them to get rid of their postwar anxieties and join in for a good laugh.

Mixing slapstick humor and political incorrectness, "Alles auf Zucker!," or "Go for Zucker!," said to be the first German-Jewish comedy since World War II, has attracted huge audiences all over Germany. Its success suggests that humor could be an unconventional form of therapy for the strained relations between Jews and gentiles in Germany.

The movie, directed by Dani Levy, a German Jew who grew up in Switzerland, is a lively family comedy about a notorious East German gambler, who long ago distanced himself from his Jewish roots, and his Orthodox brother, who escaped to West Germany before the Berlin Wall was built.

The estranged brothers and their families meet for the first time in 40 years at their mother's funeral in Berlin. By the terms of her will they can inherit the family fortune only if they reconcile and mourn in the traditional Jewish way, by sitting shiva for seven days. The inevitable clash of secularism versus traditional religion paves the way for 90 minutes of quarrels, revealed family secrets and, eventually, a happy ending.

Since its opening on Jan. 6, more than 570,000 people have seen "Alles auf Zucker!," only the second ethnic film to become a box-office hit in Germany. The first, "[Head-On](#)," Fatih Akin's love story about a Turkish immigrant couple, was seen by 750,000 Germans last year and won the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival in 2004. Only a few weeks after its release, "Alles auf Zucker!" was awarded the [Ernst Lubitsch](#) Prize for best German comedy by the Club of Berlin Film Journalists. "Levy's wonderfully incorrect comedy, which has been cast perfectly, makes fun both of itself and of Jewish life today," the German newspaper Die Welt wrote. "Mr. Levy portrays human neuroses and German-Jewish relations in a relaxed manner without being afraid to touch a taboo."

The weekly magazine Der Spiegel commented: "The audience is not laughing at the Jews but together with them. This is definitely a step in the right direction."

Paul Spiegel, the president of the Central Committee of Jews in Germany, publicly encouraged Germans to see the movie "because it helps bring Jews and non-Jews back on track to normality."

After movies like "[Schindler's List](#)," "[Life Is Beautiful](#)" and "[The Pianist](#)," it seems that Germans are relieved to watch a film that portrays Jews in a context other than the Holocaust.

"In my movie I don't want to show Jews as victims but as normal people like you and me who try to live their chaotic everyday lives like anybody else," Mr. Levy said during an interview at a coffee shop in Berlin. "They just happen to also be Jewish."

"One should never forget that 80 to 90 percent of all Germans have never met a Jew," Mr. Levy added. "Together with all the guilt feelings they have accumulated in the last 60 years because of the Holocaust, this creates an almost irrational fear of the Jews as a 'strange people.' "

Mr. Levy, 47, grew up in Switzerland. His mother escaped Nazi Germany as a young girl in 1939, and many of his relatives were murdered by the Germans. This did not stop him from moving to Berlin in 1980.

He was a founder of X-Filme, a production company known for blockbuster movies like "Good Bye, Lenin!" and "Run, Lola, Run." He also became one of Germany's most successful filmmakers.

Mr. Levy said one of his main goals was to tear down barriers. "Alles auf Zucker!" is the eighth in a series of films he has made dealing with Jewish themes.

"I always wanted to make a comedy because this genre allows me to play with the typical Jewish stereotypes," Mr. Levy said. "I am confronting the audience with their own prejudices and clichés, but in the end I make sure that they will love the characters of my movie."

The focus of the film is the two male leads -the gambler, Jaeckie Zucker (Henry Hübchen), and his Orthodox brother, Samuel Zuckermann (Udo Samel) - but their spouses also provide plenty of material for jokes. Samuel's wife, Golda, played by Golda Tencer, a Yiddish theater star in Poland, is presented as a traditional Jewish mother who soon realizes that her brother-in-law's family is "as kosher as pork chops."

Jaeckie's wife, Marlene, played by the leading German actress Hannelore Elsner, is not even Jewish. But since her husband has gambled away all their money, she is keen on the inheritance and pretends to be a good Jewish housewife. She spends hours trying to make her refrigerator kosher and reads books on Jewish habits and customs, but she never gets it quite right.

"I don't remember the last time I laughed so much during the shooting of a film," Ms. Elsner, 62, said in an interview. "We should have made this movie 10 years ago. It's had such a healing effect after all the pain the Nazis inflicted on us."

Still, it took Mr. Levy almost three years to raise the money he needed to make the film. With the financial support of two public television stations and a budget of 1.5 million euros (about \$2 million), he shot it in only 24 days.

"I was surprised how much opposition I faced when I pitched my screenplay to different organizations," Mr. Levy said. "The mere mentioning of the words 'Jewish comedy' made people shy away. Everyone was so afraid to appear anti-Semitic."

Distributors from Israel and Italy have bought the rights, a spokeswoman for X-Filme said, and the company is screening the film in the United States as it seeks distribution there.

To Mr. Levy, the most important achievement of his comedy is that it revives a tradition of Jewish humor that was once popular in German entertainment but was wiped out in the Holocaust.

"Sixty years after the liberation of Auschwitz, we know that the Nazis failed to kill the Jewish culture, their humor and soul," he said. "It has come alive on screens in Germany again."



Go For Zucker: An Unorthodox Comedy

Alles Auf Zucker! (Germany)

By **DEREK ELLEY**

Modern German cinema finally gets its first all-out Jewish laffer in "Go for Zucker: An Unorthodox Comedy," a pacey, politically incorrect but good-natured entertainment that's raked in a chipper \$4.5 million-plus since release in early January. A kind of "My Jewish Funeral (in Berlin)," pic lets loose an experienced cast of vets on a well-honed script that has broad appeal offshore, especially if distributors can overcome audiences' resistance to Teuton comedies. Stateside chances look warm, especially among upscale urban audiences.

Vet Henry Huebchen plays charming shyster Jacob **Zuckermann**, aka Jaeckie **Zucker**, who was left to fend for himself in the East when his mother fled to the West with his elder brother Samuel as the Wall went up in 1961. Since the fall of the Wall, he's turned to professional gambling to earn a crust, while his shiksa wife, Marlene (fellow vet Hannelore Elsner), runs a dry-cleaning biz downstairs.

Unfortunately the chips are finally down for Jaeckie, who has five days to settle a €44,500 (\$60,000) bank debt before the bailiffs arrest him. Worse, Marlene has finally kicked him out and wants a divorce.

Jaeckie's scheme is to enter a European pool tournament with a €100,000 jackpot. But he doesn't even have enough for the €5,000 registration fee -- and his daughter, Jana (Anja Franke), isn't keen to loan her father any more money.

Then news arrives that Jaeckie's mom has died in Frankfurt and left her fortune to her two sons. The catch is that her siblings only get the dough if they arrange a full orthodox funeral for her in Berlin. Problem one: Jaeckie long ago rejected his Jewish roots, while Samuel (Udo Samel), whom he despises, is the whole fundamentalist deal. Problem two: Custom dictates the whole family has to remain at home during the seven-day mourning period (shivah), which is when the pool tournament takes place.

In a setup that Billy Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond would have had fun with, pic clicks into gear as Samuel and his equally orthodox son, Joshua (Sebastian Blomberg), arrive in Berlin as Jaeckie and Marlene -- temporarily reconciled -- take a crash course in Judaism and quickly kosher up their kitchen. As a checkout girl tells Marlene at the supermarket, "It's never too late to turn Jewish."

However, Jaeckie's biggest problem is how to keep stealing away from the apartment to attend the pool tournament. This involves him in setting up ever more elaborate masquerades.

Swiss-born helmer Dani Levy, most of whose previous pics ("Silent Night," "The Giraffe," "I'm the Father") haven't been noted for either their lightness or pacing, directs

as if liberated from the need to score artistic cred and serious points. His ultra-lean script, co-written with Holgar Franke, is combined with lively music by Niki Reiser, mobile lensing and tight cutting to create a character-driven entertainment that stays just the right side of purely physical farce.

In addition, Levy's background as an actor pays off in the performances. Huebchen and Elsner are aces as the likable gambler and his long-suffering wife. Though the ending, which celebrates family values, is hardly a surprise, it feels perfectly natural given the warm ensemble of the whole cast, which hasn't a weak link from adults to children.

Only glitch is film's slightly grungy look in its blowup from 16mm. Originally financed as a TV movie, with a reported budget of \$2 million, and shot in only 24 days with two cameras, it's hardly up to the high tech standards of most German cinema. But its energy and big-heartedness are more than compensation.

The New York Times

ON THE WEB

July 11, 2005

Arts, Briefly

Compiled by JOEL TOPCIK

Six German Film Awards for 'Alles auf Zucker!'

"Alles auf Zucker!" ("Go for Zucker!"), a sweet-natured, irreverent comedy about contemporary Jewish life in Germany, swept the German Film Prize on Friday, winning 6 of the 10 awards for which it was nominated, Reuters reported. The film, left, which follows two brothers - one an Orthodox Jew, the other secular - raised on opposite sides of the Berlin Wall who are forced to reconcile when their mother dies, won awards for best film, best director and best actor, among other honors. "Alles auf Zucker," said to be the first Jewish comedy to be produced in Germany since World War II, beat "Der Untergang" ("Downfall"), a grim chronicle of Hitler's final days, for best film. "I just beat Hitler!" said Henry Huebchen after he won the best actor prize over Bruno Ganz, whose portrayal of the Nazi leader was widely praised.



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German film breaks taboo on satirising Jewish community

By Tony Paterson in Berlin

08 January 2005

A film which for the first time pokes light-hearted fun at Jews living in today's Germany has opened to rave reviews and praise from Jewish leaders for breaking down one of the country's most rigidly held post-war taboos.

Alles auf Zucker! ("Everything on Sugar!"), by the Swiss German-Jewish director Dani Levy, 48, went on show at cinemas throughout Germany this week and has earned little other than wall-to-wall approbation from critics. "This is the first movie in post-war German film history to deal normally with the issue of Jewish self-discovery," wrote the *Morgenpost* newspaper of Berlin.

Paul Spiegel, leader of Germany's Central Council of Jews, said of the film: "For the first time Germans can laugh together with Jews - it succeeds remarkably well."

Alles auf Zucker! comes after scores of films about the Jews and the Holocaust - such as Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* - which have been dutifully watched by Germans and even featured in school curriculums over the past decades. Yet unlike almost every German film about the Jews since the Second World War, Levy's 95-minute production is a comedy, and it is staged along the lines of a television sitcom rather than a big-screen epic.

Levy said: "The Germans' relationship to the Jews and the Holocaust is, to put it mildly, extremely burdened. Most Germans either feel ashamed when the issue is mentioned or have been over-enlightened about the issue. It may be hugely politically incorrect but I wanted to make jokes about this."

The main protagonist of *Alles auf Zucker!* is Jakob Zuckermann, a former convinced East German Communist who has long since distanced himself from his Jewish roots. He explains that he avoided all discussion about his Jewish background during Communism by remarking repeatedly: "I don't belong to that club" and "I lost all my family in the Holocaust." Zuckermann lives with his equally non-devout wife, Marlene, a peroxide blonde who lives in jogging attire, in a run-down apartment in east Berlin. "Their lives are about as kosher as a pork chop," is how one critic described the pair.

Chaos ensues when Jakob's brother and his family, who happen to be highly orthodox Jews from Israel, announce that they are to visit the Zuckermanns for a week to hold a wake for the brothers' recently deceased mother. Marlene rushes out to buy a book entitled *How Jews Live* and the couple spend frenzied hours filling their fridge with appropriate kosher food before going on a crash course on Jewish habits and customs. The two families' forced coexistence turns into a force of slapstick proportions, before both sides eventually make up and make friends.

Levy, whose father grew up in a village in Poland, said that the biggest objections he encountered when trying to get backing for the film came from German production companies and older German Jews. "Several film companies said they weren't interested in making films about 'minorities' and some senior Jewish community members were worried that a comedy would provoke a new wave of anti-Semitism," he said.

Since reunification in 1990, Germany's Jewish community has mushroomed from 30,000 to well over 100,000 because of Jewish immigration from the former Soviet Union.

Film reminds Germans how to laugh with Jews

(Filed: 09/04/2005)

Germany is re-learning the joys of Jewish humour, a branch of comedy all but forgotten in a country still haunted by the Nazis' brutal treatment of the Jews.

The first German-Jewish comic film in decades is attracting huge audiences and has been acclaimed for both reviving a lost cultural tradition and exploding the latter-day German stereotype of Jews as victims.

Alles auf Zucker! (Go for Zucker), directed by Dani Levy, a Swiss-born German Jew who lost many of his relatives in the Holocaust, takes pride in offering the first light-hearted post-war portrayal of Jews in the German-speaking world.

"There has not been a film of this kind in recent times that combines the Jewish and German humour, something that was very popular prior to the Nazis but which was then destroyed by them," said Levy.

"In my movie I don't want to show Jews as victims but as normal people like you and me who try to live their chaotic, everyday lives like anybody else.

"They just happen also to be Jewish."

The unashamedly politically incorrect film was his attempt to communicate with his mother, who fled Nazi Berlin as a teenager but had rarely been able to talk about her experiences with her now 47-year-old son.

So far almost 700,000 Germans have seen the low-budget production, which has made almost £3 million at the box office, a fortune for the relatively small German cinema market.

It has also won the prestigious Ernst Lubitsch prize for best German comedy, named after the German who moved to Hollywood in the 1920s and directed the wartime farce To Be or Not to Be.

Nevertheless, producing the first German Jewish comedy since Hitler's rise to power was not easy. It took Levy three years to raise the modest budget he needed to make the movie.

"I was surprised how much opposition I faced when I pitched my screenplay to different organisations," he said. "The mere mentioning of the words 'Jewish comedy' made people shy away. Everyone was so afraid to appear anti-Semitic."

Go for Zucker tells the heartwarming story of a sportswriter turned gambler abandoned in East Germany by his mother, who fled to the West with his older brother when the Berlin Wall went up.

When the mother dies the two brothers learn that they will receive their inheritance only if they arrange a full orthodox funeral for her in Berlin.

The wholly unreligious East German brother, plus his wife, start a crash course in Judaism and even make their kitchen kosher. But they are condemned by one Orthodox Jew as being "as kosher as a pork chop".

Some of the biggest laughs are raised by a shopkeeper who tries to comfort the couple by commenting: "It's never too late to become Jewish." There is also a scene in which the star falls into his mother's grave while faking a heart attack.

At one point the Orthodox brother inadvertently takes an ecstasy tablet and ends up in a brothel in the arms of a Palestinian prostitute.

Go for Zucker is a "step in the right direction" because "the audience is laughing with the Jews rather than at them", Der Spiegel said.

One newspaper, Die Welt, congratulated Levy on daring to break a mould.

But the biggest source of encouragement has been the warm welcome it has received from Jewish leaders.

Paul Spiegel, president of the Central Committee of Jews in Germany, said it was a "small milestone on the road to a certain normality" in relations between Germans and Jews.

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SYNOPSIS

Jaeckie Zucker is up to his ears in debt, again. This time it's worse than usual for the roguish, wisecracking, hard-drinking Berlin pool shark formerly known as Jakob Zuckermann. Jaeckie happily left everything Jewish behind him decades ago, when his mother and brother fled to the West just before the Berlin Wall was built. When word comes that his mother has died and left him a sizeable inheritance, it's a stroke of luck. But there's a catch: Jaeckie must first reconcile with his long-estranged brother Samuel, who has become an Orthodox Jew in Frankfurt and is arriving, family in tow, for a traditional funeral and *shiva* at Jaeckie's house. The madcap adventure that follows finds Jaeckie and his equally irreligious wife desperately trying to 'pass' as observant, while Jaeckie attempts to ditch the family so he can play in a high-stakes pool tournament." (Description from San Francisco Jewish Film Festival)

PRESS NOTE

In this X-Film, commissioned by WDR and co-produced by BR (Bavarian Broadcasting Corporation) and Arte, director Dani Levy uses humor and irony to tell the fast-paced story of his protagonist Jaeckie Zucker and the hurdles he must overcome. *ALLES AUF ZUCKER!* is a highly unorthodox family comedy that describes, with delightful audacity, a confrontation between two cultures in today's Berlin.

SUMMARY

"I'm a born player, and life is a game" - that's the principle that the Berliner Jaeckie Zucker (Henry Hübchen) lives by. Born in 1947, Jaeckie's real name is Jakob Zuckermann, but he's had nothing to do with the Jewish "club" since 1961, when the Wall went up. That's when his mother and her first-born child fled to the West, leaving Jaeckie behind to fend for himself. Since then, contact between the feuding family members has been non-existent. Jaeckie, in the meantime, clever as he is, became a celebrity sports reporter in East Germany. Since the fall of the Wall, however, the playboy has been down on his luck. Billiards and gambling barely make ends meet, and his marriage with Marlene has seen better days as well.

"I might be in deep shit," Jaeckie consoles himself, "but at least the view's good." We hear Jaeckie's off-camera commentary, full of self-pity, as he lies in a coma in the hospital. The best week of his life was just cut short, at the very moment of his greatest triumph. How could it have come to this? With his self-ironic and witty commentary, Jaeckie re-lives the final days of his life. Right from the start, it seems things could not possibly get any worse: A disheveled Jaeckie Zucker shuffles home, through the cold and dreary streets of Berlin. A billiard match he won just ended in a fight. At home, his wife Marlene (Hannelore Elsner) has prepared a frigid welcome for the derelict. She's fed up with his antics, and wants a divorce. Immediately. No second chances. Zucker is devastated; he has no choice but to pack his bags. Just moments later, he's hit with more bad news: his son Thomas (Steffen Groth), branch manager of a bank, is at the door - and he's brought the court bailiff and the police. Zucker missed the deadline for payment on the 44,500 euros he owes, and now he is to go to jail. Using all his powers of persuasion, Jaeckie manages to negotiate one final reprieve. Then he takes his suitcases and leaves. He's hardly out the door when a telegram arrives - with news of Jaeckie's mother's death. But Zucker is nowhere to be found. As it turns out, he's in the "Club Central," an establishment for lonely hearts and East German throwbacks.

Before he shows up there, however, Jaeckie tries to sign up for the 5th European Pool Tournament. After all, the 100,000-euro prize money would solve all of his problems in one fell swoop. All he needs is the registration fee of 5000 euros. But how is he supposed to come up with that kind of money? Reluctantly, he decides to pay his daughter Jana (Anja Franke) a visit, with

whom he hasn't spoken for two years. A former track-and-field athlete, Jana now works as a physical therapist, and has a ten year-old daughter Sarah (Antonia Adamik). But Jana knows her father's tricks all too well. When he somewhat clumsily asks her for money - money that he suddenly claims to have given her as a "loan" - she angrily throws him out of her office. When he finally arrives at the "Club Central," Jaeckie is forced to confess the bad news to Linda (Renate Krößner), the club's manager and Jaeckie's long-time friend. As the club's bookkeeper, Jaeckie made some major miscalculations that now threaten to put Linda and her girls out on the street. But Zucker doesn't give up that easily. He's counting on the pool tournament. "My time has come. I haven't lost a game this past year I haven't *wanted* to lose." Zucker is bursting with self-confidence. If only he had that registration fee...

At that very moment, Marlene shows up. She says she's willing to forgive him. She hands him the telegram: His mother wants to be buried in the Jewish cemetery in Weissensee; also, his brother Samuel (Udo Samel) will be arriving tomorrow morning. Marlene manages to drag an extremely reluctant Zucker over to Rabbi Ginsberg (Rolf Hoppe), a close friend of Zucker's mother, who is to carry out the funeral the following day.

There's just one thing left to do: turn the Zucker household into a kosher haven of family harmony. For that's where shivah will be held, the seven-day period of mourning for the deceased. Equipped with a brochure about appropriate Jewish customs, Marlene and Jaeckie go out and buy everything they need for the Jewish transformation - from seven-armed candelabras to kosher groceries and a mezuzah (a miniature Torah roll) for the doorway. Everything's ready for Samuel's arrival. But first Zucker has to stop by the local casino. After several nerve-wracking hours of gambling, he finally has the registration fee for the pool tournament.

The following morning, the Zucker family is at the airport, awaiting Samuel's arrival. "What does he look like?" asks Marlene. "For all I know," grumbles Jaeckie, "he looks like Osama bin Laden." Finally, after a short delay, Samuel arrives. To everyone's surprise, he's brought his entire family with him: the corpulent Golda (Golda Tencer), their daughter Lilly (Elena Uhlig) and their highly religious son Joshua (Sebastian Blomberg). Zucker is completely dumbstruck.

The entire mischpocha is going to be moving in? Neither Samuel nor Jackie's misgivings are helping the situation, so the wives subtly take things into their own hands. On the way to the cemetery, however, the convoy gets caught in traffic. They arrive too late, and the funeral has to be postponed. It will take place the following day - at virtually the same time as Jaeckie's pool tournament.

Despite Marlene's efforts, the Zucker residence is about as kosher as a porkchop. But nobody appears to mind. Rabbi Ginsberg reads the mother's final will and testament: The brothers will only receive the inheritance if they, in the presence of the entire family, reconcile their differences during shivah. Other than sickness or death, there are no excuses for not taking part. If the terms are not met, the - potentially considerable - fortune will go to the Jewish Community. Samuel and Jaeckie are left alone to discuss the proposition, and it doesn't take long for the first insults to fly. But since the stubborn brothers need the money, they agree to take on the task and get through the week.

The next day, both Samuel and Jaeckie have a headache. They go to pick up Jaeckie's daughter Jana, since it's the women who are doing the preparation for shivah. Samuel's complaint about his daughter's many boyfriends leads Zucker to brag about his daughter's long-term relationship. While they wait for her in the kitchen, they help themselves to some aspirin. Jana finally emerges, and introduces her "boyfriend" Irene (Inga Busch), a female colleague. Zucker is speechless. A

bitter exchange ensues, for apparently Jana and Zucker have some unsettled issues. First and foremost is a relationship which, to Zucker's great displeasure, marked the end of her athletic career. The argument doesn't last long, however, for Jaeckie and Zucker suddenly start to feel quite strange.

Instead of aspirin, it turns out they took some of Jana's ecstasy. With Jana's help, Zucker takes Samuel to his club, where he has a Palestinian woman take care of the euphoric patient. In quite an emotional state himself, Zucker confesses his love to his daughter. Then it's off to the International Congress Center (ICC), where Mayor Wowereit presides over the opening of the tournament. With unprecedented speed, Zucker plays his way through round one. Jana, who secretly followed him there, watches anxiously from among the audience.

The funeral is taking place, and Jana is finally in attendance - to the apparent consternation of Joshua. After several long-winded speeches, Zucker suddenly collapses onto his mother's grave. Was it a heart attack? Jana offers to drive him to the hospital, only to head towards the ICC once they're on their way.

"100,000 bucks. That's worth a simulated heart attack," she states in a matter-of-fact tone. "even if it is at your mother's grave. Right?" New game, new chances. Once again, Zucker clears the table in record time.

The next morning, Jaeckie doesn't feel well enough to attend the Sabbath service in the synagogue. Once he's left at home alone, however, he dashes off to the ICC. His strongest competition is a towering Ukrainian, who also makes it to the finals. The pressure is mounting, and the clock is ticking.

Zucker has to improvise like crazy, for Marlene is getting more suspicious all the time. For the next round, he enlists the help of Linda: Impersonating an emergency medic, she picks him up from home with sirens flashing.

Unfortunately, Marlene thwarts the brilliant plan at the last moment by accompanying them to the clinic. Yet again, Zucker manages to get away. But will he make it in time for his match? By this time, Marlene knows that Zucker is lying to her and to the entire family. Disappointed and angry, she reveals his deception to the gathered family. Zucker, who in the meantime has been disqualified from the tournament for his late arrival, sees no need for further excuses. In his frustration, he tells everyone about his enormous debts, and the desperate attempts to save himself and the women of his "Club Central." Low and behold, everyone understands his predicament. Encouraged by their reaction, he discloses his final chance: the Ukrainian has challenged him to a private match: his 20,000 euros against the Ukrainian's 80,000 euros. By now, the dogmatic Joshua has finally had enough. Disgusted by such impiety, he leaves to report this swindle to the rabbi. Yet once again, luck is on Zucker's side; Jana is able to stop Joshua by revealing to her cousin a secret that she's kept from him for ten years. The unexpected news catches him completely off guard. And then? The match takes place, and Jackie plays the most exciting game of his life. With his last shot, however, it's finally curtains for him: a heart attack - this time for real. Life and death can be merciless. New game, new chances?

PRODUCTION NOTES

There is a long tradition of Jewish humor in cinema. Woody Allen, Ernst Lubitsch, Mel Brooks... A German comedy based on Jewish humor, however, hasn't been seen in a while. What is it that's so special about Jewish humor? "Jews can treat each other unabashedly, with considerable political incorrectness and self-irony," according to director Dani Levy. "Jewish humor looks at people warmly but brazenly, without slipping into ridicule." In ALLES AUF ZUCKER!, the Basel-born, Berlin-based writer/director turns to one of the central themes of Jewish humor: the family. Two feuding parts of a family, separated since the building of the Berlin Wall, confront each other in modern-day Berlin - a delightful clash of civilizations is the result.

A Jewish comedy in a contemporary, everyday context - this was a subject matter that had intrigued Dr. Barbara Buhl of the WDR television film department for some time. The notion was reinforced by a suggestion made by Paul Spiegel, chairman of the *Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland* (Central Council of Jews in Germany). In a meeting with Gebhard Henke, head of the WDR television film department, Spiegel emphasized that he would like to see perspectives on Jewish life in Germany that differ from the purely historical depictions that are commonplace - even if it meant unconventional stories which were not completely politically correct. An encouraging standpoint for producer Dr. Barbara Buhl, and for Gebhard Henke, who immediately had Dani Levy in mind as a potential director for such a project. After all, the two of them enjoyed a long-standing and fruitful collaboration, which had given rise to such films as *STILLE NACHT* and *MESCHUGGE*.

Dani Levy proved to be the right man for the job. For as it turned out, he had already developed suitable material that fit the desired profile: ALLES AUF ZUCKER!, the story of two feuding brothers, separated by the Wall, who could not have developed more differently. One becomes a quasi-orthodox Jew, while the other never even gets to know the religion, choosing instead to lead a thoroughly worldly life. Dani Levy and Holger Franke, who developed the screenplay for *X FILME*, were happy that WDR had the courage to take on such subject matter. The result is a comedy that dares to say it like it is, and that does not shy away from treating clichés and stereotypes with humor and self irony.

As the project began to take shape, it was the fruitful cooperation between X Filme, the WDR (in a leading role) and their co-partners (Bettina Ricklefs of BR/Bavarian Broadcasting Corporation and Andreas Schreitmüller of arte) which proved instrumental in the successful implementation of ALLES AUF ZUCKER!, not only financially, but also with regards to content and dramaturgy. "I thought it would be exciting to set a Jewish comedy in today's Berlin. Not one that held up an admonitory finger," according to X Filme producer Manuela Stehr, "but rather one that could take liberties with the topic." "What we didn't want," adds Barbara Buhl, "was a story that took on a didactic air."

ALLES AUF ZUCKER! was meant to be X Filme's first primetime television film for WDR. When the film was given its first test-screening in front of a large audience, the response was so overwhelming that WDR and X Filme decided to take this unorthodox family comedy to the big screen. "The family aspect of the story left a particular impression on audience members. Two families that are forced to get along, despite the fact that they're in a feud," says producer Manuela Stehr, explaining the film's success, "that's something that everyone can relate to."

INTERVIEW WITH DANI LEVY

Mr. Levy, what's so special about Jewish humor?

Humor is most beautiful and most touching when it arises out of hardship, i.e. in situations when you feel empathy for someone. Humor is perhaps the most beautiful and most legitimate means of survival. Jewish humor distinguishes itself through its blunt, brazen and self-ironic treatment of human weaknesses and quirks - including the peculiarities of Jews themselves. And Jewish humor thrives on insight into human psychology. That's what I like about it.

What is ALLES AUF ZUCKER! about?

The term "Jewish Comedy" is just a label. Basically, ALLES AUF ZUCKER! is a family tale about normal people caught up in a certain grotesque, yet authentic situation. Jaeckie Zucker is a protagonist who finds himself in severe difficulties - on all fronts. On top of everything, now his brother is on his way, accompanied by his entire family. This results in a breakdown. And family breakdowns make for great comedies. You need a good story as the basis, with the right secondary characters, and anecdotes that guarantee plenty of details - a comedy really comes alive when the details are good. It was great fun to keep developing this in ALLES AUF ZUCKER!

What provided the stimulus to do a Jewish comedy?

A comedy with Jewish characters is an attempt to take people in Germany back to a certain reality. Jewish culture was very much fused with German culture, in all genres of art, and also in psychoanalysis. Its expression was welcomed and loved. The main problem we have in Germany today is that most people who deal with Jewish topics cannot fall back on any real experience. There are so few Jews in this country, that I'd say 80 to 90 percent of Germans don't even come into contact with them. This creates a sense of otherness that is imbued with a guilty conscience arising out of history. And this fuels irrational fears and creates inhibitions toward the "foreign people." But as is the case with other minorities, it's always helpful to make films about these people. Heartwarming films, not with characters that are portrayed as unattainable, perfect people somewhere out there on the horizon, but people who are full of the everyday chaos that accompanies all our lives. After you've seen ALLES AUF ZUCKER!, you don't feel like you've seen a film about Jews. Instead, you've encountered people who evoke emotions in you, with whom and at whom you can laugh. And perhaps you get the feeling that you've seen a Jew from a completely new perspective, which might take away some of your fear of "the other."

One of the exciting things about ALLES AUF ZUCKER! is that one branch of the family lives in Frankfurt am Main, and the other in Berlin...

In the old version of the screenplay, Samuel's family came from the United States. But why look so far afield? A quarrelling family, separated within Germany, between East and West - that makes for a much more realistic and interesting story, from a German perspective. So we rewrote the screenplay, and it gave ALLES AUF ZUCKER! additional depth. When making a comedy, you can never use too much fertilizer for the conflict that serves as the basis! Facing off the rich West German against the unification loser touched upon current social and economic issues, and that made the already flammable material of the "inheritance" even more combustible.

Were you not worried that the unabashed use of clichés could be misunderstood?

My biggest fear was that Jews might be prone to see anti-Semitic tendencies behind the controversial and humorous depictions of Jewish life. But so far, I haven't had that kind of reaction to ALLES AUF ZUCKER! My parents, the Jewish Community in Berlin, which supported the project, as well as my sister and brother-in-law, who are very orthodox Jews, they all expressed their approval, and they all love ALLES AUF ZUCKER!

In one scene, a taxi driver is surprised that Mother Zuckermann remained in Germany after the Holocaust...

A lot of Jewish families returned to Germany after the end of the Nazi regime. Despite the catastrophic history and the enormous scale of destruction, they retained their sense of homeland here. My mother was born and raised in Berlin. In 1939, at the age of 12, she fled Germany with her father. The fact that I returned to Berlin 40 years later, that I established myself here in manifold fashion, is an irony of my family history. Initially, my mother found it disturbing, and it took several years before she was ready to visit me here. At first I didn't realize what my moving to Berlin meant for my family. You see, in my family, my mother's adolescent experiences and the Holocaust were considered taboo. The urge I felt to deal with history - starting with the films MESCHUGGE to OHNE MICH, HANNAH UND IHR PAPA, and now with ALLES AUF ZUCKER! - was fueled by the lack of communication and information at home regarding the time that my mother spent here as a child. Films like ALLES AUF ZUCKER! are my way of trying to engage in a dialogue with my mother.

Is there a common thread that runs through your films?

The common thread for me is love, and love stories. The first three films of mine - DU MICH AUCH, ROBBYKALLEPAUL and I WAS ON MARS – had a melancholy, albeit very humorous, even tragicomic aspect. They were followed by three serious films, which were all very dear to me. I felt a strong leaning towards drama, because I feel for people who find themselves in difficult situations. I have a big urge to offer people with screwed up lives a means of identification. With ALLES AUF ZUCKER!, I returned to comedy. It's a very instinctive form of expression for me, one that just comes naturally.

How did you discover Henry Hübchen for Jaekie Zucker's role?

Henry Hübchen was designated from the start. I didn't really know him, because I hadn't seen many of his plays at the *Volksbühne*. But what struck me when we finally did meet was how strongly he envisioned himself in the role of Jaekie Zucker. You could really sense, in a physical way, his enthusiasm and passion for the character. That impressed me and convinced me to work with him.

Hannelore Elsner is also very convincing in the role of Jaekie's wife...

That role was really perfect for her. Sure, someone from East Berlin could've played Marlene too, someone who more closely personifies the milieu. But for this film I had decided not to insist on matching characters and actors that way, and instead to simply have fun making certain assertions. So I found the instinctive theatrical side to Hannelore

Elsner, which I never knew, to be quite amazing. She pushed her role to the brink of the grotesque; she's simply a born actress.

Part of the comical aspect in ALLES AUF ZUCKER! comes from the inability of the families to follow the strict Jewish rites. That presumes a certain knowledge of Jewish traditions and customs. How did you prepare the actors for that?

It was important for Samuel's family to be able to credibly embody the traditional Jewish aspect. In Golda Tencer, I found an impressive traditional Yiddish actress, who also happens to head the Jewish Theater in Warsaw. Udo Samel has a more in-depth relationship to Jewish culture; he has contact with and knowledge of Judaism, he's played Jewish characters on several occasions, and he possesses a very subtle humor. Sebastian Blomberg really trained himself for the part of the orthodox Jew. He gradually slipped into Joshua's character, and his talent as an actor took care of the rest. Elena Uhlig had less of a connection than anyone else, so she just let herself be swept up by the momentum. Playing the black sheep in the family, that approach worked for her. Rolf Hoppe, who plays the rabbi, was discovered late, but he was a real discovery. It's amazing how he developed the sense of being a rabbi. He took on a similar way of argumentation and a similar sentimentality, so that the actor and the character gradually became one. All this helped me to overcome my original hesitation to shoot the movie with non-Jewish actors. It was fascinating to watch these actors work on a daily basis, and it was a gift to be able to work with them. It just confirmed once more how wonderful the medium of film is. Something completely fictional can still give way to an authentic atmosphere - when the fabrication is moved forward with true passion and true energy. That's what's so encouraging.

INTERVIEW WITH HENRY HÜBCHEN

How did your involvement in Dani Levy's ALLES AUF ZUCKER come about?

You get an offer, and you say yes or no. The role and I just found each other. It's coincidence.

Mere coincidence? Jaeckie Zucker seems like he was tailored to your needs...

Not at all. It's my dream that someone will write a part just for me. I'm told that this is the case in "Polizeiruf 110," but apparently it's not that easy. It could be easy, though. But I guess the simplest things in life are also the hardest.

What was it about the character of Jaeckie Zucker that fascinated you?

The most important thing about such a movie is the screenplay. The second most important thing is also the screenplay. And the third most important, too. I always read screenplays when I'm lying exhausted on the couch. My body acts as a kind of barometer. If I don't fall asleep, then there's probably something to the screenplay - and that's the way it was with the screenplay to ALLES AUF ZUCKER! But that's really rare. Most of the time, I fall asleep. In ALLES AUF ZUCKER!, there are exciting characters. And there were interesting locations. The story doesn't take place in some modern apartment, or in a supermarket. The locations were so varied, and they were visually so essential to the film: the synagogue, the brothel, the type of apartment that we had, the pool hall. Taken together, it all really appealed to me. And then there's Jaeckie Zucker - a role with so many different contradictions and facets. You just can't say no to that - on the contrary!

"Life is a game!" says Jaeckie Zucker. Did that attitude fascinate you? With his many facets, the viewer might find him somewhat hard to grasp...

That's precisely what makes him so interesting. I want to communicate the contradictions, and be little faster than the viewer, so that he doesn't have time to suspect anything. Jaeckie is no slick hero who successfully deals with all his problems. He's a petty criminal, a sports reporter and a gambler at the same time; he has family strife, problems with his wife... Problems just seem to pile up around him. His story seems like a film version of a condition that many in this country suffer from. He no longer has a grasp on things. He's thrown into situations, he can't tell the beginning from the end, but he tries to get by somehow, to make his way through life.

Given the resistance to the Jewish faith that Jaeckie seems to have built up over the years, he seems to have virtually forgotten his roots. Is that something you can relate to?

I can relate very well to that. Jackie *can* forget his roots, because they're not his. He grew up under very different circumstances - in a country that had nothing to do with Jewishness. He was shaped by the period he was born in. He's not one of those people who define themselves by their family tree, and who derive their rights and privileges that way. He starts from scratch, but it doesn't seem unfair to him. That's Jaeckie Zucker, a socialist in disguise.

Do you yourself play billiards? Did you have a double for ALLES AUF ZUCKER!?

It's unusual for me to have to learn something completely new for a role. I had no idea about billiards, but I found it very appealing, and I became very passionate about it. Billiards is a very

important part of who Jaeckie is, and there's a lot of it in the film. I'm sure Tom Cruise or Paul Newman had more time to learn the game. I watched various billiard films, but there just wasn't enough time to learn to play perfectly. But I had a lot of fun in the process, and I tried to learn as best as I could. Of course, for certain shots, I did use a double. It was less important to me that I sunk the balls than that my movements looked like those of someone who's played the game all his life. That's hard enough in itself. But then Dani Levy wanted to shoot certain things in one take: so I took 20 or shots, until it finally worked. I kept saying, "You know, there is such a thing as a cutting table!" But he pretended not to hear me.

Are there any moments during the shoot which you recall more than others?

I remember one thing in particular, because it really caught me by surprise. We were shooting close to Weidendamm Bridge. I still had the bandage on my head from the fight, and I'm walking along the street carrying two suitcases. Hannelore Elsner is carrying a box and some bags. So both of us had a lot to carry, and we just had to keep walking. The camera was set up 100 meters away, on the roof of a house, so you couldn't even see that something was being filmed. We had to stand around, waiting for the signal to start walking. We must've looked in pretty bad shape, because during that short period of time, three young people approached us and offered their assistance. A bicyclist even wanted to take the suitcases on his bike. I would've never imagined that something like that still existed in this city, or in this country! That day really gave me great hope. It was the complete opposite of this wheeling and dealing society - just people who saw that someone could use some help. Three young people from Berlin.

This was your first time working with Dani Levy. How did it go?

Very relaxed. The production was characterized by good-natured, mutual cooperation; it wasn't at all a waste of time. I can't recall when the last time I experienced such a friendly atmosphere. It's all about the head, and the head is the director. Dani Levy has an eye for what's essential. But I did keep asking myself how he could possibly watch two monitors at the same time. We were shooting with two cameras for nearly the entire time. He probably closed both eyes and consulted his inner eye! ALLES AUF ZUCKER! was shot like a television film, in 23 days and with many different locations. When time is that short, you can't shoot a film with endless angles, like you can for cinema. That would be an antagonistic contradiction, and it would be doomed to fail. So you need a different format, a different aesthetic. In that respect, Dani Levy made the right decision in using two cameras.

INTERVIEW WITH HANNELORE ELSNER

What inspired you most about the screenplay for ALLES AUF ZUCKER!?

I had always wanted to work together with Dani Levy. So I got the screenplay for ALLES AUF ZUCKER!, read it and liked it right off the bat. I laughed so much while reading it, it was wonderful! The only thing I regretted after finishing was that I wasn't a man and couldn't play Jaeckie's part.

Marlene's part of may not be as prominent as Jaeckie's, but she's every bit his equal in character. Still, Marlene is quite different from the roles you usually play...

When I play a new role, I want to do something that inspires me. More and more, people ask me if I consciously seek out different characters. And I always tell them: the roles find me. They come to me. It's not that I'm looking for parts. The same goes for this script and the character of Marlene. I find it incredibly imaginative of Dani Levy to have thought of me for the part. Of course it was a challenge for me to play Marlene, a blonde with a Berlin dialect. I'd never done that before. But a colleague coached me to speak like a Berliner. And I wrote the words out phonetically in my script: "haste," "weeste," "kannste," and "vastehste" (Berlin dialect for "you have," "you know," "you can" and "you understand")*. I had to learn it like a foreign language.

As a family comedy, ALLES AUF ZUCKER! is right on the money with many of the conflicts it shows. What does Marlene personify for you?

Marlene and Jaeckie are actually the perfect couple, a dream team. They may have a quarrel now and again, like at the beginning of the film, and Marlene may often shout "I've had it! Get the hell out of here!" But they always make up in the end, because they're so close, and what binds them is true love. That said,

Marlene is Jaeckie's wife of course, and she's just as clever and shrewd as he is. That's what's so endearing about them: they don't want to deceive anyone, but they're always trying to get away with something. Marlene's involvement with the Jewish faith has less to do with the religion than with getting the family back together. Of course it's also about the inheritance, but it's not only about that! Everyone accuses each other of acting only with the inheritance in mind. But it serves a purpose, because in the end the family does come back together. And that's what I think is so great.

ALLES AUF ZUCKER! treats Jewishness in a pretty blunt, at times even cheeky fashion. That's still relatively unusual for a German production...

I really don't know what's so "new" about a Jewish comedy. Woody Allen has been making stories like that forever. A lot of Jewish stories have a special kind of humor that is considered typically Jewish. ALLES AUF ZUCKER! has it too. It's incredible how much is in this script. And yet it comes across as being so easy, so normal – Dani Levy's writing is simply amazing. My own approach to Jewishness was pretty similar to that of my character Marlene. I was astonished by all the rules, all the things you have to pay attention to, how hard it must be to keep the refrigerator separated, dairy from meat, etc...

* translator's note

In light of the increasing hostility in Germany towards immigrants and minorities, did the Jewish aspect of ALLES AUF ZUCKER! provide you with additional motivation?

No, I take care of that in other ways. For example, I'm active with the Fritz Bauer Institute in Frankfurt in the field of Holocaust remembrance. I just had a reading of Anna Segher's "The Seventh Cross" in the Jewish Museum.

How was work on the set?

We were all infected by the bittersweet humor of the screenplay, and had a lot of fun during the shooting. We were simply very happy. And it's largely thanks to Dani Levy that there was such a cheerful, playful mood on the set. ALLES AUF ZUCKER! is one of those projects I consider to be a stroke of luck,

like everything I've done with the people at X Filme and Manuela Stehr, or with Oskar Roehler, Oliver Hirschbiegel and Rudolf Thome. They are my "allies." It's a world I simply feel at home in. I already mentioned that my roles find me. That goes for the films, too. Films like ALLES AUF ZUCKER! simply have to be made — and now ALLES AUF ZUCKER! is even opening on the big screen. If that isn't an honor, I don't know what is!

IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA

Henry Hübchen

as Zucker

Smooth talker, wheeler-dealer, playboy — that's how Jakob Zuckermann likes to see himself. An energetic fellow, Jakob closed the books on the Jewish faith in 1961, when his mother and brother left him behind in East Germany — in part because he didn't want to leave his sports academy. And there's been nothing but bitter silence between them since. Jakob Zuckermann became Jaeckie Zucker, a celebrity sports reporter in East Germany. These days, he's trying his luck at billiards, because capitalism isn't really his style. Meanwhile, he works as the disgruntled bookkeeper of the East German throwback "Club Central." Together with his wife Marlene he has two children, Jana and Thomas, who he loves more than they can know.

Henry Hübchen was born in 1947 in Berlin. Following his studies at the *Hochschule für Schauspielkunst Ernst Busch* (Ernst Busch Theater Academy) in Berlin, he became one of the most sought-after actors in East Germany, appearing in such films as *JAKOB DER LÜGNER* (Jacob the Liar, 1974; dir. Frank Beyer) and *FRAU JENNY TRIEBEL* (1975; dir. Hartwig Albiro). He has worked with the *Berliner Volksbühne* since 1974, although that's not the only place he's become a star. Voted "Actor of the Year" in both 1994 and 2001, Hübchen has performed in productions by Frank Castorf, Matthias Langhoff, and Benno Besson, appeared on stage at both the *Schauspiel Köln* and the *Schauspielhaus Hamburg*, and has directed plays himself. For his staging of Molière's "The Misanthrope," his team was awarded the Friedrich Luft Prize in 1993. He gained fame through numerous award-winning roles in film and television productions, including Dieter Wedel's *DER SCHATTENMANN* (The Shadowman, 1994), Leander Haußmann's *SONNENALLEE* (awarded the Federal Film Award in 2000), and Hartmut Schoen's television series *WARTEN IST DER TOD* (Waiting Means Death; awarded the German Television Prize 2000 and the Adolf Grimme Award). In the latter, Henry Hübchen played the role of Klaus Kellermann, for which he was nominated as Best Actor. Hübchen appeared on screen most recently in *SASS – DIE MEISTERDIEBE* (Sass – The Master Thieves, 2001; dir. Carlo Rola) and *LICHTER* (Distant Lights, 2002; dir. Hans-Christian Schmid). Last year, he appeared with Moritz Bleibtreu, Josef Hader, and Corinna Harfouch in *C(R)OOK* (2004; dir. Pepe Danquart).

Hannelore Elsner

as Marlene Zucker

Marlene is in her late 50s, and her pretty face reveals that life with Jaeckie hasn't always been a bed of roses. But she still loves him and has come to terms with his antics and affairs. And when times are good, she can even forgive him for his lies.

Hannelore Elsner is one of Germany's most outstanding actresses, a woman who seems to grow more attractive and interesting with the years. She lives in Frankfurt am Main, but grew up in Burghausen, Bavaria, before moving to Munich, where she began her training as an actress. From the very beginning of her career, it was clear that Elsner possessed great talent, impressing audiences and critics alike with her performances in films such as *ENDLOSE NACHT* (The Endless Night, 1963; dir. Will Tremper), *REISE NACH WIEN* (1973; dir. Edgar Reitz), *BERLINGER* (1975; dir. Bernhard Sinkel and Alf Brustellin), *DER GRÜNE VOGEL* (1980; dir. István Szabó), and many more. The parts she was offered did not always have the depth and quality she wanted. So she compensated by working in theater, but she never gave up her hopes for ideal roles in film and television. And rightly so. Today she gets those roles. And her performances in films like Oskar Roehler's *DIE UNBERÜHRBARE* (No Place to Go, 2000), Oliver Hirschbiegel's *MEIN LETZTER FILM* (2002), and Rudolf Thome's *FRAU FÄHRT, MANN SCHLÄFT* (2003) have been remarkable dramatic achievements. Hannelore Elsner has been awarded numerous prizes, including the German Film Prize for Best Leading Actress for both *DIE UNBERÜHRBARE* and *MEIN LETZTER FILM*. In 1997, she was awarded the Federal Service Cross in recognition of her diverse achievements and enduring popularity. Besides acting, her work with the *Förderverein Fritz Bauer Institut e.V.* supporting Holocaust remembrance is especially important to her; she is also a trustee of the German AIDS Foundation.

Udo Samel

as Samuel Zuckermann

Samuel is conservative and at least as stubborn as Jaeckie. He's shorter and stouter than his brother, and walks with a bit of a limp. His leg operation was the reason he and his mother fled to the West. As a businessman, he's no stranger to bad times either — the previous year, he lost money in the New Economy. Initially, he doesn't expect a thing from his brother — except that he'll keep up his part of the family feud. If he weren't so headstrong, Samuel would know Jaeckie - like a brother should.

The much-engaged film and theater actor Udo Samel was born in 1953 in Eitelsbach near Trier. He studied acting at the *Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Theater* in Frankfurt/Main, and after engagements at the *Staatstheater Darmstadt* and the *Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus*, was an ensemble member at the *Berliner Schaubühne* from 1978 to 1992. There he worked under the direction of theater greats like Peter Stein, Klaus Michael Grüber, Luc Bondy, and Robert Wilson, as well as for Andrzej Wajda, in his stage adaptation of Dostoyevski's "Crime and Punishment." In 1991, the magazine *Theater Heute* distinguished Udo Samel as Actor of the Year for his role as Sosios in "Amphitryon." He has also had successful performances at the *Salzburger Festspiele* and the *Akademietheater* in Vienna. In 1993/94, he played the Devil in "Everyman" at the *Salzburger Festspiele*. And in Weimar in January 1996, he had his directorial debut with Alban Berg's opera "Wozzeck." Three years later, he played the lead role in the *Bayerisches Staatsschauspiel* production of "Woyzeck." Besides his theater work, Samel has also performed in many film and television features. He had his debut as a film actor in 1978 in Reinhard Hauff's *MESSER IM KOPF* (Knife in the Head), and achieved popularity with numerous television appearances. He was awarded the European Film Prize for his performance as Franz Schubert in *NOTTURNO – MIT MEINEN HEISSEN TRÄNEN* (1986; dir. Fritz Lehner). In 1993 and 1994,

he had roles in four major cinematic feature films: IN WEITER FERNE, SO NAH! (Far Away, So Close, 1993; dir. Wim Wenders), KASPAR HAUSER (1993; dir. Peter Sehr), DER KINOERZÄHLER (The Movie Teller, 1993; dir. Bernhard Sinkel), and ALLES AUF ANFANG (Back To Square One, 1994). On television, Samel made an impression with his performance in the ARD thriller "Angst hat eine kalte Hand" alongside Katja Riemann in the ZDF trilogy "Durchreise," for which he was awarded the Bavarian Television Prize, as well as in Ulrich Stark's "Treibjagd" and in Heinrich Breloer's "Die Manns – Ein Jahrhundertroman." Udo Samel has been honored with numerous awards and distinctions, including the Adolf Grimme Gold Medal Award and the Bavarian Television Prize.

Golda Tencer

as Golda Zuckermann

Golda is a real super mama, voluminous, with luxuriant curls and a big heart. Born to a wealthy Warsaw family, she's a good-natured woman with a healthy dose of pragmatism.

Golda Tencer is an actress with the National Jewish Theater in Warsaw, and in Poland is considered the *grande dame* of Yiddish song. Born in 1949 in Lodz, she began, at the age of 20, to fuse her Jewish roots with the study of acting at the studio theater of the E. R. Kaminska State Jewish Theater. At the same time, she pursued a degree in Cultural Studies at the University of Warsaw. With her numerous leading theatrical roles, Golda Tencer was quickly recognized as one of Poland's most important Yiddish actresses. Her film career has included performances in AUSTERIA (1983; dir. Jerzy Kawalerowicz), and DAVID (dir. Peter Lilienthal), which won a Golden Bear Award at the 1979 Berlinale.

Steffen Groth

as Thomas Zucker

Thomas is the branch manager of a bank, a young man who cares a great deal about his looks. But neither his gym-toned muscles, his tanning-studio tan, nor his pedantic precision can hide the fact that he has a few problems. Not only does he stutter, he's so shy that he's never had a girlfriend. To compensate, he drives a Mercedes convertible and has a dog named DAX.

Steffen Groth was born 1974 and studied at the *Ernst Busch Schauspielschule* in Berlin. Following various theater roles, he began acting in television, and became known to a wider audience through the TV series "Die Strandclique." In 2000, he appeared together with Veronica Ferres and Markus Knüffken in the TV melodrama BOBBY, DIESE JUNGHE. His last screen role was in MOTOWN (2002; dir. Stefan Barth); he'll be appearing again soon in the television features ZWEI SCHWESTERN (2004; dir. Ilse Hofmann) and EINE LEICHE ON THE ROCKS (2004; dir. Wilhelm Engelhardt).

Anja Franke

as Jana Zucker

Jana is the spit and image of her father. As an athlete, she was Daddy's darling; then love thwarted her career: Jana gave birth to Sara. Since then, her relationship with Jaekie has been problematic. She now works as a physical therapist and has a relationship with Irene.

Anja Franke was born in Berlin in the "wild sixties" and grew up amidst a children and youth theater run by her father, Holger Franke ("Rote Grütze"). She was a child TV star on German Sesame Street and "Feuerrotes Spielmobil"; at 15, she quit school and devoted herself to her acting career. For her film debut, the cheeky romance DU MICH AUCH (Same To You, 1986; dir. Dani Levy), she received the Audience Award at the Max Ophüls Festival. That was followed by two years of formal training in musicals at the *Hochschule der Künste* (Academy of Arts) in

Berlin, followed by performances in various stage productions at the *Theaterhaus Stuttgart*. Television became a springboard for Anja Franke's career. Simultaneous to her role in the show "Liebling, Kreuzberg," she appeared in the popular series "Wolffs Revier" and "Ein Fall für Zwei." Since 1997, Franke has performed in such TV features as DAS BABY-KOMPLOTT (The Perfect Child, 2001; dir. Hans Werner), 100 HOCHZEITEN (2004; dir. Franziska Meyer-Price), and FOREVER (2002; dir. Claudia Garde). In 2003, she was cast in a permanent role in "Polizeiruf 110," alongside Imogen Kogge. Anja Franke was awarded the German Young Talent Award in 1992, and in 1997 the Golden Sparrow at the Gera Children's Film Festival.

Sebastian Blomberg

as Joshua

Joshua is 32 years old, an introverted, swarthy fellow. He takes his religion even more seriously than his father does, and has been charged by the rabbi with making sure that the funeral rites are strictly observed. His self-righteousness is only shaken when Jana reveals to him that he's the father of her daughter Sara.

Sebastian Blomberg was born in 1972 in Bergisch Gladbach, and is one of the rising stars of Germany's young generation of actors. He attended the acclaimed *Max Reinhardt Seminar* in Vienna, appearing primarily on stage after graduation. Until 2001, he was a permanent ensemble member at the Basel Theater. Besides his theater work, Blomberg has had starring roles in a number of TV productions, including the widely acclaimed DUNCKEL (1998; dir. Lars Kraume). ANATOMIE (Anatomy, 1999; dir. Stefan Ruzowitzky) marked his screen debut. His most recent features for the screen are the thriller WAS TUN, WENN'S BRENNT (What to Do in Case of Fire, 2001; dir. Gregor Schnitzler), the family drama VÄTER (I'm the Father, 2002; dir. Dani Levy), as well as OLGAS SOMMER (2002; dir. Nina Grosse).

Elena Uhlig

as Lilly

Lilly is attractive, almost 30, and is in her 10th year of law school. In secret, though, she considers herself to be an enchanted princess, devoting much time and energy to the study of princes. It looks as if Thomas will be her next prey. She's a bit eccentric, and often slips out of proper German into a vulgar Hessian accent

Elena Uhlig was born in Düsseldorf in 1975. She attended the *Hochschule für Schauspielkunst Ernst Busch* in Berlin, and has made the German capital her home since. Since 1997, Uhlig and her alto voice have been engaged in a number of TV productions, including the SAT1 series "Mit Herz und Handschellen," "Ein ganzer Kerl für Mama" (2002; dir. Zoltan Spirandelli), "Sternschuppen im August" (2002; dir. Dieter Kehler), "Schöne Männer" (2003; dir. Hans Jörg Thurn), and "Grüße aus Kaschmir" (2004; dir. Miguel Alexandre). Her screen debut was the 2001 horror film SWIMMINGPOOL, directed by Boris von Sychowski.

BEHIND THE CAMERA

Dani Levy

Writer and Director

Dani Levy was born in Basel in 1957, and has lived in Berlin since 1980. After spending a wild childhood and youth as circus clown, acrobat and guitarist in a rock band, and with a mediocre (so he claims) high school diploma in hand, Levy worked in theater in Basel (1977–79) and Berlin (1980–83), before making his debut film DU MICH AUCH (Same to You, 1986), for which he won the prize for Best Film at the International Comedy Festival in Vevey. He received further awards for his 1988 film ROBBYKALLEPAUL (Audience Award at the 1989 Max Ophüls Festival) and his 1991 feature I WAS ON MARS (FIPRESCI Special Distinction as Best

Film at San Sebastian). In 1993, Levy won the Hypobank Director's Prize at the Munich Film Festival with his WDR-commissioned short film OHNE MICH (1993), which launched a spate of movies against the resurgence of right-wing radicalism in Germany. A year later, together with Stefan Arndt, Wolfgang Becker and Tom Tykwer, Levy founded the production company X Filme Creative Pool. STILLE NACHT (1995), the first film made under the aegis of X Filme, ran in the International Competition of the 1996 Berlin Film Festival. In 1997, after ten years of work on the script and development, Levy devoted himself to making a film that was very close to his heart: MESCHUGGE (The Giraffe). This complex thriller premiered in 1998 at the Toronto Film Festival. In 1999, MESCHUGGE was awarded, along with LOLA RENNT (Run Lola Run), the Bavarian Film Prize and the Award for Best Cinematography. The same year, commissioned by the automotive industry flagship city of Wolfsburg, Levy shot the first 360-degree feature film, DAS GEHEIMNIS DER SICHERHEIT, on location in Iceland and Munich. In spring of 2001, Levy made his first video for the song "Adriano – Letzte Warnung" performed by the Brother Keepers, a collaborative group of 14 Afro-German musicians (including Xavier Naidoo, Samy Deluxe, Tyron Ricketts, and Sékou). The music video went on to become one of the most-played clips for 2001 on both VIVA and MTV. With his 2002 family drama VÄTER (I'm the Father), Levy painted a highly topical and vivid portrait of an ambitious generation that is forever at risk of coming to grief over its own aspirations. In September of 2004, Dani Levy's street theater piece "Freie Sicht aufs Mittelmeer" had its successful premiere. Commissioned by Theater Basel, the filmmaker staged a tour of his hometown in the form of a story of two unequal brothers, set against the background of left-wing culture and political unrest in Basel in the eighties and nineties.

Filmography for Dani Levy (Writer/Director)

2004 ALLES AUF ZUCKER! Writer, Director
2002 VÄTER (I'm the Father) Writer, Director
2001 ADRIANO – LETZTE WARNUNG Director (music video)
1999 DAS GEHEIMNIS DER SICHERHEIT Director (short film)
1997 MESCHUGGE (The Giraffe) Writer, Director (and Actor)
1995 STILLE NACHT Writer, Director
OHNE MICH Writer, Director (and Actor)
1991 I WAS ON MARS Writer, Director (and Actor)
1988 ROBBYKALLEPAUL Writer, Director (and Actor)
1986 DU MICH AUCH (Same to You) Writer, Director (and Actor)

Filmography for Dani Levy (Actor)

2003 DE SOIE ET DE CENDRE Actor
2000 LE RÉPÉTITION Actor
1999 AIMÉE UND JAGUAR Actor
1997 MESCHUGGE (The Giraffe) Actor (and Writer, Director)
1996 KONDOM DES GRAUENS (Killer Condom) Actor
1995 DIE MEDIOCREN Actor
1994 EINER MEINER ÄLTESTEN FREUNDE Actor
1993 BURNING LIFE Actor
OHNE MICH Actor (and Writer, Director)
1992 HALBE WELT Actor
1991 I WAS ON MARS Actor (and Writer, Director)
HAUSMÄNNER Actor
1988 ROBBYKALLEPAUL Actor (and Writer, Director)
1986 DU MICH AUCH (Same to You) Actor (and Writer, Director)

Holger Franke

Writer

Born in 1942, Franke began work in theater, cabaret, TV, and radio soon after finishing theater school (1961–1964). In 1972, he was an actor with the GRIPS Theater in Berlin. In 1973, he founded the *Rote Grütze Theater* in Berlin, and continued to work there as actor, director, and writer until 1981. Plays he wrote during that time include "Darüber spricht man nicht!" and "Was heißt hier Liebe?" — which won the Brothers Grimm Award from the State of West-Berlin, was adapted for film in 1978. It remains in the repertoire of many theaters even today. Between 1986 and 1988, Franke worked as co-author and director with the *Rote Grütze Theater* on "Einer wie ich oder: Wie Günter Netzer den Ball streichelt" and finally "Gewalt im Spiel" (Brothers Grimm Award 1988). Franke began collaborating with director Dani Levy in 1987, as the co-author of ROBBYKALLEPAUL (1988). Between 1988 and 1992, he worked as actor and program director for the *Theaterhaus* in Stuttgart. After that, he transferred to the *Theaterhof Priessenthal*, where he worked as writer and director until 1999. In 2000, Franke returned to Berlin. In 2001, together with Dani Levy, he began working on the screenplay of ALLES AUF ZUCKER! for X Filme Creative Pool. 2001 was also the year that the *Rote Grütze Theater* was reestablished, and Franke has continued working with it as writer, director, and actor in numerous productions since.

Manuela Stehr

Producer

After completing a degree in law, Manuela Stehr worked from 1984 to 1991 as a producer in Berlin, overseeing the production of films such as VA BANQUE (1986; dir. Diethard Küster), MAN KANN JA NIE WISSEN (1987; dir. Gerhard Hostermann), DAS ANDERE ENDE DER WELT (1988; dir. Imogen Kimmel), and GESCHICHTEN AUS EINER ANDEREN WELT (1991; dir. Ivan Fila). From 1992 to 1999, Stehr was Director of Production Funding for the *Filmstiftung Nordrhein-Westfalen*, where she was also Deputy Managing Director from 1997 to 1999. Since 2000, she has been Co-Director and Producer of X Filme Creative Pool GmbH, and a board member of X Verleih AG since October 2000. She has since produced HEIDI M. (2001; dir. Michael Klier), HERZ (Heart, 2001; dir. Horst Sczerba), HEAVEN (2001; dir. Tom Tykwer), and VÄTER (I'm the Father, 2002; dir. Dani Levy), 4 FREUNDE UND 4 PFOTEN (2003; dir. Gabriel Heberling), WAS NÜTZT DIE LIEBE IN GEDANKEN (Love in Thoughts, 2004; dir. Achim von Borries), and was co-producer of Wolfgang Becker's GOODBYE, LENIN! (2003). Stehr's current and most recent productions include: ALLES AUF ZUCKER! (2004; dir. Dani Levy), DIE HEXEN VOM PRENZLAUER BERG (2004; dir. Diethard Küster), and DER ROTE KAKADU (dir. Dominik Graf), for which shooting finished in Dresden in early October 2004.

Barbara Buhl

WDR Editor

Dr. Barbara Buhl was born in 1953 in Oppole (Silesia/Poland). After finishing her diploma in Essen, she studied German and Social Sciences in Köln, and wrote her doctoral dissertation on Bertolt Brecht. From 1980 on, she worked as a theater dramaturg in Oberhausen and Köln. Following an editorial volunteership for WWF (*Westdeutsche Rundfunkwerbung GmbH*) and WDR (*Westdeutscher Rundfunk*), she worked as an editor and dramaturg in WDR's programming department. There she oversaw television series such as "Liebesgeschichten," "Knastmusik," "Tisch und Bett," "Marienhof," "Die Partner," and "Der Fahnder." In addition to her editorial work, she has written film reviews for Reclam Verlag's *Filmklassiker* series (1995), and in 1996–97 was a tutor in the Writing Program of the *Medienhochschule Köln*. In spring of 1999, Buhl transferred to the Television Feature Film Department at WDR, where she oversaw the series "Lindenstraße" for two years. She is currently responsible for Heinrich Breloer's three-part docudrama "Die Manns – Ein Jahrhundertroman" as well as for his new three-part series "Speer

und Er," for television features including "Liebling, bring die Hühner ins Bett" and "Die Schönste aus Bitterfeld," for cinema features such as HERZ (Heart, 2002; dir. Horst Sczerba) and GHETTO (2004; dir. Audrius Juzena), as well as debut films like KARAMUK (2002; dir. Sülbiye V. Günar) and JARGO (2004; dir. Maria Solrun Sigurdadottir).

Charly F. Koschnick

Director of Photography

Since the late seventies, Carl-Friedrich Koschnick has been working as cameraman for such directors as Arendt Agthe, Helmut Berger, Dani Levy, Marc Schlichter, Christian Görlitz, Max Färberböck and Oskar Roehler. His films include: Dani Levy's ROBBYKALLEPAUL (1988), Natalie Steinbart's ENDSTATION TANKE (The Middle of Nowhere, 2000), and Oskar Roehler's SUCK MY DICK (2000). He received the Adolf Grimme Award in 1992 for LÖWENGRUBE, and the Bavarian Film Award in 1996 for STILLE NACHT, and again in 1998 for MESCHUGGE (The Giraffe). In 2001, he was awarded the German Television Award for Max Färberböck's JENSEITS. He worked together with Oskar Roehler on AGNES UND SEINE BRÜDER, before shooting Dani Levy's ALLES AUF ZUCKER!

Elena Bromund

Editing

Born in Frankfurt am Main in 1969, Elena Bromund has worked as an AVID editor since 1993. She taught editing at the *Hochschule für Gestaltung* in Offenbach from 1994 to 1997. Since 1998, she has worked in Berlin as a freelance AVID editor on European productions ranging from commercials to videos to feature films. In 2003, she was a tutor at the International Film School Köln, and also directed two contributions to the special edition DVD of GOODBYE, LENIN! Elena Bromund's filmography includes a wide range of television and theatrical productions, including: Uli Schüppel's PLANET ALEX (1999/2000), Hendrik Handloegten's LIEGEN LERNEN (Learning to Lie, 2003), and Dani Levy's VÄTER (I'm the Father, 2002).

Niki Reiser

Music

Born in Switzerland, Reiser studied flute and composition from 1980 to 1984 in Boston, with an emphasis on film music. Later, he expanded his education at the *Konservatorium Basel*. During this time, he composed his first soundtracks for experimental films, before devoting himself to a career as a flutist in jazz and klezmer ensembles, including his own jazz group "Cocodrillo." His encounter with director Dani Levy in 1986 was the start of a friendly and successful ongoing collaboration, with numerous awards to show for it. Niki Reiser has composed music for Dani Levy's DU MICH AUCH (Same to You, 1986), ROBBYKALLEPAUL (1988), and I WAS ON MARS (1991). In 1997, he was awarded the German Film Award for JENSEITS DER STILLE (1996) and the Bavarian Film Award for JENSEITS DER STILLE and STILLE NACHT (1996). In 1999, he was awarded the German Film Award for Best Music for PÜNKTCHEN UND ANTON (Annaluise & Anton, 1998) and MESCHUGGE (The Giraffe, 1997), and in 2001, received the Swiss Filmmusica Award for KALT IST DER ABENDHAUCH (Cold is the Breath of Evening, 2000). In 2002 came another German Film Award for Best Music for NIRGENDWO IN AFRIKA (Nowhere in Africa, 2001). The same year, he composed music for Dani Levy's drama VÄTER (I'm the Father, 2002), and soon after for DAS FLIEGENDE KLASSENZIMMER (2003). After composing the music for Marco Kreuzpaintner's SOMMERSTURM (2004), Niki Reiser had two new projects with Dani Levy: the comedy ALLES AUFZUCKER! (2004) and the street theater piece "Freie Sicht aufs Mittelmeer," which had its successful premier in Basel in September 2004. In addition to his work as a composer, Niki Reiser has also remained active as a musician. In 1990, he toured Europe with his group

"Cocodrillo," as well as with the klezmer band "Kol Simcha." In 1997, "Kol Simcha," which has recorded four CDs, performed at Carnegie Hall in New York. Reiser, who lives in Switzerland, has also composed music for two productions of the *Frankfurter Schauspielhaus* ("Die Morde der jüdischen Prinzessinnen" and "Des Teufels General").

X FILME CREATIVE POOL

In July 1994, under the name X FILME, the directors WOLFGANG BECKER, DANI LEVY, and TOM TYKWER, along with producer STEFAN ARNDT, created their own joint production company in order to find new and better possibilities and means for the development, production, and distribution of films. Internally, much has changed at X FILME since 1994. Maria Köpf, who has been significantly involved in the company's development since 1995 - at first as Production Director and then as Producer - was named Co-Director in 1999. In 2000, she was joined by Manuela Stehr, the former executive of the *Filmstiftung*.