



**MUSIC
BOX
FILMS**

presents

SNOWMAN'S LAND

A FILM BY TOMASZ THOMSON

Germany, 98 minutes. Unrated.

To download hi-res images and video clips, please visit:

<http://www.musicboxfilms.com/snowman-s-land-movies-9.php>

**Publicity New York
Emma Griffiths PR
Emma Griffiths
917-806-0599
emma@eg-pr.com**

**Distribution Contact
Music Box Films
Brian Andreotti/Rebecca Gordon
312-508-5362
rgordon@musicboxfilms.com**

SHORT SYNOPSIS

In this wry German dark comedy, Walter (Jürgen Rißmann) is a professional hitman who has just botched a job. Forced to leave the city, he reluctantly takes up an offer from eccentric crime boss Berger (Reiner Schöne) to protect his house (and young, pretty, free-spirited wife Sybille) in a remote region of the Carpathian Mountains. At Walter's side is Mickey (Thomas Wodianka), his chatty, thrill-seeking old friend. After a freak accident, what seemed to be a nice, easy holiday job for the hapless pair soon becomes a comically nightmarish fight for survival. Stunning cinematography of the deceptively idyllic snowy landscapes and hardboiled, clever plot twists make SNOWMAN'S LAND an unmissable genre classic.

Chosen for the 20 Best of Fest Films at the Edinburgh Film Festival, SNOWMAN'S LAND has been presented at the following festivals: Filmfestival Max Ophuels Preis, Montreal World Film Festival, International Film Festival in Athens, Zurich Film Festival, and Arizona Underground Festival.

Cast

Jürgen Rißmann as **Walter**

Thomas Wodianka as **Micky**

Reiner Schöne as **Berger**

Eva-Katrin Hermann as **Sibylle**

Waléra Kanischtscheff as **Kazik**

Detlef Bothe as **Harry**

Crew

Director/screenplay/film editing **Tomasz Thomson**

Cinematography **Ralf Mendle**

Original Music **Luke Lalonde**

Sound **Matthias Haeb**

Production Design **Thorsten Sabel**

Costume Design **Monika Gebauer**

Producer **Boris Michalski**

Line Producer **Darko Lovrinic**

Editing **Stefanie Gross, SWR, Georg Steinert, ARTE**

The Story

Walter is fed up with the world. He has just really messed up a job. Meaning, he shot one man too many. Walter is a hitman—not one of the classy Hollywood types, but tired, burned-out, and rusty, like his old Beretta. His employer Harry wants flashy circus horses in the stable instead of an old nag like Walter and advises him to take a break. Walter would like to, but lacks the necessary cash.

Walter's colleague François comes in as if on cue and offers him a job: the former underworld boss Berger – who for years was thought to be dead but has instead been living under the radar far away in the East, isolated in the mountains – is working on something big in his new home and needs help. “More vacation than work, just the thing for you,” François promises, “fresh air, build a snowman, watch prancing deer.” He would of course go himself, but as a father... someone has to bring the kids to school. So Walter agrees.

2,340 kilometers further east. Walter meets an old acquaintance in snow-filled no man's land: the sketchy and slightly instable Micky, also a hitman on his way to Berger – but hitchhiking. Walter picks him up.

Berger's residence, a run-down former sanitorium, lies deep in the woods, snowed-in and unreachable with Walter's rickety car. The pair have to trek the last few kilometers, through a godforsaken area, without so much as a good map.

Once they finally arrive, they aren't exactly greeted with open arms. Berger himself is on a hunt and will not be back for a few days; his young wife Sibylle is alone in the house and not happy to see them. She makes it perfectly clear from the start that she isn't “the fucking maid,” there to make them scrambled eggs. If they get hungry, they can help themselves. And kindly wash the dishes. And another thing: the kitchen and living room are ok; the rest of the house is taboo.

That evening Sibylle, dressed to kill, does a line of coke in the living room and races off into the dark night with her TransAm at full throttle. Walter and Micky are alone. They make use of the time to take a little tour of the house, including Berger's private chambers. In addition to several juicy vacation photos and an old pool, they find a real surprise in the basement: a professionally equipped drug kitchen.

Dawn breaks, Sibylle is not back yet, and Walter and Micky are feeling like they are on vacation. The fresh air, nature. They go sledding, Walter builds a little snowman, they relax in front of the TV.

That night Sibylle gets back. Drunk and tired, but more talkative than before. She tells them both about the Christmas party she threw for her best drug clients. Better yet: Christmas orgy, with the best food and the best girls, with colorful pills that Sibylle passed out to everyone beforehand. Micky, antsy from the story, grabs several of the pills and mixes them in Sibylle's and his own whisky glasses when no one is looking. Before Walter can grasp what is suddenly wrong with the two – they are running through the house. Later, Micky and Sibylle have locked themselves in the pool room and want to get down to business. Walter can't stop them. Just as he can't stop Sibylle from waving Micky's gun around while flirting on a plastic deck chair. And then everything happens all at once: the deck chair collapses, a shot is fired, Berger's wife is floating dead in the pool, and Walter and Micky have a problem...

“WE’RE AT THE MOVIES, NOT IN CHURCH”

AN INTERVIEW WITH TOMASZ THOMSON

Tomasz, you are the director, author, and editor of SNOWMAN’S LAND rolled into one – these are the best prerequisites for a very personal “film d’auteur.” But the movie is not just a genre movie, right?

Yes, it is a genre movie. But it’s also a film d’auteur. It is basically that which I find exciting in cinema: when a genre movie is nevertheless independent and special, with a clear shape and signature. Real indie cinema. I think we could have more of that.

It is refreshing to find that you don’t censor yourself and you like to be politically incorrect from time to time. Did you ever think that you were taking a risk?

Well, a black comedy lives from being politically incorrect. Even the vulgar and cynical. To take these things away would mean losing the heart of the movie. So it was clear that we would not be filming a PG movie. I’m happy to take the risk that the movie might make some people uncomfortable. But if you only orient yourself to the skeptics and their fears, then you might as well just give up entirely. I mean, we want to entertain. Intelligently and subversively, I hope, but nevertheless entertain. Not preach. We are at the movies, not in church.

I ask because genre and black comedy do not necessarily always have it easy in German cinema...

No, they certainly do not. We were prepared for that, but we were still surprised at how difficult it was.

For example?

For example, the screenplay. We started the project five years ago and quickly noticed that lots of people just didn’t find it at all funny. Sometimes you have to read between the lines to get the joke and some scenes can be staged this way or that. The accidental shooting of the wrong man at the urinal was read by most people, for instance, as dramatic or even appalling. But certainly not funny! I did start to worry about whether I just had a really bizarre sense of humor. Until it became clear that we really needed to make clear how it was actually meant to be.

That’s why we made a trailer—meaning that the producer, Boris Michalski, said: Ok, we are going to the Polish mountains for three days and we are going to shoot a trailer for a movie that doesn’t exist. This trailer in effect saved the entire project and resulted in finding partners. But when I see the resonance so far with viewers, for example at festivals, or when I read about it in blogs, I know that all the trouble was worth it. Lots of people worked very hard for this success.

SNOWMAN’S LAND lives not least from its strong ensemble of relatively unknown actors. How did you find them?

I often have the feeling that in German movies I see the same 20 actors. And that is even though there are many good people who are completely unknown. I have known Jürgen (Rißmann), Tomas (Wodianka), and Eva (Eva-Katrin Hermann) for a long time. I was already thinking of them when I wrote the screenplay.

The story with Reiner (Schöne) is that I was sitting, watching “Volle Kanne,” on ZDF, with a coffee in my hand one morning when he was a guest on the show. He grinned into the camera – and I thought, that’s Berger sitting there! And that’s how it turned out. Reiner is an old hand in the movie business and it was really a pleasure to work with him. Highly disciplined and precise, but also crazy enough to do anything. It really wasn’t a very comfortable or relaxed shoot for any of the actors; they could only dream of their own heated trailers. And Waléra, who is also pretty crazy, completed the ensemble.

The whole thing takes place in the East. 2,340 km away in the East, to be exact...

2,340 km isn’t meant to be taken too literally of course. It’s an imaginary country that the hitman Walter drives to. 2,340 km away in the East should mean nothing more than a speck of land which most viewers have never visited and will probably never visit – a perfect no man’s land. The underworld boss, Berger, calls it the “last blank spot on the map of Europe,” and for the hitman Micky it is “the butt crack of nowhere, the hairy notch of the butt crack”... Well, it’s a bit of all those things (*laughs*).

So where did you actually end up shooting?

In the Black Forest! At first, I couldn’t imagine how we were going to manage to make the Black Forest look so isolated and lonely. It did make me feel slightly queasy. It was the right decision in the end, though. The Black Forest is very, very beautiful; there are some great locations. We found the right house, this old sanatorium—which is virtually an additional main actor—and without which the movie would certainly have been different. Unfortunately, whenever we filmed a long shot, there were always people taking a walk or skiers in the picture who we needed to edit out afterwards. But it worked out.

You digitally edited everything?

Yes, technology has become quite advanced. It was even possible for a low-budget film like ours to be digitally improved.

How certain were you that you would get snow?

Not at all certain! Everything was green a day before shooting started. We were really in a pickle: should we shoot the movie now without snow? We didn’t have the budget for artificial snow (*laughs*)! I had even started to rewrite the screenplay in terms of mud – there was enough mud. And then luckily it started in the night and the next day everything was covered in snow. And it stayed like that for six weeks. That really was more luck than sense.

Was your main location, the house, heated?

The place had stood empty for 10 years. There weren’t any heaters. We brought in giant oil heaters to make it at least a bit warmer. It was still fairly chilly. And Jürgen, who sat soaking wet in the basement during the torture scene... that really took its toll. The water couldn’t be too warm, either, because it would start to steam up. I also underestimated the snow: trekking 300 meters through the snow with all the equipment – you really are wiped out afterwards.

With all this experience you can now shoot at the North Pole.

I’d prefer to shoot in the sun (*laughs*)!

How was the soundtrack—which is atmospherically ideal for this movie—conceived?

We looked for the right composers for a long time. At some point, Martin Hossbach, who consulted on the music, came up with the Born Ruffians. We contacted the lead singer, Luke Lalonde, in Canada and asked if he would be interested. He said yes, and he really did strike a nerve. A very young guy, 23 years old. He really pulled it off well. And it was even the first time he had ever done a movie soundtrack.

Is there other music in addition to that?

Yes of course, we incorporated other pieces of music, but a lot of it is also by the Born Ruffians (Luke's band) and by Menomena, a band from Portland.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

JÜRGEN RIßMANN

... is the broken, worn out, hapless hitman Walter.

Jürgen Rißmann, born 1963, toured internationally as a bass-baritone singer in several A cappella formations throughout Europe and, following diverse roles in theater, has since 1995 played in several television and movie productions, most recently for instance in *Maria, ihm schmeckt's nicht* (2008), *Ganz nah bei Dir* (2007), and Heinrich Breloers *Die Buddenbrooks* (2007). Since 2005, he is recognizable as the public official Joachim Witte from the Pro 7 comedy series "Alles in Ordnung – Mit dem Wahnsinn auf Streife." The movies *Vorstadtkrokodile 3* and *Johnny Köhlkissen* are currently in production.

Filmography (selection)

2010 *Vorstadtkrokodile 3*; Director: Wolfgang Gross
Johnny Köhlkissen (Alive and Ticking); Director: Andreas Rogenhagen
SNOWMAN'S LAND; Director: Tomasz Thomson
2008 *Maria, ihm schmeckt's nicht* (Maria, He Doesn't Like It); Director: Neele Leana Vollmar
Die Schimmelreiter; Director: Lars Jessen
2007 *Die Liebe der Kinder*; Director: Franz Mueller
Ganz nah bei Dir; Director: Almut Ghetto
Die Buddenbrooks; Director: Heinrich Breloer
2006 *Die Autopiloten* (Autopilots); Director: Bastian Guenter
Beautiful Bitch; Director: Thea Krieger
Vivere; Director: Angelina Maccarone
Alles in Ordnung – Mit dem Wahnsinn auf Streife; Director: T. Gosejohann. Pro 7
2004 *Barfuss* (Barefoot); Director: Till Schweiger

THOMAS WODIANKA

... is Micky, Walter's fatally dim-witted killer colleague.

Thomas Wodianka, born 1974, had already taken part in Tomasz Thomson's first feature length film, *Stiller Sturm* (2001). From 2000-2004, he was a cast member under Christoph Marthaler at the Schauspielhaus Zurich and got into dance through his cooperation with Meg Stuart. Since then he has worked as a dancer and performer with international artists such as Simone Aughterlony, and has appeared in different theaters, such as the Volksbühne and Schaubühne in Berlin, the Salzburger Festival, and the Frankfurt Opera House. After *SNOWMAN'S LAND* in 2010 he took on a role in the movie *Friedenau* (AT) by Ziska Riemann which was released in movie theaters in 2011.

Filmography (Selection)

In postproduction *Friedenau* (AT) (Lollipop Monster); Director: Ziska Riemann
2011 *Friedenau* (AT) (Lollipop Monster); Director: Ziska Riemann
2010 SNOWMAN'S LAND; Director: Tomasz Thomson
2000 *Stiller Sturm* (Silent Storm); Director: Tomasz Thomson

REINER SCHÖNE

... “Sludge” Berger, the revenge-thirsty ex-top gangster with crazy visions.

Reiner Schöne completed a degree in Acting at the Deutschen National theater in Weimar, had his first successes in former East Germany. After 1968 he continued his career as a movie and theater actor in Germany and played the main roles in the rock musicals “Hair” and “Jesus Christ Superstar.” In 1985 he moved to Hollywood and played in several films, including roles alongside Clint Eastwood, Lee van Cleef, and Kris Kristofferson, and had roles in successful TV shows such as “Treasure Island,” MacGyver” and “Star Trek: The Next Generation.” After almost 20 years in America, he came back to Germany for personal reasons in 2002, where he was quickly present once again onscreen following his roles in the children’s comedies *Otto – Der Katastrofenfilm* and *(T)Raumschiff Surprise – Periode 1*, and several TV movies. In 2010, the film *Teufelskicker* started up with Reiner playing Trainer Rudi. In addition, Reiner Schöne is currently in the studio with his band recording his eighth album, which will have the same title as his new book, “Mitten ins Herz.”

Filmography (Selection)

2010 *Teufelskicker* (Devil’s Kickers); Director: Granz Henman
SNOWMAN’S LAND; Director: Tomasz Thomson
2006 *The Sentinel*; Director: Clark Johnson
2003 (T)*Raumschiff Surprise – Periode 1*; Director: Michael Herbig
2001 *Null Uhr 12*; Director: Bernd Michael Laube
2000 *Otto – Der Katastrofenfilm*; Director: Edzuard Onneken
1975 *The Eiger Sanction*; Director: Clint Eastwood
1971 *Return of Sabata*; Director: Frank Kramer
E tornato Sabata... hai chiuso un'altra volta; Director: Gianfranco Parolini

WALÉRA KANISCHTSCHEFF

... is Kazik, Berger’s forceful right hand with the third eye.

Born in Lwiw/Lemberg, Ukraine, Waléra Kanischtscheff (валера канищев) began his movie career at 13 years old in the USSR. Waléra was internationally cast in several TV and movie productions, most recently in the TV historical drama *Ship of No Return - The Final Voyage of the ‘Gustloff,’* directed by Joseph Vilsmaier, in Maximilian Erlenwein’s multiple prize-winning film *Schwerkraft* (2009), and in *Wir sind die Nacht* (2010). His next movies, *Polnische Ostern* (Director: Jakob Ziemnicki) and *Dr. Kretel* (Linus De Paoli), are in post production. His most recent movies are *Polnische Ostern* (2011) and *Dr. Kretel* (2011).

Filmography (Selection)

In post production *Polnische Ostern* (AT); Director: Jakob Ziemnicki
Dr. Kretel; Director: Linus De Paoli
2011 *Polnische Ostern* (AT); Director: Jakob Ziemnicki
Dr. Kretel; Director: Linus De Paoli
2010 *SNOWMAN’S LAND*; Director: Tomasz Thomson
Wir sind die Nacht (We Are the Night); Director: Dennis Gansel
2009 *Schwerkraft* (Gravity); Director: Maximilian Erlenwein
Die Gustloff (*Ship of No Return - The Final Voyage of the ‘Gustloff’*); Director: Joseph Vilsmaier
2006 *Herzentöter*; Director: Bernd Heiber

2004 Goldene Zeiten; Director: Peter Thorwarth
2002 Der Brief des Kosmonauten; Director: Vladimir Torbica
1996 Die kaukasische Nacht; Director: Gordian Maugg
1995 Une femme française; Director: Régis Wargnier

EVA-KATRIN HERMANN

... is Sibylle, a fatal mix of gangster wife, drug designer, disco incarnate.

Eva-Katrin Hermann moved from Bad Nauheim to the Bavarian capital, where she now lives, in 2000 for her acting education. In addition to theatrical productions, she played in various TV movies and series, including the comedy *Mein Gott, Anna!* (2007), as well as in successful independent productions.

Filmography (Selection)

2010 SNOWMAN'S LAND; Director: Tomasz Thomson
2008 Die Jahrhundertlawine; Director: Joerg Luehdorff, RTL
2007 The Secret of Loch Ness; Director: Michael Rowitz, Sat.1
Mein Gott, Anna!; Director: Stephan Meyer, ARD
2004 Meine Frau, meine Freunde und ich; Director: Detlef Bothe, SWR

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

TOMASZ THOMSON

Director, author, editor

Tomasz Thomson was born in Kattowitz in 1973 and grew up in Germany. He completed the director class at the National Film School PWSFTviT in Lodz, Poland. His works have won multiple prizes. He lives and works in Cologne. *SNOWMAN'S LAND* is his second feature film.

Filmography (Selection)

2010 SNOWMAN'S LAND
2001 Stiller Sturm (Silent storm)
1998 100 kilometrow peryferii (100 Kilometers of Outskirts); 8 min
1996 Viola; Documentary, 18 min
1995 I kwiatki tez (And Also the Flowers); 10 min
1994 Gleboki oddech (A Deep Breath); Documentary, 5 min

RALF M. MENDLE

Cinematographer

After studying to become a photographer, Ralf M. Mendle studied Film Design with a concentration on Camera until 1995 at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Dortmund with Adolf Winkelmann, Axel Block, and Klaus Telscher. In addition to several premiered short films – including by Hans Weingartner, Zueli Aladag, and Joerg Siepmann – as well as his work for TV, Ralf

M. Mendle has filmed diverse feature films which have also received multiple prizes. *Truth or Dare* (2004) was nominated for the Grimme Prize Documentary. His most recent projects include the comedy *Johnny Kühlkissen* (2011), by Andreas Rosenhagen, and the omnibus film *24h Marrakech* (2010).

Filmography (Selection)

2010 Johnny Kühlkissen (Alive and Ticking); Director: Andreas Rogenhagen
24h 24 h Marrakesch (Marrakech); Director: Christian Mrasek, Narjisse Tahiri, Daniel Graebner, Munir Abbar, Franz Mueller, Mohamed Oumai
SNOWMAN'S LAND; Director: Tomasz Thomson
2006 Neandertal; Director: Ingo Haeb, Jan-Christoph Glaser
2005 Kippenberger – Der Film; Documentary. Director: Joerg Kobel
Wahrheit oder Pflicht (Truth or Dare); Director: Martin Scharf, Arne Nolting
2003 Der weisse Wal; Documentary. Director: Stefan Koester (THIS IS LISTED AS 2001 IN IMDB)

BORIS MICHALSKI

Producer

Boris Michalski was born in Mannheim in 1968, he studied Photography at the Lette-Verein in Berlin, as well as Media Art and Film at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design. He helped realize several feature films, documentaries, and promotional films as cameraman and director before he founded noirfilm in 2002 together with Didi Danquart and became the producer for several feature films. Boris Michalski is a member of the German Film Academy (DGA) and the European Film Academy (EFA).

Filmography (Selection)

2011 Lenas Liebe (Bittere Kirschen, The Path to the Past); Director: Didi Danquart
2010 SNOWMAN'S LAND; Director: Tomasz Thomson
Neukoelln Unlimited; Director: Agostino Imondi, Dietmar Ratsch
2008 Nacht vor Augen (A Hero's Welcome); Director: Brigitte Bertele
2007 Reine Geschmackssache (Fashion Victims); Director: Ingo Rasper
2006 Esmas Geheimnis – Grbavica (Grbavica: The Land of My Dreams); Director: Jasmila Zbanic (Coproduction)
Offset; Director: Didi Danquart

FILM SCORE/SOUNDTRACK

The film score is by Luke Lalonde (Toronto, Canada), lead singer of the Born Ruffians.

Songs on the Soundtrack

Carlos Werneck “Lalaca e Luluca”

Herman Dune “Next Year in Zion”

The Boggs “Beside the Wi...ndowsill”

Justine Electra “Killalady”

Born Ruffians “Red, Yellow and Blue”

Menomena “The Monkey’s Back”

Matt Bauer “The Owl and the Snake”

Born Ruffians “Little Garcon”

Menomena “Ghostship”

ABOUT MUSIC BOX FILMS

Founded in 2007, Music Box Films has quickly established itself as one of the leading distributors of non-English language feature films in the US in theatres, on DVD/Blu-ray and via Video-on-Demand. Music Box’s release of Guillaume Canet’s TELL NO ONE was the most popular foreign-language film of 2008 and in 2010, the film adaptations of Stieg Larsson’s trilogy of international mega sellers dominated the foreign-language film market. The first in the series, THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO, with over \$10 million in US box office, was one the most popular international releases of the decade. 2012 releases include Terence Davies’ THE DEEP BLUE SEA, starring Rachel Weisz, and Philippe Falardeau’s MONSIEUR LAZHAR, 2012 Academy Award nominee for Best Foreign Language Film and one of the highest-grossing foreign films of the year. Recent acquisitions include Ira Sachs’ KEEP THE LIGHTS ON, winner of the Teddy Award at the Berlin Film Festival, and Julian Roman Polsler’s THE WALL, starring Martina Gedeck (*The Lives of Others*). Music Box Films is independently owned and operated by the Southport Music Box Corporation, which also owns and operates The Music Box Theatre, Chicago’s premiere venue for independent and foreign films.