

Sehr gute Filme proudly presents:

Heavy Girls

A gentle tragicomedy with a lot of humour and a hint of melancholia



HEAVY GIRLS A SEHR GUTE FILME PRODUCTION
RUTH BICKELHAUPT HEIKO PINKOWSKI PETER TRABNER PAUL PINKOWSKI
PRODUCER HEIKO PINKOWSKI DENNIS PAULS AXEL RANISCH ANNE BAEKER
SUBTITLES STELLA STOCKER LINE PRODUCER ALEXANDRINE MÄCHTGEBURTH
COLORATUR DENNIS PAULS EDITING GUERNICA ZIMGABEL MILENKA NAWKA
SOUNDRECOVERY JOHANNES VARGA
IDEA AND SCRIPT HEIKO PINKOWSKI AXEL RANISCH PETER TRABNER
DIRECTOR CINEMATOGRAPHER SOUND AXEL RANISCH © 2011

Cast



RUTH BICKELHAUPT
EDELTRAUT RITTER

HEIKO PINKOWSKI
SVEN RITTER



PETER TRABNER
DANIEL MARQUARDT



Technical details about the movie

Length **76 min** IMAGE **COLOUR** FORMAT **4:3**
SCREENING COPY **DIGIBETA** SOUND **STEREO**
SHOOTING DAYS **10** BUDGET **517,28 €URO**
LANGUAGE **GERMAN** SUBTITLES **ENGLISH**

Synopsis

SVEN LIVES WITH HIS MOTHER EDELTRAUT, WHO IS SUFFERING FROM DEMENTIA. HE SHARES HIS ENTIRE LIFE, THE APARTMENT, EVEN THE BED WITH HER. DURING THE DAY HE WORKS AT A BANK. WHILE HE IS AT WORK, DANIEL COMES TO THE APARTMENT TO LOOK AFTER EDELTRAUT. HE TAKES HER TO THE HAIRDRESSER'S, FOR WALKS AND DOES THE SHOPPING AND TIDYING UP.



ONE DAY WHILE DANIEL IS CLEANING THE WINDOWS, EDELTRAUT LOCKS HIM OUT ON THE BALCONY AND TAKES OFF. THE TWO MEN GO LOOKING FOR HER. WHAT THEY FIND IS NOT JUST EDELTRAUT, BUT ALSO A TENDER FONDNESS FOR ONE ANOTHER. THIS TURNS BOTH OF THEIR LIVES UPSIDE DOWN.



Producer's note

„HEAVY GIRLS“ WAS PRODUCED IN A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME. IT ONLY TOOK THREE MONTHS TO GET FROM THE ORIGINAL IDEA TO THE FINISHED FILM. THE FILM WAS SHOT BASED ON A TREATMENT, WHICH DEFINED THE ORDER AND CONTENT OF THE SCENES WHILE THE DIALOGUES WERE IMPROVISED.

IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE GREATEST AMOUNT OF CREATIVE FREEDOM AND AUTHENTICITY, WE INTENTIONALLY SHOT THE FILM WITHOUT A CREW AND FILM TEAM BUT WITH A SIMPLE MINI DV CAMERA.

„HEAVY GIRLS“ IS THE FIRST MOVIE OF THE PRODUCTION COMPANY „SEHR GUTE FILME“ (VERY GOOD MOVIES), FOUNDED BY HEIKO PINKOWSKI, DENNIS PAULS, AXEL RANISCH AND ANNE BAEKER IN THE SPRING OF 2011

Axel Ranisch was born in the summer of 1983 as a chubby child to a pair of competitive athletes in the beautiful borough of Lichtenberg in Berlin. He spends most of his childhood with his waltz dancing grandparents. After some heated schooldays he successfully takes his Abitur exam in 2003. When he is eleven years old he joins the literature workshop Pegasusclub and is instantly enamoured with Dmitri Schostakowitsch, Gustav Mahler, Camille Saint-Saëns and Sergej Rachmaninoff. Within the evolution of this passion he moves out of his parent's home and into the literature emporium Dussmann (bookstore). When he turns thirteen he finds another home at the educational establishment Wannseeforum in Berlin where, from 1997 until 2002, he spends many holidays acting on stage and playing table soccer. After years of longstanding scepticism of the medium Axel shoots a short film in 2002 and gets infected with the film virus immediately with no hope of recovery. It happens accidentally as he originally wanted to take part in a theatre workshop which was already full. In the subsequent seven years he directs and produces about eighty shortfilms.



In a number of other shortfilms he's involved as an actor, author, film composer and cutter.

Parallel to his Abitur Axel commences a training in media and theatre education at the DGB-Jugendbildungsstätte in Flecken-Zechlin and completes it successfully in 2004. Since then he's managed numerous projects as a media educator. He's worked with convicts in jails, at anti-racism seminars and has taken part in projects with elementary and secondary schools in Lichtenberg and Kreuzberg in Berlin. He's also worked with mentally challenged children on Gran Canaria and with student representatives at the Wannseeforum as well as with doctors within the scope of further training in medical quality management.

Numerous work experiences as well as some insignificant jobs such as arms trading, espionage for the stations MDR and RBB follow. He has his first glorious engagement as the director for a big Saturday night show called: "Berlin seeks the circus star 04"

Since Oktober 2004 Axel has been studying at the HFF "Konrad Wolf" in Potsdam Babelsberg with Rosa von Praunheim. He's a happy and contented student. At the film school his films don't always get the highest praise however since 2002 they have been screened at over one hundred film festivals of all sizes (amongst them the Hofer Filmtage, the film festival Max-Ophüls-Preis, Camerimage Lodz, the film festival in Cottbus....) and time after time they've won prizes.

Axel adores his grandmother who will turn ninety in 2011 and can still do the splits.

Auszeichnungen (Auswahl):

- 2007 Preis des Landesfilmdienstes Rheinland Pfalz „**Liebe Liebe...**“
- 2008 Hans W. Geißendörfer Nachwuchspreis „**Der will nur spielen!**“
- 2009 Achtung Berlin „**Glioblastom**“ (Preis der Zitty-Leserjury)
Deutscher Nachwuchsfilmpreis „**Glioblastom**“

Filmographie Regie (Auswahl):

- 2004 **Rhythmus im Kopf** – filmisches Selbstportrait 3 min
- 2005 **Hollbüllhuus** - Kurzspielfilm 23 min
- Mehr als Nichts** - Dokumentarfilm 15 min
- Pas de deux** - Kurzspielfilm 15 min
- 2006 **Liebe Liebe...** - Kurzspielfilm 20 min
- 2007 **Miss Bildung** – Kurzspielfilm 20 min
- Der will nur spielen** – Spielfilm 40 min
- 2008 **Trailer** für das Festival des Osteuropäischen Films Cottbus
- Glioblastom** – Kurzspielfilm 43 min
- 2011 **Diego Alonso** – Kurzspielfilm 23 min
- Dicke Mädchen** – Spielfilm 75 min

Filmographie Darsteller (Auswahl)

- 2007 **Titelverteidiger 18.5** – Regie: Ben Voss
- 6 tote Studenten** – Regie: Rosa von Praunheim
- 2008 **Meine Daten und ich** – Regie: Philipp Eichholtz
- 2010 **Résiste** – Regie: Jonas Grosch
- 2011 **Die Rose und die Nachtigall** – Regie: Philipp Eichholtz
- Wie man leben soll** – Regie: David Schalko
- Ruhm** – Regie: Isabel Kleefeld
- Axel und Peter oder Titten für Arsch** – Regie: Rosa von Praunheim

ANNE BAEKER *PRODUCER*

Anne Baeker was born in Leipzig in 1982. Two years later she moved to Potsdam, the city of film. After her Abitur exam in 2001 she completed several film internships and jobs in the film business until, in 2006 she started studying film production at the University of Film and Television „Konrad Wolf“ in Potsdam.

In 2012 she will complete her degree. During her studies she produced several shortfilms. Her pre-degree film GLIOBLASTOM (director: Axel Ranisch) won the German Young Filmmaker Award.



Beyond her studies she worked as a production manager for several productions such as the web-series DIE SNOBS - SIE KÖNNEN AUCH OHNE DICH with Christian Ulmen (director: Max Luz) as well as the children's film „Abenteuer Quacks“ (director: Esther Gronenborn). Additionally she's worked for several commercials like KNORR, ERGO-Versicherung, DACIA, DEUTSCHE BANK and MILCHSCHNITTE.

With her film family Axel Ranisch, Heiko Pinkowski and Dennis Pauls she founded her first production company SEHR GUTE FILME in 2011.

Filmographie:

2011	Dicke Mädchen (Heavy Girls)	Feature Film (D: A. Ranisch)
	Herzberg	Shortfilm (D: D. C. Bunnars)
	Doppelschraube	Shortfilm (D: L. Montag)
	Holland	Shortfilm (D: C. Walther)
	Alles Neu	Shortfilm (D: B. Böhlich)
2010	SNOBS-Sie können auch ohne Dich	Web-Series (D: M. Luz)
2009	Abenteuer Quacks	Children's Film (D: E. Gronenborn)
2008	Our wonderful nature	Animation (D: T. Eshed)
2007	Glioblastom	Shortfilm (D: A. Ranisch/ T. Bubbel)

HEIKO PINKOWSKI SVEN RITTER

Heiko Pinkowski was born in Hüls as the son of a nurse and a construction engineer. After a very Christian childhood the intensive impact of the theatre kicks off a reconversion and a very unchristian youth. After repeatedly trying he finally manages to successfully take his Abitur exam in 1988, thanks to his A in sport.

A vigorous phase of deciding on an occupation follows. He pulls out of three different courses at university. They were: constructional engineering (the numerus clausus was close to the moon), German studies and philosophy. He worked as a draftsman, male nurse assistant, welder, truck driver, manuscript developer and as a severely disabled person nurse. This led to physical and mental frustration and forced Heiko to a lengthy phase of regular evening recreation.

The only constant in his life since he was fourteen years old has been the theatre. From an early age he was drawn to the annual theatre gathering of the youth in Berlin. This was followed by commitments at the children and youth theatre and the municipal theatre in Krefeld as well as the studio stage in Cologne and the Schiller theatre in Berlin.

In the end in 1994 Heiko passed the "ready for the stage" examination and may call himself an actor with a degree without ever having been inside an acting school. After that he had commitments at the Bauhaus stage in Dessau and from 1995 until 2001 he had a firm engagement at the theatre of the state capital Magdeburg. In 2001 and Heiko felt drawn to Berlin and moved there with his family. He's been working as a freelance actor on stage and screen and behind the microphone.

In 2011 Heiko, Axel Ranisch, Dennis Paul and Anne Banker founded the production company "Sehr gute Filme GbR".



Movies (Selection)

- 2011 **Dicke Mädchen** Director: Axel Ranisch
- Europe & Bomber** Regie: Felix Sienz
- 2010 **Die Friseur** Regie: Doris Dörrie
- Offroad** Regie: Elmar Fischer
- 2009 **Die Wanderhure** Regie: Hansjörg Thurn
- Mord mit Aussicht** Regie: Thorsten Wacker
- Lenz** Regie: Andreas Morell
- 2008 **Faust Superstar** Regie: Mingus Ballhaus
- Polizeiruf 110: Schweineleben** Regie: Eoin Moore
- 2007 **SOKO Leipzig** Regie: Patrick Winczewski
- Ganz nah bei Dir** Regie: Almut Getto
- Doctor's Diary** Regie: Sophie Allet-Coche
- Ein starker Abgang** Regie: Rainer Kaufmann
- Mordshunger** Regie: Robert A. Pejo
- 2006 **6 tote Studenten** Regie: Rosa von Praunheim
- Dr. Psycho** Regie: Richard Huber
- Der will nur spielen** Regie: Axel Ranisch
- Jagdhunde** Regie: Ann-Kristin Rayels
- Wiedling** Regie: Christian Mertens

Theater (Selection)

- 2010 **Schuld und Sühne** (Theater Luzern)
Regie: Barbara-David Brüesch
- 2004 **Underground** (HdKdW/U5)
Regie: Katzuko Watanabe,
- 2003 **Einfache Freuden** (Bochum)
Regie: Lutz Hübner
- 2001 **Shoppen und Ficken** (Magdeburg)
Regie: Anja Niemann
- 1999 **Faust** (Magdeburg)
Regie: Lutz Hübner
- 1997 **Pandora** (Bauhaus Dessau)
Regie: Jens Mehrle,
- 1993 **Über die Mandelbrotmenge**
(Schillertheater Berlin)
Regie: Ulrich Zieger, Justus Carrière
- 1990 **Klassenfeind** (Krefeld)
Regie: Matthias Hartmann,
- 1987 **Der Frieden** (Jugendtheater Krefeld)
Regie: Inge Brand



PETER TRABNER *DANIEL MARQUARDT*

Peter Trabner was born in 1969 in Bueckeburg. At the age of 15 he left school and trained to become a mechanic. He worked as an instructor with the German armed forces for two years. As a truck driver he travelled all over Germany. After his truck was stolen in 1991 he joined a street theatre company and that's how he came to Berlin in '92. He took up private acting classes. Since 2003 he's been an ensemble member of the Berlin based theatre company *two fish*.

Two fish is currently performing the children's play "Bettina dawdles" at the young state theatre Berlin and the theatre at the Parkaue. The play was nominated for the nationwide theatre prize "Hang on!" 2011 and will be part of the repertoire until 2012.

Trabner plays the lead in his first motion picture "Papa Gold". He plays the young father Frank who touchingly tries to retrieve his stepson Danny who is thought lost in the big city. It premiered at the Max-Ophüls-Preis.

The film was screened at numerous festivals and was awarded the prize of the association of the German film review, in the category "best picture" at the film festival *Achtung Berlin*.

Dicke Mädchen (Heavy Girls) is Trabner's second lead in a feature film. Apart from his work as an actor Peter also works as a clown and as an improvisation coach with actors and contemporary dancers.

Theater (Selection)

- 2011** **Chez Icke** (Markthalle IX)
Regie: Gesine Dankwarth
Herein! (Landesbühne Berlin)
- 2010** **Schnittstelle Figaro** (Staatsoper im Schillertheater Berlin)
Künstlerische Leitung: Max Schuhmacher
Bettina bummelt (Junges Staatstheater Berlin)
Choreographie: Martin Clausen / Peter Trabner
Kommunalka (BallhausOst, Berlin)
Künstlerische Leitung: Ralf Grunwald
- 2009** **Woran ich merke was für ein Viech ich bin II** (Sophiensaele)
Regie: Martin Clausen
Perfekt. Gewesen (HAU 3, Berlin)
Regie: Martin Clausen
Wasserschloss (Attention Theaterfestival Lärz)
Künstlerische Leitung: Max Schuhmacher
- 2008** **Trailerpark Peter Trabner and friends** (Tanz Nacht Berlin, Uferhallen)
Künstlerische Leitung: Peter Stamer
Das billigste Gastspiel aller Zeiten (Pathos Transport Theater)
Regie: Peter Trabner
Lohndrucker (Sophiensaele, Berlin)
Regie: Kerstin Lehnart
- 2007** **Vom süßen Jenseits** (HAU 3 Berlin)
Regie: Lukas Matthaei

Movies (Selection)

- 2011** **Verbrechen** Regie: Jobst C. Oetzmann
Alles Klara Regie Andi Niessner
Dicke Mädchen Regie: Axel Ranisch
Tatort – Sansibar Regie: Franziska Meletzky
Stromberg Regie: Arne Feldhusen
Sweetheart Hotel Regie: Jakob Lass
- 2010** **Papa Gold** Regie: Tom Lass

RUTH BICKELHAUPT *EDELTRAUT RITTER*

Ruth Bickelhaupt was born in the cold winter of 1921, a day before Christmas, as the youngest daughter of the Grellmann family in Limbach Oberfrohna near Chemnitz. Her parents were the proprietors of the Hotel Zentral in Limbach. As a young girl she became part of the service personnel. She helped out in the kitchen and at the bar. She looked after the bowling alley, cared for the dogs of the guests and the hotel rooms. To this day Ruth eats from the plates and uses the cutlery engraved with the logo of the Hotel Zentral.

In 1930, supported by her grandfather, Ruth picked up ballet classes at the local music school. She dances with great passion. The training is rigorous. She learns to dance on pointe until her feet bleed. A day prior to the outbreak of the Second World War she has her first solo performance at the municipal theatre. The war confounds the future plans of the young ballerina. Still, dancing will remain a source of great pleasure throughout her life. In 1942 she marries the young and dashing pharmacist Hans who is called to arms soon after.



Luckily Hans survives the turmoils of the war and the Russian war captivity and after his return they start a family. Daughter Eva is born. Hans works as a pharmacist, studies law and becomes an attorney. He later becomes a journalist, works for the NVA (the armed forces of the GDR) studies architecture, becomes a draftsman and even the principal of the Academy of Architecture of the GDR.

Between 1946 and 1967 Ruth and her family move house twenty seven times. Temporarily they even live in a medieval fortress, Schloss Rochlitz. From 1967 onwards the family lives in Berlin. Ruth gets a job at the German-Soviet-Friendship at the Zentrales Haus Unter den Linden. She works there until her retirement in 1983. She mainly supervises culture projects, organizes concerts and the cultural exchange between the Soviet Union and the GDR. In 1983 Ruth's youngest grandchild Axel is born. He spends the majority of his childhood and youth with his grandparents. It is them who bring him up. Ruth lived through the Weimarer Republic, Nazi Germany and the GDR. When the wall comes down in 1989 Ruth experiences her fourth system of government.

In the year 2000, Ruth had just turned 79 she loses her husband on Christmas day as the result of pneumonia and a consequential stroke. This is the end of the world for Ruth. For the first time in her life she is on her own. Statistically speaking 75 percent of the widows of Ruth's age don't live past the next three years. Ruth struggles through the following five years. However she manages to defeat her grief and gets cracking. At the age of 83 she learns how to swim and at the age of 84 she learns how to go-kart. When she turns 85 she gets in front of a camera for the first time and at the age of 86 she crosses the ocean for the first time to travel to Canada because she wants to see the Niagara Falls. At the age of 89 she has her first leading role in the feature film *Dicke Mädchen (Heavy Girls)*. Today Ruth is one of the busiest women her age. On Mondays she does Tai Chi, on Tuesdays she goes for a swim on Wednesdays she goes dancing on Thursdays it's time for Chi Gong, on Fridays she's cleaning and on the weekend she takes care of her garden in Pankow. And!!!! she can still do the splits.

Movies:

- 2007 Der will nur spielen** – Regie: Axel Ranisch
- 2008 Glioblastom** – Regie: Axel Ranisch & Tanja Bubbel
- 2009 Das erste Mal** – Regie: Axel Ranisch
- 2010 Lilly und Mitch** – Regie: Valentin Mereutza
- 2011 Dicke Mädchen** – Regie: Axel Ranisch

Impressions



Thanks to:

OUR AGENCIES DIRK FEHRECKE AGENTUR MAGNOLIA AGENTUR PATRIC ADAM
OUR SUPPORTER PAUL ZACHER ANDREA PINKOWSKI ROMY TRABNER
EVA UND KARLHEINZ RANISCH
OUR CATALYST'S ANNO SAUL JULIA VON HEINZ PROF. ROSA VON PRAUNHEIM
OUR TRANSLATOR ANDRE PINKOWSKI STELLA STOCKER
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Press Reviews

OUR INTUITIVE AND IMPROVISED WAY OF WORKING IS OBVIOUS IN OUR FIRST MOVIE 'DICKE MAEDCHEN' (Heavy Girls). THE MOVIE WAS VERY SUCCESSFUL WITH THE AUDIENCE AT THE PREMIERE AT THIS YEAR'S HOFER FILMTAGE AND WON THE BERNDT-MEDIA PRIZE AS WELL AS THE 'BEST SCREENPLAY' AT THE 'KINOFEST LÜNEN'

Please find a few quotes from the press below:

'Variety': Thu., Jan. 26, 2012, 9:00pm PT

Slamdance fetes 'Girls'

Pic wins pair of awards at fest

By DAVE MCNARY

Dicke Madchen's "Heavy Girls" has won a pair of Slamdance awards -- a Special Jury Award for Bold Originality and a Spirit of Slamdance Sparky Award.

The kudos were announced Thursday night at the conclusion of the 18th annual fest -- a low-budget alternative to Sundance in a ceremony at the Treasure Mountain Inn in Park City, Utah.

"What a great way to end Slamdance's 18th festival - by celebrating the films our excellent jurors and incredible audiences have awarded these emerging filmmakers," said Peter Baxter, Co-Founder and President of Slamdance. "This years narrative and documentary competitions are stronger than ever, and these filmmakers represent the vanguard of true independent filmmaking."

Audience Award for feature documentary went to "Getting Up" by Caskey Ebeling while Andrew Edison's "Bindlestiffs" won the Audience Award for feature narrative.

Grand Jury Sparky Award for Feature Narrative went to "Welcome to Pine Hill" by Keith Miller.

Grand Jury Sparky Award for Feature Documentary went to "No Ashes, No Phoenix" by Jens Pfeifer.

Grand Jury Sparky Award for Short Documentary went to Skylar Neilsen.

Grand Jury Sparky Award for Animation went to "Venus" by Tor Fruergaard.

Grand Jury Sparky Award for Short Film went to "I Am John Wayne" by Christina Choe.

Special Jury Prize for Experimental Short went to "Solipist" by Andrew Huang.

Honorable Mention for Best Ensemble went to "I'm Coming Over" by Sam Handel.

Saarbrücker Zeitung vom 20.01.2012:

Ein Film für 517,32 Euro:

Axel Ranischs schöne "Dicke Mädchen"

Wieso das Festival Axel Ranischs ziemlich hinreißende kleine, ungestüme, Spurenelemente dosierter Infantilität mit zu Herzen gehendem Ernst mischende Tragikomödie "**Dicke Mädchen**" nicht in den Wettbewerb nahm, das begreife, wer will. Jedenfalls war es ein Fehler, weil diese Ranisch zufolge für 517,32 Euro gedrehte, zwischen Klage und Klamauk hin und her springende (dabei von einer Tanzweise Fritz Kreislers und etwas Beethoven, Purcell und Ravel untermalte) Kinofilm-Improvisation zeigt, dass sich auch mit minimalen Mitteln Bleibendes zustande bringen lässt. Erzählt wird von Sven (Heiko Pinkowski), der mit seiner dementen Mutter zusammenlebt und sich in deren Tagesbetreuer Daniel verguckt (und der in ihn, trotz Frau und Sohn). Wie schon Tom Lass' 2011 im Ophüls-Wettbewerb stehende "Papa Gold"-Improvisation veredelt Trabner nun die Ranischs. Das Treatment entwickelten Ranisch, Trabner und Pinkowski gemeinsam, der Rest ergab sich beim Drehen. Sehr kurios. *cis*

ROOFTOP FILMS:

SLAMDANCE REVIEW: HEAVY GIRLS

by Genevieve DeLaurier

January 22nd, 2012

Dicke Maedchen (Heavy Girls)

Written and directed by Axel Ranisch

Heavy Girls is the story of Sven, his dementia suffering mother Edeltraut and her married male home care worker Daniel (whom we learn Sven happens to have a crush on). Sven and his mother share their lives in a small Berlin apartment (even sharing the same bed). During the day while he is at work at a bank, Daniel comes over to care for Edeltraut and help out around the house. One day while cleaning the windows, Daniel is locked out on the terrace by the mischievous Edeltraut. She then takes off to the streets of Berlin and all Daniel can do is wait for Sven to return from work hours later. Sven and Daniel then search for Edeltraut and in the process come to realize their mutual affection for each other. Thus begins their unorthodox, complicated and often tender romance. Later in the film a traumatic turn of events quickly brings their relationship to deeper level and forces them to look at their lives, the choices they have made and the choices they have available to them.

The film addresses the issues of family, friendship, love, freedom, pain, joy and possibilities; with charm and grace and a whole lot of quirkiness. There is a sense of realness and a true intimacy to the film that is enhanced by the production choices – shot in East Berlin over three months, with only a mini DV cam, a very low budget and no crew. These characters seemed so real that I almost felt guilty spying on their lives

The performances are powerful, natural, witty and a delight to watch – with Heiko Pinkowski (Sven), Peter Trabner (Daniel) and the superb Ruth Bickelhaupt as Edeltraut (who is fantastic in pretty much her first acting gig and she also happens to be the director's great grandmother). Based on only a short treatment in lieu of a script, the film is almost completely improvised. In one pivotal scene, Sven and Daniel are picnicking by a lake, according to actor Pinkowski, the script basically said "go to a lake and have fun" and oh did they have fun. The scene is at times hilarious, gentle, absurd, and joyful. This range of emotions from moment to moment is demonstrated with such ease throughout the film. From the tender moment of Sven comforting his mother after her solo adventure in the outside world; to their humorous chit-chats over morning coffee; to a scene of the three hanging out in the apartment singing, dancing and playing dress up. Each scene seamlessly displays the depth of these people's struggles yet also their love and understanding of each other (and also how fun it is to be child-like and silly). Oh and the joy and freedom of being naked...

The enthusiasm of director Axel Ranisch shows in this film. Having just arrived minutes prior to the screening at Slamdance after a 50 hour, delay filled trip from Berlin to Park City; he still had an incredibly infectious excitement for the film. During the Q&A, Ranisch talked about the process of making **Heavy Girls**. He had been working on a big budget movie with demands and complications from higher-ups and had become increasingly frustrated. The experience pushed him to want to make something that he could control – where he had full creative freedom or in his words, to make a "very good film." This also happens to be the name of his production company (Sehr gute Filme) which is fitting because this is exactly what he accomplished.

Hammer to Nail:

HEAVY GIRLS (DICKE MÄDCHEN)

Fire In The Bellies

by Paul Sbrizzi

January 21, 2012

(*Heavy Girls*—the original title is *Dicke Mädchen* but we'll use the English translation from here on out—is US premiering in the Narrative Competition section of the [2012 Slamdance Film Festival](#). It screens on Friday, January 20th, at 8pm, and Tuesday, January 24th, at 7pm. Visit the [film's Slamdance page](#), as well as the [official website](#), for more information.)

[.....]

It turns out that mother and son also have a habit of spying on each other, which comes into full flower in a blissfully weird scene at the end of Act 1 (set to an old-Vienna romantic violin solo by Fritz Kreisler that recurs throughout the first part of the film, giving it a Euro-kitschy, old-timey feel). It's a grotesquely beautiful and funny sequence that powerfully expresses the level of understanding and acceptance between them.

Daniel gradually loosens up and gets drawn into the gentle madness. When his suspicious wife kicks him out, he joins in a silly dress-up party with Sven and Edeltraut. Daniel suddenly feels free to cut loose, throwing on a clown suit and doing "magic" that's really just him manically pulling tissues out of a box.

After a sudden, traumatic turn of events, an on-again, off-again relationship of sorts develops between the two men—a kind of romance, more for Sven than for Daniel. On a deeper level, the two men sense in each other the key to a type of escape. In one of the many bizarre scenes that Ranisch and his actors pull off with total credibility, Sven and Daniel have a picnic by a lake which starts out framed against fluffy clouds in a blue sky (a funny nod to the idyll of German Romanticism—with dirt on Ranisch's lens), which Daniel spins into a fantasy of an Australian aborigine ritual. The two men end up chasing each other around, naked and muddy, their matching round bellies bouncing up and down. Running into the water, Daniel raises his fists in victory: "It's the moment of something like freedom."

As the two men become closer, Daniel's son starts to turn up unexpectedly, the embodiment of Daniel's heavy conscience, a living, breathing obstacle to the possibility, for Daniel, of truly escaping his life. The fleshy physicality of the "heavy girls" is thrown together in yet another scene of extreme gorgeous ugliness, this one charged with foreboding.

Maybe in part because of the shooting style, with no crew and a tiny camera, *Heavy Girls* locks effortlessly into its melancholy/bemused mood and consistently captures the delicate textures of its characters' individuality in all its strange contortions. This is an incredibly intimate film, and it would be hard to overstate just how powerful and accomplished the performances are. Consistently surprising, full of strange twists and odd behavior, but always true to life, *Heavy Girls* demonstrates with extravagant imagination and clarity of vision how there's not so queer as folk.

— Paul Sbrizzi

Angela Shelton in her Blog:

Heavy Girls ~ The Sweetest Movie

I am here at the Sundance and Slamdance Film Festivals and had to share the most precious movie I've seen so far. This is a film that is not pushing an agenda, not promoting a cause or trying to freak you out – it is simply a precious love story that makes you smile.

I absolutely loved this movie! I loved the message, the love story, the music, the sweetness and the overall joy emanating from this film. If you are near a town where it is playing, I highly recommend seeing it.

It is amazing to me how some (okay, a lot) of indie movies push the envelope with things that mainstream does not. Sometimes the choices indie filmmakers make are awesome. They make you think. They can point out issues. They are 'in your face.' And sometimes, they are very disturbing.

But sometimes, the filmmaker simply sends you on a lovely journey that is so simple and so wonderful that it never would have been funded by a mainstream studio because it's just a small simple story.

Though the film is small, the love in Heavy Girls is HUGE.

I saw another film that instead of being a lovely ride like Heavy Girls, was a rollercoaster of awkwardness. It had so much nudity I wanted to throw up. Not that nudity is bad, it was just that the naked scenes of the lead girl, outside of one or maybe two, had nothing to do with the story.

The naked scene in Heavy Girls (in the above trailer too) where the guys run into a lake is so precious because the process of them getting naked is not gratuitous, it is adorable and is a huge part of the story. You are watching a precious vulnerable moment. There is no sex scene, you don't have to watch any "action", they simply run around the lake like little boys. It is so cute I had this huge smile on my face watching it. It was innocent and sweet – just like the whole film.

Heavy Girls is one of those indie movies that makes me proud of being a filmmaker and writer. I hope you get to see it

'taz' article from 10/31/11 about the premiere:

"Fight the blockbuster!"

"... Family is also the topic in Axel Ranisch's debut "Heavy Girls", which was realised with the sensational budget of 517,32 € ... however, it is great cinema! The story of a son, who lives with his dementia-suffering mother and falls in love with her male-nurse, was one of the definite highlights of this festival. A wonderful wild but also tender film, full of absurd humor and magical moments. It's been a long time since a gay love story was told incidentally and in such an unsexy way.

The premiere audience rewarded this film which is almost entirely based on Improvisation, with never ending applause. She never witnessed such an applause at the Hofer Filmtage, the presenter said. But most likely she never saw such a film either...."

der schnitt article november 2011:

"Maybe the most beautiful film in the competition"

Heavy Girls by Axel Ranisch"

... It's probably the most beautiful film of the feature film competition. The two main characters have to learn that life might offer other possibilities, other than what they are used to. That still doesn't mean that they will choose this other way. HEAVY GIRLS, a No-Budget-film, which is said to have been shot with only 517€ and some peanuts, is an inspiring piece of cinematic improvisation. Like dirt and dust put in DV appears the look of intended shabby images and the outmoded tapestry and living-room-wall-unit-setting of the main location: For too long Sven has been living the daily routine, and his life became outmoded as well. Lovingly he cares for his mother, suffering from dementia with the help of the male nurse Daniel. He lives with her and tries to make her sunset years as convenient as possible. When she dies, everything changes for him. Sven and Daniel become close - much closer than they expected. At the end Sven chooses a way that was unthinkable for him at the beginning.

With the terrific performances of Ruth Bickelhaupt, Heiko Pinkowski and Peter Trabner, Axel Ranisch lights a wonderful firework of crude humor, charm and delightful storytelling. For this film, three creative heads got rid of the pressures of convention and just started shooting. The result sends out rays of that particular freedom and takes its liveliness out of the personalities of the creators. ...

Frankenpost article from 10/31/11 about the premiere:

'Very good' does not need to be expensive

The production company is called 'Very good films' (Sehr gute Filme). And indeed, the first production deserves the accolade excellent, even though it was produced on a tiny budget – 517.32 Euro according to producer and author Axel Ranisch. He left the acting to two friends and to his 89 year old grandmother – Ruth Bickelhaupt. She plays a very active woman and her dementia brings the two heavyweight men closer together. For one of the men this is not close enough and for the other not as close as he thought it would be. The film created a wonderful atmosphere for the packed audience of the Central Cinema and the director promised to be back in 2012 – with a new film and his grandmother.

Der Westen article from 11/13/2011:

[...] Two prizes went to the team of Dicke Mädchen, one of them the Berndt-Media Prize for the best title. The whole team, incl. trailer face and actor Ruth Bickelhaupt celebrated the success. "Thank you very much, we were all hoping to win this. We thought this is a good title" said a laughing director Axel Ranisch moving on to say "The son of producer and actor Heiko Pinkowski just chucked the title out there"

This is great news as they are currently looking for a distributor. An even bigger surprise was the Prize for the best script, rewarded with 2.500 Euros. The whole team was over the moon "This is incredible! Thank you very much and Sorry", said Axel Ranisch "I wrote scripts for the last 3 years and I thought I needed a break for this film" In fact, there is only a 6 page script and most of the film is improvised. The budget by the way was 517.32 Euro.

In addition to this, the whole team was rewarded with the most spontaneous and relaxed reaction to winning a prize at the festival – unofficial and without a monetary reward!

“Tagesspiegel” article from 10/31/11 about the premiere

Filmfestival: Boys of the evil

Through the psycho press: thriller, tragic comedy and others. Discoveries at the Hofer Filmtage.

These are the moments why we love the Hofer Film festival. Other festivals have well known directors, stars and city flair, but the festival in Hof has been delivering fresh and surprising talents for 45 years. It is 2 pm. The young director Axel Ranisch stands in front of the screen of a packed cinema – full beard, pink cheeks, black glasses, probably weighing in at 100 kg. Next to him the not so young Heiko Pinkowski – full beard, pink cheeks, black glasses weighing in at 150 kg. Next to him the second chubby main actor Peter Trabner as well as a fascinating old lady Ruth Bickelhaupt. She is giving her film debut at the age of 89 years – she is the grandmother of the director.

All four are happy, the applause for their film is not ending. The director spent 517.32 Euro for his final piece at the Film University in Potsdam. This is visible, as the images are out of focus and stretched, the sound is horrible but Axel Ranisch produces a moving and tragic comedy.

Nevertheless Axel Ranisch produced a moving, tragic comedy, using a digital camera and improvised acting in what appears to be a homemade movie. In a way it is a home movie, set in a 2 bedroom flat in a housing estate focusing on the life of a woman suffering from dementia. Her son and her nurse struggle with life between family traditions and breaking out from the day to day routine, A story with elements from silent movies and a bit of social romance in the style of Andreas Dresen.

At least the Jury statement of the „Kinofest Lünen“:

“To nominate a prize for the best script is a difficult task – in particular as we have not read the scripts. We can only judge the Interpretation of the director and the work carried out in postproduction. Precisely for this reason, it is not important that – as informed by the winning team – the script only held 6 pages. The film based on the improvisation of these 6 pages was important to us: a story with three adorable characters that engage us with their conflicts and personalities. We do not need large screen event cinema if there are such beautiful films as “Heavy Girls”.”

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