

**Peter Schwartzkopff**

**Presents**

**A Reverse Angle International Production**

# **THE HOUSES IS BURNING**

**Written and directed by Holger Ernst**

**Produced by**

**Peter Schwartzkopff**

**Katja Siegel**

**Alex Gibney**

**Executive Producer:**

**Wim Wenders**

**Starring**

**Harley Adams**

**John Diehl**

**Erik Jensen**

**Melissa Leo**

**Julianne Michelle**

**Joe Petrilla**

**Robin Taylor**

**Nicole Vicius**

## **CANNES OFFICIAL SELECTION**

Press Screening on Friday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1:15 pm Salle Bazin

Official Screening on Friday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 5 pm Teatro Buñuel

## **PRESS CONTACT**

LINDALAX Public Relations

Christina von Lindenfels

Baaderstr. 36

80469 München

Tel: +49.89 130 1006-0

Fax: +49.89 130 1006-29

E-Mail: [lindenfels@lindalax.de](mailto:lindenfels@lindalax.de)

Press material at: [www.reverse-angle.com](http://www.reverse-angle.com)

# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

<u>CAST &amp; STAFF</u> .....	3
<u>SYNOPSIS</u> .....	4
<u>ABOUT THE PRODUCTION</u> .....	9
<u>Q&amp;A WITH THE FILMMAKERS</u>	
Holger Ernst (Director/ Writer) .....	10
Katja Siegel & Peter Schwartzkopff (Production) .....	13
<u>ABOUT THE CAST</u>	
Joe Petrilla (Mike Miller) .....	16
Nicole Vicius (Valerie) .....	16
Robin Taylor (Phil) .....	17
Julianne Michelle (Terry) .....	17
John Diehl (Paul Garson).....	18
Melissa Leo (Mrs. Miller) .....	19
<u>ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS</u>	
Holger Ernst (Director/ Writer) .....	20
Peter Schwartzkopff (Producer) .....	21
Katja Siegel (Production) .....	22
Alex Gibney (Production) .....	22
Wim Wenders (Executive Producer) .....	23
Stefan Grandinetti (Director of Photography) .....	25
Matthias Schöningh (Camera Operator).....	25
Silke Botsch (Editor) .....	26
<u>CAST IN ORDER OF APPERANCE</u> .....	27
<u>CREW</u> .....	28
<u>SPECIAL THANKS</u> .....	32

# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

## CAST

Mike Miller  
Steve Garson  
Mrs. Miller  
Valerie  
Phil  
Terry Storm  
Paul Garson  
Stella Miller  
Jason  
Anne  
Sharon

JOE PETRILLA  
HARLEY ADAMS  
MELISSA LEO  
NICOLE VICIUS  
ROBIN TAYLOR  
JULIANNE MICHELLE  
JOHN DIEHL  
SAMANTHA RESSLER  
DAVID TENNENT  
EMILY MEADE  
KAREN DiCONCETTO

## STAFF

Director

Holger Ernst

Produced by

Peter Schwartzkopff

Story & Script

Holger Ernst

Production

Katja Siegel, Alex Gibney

Executive Producer

Wim Wenders

Director of Photography

Stefan Grandinetti

Camera

Matthias Schöningh

Editor

Silke Botsch

# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

## Synopsis - short

24 hours. One day. One night.

A group of teenagers from a cheerless suburb struggles to find their way in a world that offers them few choices. The next morning, Mike (JOE PETRILLA) will join the army, following in his father's footsteps and thus leaving for war. His last day around family and friends turns into a war of emotions. His girlfriend Valerie (NICOLE VICIUS), angry at him for leaving, rejects him on his last day at home – and cheats on him. His friend, Phil (ROBIN TAYLOR), a smalltime drug dealer, is working for the big score that will set him up for good. Terry (JULIANNE MICHELLE) is trying to enter a corporate world she's unprepared for but already understanding the corruption the system asks for. Steve (HARLEY ADAMS) tries to get a gun to take deadly revenge on his abusive father. As the story unfolds, frustration erupts in a night of shattering violence, self-destruction and self-discovery.

THE HOUSE IS BURNING marks the feature film debut of director/writer Holger Ernst and is produced by Reverse Angle International's Peter Schwartzkopff (*Don't Come Knocking*), Katja Siegel and Alex Gibney with support of the Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg and German Federal Filmboard, FFA. Executive Producer is accomplished and internationally renowned filmmaker Wim Wenders.

# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

## Synopsis - long

**“Feelings change. Don’t be a baby about it!” - Valerie**

A nameless suburb somewhere in the United States of America: No fancy gardens, spiffy swimming pools or posh mansions here. This is one of those places where people live who do not participate on the wonders of capitalism and globalization. This is one of those places where people care more about the price of food than handbags and cell phones. People here think about a second job rather than a second car. This is a place for those people who never even think about Ivy League Colleges, those who fry our burgers and wash our cars.

In addition, this is the home to a bunch of kids, who recently graduated from high school but failed to build themselves a bright future - or rather never had the chance for it. There is MIKE, his girlfriend VALERIE, drug-dealing PHIL; STEVE, victim of a violent father, and TERRY, who tries virtually everything to get a regular job and escape this neighborhood. Mike on the other hand has already found his way out: Following in the steps of his father, he joins the Army. He will leave the next morning. As his father was K.I.A. during a former military conflict, Mike’s family does not approve of his decision. Like his mother (MELISSA LEO) and his younger sister Stella (SAMANTHA RESSLER), Mike’s girlfriend Valerie is also desperate. Afraid of being left alone she seeks solace in sex with Phil. Although she’s not sure about her feelings toward Mike anymore, Valerie insists on keeping this affair under wraps. She is giving his farewell party this evening and wants to avoid any conflict on her relationship; she simply tries to run out the clock.

On his side, Phil has no interest in any conflict with Mike either. He’s a friend, a customer of Phil’s small drug business and after all, it was just sex. Nothing Phil

## THE HOUSE IS BURNING

really cares about. Ever more so today as Phil is expecting the drug deal of his life. He only has to find a little more money, in order to finance the deal that will buy him enough dope, loads of easy money, and a carefree life for a few months.

Steve Garson, meanwhile, experiences another violent encounter with his abusive father Paul (JOHN DIEHL). Over and over again the financially troubled father has taken it out on the boy. Steve's rage has grown steadily over the years, but today, as his father banished him finally, this rage turns into blind fury. He decides – and announces – that he will kill his father.

In an effort to get a paid administrative job at an insurance company, a young, nervous – and drugged Terry Storm (JULIANNE MICHELLE) is willing to pay every price. However, the human resource director tells her unmistakably that she doesn't have the grades and qualifications required for the job. Reaching rock bottom Terry decides to make the last and final offer she has to that man: herself.

Valerie and Mike, meanwhile, have exactly what she wanted to avoid: a serious fight about their relationship. Without warning Mike shows up at her place to bring some stuff for the party. Fresh from a fight with her younger sister Anne (EMILY MEADE). Valerie is not in the mood to see him. After he finds a pack of cigarettes in Valerie's room and she rejects his advances, Mike leaves visibly annoyed, to give his little sister Stella a ride to the hospital. To top it off, the operation to correct her jug ears was rescheduled for his last day at home.

In the interval Steve arrived at Phil's flat, where he and his younger brother Jason (DAVID TENNANT) smoke dope and make plans for the evening. Steve wants a gun and after a short laugh Phil recognizes that the pimpled dork who always lacked self-confidence is dead serious this time. This could be his chance to collect the missing money for his drug deal. Phil tells Steve that a gun will cost him 500 dollars – and he

## THE HOUSE IS BURNING

has to pay today. Steve heads home to steal the money for the gun from his parents – or at least as much as he can grab.

On the way to the hospital Mrs. Miller can't keep her temper, and she berates her son during the whole ride. Her husband killed in a war, her son fighting another war and her daughter in the hospital is too much of a burden for her. Mike on the other hand certainly had other ideas for how to spend his last day home. He drops his mother and sister off at the hospital and heads back to Valerie's place. Steve in the meantime has stolen several hundred dollars and a few pieces of jewelry he also got a hold of, from his parents.

In the meantime Terry's has finished her interview and gone to Valerie's place to help with preparations for the party. When she arrived, Val and her friend Sharon (KAREN DiCONCETTO) were giggling and seemingly keeping a secret from her. After a short inquiry Sharon blurts out that Valerie had sex with Phil and that her relationship with Mike is at stake. Calm on the outside, Terry follows the girlish debate that Val and Sharon are having about boys and sex. But inside she feels her life slipping away. She had a short affair with Phil, got pregnant, had an abortion and, nevertheless, hope he would return to her. In this personal disaster, Terry does what she always does when she is confronted with problems: she takes pills, covering insecurity and pain.

At the same time, Mike arrives at Phil's flat. Surprised to find Steve there his conversation with Phil and Jason is short. They just talk about an acquaintance that recently got back from Iraq – as an amputee in a wheelchair. Then Phil and Mike talk business in the kitchen. After Mike buys his "last pot as a civilian" their conversation turns to Valerie and how Mike's planning to make it through the year when they are separated. Mike is trying to ignore that thought, but now he's starting to see why Valerie was so distant when he came on to her.

## THE HOUSE IS BURNING

Only a few hours left until the party kicks off. Phil, Steve and Jason go out for a little shooting session with the gun they got for Steve. Afterwards they are going to Valerie's house to attend Mike's farewell party. Terry is desperate and starts drinking – despite all of the drugs in her bloodstream. Valerie's sister Anne plans to have a ball on the first real party of her life. She wants to be accepted too. She wants to act like “adults” do.

Before sunrise, each of these characters will have to make a life-altering decision. Not all will make the right one. Some of the alternates even could claim their life – or the life of somebody they love.



# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

## About the production

After directing several short films, German filmmaker Holger Ernst makes his debut as feature film director with THE HOUSE IS BURNING produced by Reverse Angle International's Peter Schwartzkopff, Katja Siegel and Alex Gibney with support of German Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg (MBB) and German Federal Filmboard (FFA). Executive Producer is internationally acclaimed filmmaker and co-founder of Reverse Angle Production Wim Wenders.

The fast paced drama focuses on one day in the life of a group of troubled teenagers in an American suburb. It depicts a rough snapshot of the increasing economic decline and hopelessness of socially disadvantaged people in our western civilization. Drugs, alcohol and violence are ubiquitous in the everyday life of these kids and their parents. But above all these people suffer from the feeling of being left alone. Without hasty dramatization or falling into clichés THE HOUSE IS BURNING unfolds a closely photographed, metaphorical kaleidoscope of characters on the brink of growing up, facing the need to build a future, facing a past.

The choices all these characters have to face and the sacrifices they have to make for their decisions, the conflict of generations, the lost dreams and shattered lives, all this shows the audience quite plainly that nothing in life is achieved without cost. And in the world of these kids even the price for love, acknowledgement, acceptance, and a decent future is more than they can afford.

THE HOUSE IS BURNING is a fascinating, courageous and extraordinarily authentic motion picture about the people standing in the shade of our modern Western world. THE HOUSE IS BURNING is at once a warning and a promise. Moreover THE HOUSE IS BURNING is a strong statement for a more humane society.

# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

## Q&A with Holger Ernst (Director/Writer)

**Question:** *Directing a German production shot entirely in the USA with English speaking actors is quite unusual for a feature film debut of a German filmmaker. How did it come to this project?*

**Holger Ernst:** I was invited to the Venice film festival 2004 with my short film *Rain Is Falling*, where I saw Wim Wender's film *LAND OF PLENTY*. I liked that someone put his thoughts upfront, contacted *REVERSE ANGLE* and presented my scripts which they liked. Then everything went really fast - and here we are: *THE HOUSE IS BURNING*.

**Q:** *That doesn't explain the unusual setting.*

**Holger Ernst:** Well, I had the initial idea for *THE HOUSE IS BURNING* already some years ago. The original setting was not based in the United States but in Europe. The characters and the story I had in mind developed, and then there was 9/11. All of a sudden this world was turned upside down by the war in Afghanistan, and later Iraq. Somehow my script suddenly felt right to be put in that dramatic structure. I was lucky to have Reverse Angle International support me in this vision. But I want to stress out that although the plot is based in the USA the statement of the movie is global.

**Q:** *With the Background of the war on Iraq this seems to be a quite America-related story.*

**Holger Ernst:** This war is contemporary history. And the war is still battled. To be honest, in the beginning I wanted to make such a movie. A movie that shouts out

## THE HOUSE IS BURNING

loud: "This war is wrong! From an ideological and political standpoint." But then I recognized that this is not what my story was about and I don't like "teaching pics". I am a politically interested person and I am sure it is quite clear what I think about this war. But the point of this movie is a different one. Mike's involvement in this war is just the consequence of what he chooses in his life. The "fire" behind this can have a lot of different "fuels". I didn't want him to be the stereotypical "lost kid", that would have been too easy. He actually has a mother that loves him, he is not the stereotypical of what we call "white trash"...but he also has to grow up, make his own decisions and somehow I am sure he also misses his father – wants to become a man – just like his father.

*Q: The fact, that our modern western societies decline a growing numbers of people every chance of social advancement?*

**Holger Ernst:** Exactly. We are not talking about the American Dream. We are talking about a normal, graceful life. But no matter if you live in the USA, France, Germany or any other country, if you are born into a certain social 'caste' without money, without any prospect of good education you have very little chance to get a well-paid job, a "regular" life. And every other opportunity to escape these limitations is dangerous, illegal and/ or inhuman. This situation breeds violence. Just think of the riots in the Banlieues or the assaults on classmates and teachers in certain schools in Germany or the United States. I don't think these are ethnic problems as some politicians want us to believe, these are social problems and you find them in nearly every western society.

*Q: The characters in your movie are metaphors for some certain paths young people in such a situation are doomed to go?*

## THE HOUSE IS BURNING

**Holger Ernst:** First of all it is not only “the young people”, it’s not only this generation. There is a reason why for example Mr. Garson is beating the hell out of his son and why Mrs. Miller is using drugs, and it’s not because he is just a mean bastard and she is a pothead. All the characters/storylines in the movie are somehow metaphors for problems i see in our societies. But it was also very important for us to demonstrate the personal motivation for each of the characters. None of these would be authentic, if they were just sociological blueprints or intellectual symbols of another story. Mike for example: Of course it is one of the few opportunities for young man in his situation to join the Army, the “Légion étrangère” or the “Bundeswehr”, but he has also his own reasons that even collide with his families’ point of view. I hope the audience will see and understand the metaphors that are “hidden” in the puzzle of the characters: their dreams, their stories that stand for so much more. This all was triggered by what is going on around me in this world. I don’t have the answers, but a lot of questions.

**Q:** *So the whole movie depends on the credibility of the actors. How did you cast them?*

**Holger Ernst:** This really was plenty of work! It took us months to find the right actor for every single role. Casting Director Caroline Sinclair did a fantastic job; nonetheless I had to audition about 1,600 actors myself and this took me about three months – much longer than we were actually shooting. But it was worth all the work and passion given, as we did not only assemble a magnificent cast of extraordinary talented actresses and actors, we also got squad of highly motivated associates who helped the production in a way that reached far beyond the regular performance of an ensemble. The producers and I can hardly express how thankful we are.

# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

## Q&A with Katja Siegel (Production) and Peter Schwartzkopff (Producer)

*Question: Mr. Schwartzkopff, you made yourself quite a name by producing and executive producing outstanding film projects of accomplished directors as Wim Wenders, Martin Scorsese or Mike Figgis. What was it like to work with a “greenhorn”?*

**Peter Schwartzkopff:** Holger Ernst may be a young director, but he is certainly no “greenhorn”. In fact Wim Wenders and I were quite surprised how elaborate Holger’s ideas and the script for THE HOUSE IS BURNING already were, when we first talked about the project. We felt from the beginning that our full support was essential to him and so we tried our best to realize this production as fast and as frictionless as possible.

*Q: As a producer you must find your main topic that elevates the story beyond doubt in order to back it with 100 percent. What is yours in THE HOUSE IS BURNING?*

**Peter Schwartzkopff:** It was the general idea of having an ensemble of nearly seven or eight equal characters with the same background who give you the opportunity to go in so many different directions to express the variety of human motivations and decisions.

**Katja Siegel:** Absolutely right! You simply cannot say you prefer this character to that. They are all totally authentic, understandable and with one exception they are all even amiable. The script gripped me from the moment I read the first page.

*Q: Mrs. Siegel, it must have been quite a changeover from your last project, Hans-Christian Schmid’s Requiem, a religious drama focusing on one person, to this socially motivated ensemble piece?*

## THE HOUSE IS BURNING

**Katja Siegel:** Oh, not at all. The stories of both projects might be different, but this is the director's and writer's cup of tea. Speaking as a producer it was in deed quite similar to work with Hans-Christian Schmid and Holger Ernst. Both directors are totally devoted to their projects, both know exactly in which direction they want to go and both have a unique talent to lead their actors.

*Q: The creative team was entirely from Germany, cast and crew mainly from the United States. Were there any problems with this separation?*

**Peter Schwartzkopff:** THE HOUSE IS BURNING is not the first movie we shot in America; we already had some experiences from *Don't Come Knocking* and *Land Of Plenty*. And by the way I don't see the big differences between a so-called "European" or "American" way of producing a movie. Most of what you hear about is just gossip. Neither do the ones operate with several hierarchy systems nor are the others that more efficient. This is mostly affiliated with dimension of the budget and has nothing to do with the flag.

**Katja Siegel:** This was my first movie realized in the United States and can only agree with this point of view. There are not so many differences between "systems" – at least not in the budget dimensions I was working with. Maybe a little thing: I was quite surprised how supportive the actors were. Even when the cameras were off they were totally devoted and helped out wherever they could.

**Peter Schwartzkopff:** That is true! The entire cast was brilliant! Without their commitment it would have been impossible to finish shooting in only 24 days. I still cannot believe that we did it in time.

*Q: Mr. Schwartzkopff, this was the second time you worked with actor John Diehl. Is he a favorite of yours?*

## THE HOUSE IS BURNING

**Peter Schwartzkopff:** More of a good friend! We were so lucky he found the time to play the role. Casting this character was really hard, we had several actors in mind. Finally we asked John - and bingo!

*Q: Financing is always an interesting object on European films, especially when you are not shooting in Europe. What was the trick?*

**Peter Schwartzkopff:** There was no trick! First of all we have to thank MBB (Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg) and FFA for their support. Without their help THE HOUSE IS BURNING would not have been possible. We also have to thank our entire cast. All of the actors agreed to reduce their fee in favor of participation on the recoil and this was the only way to finance this movie with the budget we had.

**Katja Siegel:** In other words: every single actor of the movie is somehow side or line producer of THE HOUSE IS BURNING.

*Q: This is an interesting production and finance model for movies. Do you intend to use it for further productions?*

**Peter Schwartzkopff:** This was the only way to realize this movie, so more or less we just made a virtue out of necessity and I am not sure if you are able to deploy such a model on many films. But at least it is a new method that helps to produce movies. We have it in the tool-box, we'll see when to use it!

# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

## About the Cast

**JOE PETRILLA**

**as**

**Mike Miller**

Joe Petrilla graduated CUM LAUDE with a Bachelor of Science in Theater from the Northwestern University School of Speech. Since then, he was seen onstage in numerous off-broadway productions like *A Flea In Her Ear*, *Children Of A Lesser God*, *Waking The Bear*, *For Whom The Southern Belle Tolls*, *Our Town*, and *Macbeth*.

The role as Mike Miller in THE HOUSE IS BUNRNING marks his feature film debut as an actor.

**NICOLE VICIUS**

**as**

**Valerie**

Nicole Vicius recently starred, to critical acclaim, opposite Michael Pitt and Asia Argento in the award-winning drama *Last Days*, written and directed by Gus Van Sant. Her additional film credits include Robert Minervini's *Voodoo Doll* and *Half Nelson* alongside Ryan Gosling. She started her professional acting career with notable performances in TV-series as *Law & Order*, *Ed*, and *All My Children*.

Nicole Vicius just finished shooting on Talia Lugacy's *Descent*, opposite Rosario Dawson and Chad Faust, and Tom DiCillo's *Delirious*, opposite Alison Lohman, Minnie Driver, Steve Buscemi and Elvis Costello.



# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

**ROBIN TAYLOR**

as

**Phil**

Born and raised in Iowa, Robin Taylor began his career as news presenter on the family TV-show *UTV Live*. After he graduated from College he move to New York and began landing stage roles immediately after making a commitment to acting. Robin Taylor is currently playing one of the main roles in the off-broadway production of Michael Lewis Maclennan's *The Shooting Stage*. Prior to that, he starred in The Young Playwrights Festival at the Cherry Lane Theatre, in *Boy Beautiful* at the HERE Arts Centre and in *Henry IV*. at The La MaMa

Robin Taylor made his big screen debut in Spike Lee's critically acclaimed AIDS-drama *Jesus Children Of America* opposite Rosie Perez, Coati Mundi and Andre Royo. He recently finished shooting on Steve Pink's comedy *Accepted*, starring Justin Long, Ann Cusack and Tim Bagley.

**JULIANNE MICHELLE**

as

**Terry**

Born on September, 5<sup>th</sup>, 1984, Julianne Michelle began acting with the age of six. Her first appearances include *Who's The Boss?*, *Roseanne* and *Ellen*. She established herself as voice of the animated character Dot in ten episodes of the beloved TV series *The Oz Kids*. Michelle received a Young Artist Award ensemble nomination for her role in the tele-film *Bus No. 9*. She was elected as one of the "20 Teens Who Will Change The World" by Teen People Magazine and L'Oreal Paris counted her under the "Top Five Teens 2001"

## THE HOUSE IS BURNING

Her film credits include Sean Michael Beyer's *Down The P.C.H.*, the thriller *Land Of Canaan* opposite Tara Reid, and the leading role in *The Innocent And The Damned*. In brief Julianne Michelle begins principle photography for Terence Gordon's *Psychosis*.

### JOHN DIEHL

as

#### Paul Garson

Born on May, 1<sup>st</sup>, 1950, John Diehl is one of the industry's most versatile and accomplished actors whose career has almost spanned over three decades. Beginning as specialist for avant-garde and experimental productions in New York he soon made his way to Hollywood. In 1981, he starred in *Escape from New York*, opposite Kurt Russell, and *Stripes* alongside Bill Murray and Harold Ramis.

Since then John Diehl has appeared in more than 60 motion pictures and numerous TV productions. On television he is probably best known for his role as Larry Zito in *Miami Vice*. He also had regular or recurring roles in *The West Wing*, *The Shield*, and *Point Pleasant*. Other TV credits are *ER*, *The X Files*, *JAG*, and *NYPD BLUE* among others.

In 2004, John Diehl's leading role in Wim Wenders' *Land Of Plenty* was acclaimed by film critics and audience worldwide. In 2001, he starred in Jerry Bruckheimer's *Pearl Harbor* and in *Lost Souls* opposite Winona Ryder, Ben Chaplin and Elias Koteas. In 1995, Diehl appeared as Gordon Liddy in *Nixon* alongside Sir Anthony Hopkins. John Diehl's other motion picture credits include *Falling Down*, *The Client*, *A Time To Kill*, *Gettysburg* and *Jurassic Park III* – among others.

John Diehl resides in Ojai, California.

# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

**Melissa Leo**

**as**

**Mrs. Miller**

Melissa Leo is probably best known for her role as Detective Kay Howard in the highly acclaimed NBC-Series *Homicide: Life On The Street*. Other remarkable television credits include *All My Children*, *The Young Riders*, *Law & Order*, and *Miami Vice*. The New York born actress is a committed stage performer and appeared in numerous on- and off-broadway productions including Tennessee Williams' *Will Mr. Meriwether Return from Memphis?*, Eve Ensler's acclaimed *The Vagina Monologues*, *Don Joan*, *Cinders*, and *A Touch Of A Poet* among others.

Evermore on the big screen, Melissa Leos is one of the most intriguing and versatile actresses of our time. She starred in Alejandro González Iñárritu's Academy Award nominated drama *21 Grams* opposite Sean Penn, Benicio Del Toro and Naomi Watts. In the year 2004, Melissa Leo could be seen in the blockbuster *Hide And Seek*, alongside Robert De Niro, Famke Jansen and Dakota Fanning. Further motion picture credits include *Immaculate Conception*, *From Other Worlds*, *Last Sommer In The Hamptons*, and *Venice/Venice*. She also starred in *The three Burials*, Tommy Lee Jones directoral debut and screening in Cannes 2005, winning best actor and best script.

# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

## About the Filmmakers

### **HOLGER ERNST** (Director; Writer)

Holger Ernst was born 1972 in Germany and graduated from the Department of Film of the Academy of Arts in Kassel with a degree in “Visual Communications, specializing in Writing and Directing”. He has directed several short films which screened at the Film Festivals of Venice, Montreal, Paris, Valladolid, and Houston among many others over the past five years, including the much-praised *Kleine Fische* (*Little Fish*). His critically acclaimed *Rain Is Falling* screened on the Film Festivals of Berlin and Venice among others and won the renowned Max-Ophüls-Award of Saarbrücken Film Festival. Holger Ernst was also awarded with and proposed for several national and international film prizes for his scripts on feature film projects as *Das Leben Geht Weiter* (*Life Goes On*), *Familie – Demontage Einer Seele*, and *Wir Sind Die Größten*. THE HOUSE IS BURNING marks Holger Ernst’s debut as feature film director. He is currently working on another project for Reverse Angle, the drama *D.O.P.E. – Dreaming Of Paradise Europe*.

### FILMOGRAFY (Selection):

- **Argus** (BRD 1997) / Fiction / 6 Min.
- **Der blaue Engel oder das Leben der Martha S.** (BRD 1997/98) / Exp. Docu / 10 Min.
- **Kleistronik** (BRD 1999) / 5 Min.
- **Kleine Fische - Little Fish** (BRD 2000) / Fiction / 9 Min.
- **Liebst du mich ? - Do You Love Me?** (BRD 2001) / Fiction / 20 Min.
- **Natur Pur** (BRD 2003) / SPOT / 75 Sek.
- **Rain Is Falling** (BRD 2004) / Fiction / 15 Min.

# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

**PETER SCHWARTZKOPFF**

**(Producer)**

In the year 2002, Peter Schwartzkopff, being one of the Germany's most important television producers, also established himself in the movie industry. He teamed up with filmmaker Wim Wenders and they co-founded Reverse Angle Production, an independent film production, finance and distribution company. As CEO of this company and its five divisions Schwartzkopff was involved in some of the worldwide most acclaimed German and international productions over the last years. In 2003, he executive produced *The Blues Series*, containing Antoine Fuqua's outstanding live concert movie *Lightning In A Bottle* and seven documentary pieces of accomplished directors as Martin Scorsese (*Feel Like Going Home*), Clint Eastwood (*Piano Blues*), Richard Pearce (*The Road To Memphis*), Charles Burnett (*Warming By The Devils Fire*), Mike Figgis (*Red, White And Blues*), Marc Levin (*Godfathers and Sons*), and Wim Wenders (*The Soul Of A Man*). Schwartzkopff also produced Wim Wender's next motion pictures: *Land Of Plenty* and *Don't Come Knocking*.

*Land of Plenty* starring Michelle Williams and John Diehl screened at the Official Competition of the Venice Film Festival 2004. *Don't Come Knocking* starring Sam Shepard, Jessica Lange, Sarah Polley and Tim Roth was screened at the Official Competition of the Cannes Film Festival 2005. The Movie received four nominations and one award at the 18<sup>th</sup> European Film Awards.

Peter Schwartzkopff's other motion picture credits include the international co-production *Bye Bye Blackbird* starring Malcolm MacDowell and Michael Lonsdale, the critically praised youth drama *Egoshooter, Narren, ½ Miete, and Take Away*.

Prior to forming his own film production banner, Peter Schwartzkopff was responsible for the development and production of TV shows as *SPIEGEL TV, Willemsens Woche, KERNER, SONJA, and JÖRG PILAWA* among many others

# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

## **KATJA SIEGEL** **(Production)**

Katja Siegel was born in Munich/ Germany in 1975. From 1993 to 1999, she studied law at the Albert-Ludwigs-University in Freiburg, Germany. In 1999, she made a post-graduate study in producing at the Filmakademie Baden-Wuerttemberg focusing on international and creative producing. After her diploma in January 2003 and an internship at "Eurimages" in Strasbourg, she worked as producers assistant in development at "Maxmedia" (*The Others, Skyblue*) in Los Angeles. 2004 she worked as a line producer for *Requiem* by German film director Hans-Christian Schmid.

Since 2005, she works as a producer for Reverse Angle in Berlin, producing Holger Ernst's first feature film *THE HOUSE IS BURNING* and Bettina Bluemner's short documentary *Naked City*.

## **ALEX GIBNEY** **(Production)**

New York born director, writer and producer, Alex Gibney is President of Jigsaw Productions, an Emmy Award-winning production company. Gibney recently produced, wrote and directed the documentary pieces *Enron: The Smartest Guys In The Room* and *Behind Those Eyes*, both highlights of the American film festival circuit 2005. He executive produced the short film series *Exiles On Main Street* directed by filmmakers as Mira Nair, Wayne Wang, and Sherman Alexie, among others. Alex Gibney already worked with Peter Schwartzkopff on *The Blues Series*, including Wim Wender's *The Soul Of A Man* that was screened as official selection at the Cannes Film Festival.

## THE HOUSE IS BURNING

Alex Gibney's filmography includes other credits as *Brooklyn Babylon*, *The Trials Of Henry Kissinger*, and *Soldiers In The Army of Good*. He recently finished production on jazz music documentary *Herbie Hancock: Possibilities* and currently is in pre-production for *Hunter*, a portrait of late gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson.

### **WIM WENDERS (Executive Producer)**

Wim Wenders was born on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1945 in Düsseldorf. He lived in Düsseldorf, Koblenz and in the Ruhr District, where he graduated at a "Humanistisches Gymnasium" in Oberhausen. After two years of studying medicine and philosophy and a year-long stay in Paris as a painter, he attended the Academy of Film and Television in Munich from 1967 to 1970. From 1968 to 1972 he worked as a film critic for "Filmkritik" and "Süddeutsche Zeitung", among other publications.

In 1971 he was one of the founding members of "Filmverlag der Autoren", the driving force behind the "New German Cinema". In 1975 he started his own production company in Berlin, "Road Movies". In 1984 he became a member of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin. He's a doctor h.c. of the Sorbonne University in Paris and of the theological faculty of the University of Fribourg. From 1991 to 1996 he was the appointed Chairman of the European Film Academy, of which he is the elected President since. Presently he is teaching film as a professor at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Hamburg. Together with his partner Peter Schwartzkopff he produces out of Berlin, with their company Reverse Angle. Wim Wenders lives in Los Angeles, New York and Berlin.

### **Filmography and Awards (Selection)**

1972            **Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter**  
                  **(The Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty Kick)**

# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

- Prize of the Film Critics, Venice
- 1974     **Falsche Bewegung (Wrong Move)**  
German Film Prize/Gold (Director)
- 1976     **Im Laufe der Zeit (Kings of the Road)**  
Best Film, Chicago Film Festival
- 1978     **Der Amerikanische Freund (The American Friend)**  
German Film Prize/Gold (Director) and Silver (Production)
- 1981     **Nick's Film – Lightning over Water**  
German Film Prize/Silver (Production)
- 1982     **Der Stand der Dinge (State of Things)**  
Golden Lion/Fipresci Prize, Venice  
German Film Prize/Silver (Production)
- 1984     **Paris, Texas**  
Golden Palm, Cannes  
British Academy Award (Best Director)  
Prize of the French Film Critics  
German film Prize/Silver (Production)
- 1985     **Tokyo-Ga**  
"Outstanding film of the year", London Film Festival
- 1987     **Der Himmel über Berlin (Wings of Desire)**  
Prize for Best Director, Cannes  
European Film Prize (Director)  
German Film Prize/Gold (Director)  
Bavarian Film Prize (Director)  
Los Angeles Film Critics Award for Best Foreign Film & Photography  
New York Film Critics Circle (Photography)  
Independent Spirit Award
- 1991     **Bis ans Ende der Welt (Until the End of the World)**  
Guild Prize in Gold (Best German Film)
- 1993     **In weiter Ferne, so nah! (Faraway, so Close!)**  
Grand Jury Prize, Cannes  
Bavarian Film Prize (Director)
- 1997     **Am Ende der Gewalt (The End of Violence)**  
German Film Prize/Gold (Director)
- 1998     **The Buena Vista Social Club**  
Best Documentary Award, European Film Awards  
NBR Award for Best Documentary, National Board of Review  
Golden Space Needle for Best Documentary, Seattle International Film Festival



# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

Award for Best Documentary, New York Film Critics  
Award for Best Documentary, Los Angeles Film Critics  
Academy Award Nomination

- 2000      **The Million Dollar Hotel**  
            Silver Bear, Berlin Film Festival
- 2003      **The Blues Series: The Soul of a Man**
- 2004      **Land of Plenty**
- 2005      **Don't Come Knocking**

## STEFAN GRANDINETTI (Director of Photography)

Stefan Grandinetti was able to make some useful experiences in movie industry and photography in particular, long before he graduated with a Summa Cum Laude diploma for camera from the renowned Film and Television Academy "Konrad Wolf" in Potsdam-Babelsberg and finished his "Director Of Photography"-Master Class in Budapest, Hungary. Grandinetti worked as 2<sup>nd</sup> Unit Camera Operator and Assistant Camera for productions (*Enemy At The Gates*, *Resident Evil*, *September*, *Sonnenallee*, *Luther*, and *Equilibrium*, among others.)

His apprenticeship completed, Stefan Grandinetti moved up to Director of Photography in Mark Alan Cairn's acclaimed documentary *Das Leben geht weiter (Live Goes On)*, *Il Legame* and *Hitler & Mussolini*. After *Kleistronik*, *Natur Pur*, *Liebst du mich? – Do You Love Me?* and *Rain Is Falling*, THE HOUSE IS BURNING already present the fifth cooperation between director Holger Ernst and Grandinetti.

## MATHIAS SCHÖNINGH (Camera)

After graduating as photographer, Mathias Schöningh started a career as freelance camera operator. His commercial and short film credits include *Clicker*, *Mission Security*, and *Perspektive*, among others for customers as Axe and T-Systems. He is currently working on another project for Reverse Angle, director Bettina Blümner's documentary *Berlin – Prinzenbad*.

# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

**SILKE BOTSCH**  
**(EDITOR)**

Silke Botsch was born 1967 in West Berlin, Germany. She exercised her craft as a trainee in editing for different film companies in Germany and the USA. As accomplished editor she was involved in projects as the telefilm *Built Like A German House*, the internationally produced history-documentary *Khan*, and R.P. Kahl's feature Film *Angel Express*. Other film and television credits include Norwegian production *FUCKLOVINSHIT*, Veit Helmer's *Gate To Heaven*, and *Frozen Angels*, official contribution at Sundance Festival 2005.

Silke Botsch is one of the industry's most requested editors for video-clips music-DVDs and worked for acts and customers like TOCOTRONIC, Universal Music, and Ministry Of Sound. She also works as director and editor for commercials und industrial films for such customers as Deutsche Bank, Swiss Air, Terre des Hommes, Volkswagen, and Vodaphone, among others. In the 2004, Silke Botsch was guest lecturer at the Bauhaus\_Universität, Weimar on the subject „Editing and Realisation in Commercials und Television“.

# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

## Cast: (in order of appearance)

Mike Miller

Steve

Phil

Valerie

Terry

Mr. Garson

Mrs. Miller

Stella Miller

Jason

Anne

Sharon

Mrs. Garson

Liz

Carl

Insurance Man

Sheriff

Preacher

Young Steve

Sarah

Cashier

Party Guests

Nurse

Doctor

Receptionist

Army Recruiter

Army Officer

Bank Officer

Bank Assistant

Paramedic

Paramedic #2

Police Officer

Police Officer #2

Taxi Driver

Stunt Coordinators

Joe Petrilla

Harley Adams

Robin Taylor

Nicole Vicius

Julianne Michelle

John Diehl

Melissa Leo

Samantha Ressler

David Tennent

Emily Meade

Karen DiConcetto

Bernadette Quigley

Eleonore Hendricks

Erik Jensen

Frank Deal

Neal Jones

Carson Grant

Shamus Reilly

Shayna Levine

Tony Vozzo

Adam LaVorgna

Brett Fleisher

Tim Dowlin

Marjorie Johnson

Stephen William Clarke

Edloe Blackwell

Robert Scorrano

Jeff Greene

Polly Chung

Bettina Bilger

George Sheffey

John McWilliams

Roddy Murphy

Nathaniel Alexander

Gurdeep Singh

Manny Siverio

Derrick Simmons

Roy Farfel

# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

Car Crash Stunt  
Embankment Stunt  
Stunts

Janet Paparazzo  
Kevin Rogers  
Mike Burke  
John P. McLaughlin

## Crew:

UPM  
1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Director  
2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant Director

Fran Giblin  
Chris Carroll  
Kit Bland

1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Camera  
2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant Camera  
Camera Intern

Sarah Hendricks  
Yueni Zander  
Richard S. Ledley

Sound Mixer  
Boom Operator

Tammy M. Douglas  
Guillermo Pena-Tapia

Gaffer  
Best Boy Electric  
Electric  
Key Grip  
Best Boy Grip  
Additional Grip  
Additional Swings

Philipp Gerhardt  
Derek Gross  
Bart Grieb  
Jon Vendetti  
Joe Mandeville  
Marcus Lehmann  
Bill Dixon  
Nick Hiller  
Daniel Luebke

Art Director  
Props/Scenic  
Additional Props  
Art Interns

Paul Hudson  
George Allison  
Melissa White  
Andrew Lewitin  
Clint Litton

Key Hair, Make Up  
& SFX Make Up  
Hair & Make Up Intern  
Custom Color &

Joelle Troisi  
Lindsay Hymson

# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

Hair Design	James Thomas
Asst. Make Up & Tattoo Design	Michael Matos
Costume Designer	Amanda Ford
	Joelle Troisi
	Nikia Nelson
Wardrobe Supervisor	Evelyn Mejia
Story Consultant	Allan Dorr
Script Supervisor	Howard Steeves
Production Coordinator	Polly Chung
Assist. Prod. Coordinator	Marissa Price
Jigsaw Office Liason	Crystal Whelan
Production Accountant	Joice Stewart
Office Interns	Eric Jensen
	Dylan Raycroft
	Caitlin J. Pickall
	Kanin Murphy
	Fernando Alvarado
Archival Intern	Emma Pildes
Locations Manager	Taylor Cherry
Assist. Location Manager	Brian Buttray
Locations Scout	Scott Ferlisi
Key Set Production Assist.	Phillip Saxton
Set Production Assistants	Chris Tomeo
	Paola Vengoechea
Set Interns	Roja Gashtili
	Alex Mjolsness
	Christian Flores
	Garrett Hemmerich
	Marsy Tellier
Craft Service PA	Alexia Anastasio
Acting Coach	Jill Samuels
Additional Casting	Eleonore Hendricks
Casting Assistant	Bettina Bilger
Casting Intern	Stephanie Keating
Special Effects Coordinator	Drew Jiritano

# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

Special Effects Lead Man	Neil Ruddy
Associate Editor	Kiersten Harter
Editing Interns	Scott Burgess Grace Park
Catering Provided by	Something's Cooking, New York
Insurance Provided by	Kathy England Joanie Bauert England Insurance Brokerage Ltd.
Camera Provided by	Technicological Cinevideo Service, Inc.
Lighting Provided by	KAS Lighting
Walkies Provided by	Gotham Sound
Payroll Services Provided by	Axium International, Inc.
Animals	Animal Actors Inc.
Trainer	Steve McAuliff
Legal Services N.Y.	Robert L. Seigel, Esq. Roger E. Kass, Esq. Cowan DeBaets Abrahams & Sheppard LLP
Dolby Sound Consultant	Hubert Henle
Mix Studio	Studio Babelsberg
Managing Director	Olaf Mierau
Sound Department	Nina Deutschmann
Re-Recording Mixer	Holger Lehmann
Coordinator & Dialogue Editor	Immo Trümpelmann
Sound Designer	Martin Frühmorgen
Foley Mixer & Foley Editor	Alexander Heinze
Foley Artist	Carsten Richter
Musicians	
Guitar & Keyboards	Markus Glunz Jens Gebel
Bass	Daniel Dickmeis
Cello	Theo Hotze
Additional Voices	Caitlin Pickall

# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

Post Production Services	Pictorion - das werk Berlin
Postproduction Supervisor:	Wolf Bosse
Postproduction Coordinator	Tom Michel
Digital Grading Colorist:	Philipp Orgassa
Digital Grading Assistant	Nico Hauter
Online Editor:	Sergej Range
	Alexander Falk
Title Design	Alexander Janke
Visual Effects Artist	Philipp Fehling
	Thomas Hiebler
Digital Lab	Pictorion das werk München
Digital Intermediate Supervisor	Bernd Schulze
Digital Intermediate Coordinator	Ralf Wacker
Recording	Gerhard Spring
Color Timer	TBD
U.S. Production Services	Combustible Film L.L.C.
Reverse Angle	
Berlin	
Legal & Business Affairs	Valentina Lori
Postproduction	
Coordinator	Francesca Breetzke
Accountant	Rainer Pyls
	Andreas Pautsch
Assistant to	
Mr. Schwartzkopff	Solveig Hellriegel
Production Assistant	Josefine Schwartzkopff
Production Assistant	Marina Rembold
Office Coordinator	Maria Brüning
Office Intern	Jan Kramer
Music Supervisor	beckmann / milena fessmann CINESONG

# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

Archival Footage Courtesy of  
Corbis Motion

Sebastian de Faber

Production Insurance

Aon / Jauch & Hübner  
Züricher / Rolf Dieter Botz

Legal Advisor Germany

Unverzagt von Have  
Kai May

Legal Advisor Music

Taylor Wessing  
Carsten Bartholl

Music:

***G.I.L.F***

Brett

M+T: G.Schmalzl, R.Gonzalez)

© Ed.Beckmann / BMG Music Publishing

***Surprize (You not real)***

Composed by BUGI

Performed by Big Shug

Courtesy of Gambit-Entertainment

***The House Is Burning***

Courtesy of Reverse Angle Records

## **The Filmmakers Wish To Express Their Profound Gratitude To:**

All the staff at the NJ Motion Picture & Television Commission  
Bill Close and Police Chief Louis Mercurio - Borough of Haledon  
Mayor Fred Criscitelli, Police Captain Peter Vander Pyl,  
CFO Mary Jeanne Hewitt -Borough of Hawthorne  
Mayor Randy George, Lucille Debiak - Borough of North Haledon

Police Lt Dring, Mary Lee Lombardi - Township of Wayne  
Delores Choteborsky - Passaic County Administrator's Office  
Borough of Lincoln Park, Borough of Clifton  
The Gutt Family, Glue Editing & Design, Thrifty Car Rental, Sound One Corp.,



# THE HOUSE IS BURNING

Doug Biro, Hair Pi Salon, Arthur McClendon, Guess, Energy Brands, Inc., H&M, Nautica

Footwear, Hobarama LLC/Bawls Guarana, Clif Inc.

H&H Bagels, Jones Soda, Utz Quality Foods

Kirsten Niehuus, Anja Dörken, Nicola Jones, Luke Schiller, Eva Matischak, Andreas Matischak

Matthew LaClair, Kendal Ridgeway, Cosmo Bjorkenheim

Annabel Zaharieff, Alyssa Costa, Madison Errichetti

Rebecca Bartolickm, Alexa Eisenstein, Michael Hertrich,

Don Pachine, Jeff Noris, Benjamin Herrmann,

Marco Buttgereit, Hanse Warns, Samson Mücke,

Eric Black & Frauke Sandig, Andreas Preisner,

Tanja Meding, Uli Herter, MBF Frankfurt;

Florian Rettich, Cinegate Berlin, Axel Mertes Magna Mana, Frankfurt,

P + S Technik München, Anne Finger, Vitali Usselman, Annett Drittel, Ingo Frenzel,

Simon Ortmeyer, Tilmann Dehnhard, Nico Nohn, Ludwig Eckmann,

Ulf Remy, Charles and Judy Dunne,

Felix Rost, Florian Moser,

## Special Thanks To:

Astrid Hagenguth

Teresa Rosenkranz

Marita Damkroeger

Manuel Challal

Philipp Rebitzer