

HEART OF STONE

A film by Johannes Naber

Genre	Drama / Fantasy
Country of production	Germany
Year of production	2016
Duration	119 min
Director	Johannes Naber
Produced by	Steffen Reuter
Screenplay	Johannes Naber, Christian Zipperle, Steffen Reuter, Andreas Marschall; based on the fairy tale by Wilhelm Hauff
Director of Photography	Pascal Schmit
Editor	Ben von Grafenstein
Music by	Oli Biehler
Production Designer	Julian R. Wagner
Costume Designer	Juliane Maier
Make Up Artist	Kathi Kullack
Casting Director	Suse Marquardt
Cast	Frederick Lau (Peter Munk) Henriette Confurius (Lisbeth) Moritz Bleibtreu (Holländer-Michel) Milan Peschel (Glasmännchen) David Schütter (Bastian) Sebastian Blomberg (Löbl) Roeland Wiesnekker (Etzel) André M. Hennicke (Jakob Munk) Jule Böwe (Barbara Munk) Lars Rudolph (Schui-Franz)
Production in Co-production with	Schmidtz Katze Filmkollektiv Studio Babelsberg, Philipp Filmproduction, SWR, ARD Degeto, MDR
Producer Co-Producer	Christoph Fisser, Henning Molfenter, Charly Wobcken, Philipp Hoeppe
Local Release	October 20th, 2016
World Sales	Picturetree International GmbH Husemannstr. 7 10435 Berlin P: +49 (0) 30 42082480 pti@picturetree-international.com www.picturetree-international.com

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Peter and Lisbeth are two young but unfortunate lovers living in a rigid rural community in the Black Forest. She comes from a wealthy family of glassblowers; he is a poor coal worker on the lower end of society. To become rich and respected, Peter makes a pact with a devil named Dutch Michael, who rips out his heart and replaces it with a stone. Robbed of all warmth and feeling, Peter becomes a cold-hearted go-getter who rapidly achieves his goals. Ruthlessly he strives for money and power. But Lisbeth no longer recognizes Peter as the man she once loved and turns against him. There is only one way for him to put things straight: Peter must get his heart back.

HEART OF STONE is based on a dark fairy tale written by Wilhelm Hauff and first published in 1827.

It tells a poetic love story set against the mysterious backdrop of the Black Forest. Hauff's tale was conceived as a criticism of man's greed for power; it also condemns the exploitation of nature and the abuse of fellow human beings. Johannes Naber translates this timeless parable into an emotional story tailored to today's audiences.

HEART OF STONE is the second collaboration between Schmidt Katze Filmkollektiv and Studio Babelsberg after their 2012 film IN DARKNESS, which received an Academy Award nomination in the Best Foreign Language Film category.



LONG SYNOPSIS

Peter is an amiable fellow who lives with his parents in an isolated charcoal burner's hut in the medieval Black Forrest. The life of a charcoal burner is hard and full of adversity. The family is humiliated by the other villagers and beaten up by the local timbermen. The only person who treats Peter with respect is Lisbeth, the charming daughter of a glassmaker named Löbl. Peter is just as fascinated by her as he is of the art of glassmaking. Unfortunately, Lisbeth is already promised to the handsome timber merchant Bastian.

Peter thinks the only way he can win Lisbeth's heart is if he attains wealth and prestige. When his mother tells him about the Glasmännchen ("little glass man"), a fabled forest spirit who has been granting people wishes for centuries, Peter sees this as a chance to act. High up in the forest, he finally finds the Glasmännchen, who grants him three wishes. Peter's first wish is to be the best dancer in the town so that he might finally get respect from the villagers. His second wish is to always have as much money in his pockets as the timber merchant Etzel – the richest man in the village – when they play dice at the inn. His final wish is to own the most beautiful glassworks in the Black Forest so that he never has to work as a charcoal burner again. Instead, he wants to pursue the prestigious profession of glassmaker.



The Glasmännchen fulfils his three wishes. But Peter has not chosen wisely, even though he can now indeed beat his opponent Bastian in the dance contest and is thus able to get closer to Lisbeth. The new glassworks doesn't get him very far either, seeing as he never learned the trade of glassmaking. And yet, Lisbeth, who has long since secretly chosen him to be her mate, helps him gain a foothold in his new existence as a glassmaker. At this point, it appears as if there's nothing standing in their way anymore.



But then Peter wins the dice game against Etzel at the inn. Unfortunately, the money disappears and his pockets are suddenly just as empty as those of Etzel. This means that Peter can't pay the 500 guilders that Löbl expects in return of for his daughter's hand in marriage. Peter knows only one way out: he seeks out the mysterious Dutch Michel, a dodgy timberman who lives in a dark cave after being expelled from society by the people. He convinces Peter that his fears are standing in his way and proposes a deal: if Peter gives him his heart, he will in replace it with a stone, through which he will lose the ability to feel. Peter notices that many men before him have given their hearts to Dutch Michel; finally, he agrees to the pact.

Freed from any empathy and compassion, Peter goes to Holland to make it rich. When he finally returns a wealthy man, Lisbeth believes that they can now be happy together. However, Peter is not the same man he was. Uncaring and cold, he is only interested in expanding his power. In fact, Lisbeth is nothing more than a toy for him. Shocked, Lisbeth refuses to marry him and tries to convince him that he must regain his heart. When Peter gets violent and tries to make her succumb to his will, she is accidentally killed. Peter finally realises what he has done and goes back to Dutch Michel to reclaim his heart.



FESTIVALS & MARKET SCREENINGS



German Films Previews 2016 - International Trailer Premiere

Bremen, Germany 06. – 09.07.2016
Market Screening



21st BUSAN International Film Festival – World Premiere

Busan, South Korea, 06. – 15.10.2016
Open Cinema Section



Asian Film Market

Busan, South Korea, 08. – 11.10.2016
Market Screening



MIA - Mercato Internazionale Audiovisivo

Rome, Italy, 20. – 24.10.2016
Market Screening



American Film Market

Santa Monica, USA, 02. – 09.11.2016
Market Screening



Ventana Sur Film Market

Buenos Aires, Argentina, 29.11. – 03.12.2016
Market Screening

PRESS NOTE

HEART OF STONE transports us into an archaic world where people still believe in ghosts. In this powerful story of a young man named Peter who sells his heart out of love for the beautiful Lisbeth, a high-calibre cast of young actors shine bright, including Frederick Lau (VICTORIA), Henriette Confurius (BELOVED SISTERS), David Schütter (WE ARE YOUNG. WE ARE STRONG.) and long-time German stars such as Moritz Bleibtreu (SOUL KITCHEN) and Milan Peschel (THE MANNY). This breathtaking and brand-new interpretation of the popular story by Wilhelm Hauff was made against the magnificent backdrop of the Black Forest as well as on elaborate sets at the historical Studio Babelsberg.



PRESS QUOTES

"This movie is a little wonder and above all a visual delight"

Cinema

"Maybe Naber's fresh interpretation of 'Heart Of Stone' will go down in cinematic history as a new milestone"

Filmdienst

"A visually stunning, atmospheric genre movie, which deal with contemporary phenomena like contemporary phenomena greed for profit"

3sat Kulturzeit

"Not from this world!"

TV Spielfilm

INTERNATIONAL PRESS COVERAGE

Variety:

Berlin: Moritz Bleibtreu Plays the Devil in Picture Tree's 'Heart of Stone'

Berlin-based Picture Tree Intl. has taken world sales rights to dark fairy-tale "Heart of Stone," which stars Frederick Lau ("Victoria"), Henriette Confurius ("Beloved Sisters") and Moritz Bleibtreu ("Woman in Gold," "Run Lola Run"), who plays the devil. The film, which is helmed by Johannes Naber ("Age of Cannibals"), is based on Wilhelm Hauff's 1827 love story set in a rigid, rural community in the Black Forest. It centers on poor charcoal burner Peter (Lau) who needs to become rich in order to marry Lisbeth (Confurius), and makes a pact with the devil (Bleibtreu). Hauff's tale was conceived of as a criticism of men's greed for power and the exploitation of nature and people. The film is the second collaboration between Schmidt Katze Filmkollektiv and Studio Babelsberg after "In Darkness," which was Oscar nominated in 2012. It is a co-production with SWR, ARD Degeto and MDR. Visual effects are by Chimney Germany ("Her").

<http://variety.com/2016/film/global/moritz-bleibtreu-devil-picture-tree-heart-of-stone-1201705493/>

German Films:

WORLD PREMIERE FOR HEART OF STONE IN BUSAN

Frederick Lau, Henriette Confurius and Moritz Bleibtreu – director Johannes Naber has brought an impressive cast together for his free adaptation of the Wilhelm Hauff fairytale HEART OF STONE. No less impressive is the location for its world premiere in the Open Cinema of the 21st Busan International Film Festival (6 – 15 October, 2016), an open-air cinema with seating for 4,000. WE ARE THE TIDE by Sebastian Hilger will have its international premiere in Busan where it has been nominated for the Audience Award in the Flash Forward sidebar reserved for first and second films.

[...]

HEART OF STONE (Schmidt Katze Filmkollektiv, Studio Babelsberg, Philipp Filmproduction) tells a poetic love story set against the mysterious backdrop of the Black Forest. Hauff's fairy tale was conceived as a criticism of man's greed for power and condemns the exploitation of nature and the abuse of fellow human beings. Johannes Naber, who will be there in person to present the film in Busan, translates this timeless parable into an emotional story tailored to today's audiences. It is the director's third feature film, his second one - AGE OF CANNIBALS (ZEIT DER KANNIBALEN) - winning the Lola in Bronze (Best Film) and the prize for the Best Screenplay at the 2015 German Film Awards.

<http://www.german-films.de/news/news-releases/datum/2016/09/06/world-premiere-for-heart-of-stone-in-busan/>

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Johannes Naber was born in Baden-Baden in 1971. He studied philosophy at FU Berlin before transferring to the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg, where he graduated in 1999 with a degree in documentary filmmaking. He went on to make several documentary films, some of which were feature-film documentaries. He also worked as a gaffer. In 2010, Naber's feature film debut THE ALBANIAN received the Max-Ophüls-Preis as well as the Silver George at the Moscow International Film Festival. Several national and international awards followed. Naber's second feature film, the comedy AGE OF CANNIBALS, premiered at the 2014 Berlinale in the "Perspektive Deutsches Kino" section. The film also received the German Film Award in Bronze and was named the "Best Film of 2015" by the Association of German Film Critics.

Johannes Naber lives and works in Berlin. HEART OF STONE is his third feature film.

"Two things attracted me to HEART OF STONE: first of all, I'm someone who is known more for working on real-life themes, so I felt a deep, child-like desire to make a fantasy film. Second of all, the fairytale contains a very fundamental social critique that I consider to be absolutely worth telling. The opportunity to tell that story to a wide audience was very appealing to me."

Johannes Naber



FREDERICK LAU (PETER MUNK)

As the son of a charcoal burner, Peter is quite low on the social rung. He and his coal-smudged face are confronted with a constant barrage of humiliations from the local timbermen. Lisbeth, the beautiful daughter of the wealthy glassmaker Löbl, seems completely out of reach to him. But Peter is so desperate to change his lot that he's prepared to enter into a diabolical pact.

"It's an exciting thing for any actor to play someone who gives up his own heart; someone who used to be full of youthful curiosity and openness; someone who suddenly becomes manipulative and acts in unscrupulous ways." Frederick Lau

Frederick Lau was born in Berlin in 1989 and began his career as an actor at the age of 10. He is best known for films such as THE WAVE, VICTORIA and TRAUMFRAUEN. He received the 2015 German Film Award for Best Actor for his role in VICTORIA.



HENRIETTE CONFURIUS (LISBETH)

For the young men in the village, the charming Lisbeth is a trophy they all want to win. But she is a headstrong girl with her own opinions; she goes against her father's wishes and rejects the well-liked and handsome Bastian in favour of the poor yet good-natured Peter. When Peter suddenly turns into an unscrupulous businessman, their love is put to a severe test.

Henriette Confurius was born in Berlin in 1991 and has starred in TANNBACH and BELOVED SISTERS, among others.

“When Peter disappears, Lisbeth defends him and waits for him, even though she doesn’t know where he is or whether he’s coming back. She shakes off all of her doubts and continues to believe that he will return. When he finally does, he’s a completely different person. But even then she stands by his side and believes firmly that there is still a reason why she fell in love with him. After her grandmother tells her about Dutch Michel, it suddenly becomes clear to her that Peter has given away his heart. But as long as he has no heart, there is no way she is going to marry him.”

Henriette Confurius

MORITZ BLEIBTREU (DUTCH MICHEL)

Long since banned from society and forced to live in a dark cave surrounded by forest spirits, Dutch Michel seeks out ways to take revenge. However, he doesn’t have to exert himself very much, seeing as a blind desire for wealth and prestige delivers people in to his hands all on their own. Thanks to his seductive promises, he is able to steal from them the very thing that makes them human: their hearts.

Moritz Bleibtreu was born in Munich in 1971 and has starred in many films, including RUN, LOLA RUN, LAMMBOCK and SOUL KITCHEN.



“Dutch Michel is someone who draws his strength from the hearts of men. He’s basically a junkie, someone who gets love from drugs that destroy him. He then becomes isolated because people are afraid of him. He is someone whose only way of surviving is via a drug that feels to him like a taste of love. That’s exactly the way I approached the hearts he collects. For him, each heart brings new life, new vitality, new love. Dutch Michel suffers greatly, but not in a sentimental way, it’s a much more aggressive way. His suffering is full of hate and he needs to hurt others to make himself feel better.”

Moritz Bleibtreu

MILAN PESCHEL (THE GLASSMÄNNCHEN)

The Glasmännchen lives high up in the forest where the great firs stand. For centuries, he has been fulfilling people's wishes. But people no longer believe in ghosts and are increasingly losing respect for nature. The power of the Glasmännchen is dwindling, and his appeals to the villagers to come to their senses would seem to be falling on deaf ears.

Milan Peschel was born in East Berlin in 1968. He is best known for hit films such as THE MANNY and SCHLUSSMACHER, but also STOPPED ON TRACK. Milan Peschel also performs regularly on stage.



“Our adaptation has forest spirits living in harmony with nature. They represent old myths and things that no longer exist in our world. They stand for a world in which you could look to the horizon and know that there was something behind it, that is, an invisible world full of fairies and spirits.”

Milan Peschel

DAVID SCHÜTTER (BASTIAN)

As the son of the wealthiest man in the village, Bastian is good-looking and well-liked. He's also used to getting everything he wants. In the course of the story, however, not only does his dance partner Lisbeth suddenly deny him her affections; he even has to work to get acknowledgment from his father.

David Schütter was born in Hamburg in 1991. He gave an eye-catching performance in WE ARE YOUNG. WE ARE STRONG, which catapulted him into the group of major young acting talent in Germany. In 2016, he will appear in CRO – UNSERE ZEIT IST JETZT and VIER GEGEN DIE BANK.

“Bastian never had to tread his own path; instead, he's always merely followed in his father's footsteps. And now, even his father is denying him his love, which is why Bastian can't be happy, no matter how much money he has or how good-looking he is.”

David Schütter

SEBASTIAN BLOMBERG (LÖBL, LISBETH'S FATHER)

The glassmaker Löbl is one of the most influential individuals in the Black Forest. He wants only the best for his daughter, which means that Peter's affections for Lisbeth are a definite thorn in his side. Only when the poor young man suddenly achieves wealth and prestige does Löbl change his mind.

Sebastian Blomberg has acted on almost all the leading German-language stages in Europe for over two decades. He has also appeared in many prize-winning films, including THE PEOPLE VS. BAUER, AGE OF CANNIBALS, IF NOT US, WHO?, THE BAADER MEINHOF COMPLEX and GO FOR ZUCKER!

"Löbl is Lisbeth's father, the owner of a glassworks and an influential citizen in the area. He defends his daughter against the advances of the poor charcoal burner, Peter, much like he would a possession that needs to be managed wisely and sold at a profit. He seems to have forgotten that he once truly adored his daughter. He's a pipe-smoking Mephisto. Löbl is an invention of the screenwriters and does not appear at all in the fairytale by Wilhelm Hauff. This gave me a great degree of freedom to play."

Sebastian Blomberg



ROELAND WIESNEKKER (ETZEL, BASTIAN'S FATHER)

Etzel is one of the richest men in the village. As a timber merchant, he sells the mighty trees to buyers as far away as Holland. One of the people standing in his way is Peter's father, the charcoal burner Jakob Munk. Etzel is an unscrupulous businessman who will use any means to achieve his goal.

Roeland Wiesnekker was born in Switzerland in 1967. He plays Police Chief Riefenstahl in the Frankfurt edition of the long-running German crime show TATORT and has also appeared on screen, for example in the Natascha Kampusch drama 3096 DAYS.

ANDRÉ M. HENNICKE (JAKOB MUNK, PETER'S FATHER)

Jakob Munk is a charcoal burner and has taught his son Peter not only the trade, but also human decency and respect for nature. When the glassmaker Löbl tries to dictate the price of coal to him, Jakob Munk attempts an uprising – without being able to foresee the consequences of his actions.

André M. Hennicke was born in Steinheidel-Erlabrunn in 1958. He is well-known for his work in films, including *ANGST*, *ANTIBODIES* and *SOPHIE SCHOLL – THE FINAL DAYS*.

JULE BÖWE (BARBARA MUNK, PETER'S MOTHER)

Barbara Munk knows all the old tales about the forest spirits. When she tells her son Peter about the Glasmännchen who fulfils the wishes of so-called *Sunday's children* like him, she cannot know that Peter's life will change dramatically as a result.

Jule Böwe was born in Rostock in 1969. She has appeared in several features films, including *RUSSENDISKO* and *CARLOS*. She has been a member of the ensemble at the Schaubühne Berlin since 1999. She also lends her distinctive voice to many radio-play and audio book productions.



LARS RUDOLPH (SCHUI-FRANZ)

The former charcoal burner Schui-Franz was never able to assert his place in the social pecking order and now lives as an outcast on the street. For a few guilders, he allows himself to become the plaything of the powerful. However, as soon as his conscious causes him to be plagued by guilt, he confides in Peter.

Lars Rudolph was born in Wittmund in 1966. He has appeared in many films, including *THE TRIXXER*, *MY FÜHRER* and *WHY MEN DON'T LISTEN AND WOMEN CAN'T READ MAPS*.

Schui-Franz is a victim of social inequities who struggles at the bottom yet manages to climb slightly out of his circumstances; but you can hardly call him a success. Still, he's not starving, and he seems to rise above all the garbage and filth and lack of character in the society surrounding him.

Lars Rudolph

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

HEART OF STONE was shot in the state of Baden-Württemberg in Germany, but also in the states of Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia and Berlin/Brandenburg. The team found the ideal Black Forest setting near Loßburg and on the Schluchsee, while the boulders and canyons found in Saxony's Elbsandsteingebirge (a sandstone mountain region) offered the best backdrops for the more mountainous scenes. For example, the rock labyrinth near Langenhennersdorf was adapted to act as the "Tannenbühl" and the gorge of Dutch Michel. A significant part of the filming also took place in Studio Babelsberg, where the popular DEFA version of the story directed by Paul Verhoeven and starring Erwin Geschonneck as Dutch Michel was made many years ago. The key exterior motif of "Gutach Village" was elaborately built in the new film complex belonging to Studio Babelsberg. Roughly 40 technicians from the studio's in-house art department worked for two months on the construction of the backdrop, ultimately creating an entire village with streets, an inn and a marketplace. Post-production work was handled by the renowned VFX factory Chimney (HER; TINKER TAILOR SOLDIER SPY).

The film team led by director Johannes Naber created their own unique and extraordinary world without any pretence to being historically accurate. Indeed, the film depicts an entirely new and invented image of the Black Forest, which is nevertheless able to act as a parable for the story. For example, the costumes and masks of the forest spirits were all inspired by indigenous peoples; in their primeval nature, they reflect the mythical connection of the forest spirits with nature. The villagers' facial tattoos show their respective status and affiliation, thus highlighting the importance of social standing. In HEART OF STONE, physical conflicts are carried out by means of stick fighting, which draws on the medieval form of martial-arts swordsmanship known as "halbe stange". The list of characters in the original fairytale was expanded and modernised for the screenplay, with additional story arcs also added. In other words, HEART OF STONE is not your run-of-the-mill movie version of a classic fairytale; instead, it is a free adaptation of one of the most exciting fairytales in the German language and an entertaining introduction to the story for an entirely new generation of young-adult viewers.



“I believe it’s best to seek out and focus on the special elements. Instead of researching the era and reproducing it precisely, our approach was to simply invent a new Black Forest completely, one that has never existed before and will never exist again, but one that can stand as a parable for the story. We also took things and ideas from all over the place; clothing and body painting from indigenous peoples, the symbols of the Berber that we tattooed onto the faces of our cast, the exotic hairstyles and rituals, etc. We didn’t let Christian faith occur here. But there is another religion, one that has an animistic aura to it, a very primitive force that is never explained but is always present and resonating. Of course, this casting-off and remaking is also reflected in the makeup and costumes.”

Johannes Naber



HEART OF STONE was produced by the Schmitz Katze Filmkollektiv and co-produced together with Studio Babelsberg, Phillip Filmproduktion and the TV channels SWR, ARD Degeto and MDR. The project received funding from the MFG Film Fund Baden-Württemberg, Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, Film- und Medienstiftung NRW, the German Film Fund (DFFF) and the office of the Federal Minister for Culture and the Media (BKM).



ABOUT THE ORIGINAL FAIRYTALE

Wilhelm Hauff (* 29th November 1802 in Stuttgart, † 18th November 1827 in Stuttgart) is one of the most important authors of the Late Romantic Period in German literature. He is best known today for his fairytales, which he published between 1825 and 1827 in three almanacs. "Heart of Stone" forms part of the third almanac amidst the framing narrative "The Spessart Inn".

When composing his literary fairytales, Hauff drew on motifs from regional legends and simultaneously portrayed the social changes taking place right before the advent of industrialisation. The emergence of the bourgeoisie in this era resulted in the loosening of traditional estate systems and mandatory guild membership; after that, people were able to freely choose the craft they wanted to pursue. Ultimately it was the influence of the French Revolution that lent increasing importance to individual accomplishments. The timber merchants of the 18th century, in particular, obtained significant wealth in a relatively short period of time, primarily due to their business interactions with the Netherlands. Back then, a large portion of the wood the Dutch needed to build their ships came from the area along the Rhine River. At the beginning of the 19th century, however, the timber business declined sharply when the timber resources in the Black Forest became overexploited and were almost destroyed. These early capitalistic developments led to social divisions in the typical rafting villages, much like the strife that appeared elsewhere later with the advent of industrialisation.

"Heart of Stone" portrays a medieval society into which capitalism is slowly gaining entry: it is a world in which people usurp nature out of sheer greed, a world where the balance has been lost. Hauff puts a typically mythical and uncanny twist on the quest of the individual for power and acknowledgment. And, with its powerful metaphor of the stone heart, his fairytale continues to be relevant today.



“This is what makes up the essence of this particular Hauff fairytale. It asks us to look at the difference between “having” and “being”. The heart of stone stands for “having” and the power of property – and, in turn, the corruptibility that is its logical consequence. “Being” is determined by having, and this includes love, experience and interpersonal relationships, things that are unbelievable important for a society. The overcoming of the stone heart is the liberation of being from the dictatorship of having. I believe this is a message that can’t be repeated often enough in our day and age”.

Johannes Naber



ABOUT OTHER FILM ADAPTATIONS OF THE FAIRYTALE

HEART OF STONE has been rendered for the big screen many times, for example in 1923 by Fred Sauer and in 1933 by Karl Ulrich Schnabel (starring Franz Schnyder, this film was completed by Raff Fluri and Ann Mottier-Schnabel, then restored and released for the first time in July 2016). In 1978, a film version was made by the Augsburger Puppenkiste as part of the collection “Fairytale and Sagas with the Augsburger Puppenkiste”. It also appeared in a number of different TV formats, such as the six-part ZDF television series in 1978 and the film series “ZDF Fairytale Pearls”.

The most popular film version of HEART OF STONE was made in 1950 under the direction of Paul Verhoeven and starring Erwin Geschonneck as Dutch Michel, Paul Bildt as the Glasmännchen and Lutz Moik als Peter. It was the first colour film made by DEFA in East Germany, as well as the first fairytale film adaptation to use live actors. It is considered to have been the starting point of the subsequently highly successful production of fairytale films in East Germany. With almost 10 million ticket buyers, it was also the third most successful DEFA film ever. While the exterior shots were filmed in the Thüringian Forrest, the bulk of the film was shot in Studio Babelsberg, as was the case in the present adaptation in 2016. In order to achieve the opulence and innovation they wanted, the DEFA team hired several specialists, including the trick engineer Ernst Kunstmann, who made use of the Schüfftan process, among other methods.

Kunstmann had worked as an assistant to Eugen Schüfftan many years prior and had developed the unique procedure with him in the course of the 1920s. This reflective procedure made it possible to combine large backdrops with modelled buildings and thus, for example, bring together a giant-like Dutch Michel with the small charcoal burner Peter in one image. One central organ of the East German Communist Party called “Neues Deutschland” argued that the film had a “sultry, bloodthirsty atmosphere” and criticised the fact that the film went over budget, which did indeed occur primarily thanks to all the elaborate visual effects. The film was called “decadent” and DEFA was asked to “cut considerable parts out of the film so as to help it achieve a more appropriate effect” (Neues Deutschland, 12.12.1950). No changes were made to the film, however, and this is mostly likely the reason why it continues to be such a highly popular film – and an unusually scary fairy-tale classic – right up to our present day.

“For me and so many others of my generation, Paul Verhoeven’s 1950 film adaptation of the story was an incredibly important part of my childhood. It was therefore important for me to play a part in this film and work off this myth, and by this I mean the story, which is a very German story, and the film, which was one of the very first DEFA films. There are so many images from this fairytale that are still in my head; so many scenes. For example, images of Erwin Geschonneck as Dutch Michel. Those were incredibly primal experiences for me; they were image experiences. I was always being pulled back and forth between fascination and horror”. Milan Peschel

Despite his admiration for the 1950 DEFA film adaptation, Johannes Naber wasn’t aspiring to remake that earlier film. Instead, he sought to create a modern reinterpretation of the historical fairytale as a stand-alone film.



PICTURE TREE INTERNATIONAL GMBH – COMPANY PROFILE

Picture Tree International GmbH is a world sales & production company founded 2012 by Andreas Rothbauer with headquarters in Berlin. The core business of the company is the worldwide licensing of film rights across all genres and media as well as the coproduction of international feature films and domestic German distribution in an integrated business model.