

# PEACEFUL TIMES

A film by  
NEELE LEANA VOLLMAR



Distributed in Australia and New Zealand by  
**POTENTIAL FILMS**  
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# CAST

Irene Striesow  
**KATHARINA SCHUBERT**

Dieter Striesow  
**OLIVER STOKOWSKI**

Ute Striesow  
**NINA MONKA**

Wasa Striesow  
**LEONIE BRILL**

Flori Striesow  
**TAMINO WECKER**

Karl  
**AXEL PRAHL**

# CREW

DIRECTOR **NEELE LEANA VOLLMAR**  
SCREENPLAY **RUTH THOMA**  
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY **BIRGIT VANDERBEKE**  
PRODUCER **CAROLINE DAUBE**  
CINEMATOGRAPHER **PASCAL SCHMIT**  
EDITOR **FLORIAN DRECHSLER**  
ART DIRECTOR **STEPHANIE SCHLIENZ**  
MUSIC **OLIVER THIEDE**  
A PRODUCTION OF ROYAL PONY FILM  
IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH  
**BAYERISCHER. RUNDfunk / ARTE, ODEON PICTURES, LUNARIS FILM- UND,  
FERNSEHPRODUKTION, NEUE KINOWELT, FILMPRODUKTION**  
WITH SUPPORT FROM **FFA, FFF BAYERN, DFFF**

## TECHNICAL DATA

FORMAT 35 mm / 1:1,85 / Dolby Digital  
LENGTH 98 min.  
ORIGINAL LANGUAGE German  
SUBTITLES English

# SYNOPSIS

Germany in the 1960s: Peaceful times in the West can start at last, if only Irene Striesow could manage to shake off the past. She is homesick for East Germany, mistrustful of the cease fire, and most of all, distraught about her husband Dieter's other women. She would rather die young and she doesn't make any efforts to hide it from Dieter and her three children Ute, Wasa and Flori. As their living room begins to look more like a war zone, her children decide to take matters in their own hands. They want their mother to finally be happy, that Dieter can crack light-hearted jokes about East Germany again, and that, if possible, the third world war doesn't happen after all ...

# INTERVIEW WITH NEELE LEANA VOLLMAR

***PEACEFUL TIMES is the film adaptation of the same named novel by Birgit Vanderbeke. What fascinated you about this story?***

We liked the tonality of it. It is the humorous tongue-in cheek description of a family told from the point of view of the children. We found it very touching.

***How did you come to work with the well-known screenwriter Ruth Toma?***

Ruth Toma had always inspired us, so one day we contacted her. An exploration process began. We spent many afternoons together getting to know each other better. Most of all, we value the connection between emotionality and humor in her work, excellently shown in EMMA'S BLISS or KEBAB CONNECTION. You don't often get melodramatic tones in German film, emotional nuances hardly ever, and she is a master at creating them.

***Why this particular theme, this particular period, this love for the stuffy 60's that one would just rather forget?***

The novel is also set in the 60's. We also found it exciting that it was another kind of 68er film. Even though you see the images of the student protests on TV, they don't touch the family at all, which is struggling with its own worries and problems. They live in such a different world that they don't quite notice what's going on. They have transplanted their small cosmos from the GDR in West Germany. Irene doesn't manage to open up to her new life and attempts to relive her East German life in the West. The love story was equally important to us, this strong love between husband and wife that carries the whole thing in the first place.

***Could this family story take place today in our time, or is the image of a family shaped by time?***

It appealed to us that this whole history trauma could also be a trauma of our time. Even though today people have other fears and worries, universal themes such as holding on to specific things and the unwillingness to let go, remain in the foreground. They can be transported in all times. This is significant for the viewers because it's something they can identify with. This is a situation we all know, that can also happen today and has, at first, little to do with the GDR Trauma. Another universal theme is also the fact that the children feel responsible for the suffering of their parents. This feeling of responsibility that the children have for their parents is something that everyone knows. It's about the sudden shift of roles – who is the child? Who is the parent? The daughters are suddenly telling the mother what to do. For a short time, Irene becomes the child. This is what is emotionally so moving about this story.

***Family is a consistent central theme in your films...***

There is hardly anything that touches and moves us more, and that on a daily basis; every single one of us. This is why it was an obvious subject for my first films: MY PARENTS, a short film, and then my feature debut VACATION FROM LIFE.

***What kind of woman is Irene Striesow?***

She's a woman who feels homeless and can't manage to let go. She feels out of place in the West and yearns for the security of life in the GDR despite all the suffering she had gone through there. Her first love was shot before her eyes and it pains her that she couldn't even say goodbye to her mother when she fled. She's more neurotic than depressive, she lives a retrogressive life cultivating her flaws instead of looking ahead. Like so many people, she first sees the negative in life. However, she doesn't exactly have the kind of husband that supports her and holds on to her. Still, she loves him in a very heartfelt and uncomplicated way, despite all the conflicts and the jealousies.

***Are you nurturing East-prejudices?***

This feeling of being caged in gives her security; she hates competition. In the GDR, everything was regulated and organized, everyone was equal, and you didn't have to assert yourself. She shuts herself off and is scared of the Russians marching in, but she rejects everything western. This is a paradox. Yet, she's in the middle of a process and is growing. You can see this in her reaction when she finds out about her husband's affair. His confession sets a significant process in motion. Finally, it's out. This is a confirmation for her that she no longer needs to doubt her mind. Not knowing was the worst, now she can deal with it and actively do something about it. The end of her process brings the opening and she gains a powerful insight: my home is no longer in the GDR, it is where my family is.

## NEELE LEANA VOLLMAR DIRECTOR

Neele Leana Vollmar was born in Bremen in 1978. In 2000, she began her film studies at the Baden-Württemberg Film Academy in Ludwigsburg, which she completed in 2005. In 2003, she received a Caligari fellowship and participated in both the Berlinale Talent Campus and the Hollywood Masterclass. During her studies, she made several short films, one of which is MEINE ELTERN – MY PARENTS (2003), which played at over 250 film festivals and won 40 awards. Her feature film debut and graduation film at the Ludwigsburg Film Academy URLAUB VOM LEBEN – VACATION FROM LIFE (2004) opened the 39<sup>th</sup> Hof International Film Festival. Since 2005, Neele Leana Vollmar has been working as a freelance film and advertising director. PEACEFUL TIMES is her second feature film. Preproduction has started on the film adaptation of Jan Weiler's novel MARIA, IHM SCHMECKTS'S NICHT. Shooting starts mid-September in Germany and Italy.

**FILMOGRAPHY:** 2008 PEACEFUL TIMES /// 2004 URLAUB VOM LEBEN – VACATION FROM LIFE /// 2003 MEINE ELTERN (SHORT) – MY PARENTS **AWARDS** (A SELECTION): 2005 First Steps nomination for Best Film for VACATION FROM LIFE /// 2004 International Public's Award, Prix du Rire and Prix Canal in Clermont Ferrand for MY PARENTS /// 2004 Audience Award AFI Film Festival Los Angeles for MY PARENTS /// 2004 Best Student Film – Aspen Shorts Festival for MY PARENTS /// 2003 Eastman Kodak Award in Hof for MY PARENTS

## KATHARINA SCHUBERT AS IRENE STRIESOW

Katharina Schubert was born in Gifhorn in 1977. She studied acting at the renowned Max Reinhardt Seminar in Vienna, and privately studied singing and piano. Her acting career began in 1999 at the Burgtheater in Vienna. In the same year, the trained singer performed at the Wiener Festwochen in a Luc Bondy staging of Lotphantasie. Since 2001, Katharina Schubert has performed at the Münchner Kammerspiele. Her cinema debut was in Benjamin Heisenberg's SLEEPER. Recently she has played in Ben Verbong's HERR BELLO and Ralf Westhoff's surprise success SHOPPEN. Her latest leading role is in the film LAURA directed by Ben Verbong. Katharina Schubert sings in the band Kapulikaupunki Broken Heart Orchestra.

**SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:** 2008 LAURA – OB IHR WOLLT ODER NICHT (dir. Ben Verbong) /// 2008 DER KRIMINALIST (dir. Dagmar Hirtz) – TV /// 2007 SHOPPEN (dir. Ralf Westhoff) /// 2007 UNTER VERDACHT (dir. Isabel Kleefeld) – TV /// 2006 HERR BELLO (dir. Ben Verbong) /// 2004 SLEEPER (dir. Benjamin Heisenberg) **AWARDS:** 2007 Bayerischer Kunstförderpreis – Bavarian Art Grant Award /// 2004 Talent Award from the Münchner Kammerspiele

## OLIVER STOKOWSKI AS DIETER STRIESOW

Oliver Stokowski was born in Kassel in 1962, studied music in 1981 and then decided to study acting at the University of Music and Performing Arts, which he graduated from in 1989. During his studies he was discovered by the director Dominik Graf for his film TIGER, LÖWE, PANTHER. Stokowski has played at the Staatstheater Hannover, the Residenztheater / Bayerisches Staatsschauspiel München, the Burgtheater in Vienna and at the Salzburg Festival. Since 2006, he is part of the ensemble of the Schauspielhaus in Zurich. Stokowski has played major roles in films by Sönke Wortmann, Oliver Hirschbiegel, Rolf Silber and Hans W. Geissendörffer. From 2001 to 2005, he played the main role in 19 episodes of the TV series DER ERMITTLER, for which he received the German Television Award for Best Actor. Internationally, Stokowski has worked in American (U-571) and Norwegian (MAX MANUS) films.

**SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:** 2008 MAX MANUS (dir. Joachim Roenning, Espen Sandberg) /// 2007 WILD CHICKS IN LOVE (dir. Vivian Naefe) /// 2006 HOUNDED (dir. Angelina Maccarone) /// 2005 SNOWLAND (dir. Hans W. Geissendörffer) /// 2003 DIE GEISEL (dir. Christian Görlitz) /// 2001–05 DER ERMITTLER (dir. Peter Fratzscher, Michael Macckenroth, Markus Bräutigam, Dirke Regel, Robert Sigl) – TV /// 2000 THE EXPERIMENT (dir. Oliver Hirschbiegel) /// 1999 U-571 (dir. Jonathan Mostow) /// 1998 ST. PAULI NACHT (dir. Sönke Wortmann) /// 1996 DER SKORPION (dir. Dominik Graf) /// 1995 REGULAR GUYS (dir. Rolf Silber) /// 1988 TIGER, LÖWE, PANTHER (dir. Dominik Graf) **AWARDS:** 2001 German Television Awards: Best Actor in a Series for DER ERMITTLER /// 1999 Kurt Meisel Award of the Friends of the Bavarian Staatsschauspiels in Munich