

RECK Filmproduktion presents

AGAINST ALL ODDS

Script & Direction
Anka Schmid

with

Sandra Reinhard-Troxler, Marcel Troxler, Jason & Dean
Jasmine Suter, Roman Röhrer, Armando
Jennifer Aeschbacher, Moses Mwathi Wakio, Tanijsha

Switzerland 2011 / 93 min / color / 1: 1.85 / Dolby Digital

Production:

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Short Summary

3 Girls, 3 Babies, 3 Years

Between exuberance and responsibility. Or: the perplexing elation of existence, when you're not quite grown up but already a mother.

Women have children. But when you're not even eighteen - like Sandra, Jasmine and Jennifer – and your belly begins to grow, people stare at you and frown. And once the baby is born, it turns out that life with a child is much more challenging than you ever imagined in all your pink teenage dreams. A refreshing long-term study of three very young mothers, their children and the fathers. A film about the first great love, career plans and dreams for the future. But above all, a film about the courage and unwavering confidence that is necessary when you're at an age where others blithely enjoy being young – and you take on the responsibility of a child.

Synopsis

Their names are Sandra, Jasmine and Jennifer; they live in the outskirts of Lucerne, in Basel and close to Thune in Switzerland and they have one thing in common: they got pregnant when they were minors – and not even eighteen, when they brought Jason, Armando and Tanijsa into the world. "I always knew I wanted to have a child when I was young", Sandra says confidently today. But she and her friend Marcel were still nervous when, at the age of seventeen, they had to tell their parents that they would soon become grandparents. But their families accepted the news rather calmly, saying they would support the young parents and take care of that grandchild whenever necessary.

Jennifer, too, finds support at home. Earlier she had been a real „snotty little miss“: always going out, always on the move, constantly quarreling with her mother and all her relatives. Her pregnancy calms Jennifer down. So her mother suggests that she move back home. She is happy about this because her boyfriend Mwhati is, as Jennifer says, „still too young to be a real father“ and, shortly after Tanijsa is born, no longer her boyfriend. Having just turned sixteen, he is in the process of living through his wild years, his „Sturm und Drang“ phase. He wants to be free, drifts around and begins to rap.

A child doesn't change anything in the amorous errors and entanglements, the stormy moments that you experience in youth. But life with a child is quite different from the way you imagine it in your pink teeny dreams. It's challenging. It strains the relationship. When Armando is a couple of months old, Roman wanted the child, says Jasmine. But now that great love has cooled off. Jasmine doesn't know what will become of their relationship. Roman only comes by sporadically. It takes four years until he – now a clean-cut young man – acknowledges his paternity and signs a contract for child support. At this point, Jasmine has a new boyfriend. "It is difficult to find a new boyfriend when you have a child," the young woman from Basle had confirmed the year before. She spent part of her youth in a home for children, has no intact family to support her and she has difficulty being alone. Luckily she has lots of friends who visit her and her little boy every day. Armando has become a real clique-baby. A group of friends take him for walks. He goes to Mardi Gras with Jasmine and her friends, celebrates his birthday in the midst of a circle of young women and

men. Jasmine even takes him along to the Social Security Office and to the mother-infant consultations. She is wary, wants to prove to herself and the world that she's doing a good job with Armando and is constantly on the edge of her capacities: Jasmine is searching, like many in her age group. She doesn't know what she wants, lives for the moment, dreams her time away. Armando is both her foothold and a burden. Life with a child is not always a picnic when you're not really a grown-up yourself and you don't know where life is taking you.

It is Sandra and Marcel who have the most realistic approach to life. They are both in the middle of their apprenticeships when Jason is born. But Jason inspires them both. All the more now, Sandra tells herself. She completes her studies as one of the best in her class and is happy about her success. „I proved it to everyone“, she says, glowing, with her diploma in her hand. With Marcel and Jason she moves into an apartment, they get married and before long, a second child is born. They are a happy little family of four.

As their children grow older, Jennifer and Jasmine also find more secure paths in life. Jasmine completes her traineeship. And she has found a reliable partner in Elso, who is a loving substitute Papa for her Armando. Jennifer has, in the meantime, taken her own apartment with Tanijsa. She works in an old folks' home, learns to drive and studies to become a nurse. Now Mwhati also has solid ground under his feet. He looks around for a traineeship, visits his daughter more and more often and raps about his fatherhood. „Things don't always go well. It takes lots of strength, pride and courage. The past is behind us. Let go of it. Grab your opportunities. Now or never.“

„Tough but vulnerable young people seeking their way. The chances people give them – or deny them – are an incorruptible mirror of our society.“ Neue Zürcher Zeitung

„A heart-warming, quiet and astute study about being young – that will certainly stimulate discussion.“ Zürcher Landzeitung

The three mothers, three fathers & their children

SANDRA & MARCEL WITH JASON & DEAN, CANTON LUCERNE



Background:

Sandra and Marcel meet via chatting. Both are in their apprenticeships: she as salesgirl in a bakery, he as carpenter. After 3 months Sandra becomes pregnant.

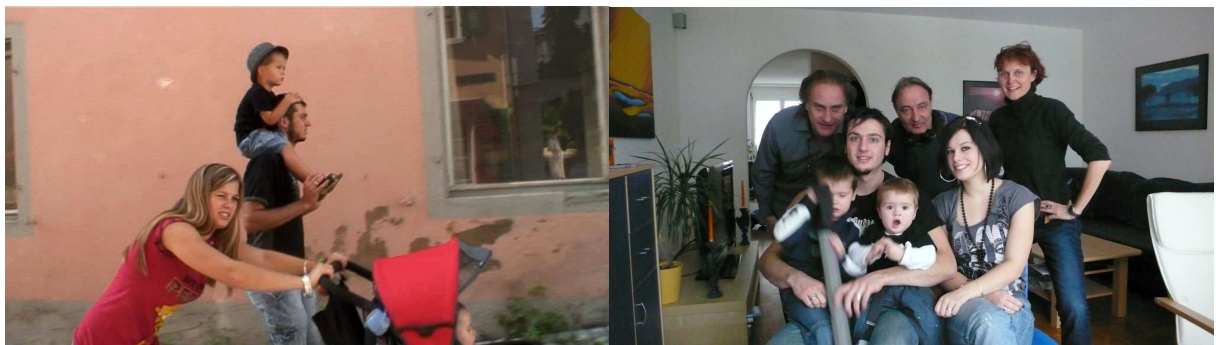
When shooting starts in September 2006:

Both live at home with their families in Canton Lucerne. Sandra is 17 and Marcel has just turned 18. Their child will be born in two months. The couple plans to move into their own apartment. Both will have to take their final apprenticeship exams in the coming summer.

What happens in the years 2007, 2008 and 2009 is told in the film...

By completion of shooting in January 2010

Sandra and Marcel have two children: Jason (3) and Dean (1) and they live in their third apartment together near Lucerne. Marcel works 100% and Sandra has several different part-time jobs – mostly on weekends or evenings, so Marcel can take care of the children.



JENNIFER & MWATHI WITH TANIJSHA, CANTON BERNE



Background:

Jennifer and Mwathi live in the same home for children and youth. With over a hundred love letters, Mwathi finally wins Jennifer's heart. In her last year of school Jennifer gets pregnant. A month after graduation, her little daughter Tanijsa is born.

When shooting starts in October 2006:

Jennifer is 17 and lives with her 2-month-old baby together with her mother and sister in the Bernese Oberland. She takes care of her baby, while Mwathi (16) continues living in the home for youth and completes his tenth year of school. The young couple has just recently split up.

What happens in the next three years is told in the film...

By completion of shooting in January 2010

Jennifer (21) now has her own apartment with her little daughter Tanijsa (3). Her mother, sisters and other relatives live nearby and help her because Jennifer works part-time in an old folks' home. She has begun a training program and has to travel to Berne every Monday. Mwathi (20), after difficult times, now has more contact with his daughter. He is completing a year of career-preparation training and spends a lot of time with his Rap band S.O.L. (States of Lyrics).



JASMINE & ROMAN WITH ARMANDO, BASEL-LAND



Background:

Jasmine and Roman fall in love with each other in the classroom. In her last year of school, Jasmine gets pregnant. The young lovers move into an apartment of their own, together with another couple.

Armando is born in autumn of 2005. Jasmine has just turned 18, Roman 15. The two live through wild ups and downs in their relationship.

When shooting starts in September 2006:

Two days before shooting starts, the two separate. Little Armando is 10 months old. Jasmine (18) lives alone with her child in social housing near Basel. Her friends assist her and her „main job“ is caring for her child.

And what happens in the years 2007, 2008, and 2009 is told in the film...

By completion of shooting in January 2010

Jasmine (22) still lives in the same apartment, but it looks much different now. Recently, she has renovated it together with her friend Elso (21). Armando (4) still spends his weekdays in the home for children. Jasmine wants him to live with her at home as soon as he begins kindergarten in the coming summer. She works in various jobs to earn money.



Crew

Script & Direction	Anka Schmid
Editing	Marina Wernli Matthias Bürcher
Photography	Patrick Lindenmaier Anka Schmid
Original Sound	Dieter Meyer Anka Schmid
Music	Peter Bräker Darko Linder
Additional music	Black Tiger: "Summernächt" CD Betonmelancholie © & p: Nation Music & Black Tiger Nr. NM0034-2 States of Lyrics: "Jetzt oder Nie" „SOL“
Sound Editing, Sound Design & Mix Assistant	Christian Beusch Guido Helbling
Stagiaire Editing	Marisa Koch
Color Correcting	Patrick Lindenmaier
Title Graphics	Peter Volkart
Legal Consultant	Sven Wälti
Production Management	Franziska Reck Anka Schmid
Production Assistant	Sabine Girsberger
Producer	Franziska Reck

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Swiss television, Editor Urns Augsburg
SRG SSR idée Suisse, Editor Alberto Cholet

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Comments by Anka Schmid

These audacious young people, who have decided spontaneously to have a child, fascinate me. Their confidence and willingness to take a risk contrasts sharply from today's often over-planned lifestyle, where the decision to have children is pushed into a later phase of life, where early pregnancies have become a taboo. I found it interesting to take a closer look at teenage parents. As far as the Swiss law is concerned, they are still too young to take on the responsibility of a child and they are constantly confronted with prejudices and problems in everyday life. At the same time they are bursting with the vitality of life and undergo immense steps in development.

I knew that with this long-term documentation, I was entering into a real adventure. It was not a short undertaking – but a connection over several years – with all the joys and sorrows that make up the lives of young people. For almost four years I accompanied my protagonists in their surroundings, observed them and discussed with them. And so I became a witness to teenagers becoming young adults. The time that elapses is the most obvious with the children: at the beginning they are babies or even still unborn. By the end of the film they have become little personalities. The development of the young people into grown-ups is just as significant. But the changes manifest themselves not so much outwardly, but rather through how we experience them because of what they say, what they think and how they behave.

The film project began with the search for suitable young people. This was full of hindrances. For reasons of data protection, no one was allowed to even give me the addresses of pregnant minors or teenage parents. Young parents are also regarded with great skepticism, so it was not easy to convince them to participate in such an undertaking. And finally, it was the people around them who had to agree to shooting a film. The protagonists were still minors when shooting began and thus not entitled to make their own decisions. They still lived with their parents or in a school for children and youth.

After an intensive year of searching, I found five interesting couples whose differences provided gripping interplay: two teenage couples who were intensely in love, a recently separated couple and two single mothers. One of the two single mothers was supported by her circle of friends, the other lived in a home for mothers. The places where they lived were as different as their personal situations: one lived in the country, the others in the city and all of them in different cantons, which is reflected in the film through the charm of different dialects.

My goal was to portray the protagonists as authentically as possible within the framework of their everyday life. To achieve this, I purposely did a great deal of the shooting myself. I filmed with a small, inconspicuous HDV camera and a transmitter microphone. The multiple stress of being camerawoman, interviewer and sound technician was a huge challenge. This way of working, however, made it possible that, as one single person, I was not a disturbance in intimate situations and that I was able to react flexibly to schedule changes. This was important because in the life of my protagonists, plans, decisions and deadlines often change very spontaneously.

To maintain continuity in my film plan, I made sure that I went to film all those involved at least once every season. In addition, I documented them once a year with the support of a film team and on these days of shooting I took advantage of being free from technology so that I could concentrate on our conversations.

Every filming session had its surprises and every time these young people captivated me anew. Over the years, we grew closer to each other. But one thing remained clear: I was the filmmaker, not their friend or social worker.

It is only natural that difficulties also arose over the course of long-term shooting. I was often confronted with youthful unreliability. Sometimes the teenies simply had no more money to call me. Or they changed their mobile phone numbers and forgot to tell me. After a year of shooting, one of the young mothers had to leave the project because of severe threats from her father and this bothered me deeply. But so did the problems that all the protagonists encountered in their real, everyday lives. Their problems affected me much more than the difficulties in my own work. There were also many exhilarating moments while we were filming, which made me, personally, very happy. All these phases of ups and downs can now be followed in the film.

After shooting was over, the work process continued into the editing phase: 150 hours of film material had to be shortened into two hours. We had to portray three and a half years in the lives of three teenage mothers within a timeframe of 90 minutes. In doing this, I was determined never to overstep the fine line between revealing and exposing, which led me to the decision not to integrate one of the teenage mothers into my film. Divulging their faces would have been too serious and too burdensome for both the mother and her child. In the end, the reduction to three stories of development turned out to be a great advantage. The film gained clarity and density.

When I began researching this film project, I was 44 years old and mother of an 11-year-old son myself. I grappled intellectually and intensely with the field of tension between hostility to children in our society and the individual, archaic desire to have children. During my research on this subject, I met very courageous young mothers who, with great commitment, professed their devotion to their children. I was instantly fascinated by these teenage mothers, their determination and their confident attitude towards life. It was they who convinced me to make a film that very consciously concentrates on optimism and the courage to deal with life. For once, it should not be a film that focuses on death, destruction or hardship, as is so often the case in gripping documentaries. I knew that I would not be doing myself a favor if I dealt with this subject „dramaturgically“. I decided voluntarily to renounce to many emotions that arise out of pity.

Once I had found a concept for the film, I got to work. Now I knew that I wanted to make a long-term documentation in which the most existential question of all is at the core. That is, about the courage it takes to bring a child into the world. I was convinced that a portrait of young teenage mothers would touch the viewers if I could show with what amazing energy these young people defy resistance and with how much vim, vigor and vitality each of them chooses her own way.

Now I am almost 50 years old. In retrospect I see the four years that I spent with the young mothers and fathers as a great gift. Their stories show that life is full of surprises and that even in crisis situations new solutions can be found.

November 2010

Biography of Anka Schmid

Anka Schmid sees herself as a border-crosser between film and art and, in addition to narrative cinema and TV films, she also makes experimental films and video installations. She has won various prizes and awards and has made numerous exhibitions. Her films have been shown at international festivals such as Locarno, Nyon, San Francisco and Sundance.

Anka Schmid was born in Zurich in 1961. After graduating from high school, she began her studies in German philology and she shot her first experimental videos and Super-8 films. In the turbulent 80's she was active in a street theater and a music band. In 1984 she moved to Berlin when it was still a divided city because she had been accepted as a student at the German Film and TV Academy, (Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin - DFFB). Here she made numerous short films and videos. In 1989 she spent a year in the USA, shooting the Hopi documentary TECHQUA IKACHI, LAND – MEIN LEBEN with the Hopi Indian James Danaquymptewa and the artist Agnes Barmettler. In 1991 she completed her studies at the DFFB with the feature film HINTER VERSCHLOSSENEN TÜREN, which won numerous prizes. After that, she worked as freelance cinematographer and director's assistant in Germany, Switzerland, France, Argentina and the USA. In 1994, her son was born in Berlin and in 1998 she moved to Zurich with him. In Switzerland, in addition to her own creative work, she is a lecturer in film and heads animated film workshops.

Filmography (Selection)

2011	MIT DEM BAUCH DURCH DIE WAND	Documentary
2009	ISA HESSE-RABINOVITCH - The Movie Game	Portrait of the artist
2008	HIERIG – HEUTIG	Dance Film / Video Installation
2006	AFÁN	Dance Film
	FOUND FOOTAGE I - VII	Art Videos
2005	YELLOW - Electropop made in Switzerland	Portrait of the musicians
2002	ABC SOUND ALPHABET	Music Film
2000	DAS ENGADINER WUNDER	Short Film
	Co-realization with Tania Stöcklin	
1998	BLIND DATE Part: LITTLE SISTER	Episode film
1997	LABYRINTH-PROJEKTIONEN	Art Video
	Co-direction with Agnes Barmettler	
1995	MAGIC MATTERHORN	Documentary
1991	HINTER VERSCHLOSSENEN TÜREN	Fiction Film
1990	PRAKTISCH UND FRIEDLICH	Experimental Film
1989	TECHQUA IKACHI, LAND – MEIN LEBEN	Documentary
	Co-realization James Danaquymptewa, Agnes Barmettler	
1986	HABIBI - EIN LIEBESBRIEF	Short Film
	DIE REISE ZUR SÜDSEE	Animation Film
	HERZENS-FREUDE	Animation Film
1982	FLIEGEN	Experimental Film

RECK FILMPRODUKTION GmbH

RECK Filmproduktion in Zurich was founded in 2000 by Franziska Reck and focuses mainly on the development and production of documentary and experimental film – especially film essays – for cinema and television.

Franziska Reck has been actively involved in the world of film for twenty years, energetically promoting independent filmmaking in Switzerland. Beginning as a film distributor at the Filmcoopi in Zurich (1983-1990), she continued building up the distribution and promotion of Swiss films as director of the IGV/CID (1993-2000) and as freelance film producer herself (since 1990).

RECK Filmproduktion stands for – and features – interest in the lifestyles and the diverse forms in which people express themselves, as well as the fascination with images – whether documentary, staged or experimental in nature. In the centre of the search are human encounters, images depicting what happens when different cultures come together.

Filmography

2011 AGAINST ALL ODDS by Anka Schmid, documentary

2010 BÖDÄLÄ – DANCE THE RHYTHM by Gitta Gsell, documentary

2009 ISA HESSE-RABINOVITCH – The Movie Game by Anka Schmid, documentary

2008 FEDERICA DE CESCO by Nino Jacusso, documentary

2008 MONSIEUR SELAVY by Peter Volkart, short film

2008 MUSIKLIEBE by Yusuf Yeşilöz, documentary

2007 RAJA'S REISE by Karl Saurer, documentary

2006 SWEEPING ADDIS by Corinne Kuenzli, documentary

2006 ZWISCHEN DEN WELTEN by Yusuf Yeşilöz, documentary

2005 IRENE SCHWEIZER by Gitta Gsell, documentary

2005 TERRA INCOGNITA by Peter Volkart, short film

2004 NAMIBIA CROSSINGS by Peter Liechti, film essay

2003 DIETER ROTH by Edith Jud, documentary

2002 ONOMA by Nino Jacusso and Gitta Gsell, 9 short films for Expo 02

2001 VIRUS-L by Gitta Gsell, experimental short film

2000 TRANSITO by Nino Jacusso, documentary

1996 A PROPOS DE JOYE by Isolde Marxer, documentary

1992 TRAUMZEIT by Franz Reichle, documentary

In production

2011 (Spring) SIRA – SONGS OF THE CRESCENT MOON by Sandra Gysi and Ahmed Abdel Mohsen, documentary

In preparation

SHANA by Nino Jacusso, fiction

A PASSAGE THROUGH INDIA by Christoph Schaub, documentary

ALTERN IN DER MIGRATION by Yusuf Yeşilöz, documentary

GLASPERLEN AUS GABLONZ by Corinne Kuenzli, documentary