

KINO

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

P R E S E N T S

"... dense with detail and brimming with emotion ... grounded in the gorgeous strangeness of real life."
-- Kristin M. Jones, FILM COMMENT

OFFICIAL SELECTION
LOCARNO - TORONTO - NEW YORK
FILM FESTIVALS

Bonded in chaos ...

FREE RADICALS

... split by fate.

A film by Barbara Albert

KINO INTERNATIONAL presents A COOP 99 Production / A BARBARA ALBERT Film
"FREE RADICALS" Karin Reschais, Ursula Strauss, Georg Friedrich
director of photography Martin Gschlacht, editor Monika Völl
executive producer Bruno Wagner producer Antonin Svoboda, Martin Gschlacht
co-producers Martin Hagemann, Hartwig Künig, zero südwest, Rolf Schmid, Fama Film
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY Barbara Albert
CASTING BY A-Ne, Los Del Rio

A KINO INTERNATIONAL RELEASE www.kino.com

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PRESSBOOK

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I N T E R N A T I O N A L

CAST

Manu – Kathrin Resetarits
Andrea – Ursula Strauss
Andreas – Georg Friedrich
Gerlinde – Marion Mitterhammer
Reini – Martin Brambach
Luka – Rupert M. Lehofer
Sandra – Bellinda Akwa-Asare
Belinda – Gabriela Schmoll
Heinrich – Christian Ghera
Karl – Karl Fischer
Patricia – Désirée Ourada
Kai – Dominik Hartel
Gabi – Nicole Skala
Yvonne – Deborah Ten Brink
Josef – Alfred Worel

CREW

Written and directed by Barbara Albert
Director of Photography – Martin Gschlacht
Editor – Monika Willi
Set Designer – Katharina Wöppermann
Costume Designer – Monika Buttinger
Make Up Artists – Karin Schön-Kopriva AND Susanne Neidhart
Sound Engineers – Andreas Kopriva AND Bernhard Weirather
Sound Design – Bernhard Schmid
Sound Mix – Hans Künzi
Casting Directors – Rita Waszilovics and Tina Holzer
Executive Producer – Bruno Wagner
Producers – Antonin Svoboda, Martin Gschlacht, coop 99
Co-Producers – Martin Hagemann, Hartwig König, zero südwest Rolf Schmid, Fama Film
Still Photos – Nick Albert

TECHNICAL SPECS:

Free Radicals

(böse zellen)

Austria / Germany / Switzerland

2003 – 120min – 35mm – Color – 1:85 – Dolby srd



Synopsis:

After being the lone survivor of a gruesome plane crash, Manu (played by Kathrin Resetaritis) returns to a small Austrian town and successfully rebuilds her life. Five years after the near-fatal accident, Manu is surrounded by family members, friends, husband and a lovely young daughter.

But for the sake of destiny—or chance—Manu's good luck disappears. After a night of dancing with her best friend Andrea (played by Ursula Strauss), Manu's car fatally collides with a vehicle full of teenagers. More than unleashing a cascade of events which disrupt the lives of her husband—who had been cheating on Manu with her Andrea—daughter, friends, siblings, and the teenagers involved in the accident, Manu's death forces those who lived around her to confront some of their most unexamined life choices.

For example, Manu's death pushes Andrea to re-examine the nature of her relationship with Manu's widower (played by Georg Friedrich). And while Manu and Andreas's daughter Yvonne (Deborah Ten Brink) spends most her time with aunt Gerlinde (Marion Mitterhammer), the latter is thrown into chaos by the abrupt loss of her sister quickly descending into a string of abusive relationships. One of these men has a daughter: Patricia (played by Désirée Ourada) is a schoolmate of the teenagers in the car accident.

Reluctantly attracted to her schoolmate Kai (Dominik Hartel), the popular young man who was driving the car which killed Manu, rebel teen Patricia steps in to help Kai and his ex-girlfriend Gabi (Nicole Skala), now paralyzed by the accident. Using a Ouija board to connect to unknown forces, Patricia and Kai become first-time lovers.

Manu's brother Lukas (Rupert M. Lehofer), a math teacher at the high school attended by Patricia and her friends, also struggles to make sense of this sudden loss. In one of his many lonely lunches, Lukas meets Sandra (Bellinda Akwa-Asare) and clumsily tries to make a move on her. Although not immediately successful, both continue to meet at a local McDonalds, where they nervously share their lives and dine on fast food.

In the meantime, Sandra's mother Belinda (Gabriela Schmoll) participates in a local choir and becomes enamored with the choirmaster. Faced with his rebuff and an unhappy existence, Belinda jumps in front of a train but miraculously survives the suicide attempt. As she recovers from the injuries, Belinda is somehow released from her chains of self-doubt and gets a second chance to appreciate her life.

Much of the action in FREE RADICALS happens in or around a shopping mall, which is built over the course of the film. The building's apathetic opening party works as a collective, even if anti-climatic, closure for some of the film's main narratives.



Director's Statement:

The theme of interpersonal dependence has always fascinated me and this was one of the impulses to develop the main characters in FREE RADICALS. I consciously imagined various combinations of people from quite different worlds who appear to share the same traits: dependence on others and utter loneliness. All of them fight for something or someone, while none of them seem to understand exactly what it is they really need. Yet, there is a strong vitality about all of them, even when these characters are in the throes of depression.

We are all trapped in intricate relationships. To better depict these systems of relationships in a contemporary setting, I had to create a complex world with ambivalent characters.

When I was writing the script for FREE RADICALS, it became clear to me that in my previous films, people had often looked up to the sky. You could almost feel their need to yearn. In this film, we often shoot from the perspective of looking down which suggests imprisonment. Therefore, FREE RADICALS is more about finding happiness (or not) with what you already have than it is about a longing to be somewhere else.

FREE RADICALS is also a film about death and fear of death, about the sudden loss resulting from the death of a person and the inevitable feelings it brings. I wanted to create a dark, eerie, and uncertain atmosphere in the movie, one sustained by fear of death and fearful thoughts about eternity and infinity.

Uncertainty is something we always carry with us, as well as the feeling that you can't come to terms with death. But what prevails is that somehow you cope with it after all. To me, the film offers a kind of reconciliation: when the little girl Yvonne is sitting on the ground looking into a puddle and it's raining, it all becomes very simple. It is a simple and peaceful image.

– Barbara Albert (Vienna, 2003)



Barbara Albert talks to Birgit Flos:

Contexts & Coincidences

At least once in our life we question ourselves about the meaning of it all. Maybe the answer is not at all profound. That's life. We're constantly searching for one thing to correspond to another, and so it's satisfying when things do reach full circle. By the same token, when we come across banal coincidences we are compelled to look for deeper meanings. Of course, we can ask whether these "meanings" really exist. Perhaps there is something to gain solely from the process of looking for them.

The Consumer Society

The phenomena of consumerism and capitalism, as well as the projection of desire onto objects has been decisive in the choice of the film's locations—fast-food restaurants, pedestrian precincts, supermarkets, shopping malls. These shopping temples have become part of the everyday landscape as they reveal a tendency to project a utopian ideal while being quite frightening. They also illustrate a kind of faith in consumerism, where, for example, a sweepstakes in a mall is supposed to bring happiness.

Aufstellungen and Systems

[Translator's note: Aufstellungen is a method of psychoanalysis which examines family situations and hierarchies, formulated by the German psychotherapist Bert Hellinger].

Aufstellungen are good for making psychic systems comprehensible. To look at a family situation, and realize something, to learn from it. Film is comparable to an Aufstellung because it also illustrates a system of dependencies. It's fascinating that both the living and the dead are present in this process. It's a matter of getting something from their memory – strength or support maybe.

-- Barbara Albert & Birgit Flos



ACTOR'S BIOS:

Ursula Strauss (Andrea)

Ursula Strauss was born in 1974 in Melk, a small city near Vienna. After high school, she trained to become a kindergarden teacher before enrolling in a local drama school in 1993. In 2002, Ms. Strauss played the role of Ms. Werdenstein in the acclaimed theater production of Thomas Bernhard's "Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh" (Above All Peaks is Silence). Her first professional film experience was "YELLOW CHERRIES" (2001), directed by Leopold Lummerstorfer.

Kathrin Resetarits (Manu)

Before studying to become a film director at the Vienna Film Academy, actress/director Kathrin Resetarits studied journalism, philosophy and theatre in Vienna. Her fertile collaboration with Barbara Albert started with the short film "SUN SPOTS," leading to feature-film roles in Jörg Kalt's "DIRECTION FUTURE THROUGH THE NIGHT" and Bernhard Weirather's "IKARUS." Ms. Resetarits directed various fiction films and documentaries, such as "LA PALOMA" (1994), "FOREIGNERS 1-3" (1998), "ME AND ME" (2002), "THE LAST THINGAMAJIG" (1996) and "EGYPT" (1997). The latter has received several prizes in and outside Austria.

Georg Friedrich (Andreas)

Widely regarded as one of the most established Austrian actors of his generation, Georg Friedrich has metamorphosed himself into a wide range of roles. He can be spotted in Austria's most recent award-winning films and is probably best known for his long-time collaboration with director Michael Haneke (THE PIANO TEACHER). Among others, Mr. Friedrich appears in Haneke's TIME OF THE WOLF (2003), THE PIANO TEACHER (2001), 71 FRAGMENTS IN A CHRONOLOGY OF CHANCE (1994), THE SEVENTH CONTINENT (1989) as well as in Barbara Albert's debut feature film NORTHERN SKIRTS (1999) and in Ulrich Seidl's DOG DAYS (2001).

Désirée Ourada (Patricia)

Born in 1987, in Vienna, Désirée Ourada is currently finishing high school. Her major artistic interests lie in music (mostly Punk-rock and Heavy metal), painting and photography. "FREE RADICALS" (2004) was her first screen experience.

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DIRECTOR'S BIO:

BARBARA ALBERT (Writer/Director)

Born in 1970, Vienna, Barbara Albert is one of the most promising film directors in Austria. After studying Directing and Scriptwriting at the Vienna Film School from 1991 to 1995, Ms. Albert went on to collect her first international film prize with her short film "SWALLOWS OF THE NIGHT" (1994), which won the Best Short Film award in Saarbrücken, Germany, at the Max-Ophüls-Film Festival.

Her feature film debut NORTHERN SKIRTS (1999) was nominated for a Golden Lion at the Vienna Film Festival and on the same year, Ms. Albert was nominated for the European Discovery of the Year award by the European Film Award commission. NORTHERN SKIRTS was screened to critical acclaim at the MOMA/New Directors in 2000 and was a festival favorite around the globe.

FREE RADICALS (2004) is Ms. Albert's second feature film and an audacious jump in an already celebrated career. Funded by Austrian, Germany and Swiss funds, FREE RADICALS was the official Austrian submission to the Best Foreign Film category at Academy Awards in 2004.

FILMOGRAPHY:

Free Radicals (2003)
State of the Nation: Austria in Six Chapters (2002)
Northern Skirts (1999)
Sonnenflecken (1998)
Sliden': All Bright and Wonderful (2000)
Somewhere Else (1997)
Fruit of Thy Womb, The (1996)
Nachtschwalben (1993)
Und raus bist du (1992)
Der andern eine Grube gräbt (1991)

