

Jürgen Hoppmann (J), interviewed by Philip Fairweather (P) in 2006 concerning the production of the feature film AstroEuros and future works for the the novel version of this movie, working title "Det Astrologe"

J = Director's Interview Take One!

P = Hi Ladies and Gentlemen! I'm sitting here to...

J = Director's Interview Take Two!

P = Hi Ladies and Gentlemen!

My name is Philip Fairweather and I'm sitting here with the director of this master peace: Jürgen Hoppmann

P = So Jürgen - when did you get the first idea of this film and - what on earth is it all about?

J = It was in 1998.

J = I was totally fucked up. I'd lost my three children and my ex wife.

J = I had to sell my house in the Countryside. I'd finished my books about museum exhibitions and my software did not sell any more.

J = So I had to save my soul.

J = Then I had this idea to make a big movie - but I hated this idea.

J = For one month I lay in my bed and cried in my pillow because nobody would help me to make this movie.

P = But what's going on in most people's minds when seeing this movie is: What on earth is it all about?

J = Yes: What's this movie about?

J = You want to smoke? Oh no, I know, this is your profile trick.

J = You must realise that for more than four years I tried to sell the movie & present it to anybody- thus I promoted this movie.

J = And I was absolutely shy to tell them that the movie was about Astrology, because everybody says astrology is bullshit, or rather everybody in Germany says that!

J = Everybody loves Astrology, but in the TV companies everybody say, astrology is bullshit.

J = Another theme is the love story between east and west. Ok, it's bullshit, but a little bit better.

J = But then it's also about history, mythology, Greek mythology, and about the history of Astrology in Germany, like in the Third Reich etc.

J = I made some big museum exhibitions.

J = And everybody said: "That's definitely bullshit!"

J = You can not make your first movie a historic movie.

J = But that was not the problem.

J = The problem was telling anybody about the conspiracy theme.

J = What about if the Euro is ruled by some curious esoteric freaks with the big moneys in their hands?

J = What if the coin would be a symbol for the twelve stars and so on?

J = What about if some curious people rule the world, believing in Astrology or some other esoteric things?

J = I was absolutely shy to tell anybody about this.

J = I was absolutely afraid.

J = And I was afraid for myself to think about this.

J = That was my problem.

P = You know, in the light of conspiracy theories... Things like that are all the rage at the moment what with "The Da Vinci Code" and everything like this being so popular...

P = Do you think that you now have some kind of foothold in the conspiracy theory market now?

J = I don't know.

J = And the reaction was: They presented me a book about there being a big Jewish conspiracy all over the world, that the Jews are guilty and all that fucking stuff the right wing esoteric scene believe in.

J = Oh God! I thought, I should destroy my movie, because it's not right wing propaganda that I made.

P = Ah, right.

P = Well, I found out, that my role in this film, where I provided the english voice of Fred Schmidt as Störnberg...

P = I thought that he was remarkably similar to the actor David Verrey, who appeared in an episode of "Doctor Who"- "Aliens of London."

P = And, because this was all about Aliens taking over Downing Street, and I'm, you know...

J = I did not make an Alien movie, but this story you reminds you about this?

P = Yes, I don't know whether it is the kind of face some aliens were, hiding themselves inside.

P = More this idea of the people at the top being not that what they seem...

J = This is also a idea of this British... ?

P = Yes, in some aspects, focusing on different things...

J = Interesting.

P = But I think, that has much to do with some ideas of your film, i.e. that thing on the top of the Euro organisation are not quite what they seem.

J = Yes Philip, that is an interesting theme, the Euro.

J = What I felt 8 years ago when I started the movie is that the Euro and Europe is a big theme.

J = And it's still not mentioned in the world of movies, the idea of the Euro and what Europe is.

J = Like the United States of Europe.

J = Nobody talks about, but it still exists and the curious thing is:

J = We have a President of the United States of America, but we don't have a President of the United States of Europe.

J = This is a very powerful structure, Europe, but rather nobody knows the rules it works on.

P = Exactly.

J = And there is a big euphory, like here, where I finished my work at the border with Poland.

J = And you, being an Englishman living in Poland - you supported me very much, finding many people for the English and the Polish dub from Wroclaw and Legnica, and I took some people from Zgorzelec as well.

J = So it's: We in Europe made a film.

J = The main actor now lives in Mallorca, others live in Austria or Hamburg or somewhere else.

J = The english screenplay was made by an Irishman,

J = So it's an European film.

J = But what's Europe?

J = And rather nobody in Europe, I think, cares about it.

J = And who rules Europe?

J = The main idea I had was making people mindful of thinking and looking at what really happens here in Europe.

J = And maybe some people rule Europe we don't know about!

P = Exactly.

J = But the people must be aware of this, looking for democracy and where the power goes.

J = And I think this is very interesting for the people and I hope...

J = It's a curious movie, a UFO movie or a Splatter movie or a B movie or Trash movie, but...

J = But the main theme is about democracy and politics and that people think about it in their mind.

P = OK, you said, that there had been much about European cooperation.

P = But did you intend that right from the beginning or is that something that grows while the film grew?

J = It grows, I'll give you an example:

J = I tried to sell the screenplay everywhere and brought it to many places.

J = In 1998 I went to a film university in Potsdam.

J = They did not want to make it, they did only wanted to get money, from me to write a treatment,

and then in 1999 I went to Script House in Berlin, told them:

J = "Now you have 10.000 DM (i. e. 5.000 Euro). Help me to write the screenplay - only to write the screenplay."

J = They said: "Oh, oh, we don't do it."

J = But three month later, they offered something:

J = If somebody paid some thousand Euros in a special course.

J = But at that time I had another group.

J = There was a man who came from Africa, director Wolfgang Pfeiffer.

J = And then I went to Switzerland and then to Greece.

J = Where I found an Austrian Girl there, playing Astro Drama.

J = And then I went to Austria the next year. Just to find a Lilith I travelled around Europe!

J = And in Austria I lived together with two other women, Georgia Dollereeder and Mutze.

J = They promoted the movie, said "It's a great idea" and painted something for it.

J = Then, when I was absolute bankrupt, there came a phonecall from Munich:

J = The girl said: "I heard you want to make the movie without me?"

J = I said: "Sorry, I have no money."

J = The girls said: "I don't care about money. Who cares about money. Maybe I'm a millionaire?"

J = She was not a millionaire.

J = But back in Berlin we started the movie.

J = People came from all over.

J = So it's always been twisted all over Europe.

J = The production was like the movie was.

J = With the first final cut, I went to Switzerland and then back to Munich and then Görlitz.

J = Then it was promoted: My next boss came from the Netherlands, Denny Holwerda - a big DVD factory.

J = Now the DVD is made by a company from the Netherlands and I hope to promote it in Poland.

J = So the production is European.

P = I mean, this idea... to do all this dubbed versions on top of the original German version... again: Was this what you intended to do right from the start?

P = Or was it something that eventually grew up when you came to Görlitz?

J = For example: Everybody got my screenplay.

J = I invested some thousand Euros for the screenplay.

J = And the only person giving me any positive feedback was a screenplay agent in London, Julian Friedman, who came to Berlin.

J = And with my three little children I visited him later in London, asking:

J = "Could you find a producer?"

J = But, being in London, he said: "You must find a producer in Berlin."

J = I did not want to make the movie.

J = In the meantime I wrote some other screenplays for some Yoga people.

J = The result was "Urban Tantra Yogini".

J = For this movie, I wrote the screenplay, but I did not want to produce it.
J = But nobody had a camera, nobody had a production studio, so what to do?
J = "So, now you are the producer. " "But who's the director?" "Your are the director. "
J = So everybody pushed me into it.
J = I did not want to make the movie.
J = I was totally fucked up with no money, at the end of 2002. Back in Berlin I had only a very small room (9. 6 square meter).
J = Then I met a women who organised everything on the old Mail Ministry of former GDR.
J = And she had all the rooms.
J = So we started the movie.
J = I never wanted to make the movie.
J = And I never wanted to cut it.
P = OK, but the question I wanted to ask was about that dubbing, that now you dubbed it into two other languages.
P = When you finished the original German version?
P = Did you have any idea making such a big project with all this voice artists from Görlitz, Zgorzelec, Wroclaw, Legnica and other places to put this film into English and Polish as well?
P = Was that your original plan when you finished the job?
J = There was an idea, because there was this Irishman who wade the translation into English.
J = And we made English subtitles.
J = And the first release of the movie, we tested it and it didn't work.
J = So I said I'd wait a bit. And then I cutted the movie again, when I am in Görlitz.
J = And Roland Kotter from Dresden helped me.
J = In the credits you see all the people who helped me.
J = But in the meantime I dubbed many movies here in Görlitz.
J = The EDD company said: "Here are 15 animation movies. Do make the dub."
J = And I made some other dubs, so I got really experienced in dubbing.
J = One day I thought:
J = "Now I have all this screenplay in English."
J = "So I must find people who can make the English dub!"
J = Next day I found you in Zgorzelec - you remember that story?
P = Yeah.
J = But it was never intended to do it.
P = So in many ways... a happy accident.
J = There had been many lucky accidents... For example Bea...
J = When I started to make the movie, I was a Tarot Card Layer and worked at a medieval market.
J = I was payed by Yahoo International... you know the website...
J = I made the Tarot Cards and at the end of a long evening there was a totally drunk person.
J = She said: "Could you read the Tarot for a completely drunk person?"
J = And that was Bea, and she promoted everything that we got the Great Ministry.
J = And so there had been many happy accidents.
J = Doris wanted to make the movie, wanted to be the first person.
J = And Udo Moll was the co-direktor... he played roles and helped me very much.
J = Or Michael Meier.
J = Michael Meier wanted to share the movie.
J = He said: "I have a Trabant 601, I am trained to use a machine gun, I have a wolf coat."
J = So I said, this is a good guy.
J = And he made everything.
J = He made audio, made camera, made dubbing, played some roles, and organised and so on.

J = More and more people came and shared the project.

J = I always wanted to skip the project.

J = But I couldn't do it, because so many people helped me.

J = All in all a very lucky time.

P = So lots of people turned up.

P = But did anybody see any money?

J = We will see.

J = There are some clear rules:

J = I payed much!

J = I think I payed 25. 000 Euros for it.

J = Nobody working directly on the movie got any money, but they could get money later if I could sell it.

J = So that's in tot something around 50.000 Euros.

J = Only people making the dubbing, mostly from Poland, speaking small roles, got around 30 Euros each.

J = Or for translation. They get their money direct!

J = The others... the musicians, for instance will get some money... also the actors and the crew...

J = We have special contracts, but it's the same contract for everybody...

J = They'll get the money when the movie gets sold!

P = Now it looks like the film is shaping up for a DVD release...

P = What are you actually doing with the DVD.

P = Will you be going to promote it at film festivals or... ?

J = Yes. The DVD is not for commercial use.

J = I don't know whether I will ever sell the movie.

J = I hope so.

J = I will do everything: Spread it to the festivals, give it to TV companies or something else.

J = But the main thing is: The DVD is for all the people who shared the movie.

J = So everybody who shared the movie will get a private copy only for private use.

J = And I'll bring it to everybody... wherever they are!

J = So when the movie is finished - I hope to finish it end of August and then going to Warsaw and try to promote it there where I'll be working at a movie company there...

J = After that I will travel to everybody all over Europe and give them their personal copy.

J = And then spread the world and hope to find a distributor or tv companies who want to buy it...

J = But this DVD is only for personal use, it's not for selling!

P = So basically you feel a little bit guilt about the fact...

J = Yes!

P = ...that other people who worked on that film haven't seen any money yet and so one of your priorities is to make shure that it is properly promoted, and eventually sold so that the people actually start to see some money?

J = Yes. That's why it was so important to make the English dub and the curious thing was that most of the English dub was made by people from Poland.

J = English, British people like you, but also native Polish speaker. That's why I also made the Polish dub.

J = This is a test, whether anybody really would buy the movie so that we really get money to pay the people for their proper work.

P = Yes. But mean in the world of DVD movies and this sort of thing - maybe not so much in German where a lot of things are dubbed - but have you thought that dubbing is really a viably international process, because a lot of countries now prefer subtitles?

P = Do you actually think this was a good move?

J = Well, I think, I hope this is a good move.

J = This is not only a three language version by dubbing - and dubbing in Polish is quite complicated and it's very new.

J = Also I did not pay much for the people who made the dubbing.

J = We definitely did not have a professional dubbing studio.

J = So I hope the english speaking world will respect our great work we did on this - independent - dubbing.

J = Maybe it's the first real independent low to no budget movie which is dubbed into two languages.

J = And we have also the subtitles.

J = You can maybe for example hear the english dub and read the polish subtitles.

P = Yeah. So in many ways you can say to people who are sceptical about dubbing that they should give this one a try, because not so much for the dubbing but for the fact that this was an enormous community project!

P = Lots of people who had never the chance to be in a film before.

P = This was the little moment that brought many people together!

J = Yes, this is a very important point:

J = Maybe the Euro is ruled by some people sitting somewhere up in the mountains, and they rule everything.

J = Maybe. But also the film industry is ruled - especially in Europe - by some people who rule everything.

J = So there is no chance for independent movies, no chance for good people to show what they can do.

J = The curious thing was: In this movie we created everything, even the music. We made a lot of music! Everthing was created directly for the movie.

J = And all the dubbing and all these things: It's like in a "big" movie, a big Hollywood movie, what we did.

J = And also the dubbing things. I took many normal people, but also people like Ada from Wroclaw, who studied theater, who made the English and Polish dub for the Lilith scene, who are trained.

J = Or you Philip: You are travelling around Europe, singing on the street.

J = You have a brilliant voice, you have studied in England, know much about theater,

J = Those people never get a chance to show what they can do.

J = And this movie gives people a chance.

P = You said before... it's a massive community project, which you never intend to be a community project, but it' turned into something really amazing.

J = Yes, just that.

P = Lots of people who never had the chance to work on a film before got this chance, and the result is quite something!

J = Yes Philipp, this is just the point.

J = The movie is just what the production of the movie is, and I hope, it's also the result.

J = It's an idea of Europe.

P = Hm.

J = Of the brilliant idea of Europe, that people come together.

J = Someone starts something and more and more people...

J = We are allowed to move.

J = We are allowed to communicate now. And so we can do creative things.

J = And so this movie is still a symbol of Europe.

J = That's the idea of the people and... that's it.

P = Jürgen Hoppmann, thank you very much.

J = Thanks, Philip.