

PRODUCED BY  
CHRISTOPH MÜLLER

A FILM BY  
ANDREAS DRESEN

BASED ON A SCREENPLAY BY  
WOLFGANG KOHLHAASE

HENRY  
HÜBCHEN

# Whisky with Vodka

CORINNA  
HARFOUCH

SYLVESTER GROTH    MARKUS HERING    VALERY TSCHÉPLANOWA

ALL ABOUT THE FILM



Karlovy Vary  
International Film Festival



## Short Synopsis

The actor Otto Kullberg (Henry Hübchen) is a man women love and men like. Sometimes he drinks a little too much. When his excessive drinking leads him to miss a day on the set of his new film and it seems like he's about to blow the whole thing, a younger actor (Markus Hering) is hired to shoot all the scenes a second time as a backup solution: Leo the producer is not willing to lose any money.

Otto Kullberg, a man of fast wit and driven by his need to be at the center of attention, finds himself forced to assert his role on the

set, in a 1920's costume, to decide between the love for two women, and to redefine his role in his own life. Many films ago, there was a love story between Otto and his partner Bettina (Corinna Harfouch), who is now the wife of the director (Sylvester Groth). Does the distinction between film and reality fade away? In the duel between the actors on set, no one wants to be the loser. Everyone loves the truth and everybody lies.

Not to mention, you really shouldn't mix whisky and vodka.



With this melancholic comedy, WHISKY WITH VODKA, director Andreas Dresen (CLOUD 9) and scriptwriter Wolfgang Kohlhaase (SOLO SUNNY) join forces once again after their successful collaboration on SUMMER IN BERLIN: with a sensitive touch, told with lightness and laconic humor, their film speaks of loneliness and growing older, of opportunities and dreams, and of smaller and bigger lies. The wonderful ensemble (consisting of among others Corinna Harfouch, Sylvester Groth and Markus Hering) is led by Henry Hübchen (GO FOR ZUCKER!), who embodies a winner, a leading role actor in both film and life and yet living very close to the edge. Rich with comedy, he lends his figure a touching vulnerability and depth. Dresen takes a deep look at the role-plays that we encounter in cinema, if we choose to – and those that involve our lives, even if we don't choose to.

**TELLECK**  
Otto, could you put a little more tango in it?  
I mean with the feet.

**OTTO**  
The tango is in my face.





## Interview with Andreas Dresen

### Where did you get the idea for WHISKY WITH VODKA?

It came to me in the form of a script by Wolfgang Kohlhaase. During a train ride from Lünen to Berlin, he told me the story and asked me whether I would be interested in reading it. I did and discovered a lot of human truth in it: When do people give in?



How do they get themselves into dissatisfying situations? The script takes a bizarre incident that took place in the 50's and makes it the starting point of a story about opportunism and life's lies and deceptions. It meets my own experience and I found myself asking: What is truly important in life? What values do I stand for? These are decisive questions that the characters in the film are also forced to ask themselves.

### How would you characterize the main figure in the film, the actor Otto Kullberg?

At first he seems to be quite confident in everything he does – Otto has fast wit, always ready with a clever line, and he's built himself a perfect facade to the outside world. But deep in his heart he is a very lonely man, and that's also why he drinks so much. He didn't manage to build any durable and long-lasting relationships to other people outside his profession. Rather, he fled into his work, immersing himself in one film project after another. But there are more important things in life than just work. This becomes clear to him in a very tragic way when Otto realizes that even at work he's slowly slipping into the background: only thanks to his past love Bettina does he manage to get himself back on track again. He gets a growing sense of

how replaceable he is: Otto's last crutch in life is also slipping away.

### Arno, his rival, is also not better off.

You end up feeling so sorry for him having to play the thankless role he's been forced to take on in this film project. And he also hasn't found anyone to share his life with. And then he totally deceives himself by pretending that he's satisfied with his role as the substitute actor. But in reality he's got other ambitions: at the end, he tries to deceive Otto in a very ugly way.

### And Bettina? What kind of person is she?

The great love of her life never had the chance to bloom; with Telleck she's settled herself to a pragmatic compromise, but she's still searching and at the end she even starts something with Arno. Secretly, she still yearns for her old love that she can't have and so struggles with herself.

### And then there's Martin Telleck, the film's director.

Oh God, yeah, he's really an opportunist! His corruption starts already with the fact that the only reason he hired Otto was because he would have otherwise not found a distributor for his film. Then he is quite disloyal to Otto by accepting the backup solution with the substitute actor. Of course he wants to rescue his dream project but to do that he resorts to dishonesty. What I miss in him is a clear-cut position. Nevertheless, I find his helplessness at times quite moving. I mean in the end it's only human when we cave in under pressure. The entire script is set up in such a way that



you develop an understanding for each of the characters. None of us really goes through life without making compromises, do we?

### Basically, not one single character in this story is truly happy.

Yes, they're all flapping their wings; they're all seeking – probably just like the rest of us. I think that the fear of being alone is a fundamental issue in our lives. Basically, Wolfgang Kohlhaase tells a deeply sad story about missed opportunities, but he does it with such wonderful humor. This is his great talent.

### How did you set out to stage his extremely stripped down dialogues?

These dialogues are written in such a precise and unsentimental manner that they demand an enormous precision in speed:

if you shift the rhythm by a single nuance, you lose the bite or the comedy. Kohlhaase's figures never actually say what they mean or think. They've all built an invisible protective shield around their hearts. People are always cautious when it comes to showing their feelings and emotions. Kohlhaase doesn't try and emulate any everyday language but rather writes in an artistic language that creates reality on a very high level and in the end is very much close to life. Already in SUMMER IN BERLIN I realized that as a director you shouldn't attempt to reduce these words and lines to something common and trivial. If you take them exactly the way they are written, then the effect you get is extremely honest and real.

### You once said that Kohlhaase has a sense for tone. How would you describe the tone of WHISKY WITH VODKA?

Tragicomic with a strong melancholic impact. It is a bitter story that disguises itself – much like SUMMER IN BERLIN. We wanted the viewer to get a sense very early on that this film is not some farce on filmmaking, and so

we built in breaks in the story right from the start, in the form of close ups that capture moments of loneliness and longing. At the latest, when Otto and Bettina drive off to the country inn, it then becomes very clear that this film is an exploration of some basic existential questions.

### The conversation between the two characters at the country inn is one of the central scenes in the film...

You can see how they're deceiving themselves; how they're hoping for something, yet in vain; how they set up the wrong courses in their lives and then only to realize it far too late. Shooting this scene was also a great discovery for me. It was extremely moving and powerful for me to see how Corinna Harfouch and Henry Hübchen made what was happening in that moment between these two characters all come alive.



### TELLECK

**You don't make a film because you're certain, but to discover something. A film is conjecture. It's about finding new images for things that repeat themselves. The great phenomena – love, death and the weather.**

### What happens at the deathbed of Otto's father is also very moving.

Here the film raises the principal question that all the characters in the film will have to face one day: "Who am I?" Otto's father asks



this question at the moment he is about to leave the world. And Otto answers him with the beautiful words, “You are my father”. To be a father is precisely what Otto had missed – and it is in that moment that it becomes clear to him. His father, the postman, was on the road in real life – Otto on the other hand had only ever moved and lived in an illusory fake world.

On the side, the film is also about social reality – for example when Otto, during his speech to the film crew at the film party, bitterly complains about how he was treated.

Yes, that speech is quite strong. In our society, there’s an enormous pressure that burdens each and every one of us; we have to function, always. If you make a mistake, you will be mercilessly replaced. Of course Otto should not have been drinking, but in the end people are simply not functional robots. We have to accept that we all also make mistakes. We need to treat each other with more respect and dignity in this world. This is what Otto complains about. It’s about a lot more than simply acting.

The characters in your film don’t walk together in life. They’re all solitary fighters, walking alone.

That’s just how people are. That’s why loneliness is such a central theme, not just in this film but also in our society. It also manifests itself in the trailer park at the sea in which Telleck’s film team is staying.



Every evening, each crew member sits in his/her own little house. Once in a while one goes out from door to door and knocks carefully. But in the end they part ways and each goes back “home”. They all live together, and yet alone. This picture was quite important to me and that’s why I made sure that Telleck’s team in the film doesn’t stay at a hotel, as is usually the case on a film set.



What was your biggest challenge during the shoot?

The film-in-film story that led to showing the same actors playing different characters and styles. In the rain scene under the pier, for example, Corinna Harfouch first kisses her screen partner, and then we see her in a private moment as Bettina and then she finally kisses her second screen partner and then her husband – all with totally different attitudes! Aside from that, I had to get used to having so many people moving around both in front of and behind the camera. I sometimes shot with two cameras, and then there was also Telleck’s team. If you’re not careful, you’ll quickly end up with a confusing mess. At the beginning I didn’t even know how I was going to set up a shoot with three camera teams.

And what solution did you come up with?

We did it all quite systematically: first we set up Telleck’s scenes so that we knew how his team and actors would move. Only then could we start to build up our own picture. To think like that was quite unusual for me – I’m more of a chamber play kind of guy.

**BETTINA**

**Either it starts out with grand feeling and then all comes crashing down.**

**Or it starts out much more rationally, with sympathy, friendship ... and the feelings come later.**

At least in this film you could indulge yourself in costumes and set dressing for a change.

Yes! And thanks to the historical film-in-film story, I could also play with different film styles. The scenes set in the 20s for example demanded from the actors a totally different kind of body language, gestures and dialogue techniques. For instance, in a beach chair scene, there was this typical fast, high-pitched clip-clap dialogue like in a screwball comedy. And I could even shoot a grand ball scene! This isn’t usually quite what I have to deal with in my stories of daily life. But I had great fun shooting something like that. And of course during my studies at Babelsberg, I did actually learn classical film storytelling. That’s why I was very happy to pull out some of those skills for WHISKY WITH VODKA: I could pull out a couple of stops here that normally have no place in my films.

Interview by Marco Schmidt





**OTTO**  
In this film, I bang  
first the mother,  
then the daughter.  
But does that mean for sure  
it will be a hit?  
People are fed up.



## ANDREAS DRESEN DIRECTOR

Andreas Dresen was born in 1963 in Gera, former East Germany. In the early 80s, he began working in theater and making short films. He studied directing at the HFF „Konrad Wolf“ Potsdam-Babelsberg. Since 1992, he has been working as a writer and director for film and TV.

Andreas is one of Germany's most admired directors with diverse and award-winning features. NIGHT SHAPES won Best Actor at the Berlin Film Festival and the Best New Director award at Valladolid. GRILL POINT won the Silver Bear – Grand Jury Prize at the Berlin Film Festival, as well as Best Director and Best Ensemble at the Chicago Festival and Best Director at the Ghent Festival. SUMMER IN BERLIN, was awarded Best Screenplay at the San Sebastian Film Festival and Best Actress at the Chicago Festival.

CLOUD 9 received the “Coup de Coeur du Jury” in the section Un Certain Regard at the Festival de Cannes 2008. Furthermore, Ursula Werner was awarded as Best Actress, Andreas Dresen as Best Director and the film with the Lola in bronze at the German Film Awards.



### SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- 2009 WHISKY WITH VODKA (Whisky mit Wodka)
- 2008 CLOUD 9 (Wolke 9)
- 2005 SUMMER IN BERLIN (Sommer vorm Balkon)
- 2004 WILLENBROCK
- 2002 HERR WICHMANN VON DER CDU • documentary
- 2001 GRILL POINT (Halbe Treppe)
- 2000 THE POLICEWOMAN (Die Polizistin) • TV
- 1998 NIGHT SHAPES (Nachtgestalten)
- 1997 CHANGING SKINS (Raus aus der Haut) • TV
- 1994 MEIN UNBEKANNTER EHEMANN • TV
- 1994 KUCKUCKSKINDER • documentary
- 1992 SILENT COUNTRY (Stilles Land)

## WOLFGANG KOHLHAASE SCREENPLAY

Wolfgang Kohlhaase, born 1931 in Berlin, was working as a dramaturgy assistant at the DEFA, the East German state film production company, before he became an independent scriptwriter and author.

Together with the director Gerhard Klein he worked on the children's film ALARM IM ZIRKUS and on some “Berlin Films”, among them BERLIN – CORNER SCHÖNHAUSER (1957) as well as BERLIN UM DIE ECKE.

I WAS NINETEEN in 1967 was the start of Kohlhaase's long collaboration with Konrad Wolf. They worked on films like MAMA, I'M ALIVE and THE NAKED MAN IN THE STADIUM. SOLO SUNNY was awarded with the Silver Bear at the Berlinale for best actress (Renate Krößner) and the International Critic's Prize.

In 2000, his screenplay of THE LEGENDS OF RITA (directed by Volker Schlöndorff) was nominated for the European Film Prize. SUMMER IN BERLIN was the first collaboration with Andreas Dresen. He received the Jury Award for Best Screenplay at the San Sebastián Film Festival.

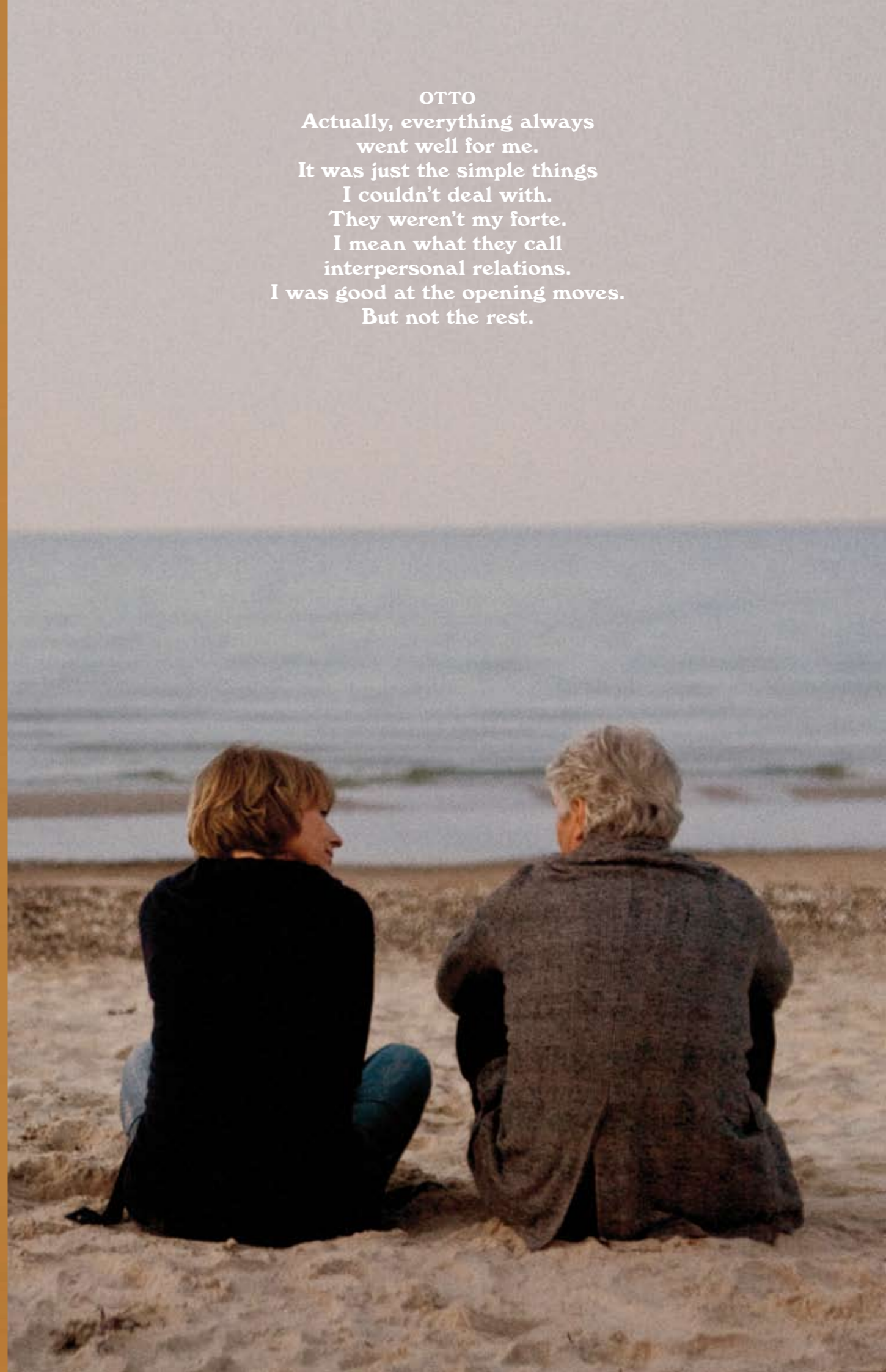
Kohlhaase was a member of the East German Academy of the Arts from 1972; in 1991 he was selected to become a member of the Akademie der Künste Berlin-Brandenburg. He also gives lectures on scriptwriting at various universities. He lives in Berlin.

### SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- 2008 WHISKY WITH VODKA (Whisky mit Wodka) • Script
- 2006 SUMMER IN BERLIN (Sommer vorm Balkon) • Script
- 2002 BABY • Script
- 2000 THE LEGEND OF RITA (Die Stille nach dem Schuß) • Script
- 1993 INGE, APRIL AND MAY • Script and co-director
- 1989 DER BRUCH • Script and Song Lyrics
- 1983 THE TURNING POINT (Der Aufenthalt) • Script
- 1980 SOLO SUNNY • Script and co-director
- 1967 I WAS NINETEEN (Ich war neunzehn) • Script
- 1965 BERLIN UM DIE ECKE • Script
- 1957 BERLIN – SCHÖNHAUSER CORNER (Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser) • Script
- 1954 ALARM IM ZIRKUS • Script



OTTO  
Actually, everything always  
went well for me.  
It was just the simple things  
I couldn't deal with.  
They weren't my forte.  
I mean what they call  
interpersonal relations.  
I was good at the opening moves.  
But not the rest.







**MELANIE**  
Step on it,  
the actors are  
getting older!



## Cast

Otto Kullberg	<b>Henry Hübchen</b>
Bettina Moll	<b>Corinna Harfouch</b>
Martin Telleck	<b>Sylvester Groth</b>
Arno Runge	<b>Markus Hering</b>
Heike Marten	<b>Valery Tscheplanowa</b>
Productionmanager Herbert	<b>Peter Kurth</b>
Melanie	<b>Karina Plachetka</b>
Alex	<b>Matthias Walter</b>
Tillmann Korn	<b>Kai Börner</b>
Holger	<b>Thomas Putensen</b>
Henry	<b>Peter Pauli</b>
Stageman	<b>Frank Auerbach</b>
Landlord	<b>Tilo Prückner</b>

As musical guests

**Günther Fischer, 17 Hippies**

Editorial Department

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Filmförderungsanstalt, Deutscher Filmförderfonds**



## Crew

Director	<b>Andreas Dresen</b>
Script	<b>Wolfgang Kohlhaase</b>
Producer	<b>Christoph Müller</b>
Co-Producer	<b>Peter Rommel</b>
Creative Producer	<b>Cooky Ziesche</b>
Production Manager	<b>Peter Hartwig</b>
Line Producer	<b>Patricia Barona</b>
Director of Photography	<b>Andreas Höfer</b>
Production Design	<b>Susanne Hopf</b>
Costume Design	<b>Sabine Greunig</b>
Make Up	<b>Grit Kosse</b>
	<b>Uta Spikermann</b>
Editor	<b>Jörg Hauschild</b>
Sound	<b>Peter Schmidt</b>
Sound Mix	<b>Ralf Krause</b>
Music Consultant	<b>Jens Quandt</b>
Light Design	<b>Georg Nonnenmacher</b>

## Technical Data

Length	<b>104 min.</b>
Format	<b>1:1,85</b>
Sound	<b>Dolby Digital</b>





THE MATCH FACTORY PRESENTS A SENATOR FILM PRODUKTION IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH ROMMEL FILM RBB WDR BR MDR AND ARTE  
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