**SYNOPSIS**

**“In life, you only regret the things that you didn’t do.”**

Two older ladies (Christine Ostermayer and Margarethe Tiesel), who couldn’t be more different, meet in a nursing home. Soon, they embark on an exciting road trip that doesn’t quite go according to plan. Along the way, they each discover a whole new version of themselves and learn to appreciate what really matters in life.

A film about new beginnings in old age, existential questions and finding levity in serious topics. The fantastic cast of 80 PLUS takes the audience on an adventure reminiscent of THELMA & LOUISE, featuring audience favourites such as Julia Koschitz, Manuel Rubey, Thomas Mraz, Julia Jelinek, Stefanie Sargnagel, David Scheid, Reinhard Nowak and many more.

**PRESS TEXT**

Christine Ostermayer plays Helene, a once famous stage diva. She is reserved and, despite her advanced age, still very disciplined (no smoking, no drinking, healthy diet). Margarethe Tiesel play Toni, a somewhat crude, no-nonsense woman who enjoys life to the fullest (smokes, drinks, eats unhealthily).

Helene has already made herself an appointment at a Swiss assisted suicide clinic. But she has no way to get there, as her nephew (Manuel Rubey) refuses to drive her. He is one step away from becoming CEO and is worried about his image.

But fate brings Toni into her life. She may be loud and a bit pushy, but she’s always up for an adventure. In Helene’s elegant Jaguar, the unlikely pair heads west to Switzerland. On their eventful road trip across Austria, they keep plenty of people on their toes – including the police and border officials.

One of the many beautiful messages the film conveys to its audiences is that it’s never too late to surprise yourself.

**80 PLUS is a joyful film full of polished dialogues, situational humour and charm that deals with difficult issues in a light-heartedly way.**

**The film was shot during the summer of 2023 on location in Tyrol / East Tyrol: Hall in Tirol and Kaunertal, Lower Austria, Vorarlberg and Zurich.**

**INTERVIEW with Christine Ostermayer and Margarethe Tiesel**

***“In our profession, you just have to function – from head to your badly operated toe.”***

*Christine Ostermayer, how would you describe your character, Helene?*

As a headstrong, confident, spirited old lady.

*And Margarethe Tiesel, how would you describe your character, Toni?*

She’s a feisty woman who has suffered many blows without losing her sense of humour.

*What do you see as the main themes of the film?*

MT: Autonomy, self-determination, courage and the desire for freedom.

CO: I’ve rarely encountered a film that addresses so many issues that are relevant to my own life.

*Watching* 80 PLUS*, one can’t help but think of THELMA & LOUISE...*

CO: I’ve heard of the film, of course, but I’ve never seen it.

MT: I know the film, and found it a bit shocking, because the two women die at the end. But that’s how it is: it’s just a role, a game.

*Where was the film shot?*

MT: In Vienna’s Oberlaa district, Lienz, Hall in Tirol, in Zurich and in Germany. And on the Großglockner High Alpine Road – that was terrible! My husband was very jealous because I was allowed to drive that car [a Jaguar]. But to be honest, I found it really hard work. The car was one of those Jaguar classics that all men enthuse over. But it was actually very uncomfortable…

CO: Awful!

MT: You have to slide in and the seats are so low. Just getting in and out and in and out is so tiring.

*You did the driving yourselves, alternating between being the driver and the passenger. What’s it like shooting a scene while driving a car?*

CO: It’s like in real life: if you’re a driver yourself, you make a terrible passenger.

MT: Were you scared when I was driving?

CO: No, not at all – but I could tell you were tense. The driving scenes were early on in the production schedule. So it was a new job, a new car, a challenging road, and a lot of dialogue –you have to be really focused. It’s exhausting.

MT: In one scene, a stuntwoman was supposed to drive the car instead of me. But she couldn’t reverse uphill so I had to do it myself, which I’m quite proud of. *(laughs)*

*It must be tough filming in so many different locations be, no?*

MT: It is quite exhausting, to be honest. But you get used to it. Especially when you shoot every day, you get into the groove and become more relaxed. That’s a plus.

CO: Yes. And you get to see the world, get to know new places. It’s like being on tour. Every night, you go to bed in a different place. You’re just happy to have a good mattress.

*Which of your character’s traits do you like and which do you find annoying?*

CO: I don’t find anything annoying about her. Wearing heavy costumes or having to smoke or eat constantly – these are things that can be a nuisance. But otherwise, the job is pure joy. The juicier the character, the more intriguing I find them.

MT: What I found annoying about my character was that she never talks about herself and how she really feels. I didn’t like how she would just gloss over things all the time: “Everything’s great. Everything’s fine…”

CO: But lots of people are that way!

MT: Of course, but when you have to play someone like that, you sometimes feel like: “Go on, say something!” But she never does. On the other hand, I admire her for having the courage to drive that car without a license, for being so curious about other people and for simply not giving a damn. She just walks up to the other lady and says: “I’d like your autograph!” I don’t think I’m as bold as the character I play here.

CO: I think the audience can draw a lot of strength from your character in particular.

*What do you like about each other?*

MT: While we were shooting, I really admired her discipline. We would be quite exhausted at times, but Christine would just push through when things were taking forever. I’d watch her and think to myself: “Wow! Will I ever be like that?” Sometimes, I was much more tired than she was. You were so consistent and focused.

CO: I had a strange experience that I had never been aware of before, during one of those moments where I thought I could just keep going. It was the last day of shooting in Zurich, a very hot day and there were lots of tourists around. At the time, I thought, everything was fine and I was doing my job as usual. But when I watched the scene weeks later in the dubbing studio, I saw this exhausted actress. She delivered her lines just fine, and the tone was quite fitting because, after all, my character was there for assisted suicide. But I was speechless, because I had thought I had all this strength when I actually had nothing left.

MT: But it was perfect for that particular scene.

CO: Yes, but the camera captures the truth.

*This is a film about existential questions. How difficult was it to tell this story as a comedy?*

MT: I think comedy is the only way to tell this story, if you don’t want the audience to shut down and say: “I don’t want to hear about this!” It’s important to address this topic – something that I myself tend to avoid. I like this format, because the medium of comedy helps to make the issue more palatable.

CO: That’s true. We’ll do a drama some other time.

MT: But the subject itself *is* a drama, isn’t it? I think it’s the Buddhists who say: “Think of death every day and you will live a happy life.” And the idea isn’t that absurd. Death is part of life and if you’re aware of your own mortality every day, you’re going to live differently. I’ve been trying to practice this a little bit.

CO: It’s just like in real life: it’s strange, it’s serious, it’s dramatic, but you can still find things to laugh about.

*What do you personally think of assisted suicide?*

MT: I’ve always dreaded being asked this question. I don’t know. I guess it depends on the situation. I have no answer. Would you ever consider assisted suicide?

CO: I’m definitely in favour of it. That was one of the reasons why I gladly said yes to this project. At this point, it’s an important topic in my life. Just as I advocate a self-determined life, I’m also an advocate for the right to seek help in dying. I just hope we can all find an understanding person who is able to help us. You can’t do it alone.

MT: The laws in Austria have been amended – assisted suicide is no longer a criminal offence.

*What are the advantages of getting old?*

MT: It’s fantastic not having to constantly prove yourself anymore – especially in my line of work. It’s a great privilege not to feel that pressure and to just get on with things without worrying about what other people think of you.

*Was that a gradual process or did you suddenly realise that you’re more relaxed?*

MT: It was gradual, I’d say. I still worry that someone might not like me – that still hurts.

CO: That’s why I don’t read reviews! Because in theatre, you have to go back out on the second night and play the part again. And I can’t do that if I’ve read a negative review. But I must admit that getting old and retiring is fantastic. You finally get to do all those things you never had time to do before.

*What advice would you give your younger colleagues?*

CO: Learn the profession. It’s not enough to have a degree. When I started, directors would say: “Speak up! The people in the back row have also paid for their tickets!” Nobody taught me how to do it, though. You just have to practise, practise, practise – preferably on annual contracts at small theatres.

*There’s this statement in the film: “People at my age are tiring, because all they talk about is their ailments.” Do you believe friendships are possible between the elderly and the younger generation?*

MT: You can’t expect young people to come to you. A group of young people moved into the apartment opposite mine, for example. Back in the day, when I moved in somewhere, I would knock at the neighbours’ doors, say hello and introduce myself. The young people today don’t do that. I had to go over and welcome them to the building, which took some effort. But now we know one another and everything’s fine. So, you just have to approach people.

*Do you believe it’s possible to find new friends in old age?*

BOTH: Of course!

*What’s it like these days for older women in TV and cinema?*

CO: I’m living proof of the fact that the situation is not hopeless.

MT: And they are trying harder to write more scripts with parts for older women.

*This film is a nice example for that. Do you believe it will help to improve the situation even more?*

CO: No, but hopefully plenty of people will like it and realise that there are more possibilities.

*Christine, are there any parts you are still waiting to play?*

CO: No. I’ve been fortunate enough to play many different female characters throughout my career. And now I’m at a point where I understand and feel what it means to be old. In our profession, you have to function – from head to your badly operated toe. That means not interrupting the workflow.

*And what about you, Margarethe?*

MT: I would like to play an inspector, someone like Miss Marple. I’d love that. (*laughs*)

*What emotions do you hope the audience will be left with after watching this film?*

CO: After having watched a good, beautiful film, I feel like I’m on cloud nine. I feel great, even if I was feeling terrible before. Films can have a huge impact.

MT: I think, it would be nice if people mulled this topic over a bit after coming out of the cinema, if they talked about it with their families.

CO (chuckles): You’re still too young…

MT: Well...

CO: I have so many conversations about this topic. I’d say, it’s all anyone talks about once they’re over 80.

MT: You know what? My grandmother would have been all for the idea of assisted dying, because she didn’t want to be a burden on anyone. She would’ve done it just so her family wouldn’t have to spend so much money on her care.

CO: But it can be a relief, too! There are a lot of seriously ill patients, who have no chance at all to end their lives in a self-determined way. When the time comes for me that I can no longer help myself, I would like to have someone who can help me without going to prison for it. But fortunately, that is already the case here.

Interview: Susanne Auzinger

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