**CHUCKS**

A film by Sabine Hiebler and Gerhard Ertl

After the novel by Cornelia Travnicek

**SYNOPSIS**

Live. Love. Dance. Now! Mae (Anna Posch) roams the streets of Vienna as a punk in her dead brother's Converse shoes. She lives on canned beer, sprays walls, tries her hand at poetry slams. She’s not interested in bourgeois life but in stronger experiences. When she is sent to an AIDS center to work off a punishment, she meets and falls in love with Paul (Markus Subramaniam).

CHUCKS, the new film by Sabine Hiebler and Gerhard Ertl *(“Coming of Age / Anfang 80”),* tells the featherlight story of growing up between life and death. Full of humor, at times rebelliously loud, then extremely tender – completely in the spirit of the literary version it is based on, the successful novel by Cornelia Travnicek about which Clemens J. Setz once wrote: “*If I were to get stuck in a lift with a character of contemporary literature, I would want it to be Mae. I don’t know whether I would come out safe and sound, but it would be worth it.”*

**CREDITS**

**Directed by:** Sabine Hiebler, Gerhard Ertl / **Screenplay:**  Sabine Hiebler, Gerhard Ertl after the novel by Cornelia Travnicek (published by DVA Verlag ein Unternehmen der Gruppe Random House GmbH, München)

**Starring:** Anna Posch, Markus Subramaniam, Thomas Schubert, Stefanie Reinsperger, Susi Stach, Lola Khittl, David Süss, Karl Fischer, Gerald Votava, Barbara Gassner, Alice Schneider, Paul Matic

**DOP:** Wolfgang Thaler / **Editing:** Roland Stöttinger / **Production design:** Nikolai Ritter **Costume:** Monika Buttinger / **Make up:** Daniela Langauer / **Casting:** Judith Limberger and Eva Roth

**Sound:** Hjalti Bager-Jonathansson, Sound re-recording mixer**:** Ingo Pusswald

**Music:** Soap&Skin, Hella Comet, MOnsterheart, Julian & der Fux, Propella, Chrome, Bilderbuch, Clara Luzia, APPARAT, Matthew Herbert

**Co-producer:** Sabine Hiebler und Gerhard Ertl, **Producer:** Danny Krausz und Kurt Stocker, DOR FILM - [www.dor-film.com](http://www.dor-film.com)

**Produced with the support of :**

**Austrian Film Institute, Film Fund Vienna, FISA (Location Austria), ORF Film/Television Agreement**

***German (English or French subtitles), 93 min., colour, DCP 2K, 5.1. Surround Mix***

**AdolesCENCE as A GLITCH  
A Conversation with Sabine Hiebler and Gerhard Ertl**

*What fascinated you about the book* CHUCKS*?*

When we first read CHUCKS by Cornelia Travnicek, we were amazed at how many parallels this novel had with our film “Coming of Age”. CHUCKS, too, is about love and death – a thematic combination we simply cannot turn down – and about the overwhelming emotions involved.

Both are love dramas in which the characters grow to meet the challenges they are faced with: The female protagonist breaks conventions and in this way clashes with society and institutions in search of “her” own path. Both films are love stories at the fringes of adult life, only that CHUCKS is at the opposite end of the age spectrum. It was a stimulating challenge for us to address similar themes from this other, young perspective.

Adolescents these days are under enormous pressure. We asked ourselves: How does it feel as a teenager growing up today and trying to find your place in society? What is it like when social acceleration doesn’t leave time for personal crises? When there is virtually no place anymore for “non-profit-oriented” values? When just functioning in society’s treadmill becomes the ultimate goal – and youth, puberty, adolescence a glitch?

All this sets the scene for our heroine’s story.

At the same time we wanted to have the plot take place completely in the emotional world of our characters: How do they overcome the challenges and difficulties arising along their paths?

*As a rebellious teenager Mae doesn’t exactly make life easy for her mother. As parents how do you view this constellation?*

It’s not a child’s task to make life easy for his or her parents. But it’s true: Her mother has been given a difficult lot fraught with crises and she has her hands full trying to deal with her own problems. Mae’s family falls apart just when she would have most needed its support. The great thing about Mae is that she never gives up searching for her own path and trying to cope. And all the while she is contrary, rebellious, and clashes with her environment – but she trusts her convictions and doesn’t let herself be misled by conventions, prejudices, and restrictions.

*How would you describe your process of writing a screenplay?*

Very discursive: First we work out the structure and sequence of scenes and in doing so define quite precisely what each individual scene should achieve in respect to the theme, story, and characters. That is the arduous part of the job, once that is done we start writing. That’s the more fun part: harvest time.

*How did you find your actors? What was it that made them seem “right” to you?*

Casting was a long and very intensive process: lay actors, acting students, young actors ... From the short list what was crucial to us besides the qualities of the individuals was building an ensemble. For the female lead we looked for an actress who could in a credible and likeable way embody the character as fragile, vulnerable, and tender on the one hand, and as cocky and obstinate on the other. This role is very intensive. The whole story rides on this character and she appears in nearly every scene. That’s quite a task for a young, relatively inexperienced actress and can be pretty daunting. Fortunately, Anna Posch took on the challenge.

*How was it working with the young actors?*

Young actors are naturally an enormous advantage when it comes to the authenticity and freshness of the scenes. It also helps, for example, if they don’t have to play the same thing thousands of times or have to be surprised at what is behind a door. We really just let them into the situation.

*Was there a kind of visual concept you wanted to realize?*

“Hoveringly told – at times cocky, at times poetic“ – that’s how the novel was described and that’s how we wanted to direct the movie. For us it was fantastic that we were able to work with Wolfgang Thaler again. In “Coming of Age” Wolfgang’s hand-held camera had allowed us to develop a very direct, emotional bond to the characters and always be very close to the protagonists and the action. We wanted to establish the same sort of intimacy in CHUCKS, only – in keeping with the young setting – with a more fast-paced, “livelier” visual language.

Wolfgang’s camera translates the rebellious protest of our heroine as well as the poetic, floating state of the lovers into direct, emotional images. During the course of the story Mae evolves from being a nonconformist antagonist to the protagonist of her own life. She becomes a young adult who finds her own language and outgrows the shoes that have always belonged to someone else. Parallel to this development the rhythm of the film also grows calmer and more stable.

*Did you plan all along to use already existing music? What were your selection criteria?*

The idea to use already existing music for CHUCKS emerged gradually over time. In Austria the music scene is currently incredibly alive and diverse. From the beginning our idea was to associate strong female voices with the strong female figure of the main character. And we found these voices in Anja Plaschg, Clara Luzia, Monsterheart, and Propella. Since CHUCKS is set in the young scene and a lot of the action takes place in clubs or shared apartments, there is plenty of room and lots of opportunities for music. In the end we were able to present a fantastic sample of the current Austrian music scene. In addition to the abovementioned artists the sound track also spans the spectrum from Bilderbuch to Julian & der Fux and Hella Comet to Camo & Krooked.

**SABINE HIEBLER and Gerhard ERTL Bio/Filmography**

Ever since they were students at the University of Art and Industrial Design in Linz, Sabine Hiebler and Gerhard Ertl have worked together.

In the early stages of their artistic cooperation they produced and staged prize-winning experimental films which were shown around the world (e.g. the New York Film Festival, Berlin Film Festival, MOMA Museum of Modern Art, New York).

Their artistic endeavours in the realms of photography, visual arts and video have been presented in numerous exhibitions (Ars Electronica, Neuen Galerie Graz, Vienna Museum of Art History, Biennale de l´image Paris).

Sabine Hiebler and Gerhard Ertl’s first feature film was NOGO – an episode film with Jürgen Vogel, Michael Ostrowski in his first film role, Jasmin Tabatabai, Meret Becker, Oliver Korittke and Mavie Hörbiger.

The film had its international premiere in Rotterdam and at the Max Ophüls Festival in Saarbrücken, was invited to festivals around the world and received numerous awards including the Variety Critics’ Choice and the Diagonale Award for Innovative Production.

This was followed by another feature film which won numerous awards, *“Coming of Age / Anfang 80”*, with Christine Ostermayer and Karl Merkatz in the leading roles. Both the film and the actors were awarded in Austria and around the world (including the Best Foreign Film Santa Barbara, Best Actor and Audience Prize World Film Festival Montreal, Best Narrative Film Wisconsin).

**F i l m o g r a p h Y:**

**EXPERIMENTAL FilmS:**

Schönberg, Crossover, Crossover 2, Position Simultan 1990 /

LIVINGROOM 1991 / Definitely Sanctus 1992 / General Motors 1993 /

SPOT-CHECK 1994 / PROST 1995 / KOMAKINO 1996 /

TRANSCODER (Understanding Lydia) 1998

**FEATURE FILMS:**

CHUCKS 2014 / 2015

ANFANG 80 2011 (with Karl Merkatz and Christine Ostermayer, Erni Mangold )

NOGO 2002 (with Michael Ostrowski, Mavie Hörbiger, Jürgen Vogel)

**PRIZES / AWARDS: (selected**)

1993: Film Prize from the Ministry of Education and Art

1995: Media Prize from the Sate of Lower Austria

2000: Upper Austria State Prize for Film

2001: Thomas Pluch Screenplay Prize for NOGO

2002: Diagonale Prize for Innovative Production for NOGO

Variety Critics´ Choice for NOGO

2012: Diagonale Graz – Best Actress Award for Christine Ostermayer in Anfang 80

World Film Festival Montreal:

Most Popular Film of the Festival – Audience Prize for Anfang 80

Best Actor for Karl Merkatz in Anfang 80

Hof Film Festival – Millbrook Screenplay Prize for Anfang 80

Zürich Film Festival – German Language Contest: Special Mention for

Anfang 80

2013: Austrian Film Prize, Best actor for Karl Merkatz in Anfang 80

Santa Barbara Int. Film Festival – Best International Feature Film Anfang 80

Wisconsin Int. Film Festival – Best Narrative Film for Anfang 80

**Film Festivals:** (selected)

New York Film Festival 1991, 92, 94 and 97 / USA

International BERLIN Film Festival 1991, 96 / G

San Francisco Int. Film Festival 1993 / USA

London Film Festival 1991, 92, 93 / GB

Sydney Film Festival 1993, 95 / AUS

Sao Paolo Int. Film Festival 1995, 2002, 2012 / BRA

Melbourne Intern. Film Festival 1992, 95, 96, 98, 02 / AUS

Worldfilm Festival Montreal 2012 / CAN

Philadelphia International Film Festival 1992 / USA

Austrian Avant-Garde Cinema Tour USA 1994/95 ( MOMA New York)

ARCO Arte contemporàneo Madrid 1993, 94 and 97 / S

Bombay Int. Film Festival 1996 / IND

Rotterdam Int. Film Festival 1997, 2002 / NL

Toronto Worldwide Short Film Festival 1997 / CAN

Los Angeles AFI Int. Film Festival 2002 / USA

Chicago Int. Film Festival 2002 / 2012 USA

Fort Lauderdale Int. Film Festival 2002 / USA

**EXHIBITIONS (VISUAL ARTS AND PHOTOGRAPHY)**

Ars electronica 1993

Theseustempel (Vienna Museum of Art History) 1993

Neue Galerie Graz 1994

Biennale de l´image Paris 1998

**THE POWER OF LISTENING**

**A Conversation with Anna Posch *(“Mae”)***

*If you had to describe Mae, which attributes would you give her?*

Impassioned, exacting ... she is very meticulous when it comes to certain things like values or emotions. Exactly the opposite of what she often criticizes about people when they are too exacting about everyday things that simply aren’t very important to her.

*Had you already read Cornelia Travnicek’s novel?*

*At the time I thought the book was fantastic, and when I found out I was invited to audition, I was very, very nervous. I also thought about not doing it because I just wasn’t sure if this was the right thing for me even though the book had really moved me. My friends all encouraged me and said I should do it. I went to the audition with absolutely no expectations. When I got the part, I was totally excited and quickly became very engrossed – I immediately immersed myself in my role.*

*Did Mae feel like a relative or a stranger to you? Was it easy or difficult to fall into character?*

Certain things in me are or were similar to Mae. And I’ve experienced some things myself too. I imagined the kind of music she listened to and drew parallels to myself. In that way I adopted a certain attitude toward life. Of course I didn’t take everything personally and I had to make changes. I had a tough time understanding or imagining doing certain things at first. I concentrated on those things and tried to put myself in her position. And then it was possible.

*Was there a moment for you during shooting where you could say: The entire experience of the film is condensed right here?*

On the same day we shot the scene at the poetry reading, which doesn’t come till the end of the film, and right after that we shot the poetry slam scene. I was deeply moved that so many people came to the poetry reading. For me that’s when something fell into place in the movie because I realized that it is a liberating feeling to create something like this book. I think that has a certain power: To find listeners for what one thinks, feels, and has experienced.

*In the movie a young woman falls in love with someone who is terminally ill. Can you relate to this aspect?*

I consider it irrelevant that this person dies in the end. If you allow yourself to fall in love, there is always the possibility of loss. I don’t even need to know, for example, that my partner has AIDS and is going to die. He might have an accident or something else could happen, or he might simply fall in love with someone else despite all the effort you invest in trusting a person. With Mae this is even harder because she has already had to deal with losing her brother. I think that’s why she is not all that keen on letting herself become emotionally involved, trusting someone or yielding certain things to another person. That is why she tests Paul in certain places to see how he reacts. It is not until she starts to see how he ticks that she is able to open up to him. The film urges us to live in the here and now and – especially when it comes to love – not to discriminate: If you are lucky enough to love someone, you shouldn’t get caught up in agreements about things that don’t even exist or that never will because often things can change so quickly.

**ANNA POSCH**

Born in Neunkirchen/Lower Austria in 1992, lives in Vienna. After graduating from high school she studied acting for two years with Elfriede Ott.

**Filmography:**

CHUCKS (2015, directed by: Sabine Hiebler, Gerhard Ertl)

Die Detektive (2013, pilot of TV-series directed by: Michi Riebl)

Diamantenfieber (2012, directed by: Peter Kern)

**THE INNER PUNKISHNESS**

**A Conversation with Markus Subramaniam *(“Paul”)***

*Who is Paul to you?*

I would describe him as funny and wise, in fact extremely wise for his age.

*What role does illness play in the relationship between Paul and Mae?*

A crucial one! If Paul didn’t have his illness, he wouldn’t be the person he is. This closeness to death determines his character extremely. And it has also brought him to this state of inner punkishness. Mae is punkish on the outside and Paul on the inside. You can’t tell by looking at him, but that’s what they have in common.

*Did you find it hard to get close to Paul?*

I find it hard to act wiser than one is. As an actor you can expand in many directions, but you can’t, for example, be cooler or wiser or funnier than you really are. You have personal limits and you’d quickly end up playing this or that cliché, for example the wise old man. And that doesn’t fit. That was the greatest challenge for me.

*Were you familiar with the novel and how was it for you? Which world did it present to you?*

Above all Mae’s world. A girl who has gone slightly astray, has stress at home, and is looking for her place in the world.

*What was it like working with Sabine Hiebler and Gerhard Ertl?*

Very intensive. It was my first movie. I had had very little shooting experience and had previously only done stage acting. In a way working with Sabine and Gerhard was a crash course. Making movies is much more intimate. It focuses more strongly on what is going on inside a person, about feeling things. Sure you have to think and feel on the stage too, but there you also need “momentum” to turn everything inside out. When you’re making a movie, you are acting for a smaller radius.

*How did you absorb your role?*

I lost weight for three months (laughs). With the help of a nutritionist I lost ten kilograms. That’s how I prepared myself physically. Otherwise, I met with AIDS patients, went to the AIDS center, and informed myself about what they can do and where they have to be careful.

*Was there any particular scene during shooting that sticks out in your mind?*

What I remember in particular is my first day of shooting, right here around the corner outside by the Danube. I was super nervous and just as insecure. Was I good? What do they expect of me? After everything went well that day, I looked forward to the rest of shooting.

**MARKUS SUBRAMANIAM**

Born in Dachau in 1986. After graduating from high school, he studied acting at the Max Reinhardt Seminar (2006–10). Ensemble member at the Landestheater Linz (2010–2014). Currently guest actor at the Landestheater Vorarlberg.

**Filmography (selection)):**

CHUCKS (2015, directed by:: Sabine Hiebler, Gerhard Ertl)

Jesus Cries (2013, directed by: Brigitte Maria Mayer)

Schongang (2012, directed by: Guy Lichtenstein)

Eaton – Power Solutions (2011, directed by: Günter Kaser)

**EXPECTATION AND CONFORMITY**

**A Conversation with Cornelia Travnicek**

*Was there a scene or statement that led you to write the novel* CHUCKS*?*

In hindsight, of course, that’s always hard to say – there’s that nice word “inspiration” that means an idea appears out of nowhere. But the point of departure for me was actually the family constellation behind the main female character. What happens to families who are confronted with these kinds of strokes of fate. For me there were two possibilities: Either you stick together and wall yourself in against the “evil” outside world that dealt you this devastating blow, or as in the case described in the book you drift apart, become estranged.

*How would you describe Mae?*

Not conforming to expectations. People often want young women to be very friendly and behave nicely. Mae is the absolute opposite of this. At readings in schools people often comment that she is so unfriendly and to some extent callous – but she isn’t. She only acts this way with others because she is so vulnerable. For her character it was very important for me while writing and in the language to forget all my expectations and to let her be the way she is.

*To you is there a key scene where the fundamental conflict thickens both in the book and the film?*

There are several small key scenes and I think they are what really make the book and the film. There are a lot of books that work up to the climax for 200 pages and once you reach it, there is a denouement. With CHUCKS it’s different and I like that. It consists of many little bright moments between the individual characters. In the book there is a key scene in which it becomes clear that something isn’t right between the parents as seen from the child’s perspective. Or the scene in the film between Mae and her mother with this slight hesitation, where they stand in the doorway and can’t be close with each other even though you know that they both want to. And this is expressed by the little awkward hug.

*A nice coincidence: Parallel to the theater release of the film your new novel “Junge Hunde” (Young Dogs) is also coming out this fall. Is this book a consequence of your experiences with* CHUCKS*?*

Actually, no. If you do something that is very successful, you want to prove to yourself and other people that you can do other things too and don’t want to pin yourself down. Here, too, I see two possibilities: Either you churn out more of the same and milk the formula for all it’s got, or you prove your versatility. But the theme of my new novel is also the family – family constellations, what a family actually is, and that it doesn’t just mean blood relationships in a narrow sense.

*So what does family mean to you?*

Sticking together. In the case of CHUCKS Mae found a surrogate family in a sick man who had been abandoned by his own family. In this way she has more family status for him because they left him stranded. It’s not so much about a kind of birthright as it is about an offer that someone accepts or doesn’t.

**CORNELIA TRAVNICEK**

Born in 1987, lives in Lower Austria. She studied Sinology and computer science at the University of Vienna and works part time as a researcher at a center for virtual reality and visualization. She has received numerous awards for her literary work, among others the Lower Austrian Recognition Prize and the Kranichsteiner Children’s and Youth Literature Scholarship awarded by the German Literature Fund for her debut novel CHUCKS (DVA 2012). In 2012 she was awarded the Audience Prize at the Days of German Language Literature in Klagenfurt for an excerpt from her novel *“Junge Hunde”*, being published by DVA in October 2015. Besides several independent publications, various texts have also appeared in newspapers, journals, and magazines.

**Pressreview novel CHUCKS by Cornelia Travnicek**

**published 2012 in Deutsche Verlagsanstalt**

**available as btb-Paper Back, 192 pages, ISBN 978-3-442-74702-3**

“Poetic, laconic, and unsentimental ... A remarkable talent.”

Neue Zürcher Zeitung

“With Chucks Cornelia Travnicek has written the story of a painful adolescence.”

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

“Cornelia Travnicek strikes new punkish notes in her deeply sad, gently humorous novel. Mae is rebellious and bitter, love-hungry and worldly wise – a girl you can’t help liking.”

Augsburger Allgemeine

“Excellent! Cocky, wise, sad, and bursting with color ... The surprisingly sure, poetic, and humorous language amazes and enchants.”

weltexpress.info

“The author has succeeded in writing one of the most surprising books of the season, a book that weighs heavy precisely in its lightness and possesses great power of zeitgeist diagnosis.”

Der Standard

“Wonderful to read: One grasps how difficult and confusing it often is to be young. Amusing, sad, and profound.”

Wiener Zeitung

“The young author has a special talent for telling stories like fairy tales and she uses a uniquely fresh, witty language. A true jewel.”

rcn – event & music

**The COURAGE to be brave**

**Producer Danny Krausz on CHUCKS**

I already got to know the creative originality of the director duo Hiebler-Ertl in their first feature film “nogo,” which I produced in 2000.

Their screenplay for CHUCKS impressed me deeply, and I had a vision that it would make a very good film.

In CHUCKS people face their destinies; there is no complaining. I find that fantastic. I rarely see such figures in our films. They give people – and especially young people – the courage to be brave when interacting with each other. To me that is perhaps the most important and wonderful thing about this movie.

The stylistic self-confidence of the cinematographer Wolfgang Thaler is as magnificent as it is organic. I am grateful to him for the opportunity to make this movie together.

Dor Film stands for a wide range of entertainment, but films from “The Unintentional Kidnapping of Elfriede Ott” or “Life Eternal” to CHUCKS have one thing in common: They are emotionally moving Austrian films.

Every young person who even thinks about this film for just a few minutes and in doing so laughs and cries is someone for whom we want to have made this movie.

**DOR FILMOGRAPHY**

Danny Krausz and Milan Dor founded DOR FILMin 1988. Since 1995 Danny Krausz and Kurt Stocker are running the company jointly. Productions include far more than 120 feature films and documentaries as well as TV-movies and series.

Dor Film has pursued one common goal over the years: providing full support for creative partners not only during the production, but also during the development and distribution process. The audience proves that we are on the right track, six out of the ten most popular Austrian films since 1982 are DOR FILM productions. Furthermore, DOR FILM is known as "developer for new talent"; with a quarter of the feature films directed by first time directors.

Some highlights of the earlier years are HINTERHOLZ 8 - the Austrian box office hit of the last twenty years, THE INHERITORS by Oscar® winner Stefan Ruzowitzky and BLIND SPOT - HITLER’S SECRETARY by André Heller and Othmar Schmiderer and Dor Film has co-produced award-winning international films like ŽELARY by Ondrej Trojan (Foreign Language Film Award Nomination 2004), COMEDIAN HARMONISTS by Joseph Vilsmaier, SUNSHINE by Istvan Szabo, GRIPSHOLM by Xavier Koller, and RED VIOLIN by François Girard.

**Feature Films (selection):**

2015 LIFE ETERNAL   Wolfgang Murnberger

2013 THE DEVIL’S VILOLINIST Bernard Rose

2013 THE LAST OF THE UNJUST Claude Lanzmann

2012 YOUR BEAUTY IS WORTH NOTHING Hüseyin Tabak

2012 SPAIN Anja Salomonowitz

2012 YOKO Franziska Buch

2012 GLORY Isabel Kleefeld

2011 360 Fernando Meirelles

2010 THE POLL DIARIES Chris Kraus

2010 THE WAY TO LIVE David Schalko

2009 DESERT FLOWER Sherry Hormann

2009 THE UNINTENTIONAL KIDNAPPING OF ELFRIEDE OTT Andreas Prochaska

2009 LILLIY THE WITCH  1 Stefan Ruzowitzky+2 Harald Sicheritz

2008 THE BONE MAN Wolfgang Murnberger

2008 north face  Philipp Stölzl

2006 FRIENDSHIP Rupert Henning

2004 SILENTIUM Wolfgang Murnberger

2004 SLUGS Michael Glawogger

2004  C(R)OOK Pepe Danquart

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