

## VIENNALE 2023 Review: *Rickerl*

by [SUSANNE GOTTLIEB](#)

03/11/2023 - Adrian Goiginger takes an emotional deep dive into Vienna's pub and music scene, offering a fitting acting debut to Austrian singer-songwriter Voodoo Jürgens



Voodoo Jürgens as Rickerl (left) and Ben Winkler as Dominik (right) in *Rickerl*

There might be something in the water in Vienna. Or maybe it's the morbid feeling of a long-lost imperial relevance still haunting the streets, while the city oscillates between current zeitgeist and romanticised tradition. Whatever it is, it has proven as a fruitful ground for young musicians to come into their own, challenge the dominance of the old classical composers and the never-dying popularity of Austropop, and leave their own mark on the scene. The Average Joe, the losers, the underbelly, become the unlikely heroes of these melodies.

Austrian director **Adrian Goiginger**, who found fame with [The Best of All Worlds](#) [+] and [The Fox](#) [+], has always fared well with these outsiders and often projects emotional movie versions of his own family history onto the screen. In [Rickerl](#), which had its world premiere at the 61<sup>st</sup> [Viennale](#), he recounts within a fictional

context episodes from the personal life of singer and songwriter **Voodoo Jürgens**, a member of the aforementioned new music scene, who delivers his acting debut.

Just like Jürgens, who started as a gravedigger at the cemetery and had a difficult relationship with his father, the character Erick “Rickerl” Bohacek grew up in a spiral of generational trauma, with little to aspire to, except escaping dead-beat jobs or pursuing the wish to be a good father to his son Dominik (**Ben Winkler**) and, finally, getting the demo tape for his first album ready.

But while real-life Voodoo Jürgens is a huge star in his native country, Rickerl is what you would call, to put it simply, a loser. A man who can’t go through with anything he sets his mind to, who prefers to sit with friends at the local pubs and fantasises about the career he would like to have — and a man who repeatedly sabotages all attempts and shuts all doors that open for him as soon as things get serious.

The talent is there, but the motivation is not. Instead of producing his songs, they are just scraps of paper floating around in his guitar case. Rather than adapt to the harsh reality of adult life, of existing between personal joys and unpleasant musts, he just opts for open conflict. But when even his son, who has had nothing but awe for him up to this point, finally pulls away hurt after the father prioritises his floundering career and personal chaos over him, Rickerl realises that he has to change his outlook on life to not lose his son and be the father he needs. Maybe he could even take his career from a handful of shabby bars to an actual recording studio.

With Goiginger’s usual careful approach to his marginalised protagonists, and with Voodoo Jürgens’s natural charm and a bag full of new songs weaved through the film like so many musical interludes, there is much to like about this music drama. The greasy atmosphere of the Viennese “Beisl” — traditional Viennese and often run-down bars — as well as its colourful audience are concisely captured, and the shooting locations are a Best Of Vienna off the typical tourist tracks.

The script abstains from trying to over-emotionalise the cliched but still popular narrative of a man having to grow up and fix his relationships and direction in life. After all, Goiginger, who also wrote the script, has proven himself to be a bit more on the extreme sentimental side when it comes to his writing. But it works because there is so much heart in this film. And the realisation that sometimes, just taking the first, honest step in the right direction is worth all the effort. No matter where it will ultimately lead.

*Rickerl* is an Austrian-German production by [2010 Entertainment](#) and [Giganten Film](#). It is distributed in Austria by [Filmladen](#) and internationally by 2010 Entertainment.

## more about: Rickerl - Musik is höchstens a Hobby



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**original title:** Rickerl - Musik is höchstens a Hobby

**country:** [Austria, Germany](#)

**year:** [2023](#)

**directed by:** [Adrian Goiginger](#)

**screenplay:** [Adrian Goiginger](#)

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