

IN PRODUCTION



Scene from "Bastard"
(photo © Maranto Films)

Bastard

Type of Project Feature Film Cinema **Genre** Psycho-Thriller
Production Companies Maranto Films/Cologne, Gifted Films/Ludwigsburg, in co-production with SWR/Baden-Baden **With backing from** Filmstiftung NRW, MFG Baden-Wuerttemberg, BKM **Producers** Reza Bahar, Nicole Ringhut **Commissioning Editor** Ulrich Herrmann **Director** Carsten Unger **Screenplay** Carsten Unger **Director of Photography** Lars Petersen **Editor** Dora Vajda **Production Design** Christian Strang **Principal Cast** Martina Gedeck, Markus Krojer, Thomas Thieme, Finn Kirschner, Antonia Lingemann, Hanns Zischler, Beate Maes, Stephan Schad **Casting** Sabine Schwedhelm **Format** 35 mm, color, cs, Stereo **Shooting Language** German **Shooting in** Cologne and surroundings, March – April 2010

Contact

Maranto Films GmbH · Reza Bahar
Venloer Strasse 241-245 · 50823 Cologne/Germany
phone +49-2 21-16 85 30 04 · fax +49-2 21-16 85 30 05
email: info@marantofilms.com
www.marantofilms.com

Producer **Reza Bahar** first met writer-director **Carsten Unger** when they were both studying at the Baden-Wuerttemberg Film Academy in Ludwigsburg in 2005.

"I was in my first year and Carsten was preparing his graduation film *The Blue Monkey (Der Blaue Affe)*," recalls Bahar who then produced the 45-minute film, starring Matthias Schweighoefer and Esther Zimmering, as a co-production with Hessischer Rundfunk. When *The Blue Monkey* premiered at the 2007 Hof International Film Festival, Unger and Bahar met up again and talked at length about the director's new project – at the time called *Rattenfaenger* – which was in its third draft of the screenplay.

"The project has changed quite a lot since then," Bahar says. "Originally, the two teenage children played out their frustration against the parents and it was more of a story about revenge."

Support for developing the screenplay subsequently came from MFG Baden-Wuerttemberg and **Stefan Daehnert** was brought on-board in 2008 as a dramaturg to provide an outsider's perspective to Unger's script.

Bastard opens with the nine-year-old Nikolas (**Finn Kirschner**) disappearing without a trace and the police fearing that this might be a sex crime. The profiler Claudia Meinert (**Martina Gedeck**) comes across inconsistencies in her conversations with the boy's parents, and the mother, in particular, seems to be hiding something. When a video then appears of Nikolas in handcuffs, the trail leads to the 13-year-old Leon (**Markus Krojer**). Now it is up to the psychologist to gain Leon's trust and solve the case. But the boy begins a game of cat and mouse with the investigators and the family that could lead to a catastrophe for everyone involved.

"We were pleased and surprised that everyone on our wish list for the cast was happy to commit at an early stage because they were convinced by the quality of the screenplay," Bahar notes, pointing out that the role of Nikolas is the first substantial acting part for the child actor Finn Kirschner, while **Antonia Lingemann** – who had a supporting role in the Bushido biopic *Electro Ghetto (Zeiten aendern Dich)* – now has her first lead in this film.

Markus Krojer, known to audiences from Marcus H. Rosenmueller's two Heimatfilms *Grave Decisions (Wer fruеher stirbt ist laenger tot)* and *Little White Lies (Die Perlmutterfarbe)* – came to the attention of Bahar when he saw him at the awards ceremony of the Bavarian Film Awards.

"The challenge with this film was to keep true to our vision and not let the story be distorted by other people," Bahar explains. "We always held on to our intention to make the film as we wanted. The film's plot is very uncompromising and so it is not without reason that it took us four years to find a broadcaster and funders. But we had the good fortune to have a commissioning editor like **Uli Herrmann** [at SWR] who also fought for the project."

"The special and unique aspect of this film is the mix of a psychological thriller and a coming-of-age drama," Bahar notes. "What appealed to me was the uncompromising nature of the characters, the unusual course of events and the unpredictable plot."

At the same time, **Maranto Films** is working as a service producer, with **Nicole Ringhut** in charge, for Wild Bunch Germany and Pan-Européenne/Paris on *Largo Winch 2*. The international co-production will be shot in the Cologne area from mid-May with a cast including Tomer Sisley, Ulrich Tukur, Laurent Terzieff and Clemens Schick.

Gifted Films is currently preparing the next feature film by Thomas Stuber (*Teenage Angst*). Other national and international projects are at the stage of development or financing at both companies.

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