

BLACK NIGHTS 2016 Panorama

We Used to Be Cool: Children, lies and videotape

by MIHA VEINGERL

15/11/2016 - Austrian director Marie Kreutzer's third film focuses on three couples in their thirties who decide to become parents



Austrian writer-director **Marie Kreutzer**'s third feature film, *We Used to Be Cool* [+], has just screened in the **Black Nights International Film Festival's** Panorama programme. After focusing on life in a commune (*The Fatherless* [+], 2011) and terminal illness (*Gruber Is Leaving* [+], 2015), Kreutzer is once again portraying her favourite topic, relationships, but set in a specific generational environment. Again on display are the director's love for narrative-relevant pop songs and her regular topos of differentiating the city lifestyle from that of suburban or rural areas.

(The article continues below - Commercial information)



Three couples with different dynamics, longtime friends in their thirties, and more or less fulfilled in terms of their careers and personal paths, decide almost simultaneously to become parents. Stella (**Vicky Krieps**) and Markus (**Marcel Mohab**) seem harmoniously happy with the idea of starting a family, while the other two babies are the product of self-inflicted stress. Having offspring represents the next level to reach for Chris (**Manuel Rubey**) and Mignon (**Pheline Roggan**), who pressure their partners into parenting.

Remarkably, this is a film about young parents that manages to convey its message without the stereotypical use of grandparents as a moral compass or corrector. Instead, it focuses solely on the generation of thirty-somethings as parents and the tricky issues they have to deal with, such as conflicting philosophies regarding raising and feeding children, the social skills of other peoples' children, self-doubt as a parent, (justified) scepticism towards one's partner, and a restructured search for the best way to live.

The couples' answers to these issues are presented in the form of video confessions to Stella, the documentary filmmaker in the group, who decides to make a project out of their common experience. Depending on the inclinations of the viewer, this can be reminiscent of **Soderbergh's** *Sex, Lies, and Videotape*, or the "private" commentaries of reality TV show participants. The interviews are short, black-and-white snippets, scattered around an otherwise conventionally edited film, shot in predominantly bright colours. They show the development of the individual couples as well as the group as a whole, but also how the traditionally accepted roles of fathers and mothers are slowly but steadily sinking into an indefinable mess.

Family, friends, the media, religion, social movements and other opinion-makers are constantly trying to sell us their solutions to puzzling life experiences. Kreutzer's film reminds us that these instructions have their limits, since no two persons can have the same background and experience. Therefore, *We Used to Be Cool* can serve as an entertaining and insightful platform for this generation and their parenting issues.

We Used to Be Cool was produced by Austria's **Novotny & Novotny Filmproduktion** and **Witcraft Szenario**, and **Picture Tree** has the international rights.

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