

# VARIETY

## *‘A Heavy Heart’ Heralds a Helmer on the Rise*



Courtesy of TIFF  
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*Thomas Stuber's debut feature to premiere at TIFF*

*Ed Meza* @edmezavar

Thomas Stuber arrives at TIFF with just his debut feature, “A Heavy Heart” (“Herbert”), but the 34-year-old Leipzig native has been on the rise for some time now, winning accolades for his stark and gritty stories of social misfits.

He won a Student Academy Award and the German Short Film Award for 2011’s “Of Dogs and Horses,” about a destitute old man who wagers all the money he has in an effort to save the life of his beloved dog. He followed that with a number of television projects and award-winning short films, including “Teenage Angst,” which examined bullying and violence at an upscale boarding school.

“A Heavy Heart,” Stuber’s first feature-length theatrical film, centers on an aging boxer forced to come to terms with his physical decline after being diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). Penned by Stuber and his writing partner Clemens Meyer and based on a story by Paul Salisbury, the picture gets its world premiere in Toronto’s Contemporary World Cinema section. It is sold internationally by Picture Tree Intl.

There are parallels between the old man of “Of Dogs and Horses” and the boxer in “A Heavy Heart,” Stuber says. “They are both outsiders. Those are the protagonists, the stories, that interest me: people who live on the edge of society, people who have to fight for the small joys, or even for their lives.”

Stuber’s television projects include an upcoming installment of German pubcaster ARD’s hit crime drama movie series “Tatort.” He’s shot one TV movie and is shooting another for a different German pubcaster, ZDF.

Next year Stuber will begin his second feature film, “In den gaengen” (“In the Aisles”), a romantic drama set in a hypermarket on the outskirts of Leipzig. The screenplay for “In the Aisles,” co-written with Meyer, won this year’s €10,000 (\$11,389) German Screenplay Award.

Stuber says while he tries to capture universal themes and stories in his films, the locations they inhabit tend to be in and around Leipzig, home town to both Stuber and Meyer.

“(He) and I both have a special view of the city,” says Stuber. “It’s not just the cityscape but also the people here.”