

Strand Releasing presents

THE EDGE OF HEAVEN

AUF DER ANDEREN SEITE

A FILM BY

FATIH AKIN

Winner – Best Screenplay Award, Cannes Film Festival 2007.

Winner – Best Screenplay Award, European Film Awards 2007.

**Winner – Best Picture, Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Editing
2008 German Film Awards (LOLA)**

35 mm / 1:1.85 / Color / Dolby Digital Surround EX

116 min / In German, Turkish and English, with English Subtitles

NY/National Press Contact:

Sophie Gluck / Sylvia Savadjian

Sophie Gluck & Associates

phone: 212.595.2432

sophie@gluckpr.com

Sylvia@gluckpr.com

LA/National Press Contact:

Michael Berlin / Marcus Hu

Strand Releasing

phone: 310.836.7500

michael@strandreleasing.com

marcus@strandreleasing.com

Please download photos from our website:

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SYNOPSIS

Retired widower Ali (Tuncel Kurtiz) sees a solution to loneliness when he meets prostitute Yeter (Nursel Kose.) Ali proposes to the fellow Turkish native to live with him in exchange for a monthly stipend. Ali's son Nejat (Baki Davrak,) a university professor, seems disapproving about his boorish father's choice. But the young German man quickly grows fond of kind Yeter, especially upon discovering most of her hard-earned money is sent home to Turkey for her daughter's university studies.

The accidental death of Yeter distances father and son even more, emotionally and physically. Nejat travels to Istanbul to begin an organized search for Yeter's daughter, Ayten (Nurgul Yesilçay.) He decides to stay in Turkey and trades places with the owner of a German bookstore who goes home to Germany. What Nejat doesn't know is that 20-something political activist Ayten is already in Germany, having fled the Turkish police.

Alone and penniless, Ayten is befriended by German student Lotte (Patrycia Ziolkowska,) who is immediately seduced by the young Turkish woman's charms and political situation. Lotte invites rebellious Ayten to stay in her home, a gesture not particularly pleasing to her mother Susanne (Hanna Schygulla.) Ayten ends up arrested and confined for months while awaiting political asylum. When her plea is denied, Ayten is deported and imprisoned in Turkey. Passionate Lotte decides to abandon everything to help Ayten.

In Turkey, Lotte gets caught up in the frustrating bureaucracy of the seemingly hopeless situation of freeing Ayten. A chance bookstore meeting will lead her to becoming Nejat's roommate. A tragic event will bring Susanne to Istanbul to help fulfill her daughter's mission. Emotional moments spent with Susanne will inspire Nejat to seek out his estranged father, now residing on Turkey's Black Sea coast.

FATIH AKIN: WRITER AND DIRECTOR

THE EDGE OF HEAVEN (Auf der anderen Seite) is Fatih Akin's fifth fiction feature and made its world premiere in Competition at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival where it won the Best Screenplay Award. 2005's **CROSSING THE BRIDGE – THE SOUND OF ISTANBUL** presented the variety of music found in contemporary Turkey. 2003's **HEAD-ON (Gegen die Wand)** won the Berlin Film Festival's Golden Bear, as well as Best Film at the German and European Film Awards. Akin was born in 1973 in Hamburg of Turkish parentage. While studying Visual Communications at Hamburg's College of Fine Arts, he wrote and directed his first short in 1995: **SENSIN – YOU'RE THE ONE! (Sensin – Du bist es!)**, which received the Audience Award at the Hamburg International Short Film Festival, followed by **WEED (Getürkt, 1996)**. His first feature, **SHORT SHARP SHOCK (Kurz und Schmerzlos, 1998)**, won Locarno's Bronze Leopard and the Bavarian Film Award for Best Young Director.

Filmography

2007 **THE EDGE OF HEAVEN (Auf der anderen Seite)** /// 2005 **CROSSING THE BRIDGE – THE SOUND OF ISTANBUL (documentary)** /// 2003 **HEAD-ON (Gegen die Wand)** /// 2002 **SOLINO** /// 2001 **WIR HABEN VERGESSEN ZURÜCKZUKEHREN (documentary)** /// 2000 **IN JULY (Im Juli)** /// 1998 **SHORT SHARP SHOCK (Kurz und Schmerzlos)**

COMMENTS FROM FATIH AKIN

NOT GOING OUT IN THE FIRST ROUND

I put so much into the making of **HEAD-ON (GEGEN DIE WAND)**, that when I finished, I had no idea what to do next. On my previous films, I had always known what I was doing next before finishing the current one. So there I was in this bad situation not knowing what to do. Ironically, to make matters worse, **HEAD-ON** became a big success for me. I wasn't expecting it. As great as it was, success doesn't make everything easier. I got even more blocked. I felt pressured to come up with something better than **HEAD-ON**. I wanted to do better artistically. I had to prove to myself that **HEAD-ON** wasn't the best I could do. I relate a lot of things to sports, so I kept thinking that I didn't want to go out in the first round. I was faced with the challenge of following up **HEAD-ON**. Being faster than Carl Lewis. Being Ben Johnson.

BECOMING A PARENT

Becoming a parent had a huge impact on me. My son was born in 2005. Suddenly I had to be more responsible and think about tomorrow. Before I was just a rock 'n' roll kind of guy. The birth of my son eased a lot of the creative pressure I was under. It definitely affected my writing. Teaching at a university in Hamburg, sharing my experiences with students, that also helped. Making the documentary **CROSSING THE BRIDGE** also helped ease the pressure. Going to Turkey, meeting all those singers and musicians, that was like therapy.

MY HOMEWORK

Filmmaking is a big part of my life, but it pales next to issues like birth, love and death. To really grow up, I felt I had to make three films. Call it a trilogy if you want

to, but it's basically three films that belong together because of their themes of love, death and evil. HEAD-ON was about love. THE EDGE OF HEAVEN is about death. Death in the sense of every death is a birth. Like both death and birth open doors to other dimensions. With THE EDGE OF HEAVEN, I feel like I'm reaching some other level, but something is still missing that will be in the third film about evil. I just feel like I have to tell something to the end. These three films are kind of my homework, then I can move on. Maybe move on to genre films, film noir, western, even horror.

THE ART OF LOVING

Erich Fromm's "The Art of Loving" influenced me a lot. I'm fascinated by human relationships. Not just boy meets girl or in a sexual sense, but also between parents and children. All human relationships. I believe that all the wars in the world are the result of not using love in the way that humanity should. I think evil is the product of laziness. It's easier to hate someone than to love them.

SHOOTING IN TURKEY

I finally started shooting on May 1, 2006. THE EDGE OF HEAVEN was shot in Germany – Bremen and Hamburg, and in Turkey – Istanbul, the Black Sea Coast and Trabzon. The shoot lasted about 10 weeks. For a filmmaker, Turkey is a great place to shoot. Shooting in Germany is much less interesting. It can be attractive, but you have to look hard or create it. The light is extraordinary in Turkey because of its geographic position. For me, shooting in Istanbul is like shooting in New York. They're both attractive and cosmopolitan. Each city is a megalopolis. I love to shoot in cities. I'm a big city child. It's what I know. In THE EDGE OF HEAVEN, the city of Istanbul is actually a character. Since she doesn't speak the language, foreigner Lotte becomes lost as she confronts Istanbul. But I also wanted to break the urban image with scenes in the countryside and the coast.

IN BETWEEN TWO CULTURES

I have this Turkish background and I have this German background. I was born in Germany, but I'm in between the two cultures. Educated in Europe, but also raised in Turkish by my parents. Turkish culture has always been a part of my life. I traveled to Turkey with my family every summer since I was a kid. Since I'm in between these two cultures, it's natural that my films are in between, too.

LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP WITH TURKEY

I have this love-hate relationship with Turkey, a very complicated relationship. I became much more interested in Turkey after I finished school in 1995. I decided to make my first short film there, WEED in 1996. I saw another face of Turkey and I became more and more fascinated. I became more Turkish. With every meter of film I shoot in Turkey, I try to understand the country more and more. But the more I understand it, the more it makes me sad. I hate the politics, the nationalism. Look at what is happening in that country. History repeating itself. The same mistakes again and again. I love that country, but shooting in Turkey takes a lot of energy, tears and blood.

TURKISH BUREAUCRACY

The image of Turkish bureaucracy in THE EDGE OF HEAVEN isn't harsh, it's Kafkaesque. This is not criticism, it's truth without comment. In the film, when the political activist is arrested in front of Ayten, the happy crowd applauds. The sad thing is that this happened naturally in rehearsal, the extras just automatically

clapped. This really only happens when those arrested are considered to be "enemies of the state". Fascism is alive and well in the streets of Istanbul.

COUNT THE TURKISH FLAGS

There are a lot of Turkish flags seen in THE EDGE OF HEAVEN. Go ahead and count them. I guess the nationalists will interpret that as a sign of love for Turkey, but I didn't put one in. They were all already there. I didn't change the locations. I shot them the way they were. Maybe I went too far, there are so many Turkish flags!

INTELLIGENCE IS SEXY

I think intelligence is sexy, so I made the character of Nejat a professor. And a German professor of Turkish origin breaks certain clichés which still exist in Germany. Turks today play a significant role in German culture, politics and science. They're not just hustling in the streets. For Yeter, education is important enough for her to prostitute herself to provide one for her daughter. Nejat can relate to this desire for knowledge. I liked the irony that when Nejat goes to Istanbul he trades places with a German intellectual running a bookstore.

EDUCATION CAN SAVE THE WORLD

Literacy, education, plays a profound role in THE EDGE OF HEAVEN. A book is a key image in the conflict between Nejat and his father. Which book to show? It was a very difficult decision for me. I didn't want "Siddhartha" or "The Hobbit" or anything too full of some parallel meaning. So I thought I would advertise my friend's fantastic book. I chose "Die Tochter des Schmieds (The Blacksmith's Daughter)" by Selim Ozdogan. In regards to the film, the key element is about reading. Reading stands for education. And education is the only thing that can save the world.

HANNA AND TUNÇEL

I imagined this German mother coming to Istanbul looking for her missing daughter. I had this image early on with Hanna Schygulla in mind. I had met her in Belgrade in 2004 and she put a spell on me. I was really into the idea of working with her. Some German journalists have compared my career to that of Fassbinder's, but I don't see it at all. I come from the streets, not the theater. Yilmaz Güney is more my background, independent against the norm. What Fassbinder was to Hanna, Güney was similar to actor Tunçel Kurtiz, who I also imagined early on to be part of THE EDGE OF HEAVEN. But my goal wasn't to use them as icons from films by Fassbinder and Güney. It would have been vain of me to try and use them like no one else before. I didn't want my direction to be affected like that. For me, my job is storytelling. And both Hanna and Tunçel fit the idea I had for the parents in the story.

SAMPLING

The challenge for me as a filmmaker is not to repeat myself. I like to surprise myself and ultimately the audience. I hope that all my films will seem different. I guess we'll be able to judge that five films from now. When my ideas come, they all come at the same time and they come from a lot of different sources. I even recycle, like sampling in hip-hop music, which I love. They use known bass lines to create something new from something old, and it's a sort of homage at the same time. Some of the issues in THE EDGE OF HEAVEN were sampled from CROSSING THE BRIDGE. The character of the political activist Ayten was inspired by those Kurdish singers. Here in the West, we don't have to fight for freedom of speech. But the war for justice is still going on in Turkey.

PASSION IS SEXY

Fighting for something with passion is sexy. And I wanted a sexy character for THE EDGE OF HEAVEN. Ayten is very emotional. She's street smart and very attractive. She's a political person. At first, actress Nurgül Yesilçay didn't feel comfortable with the political background of the character. When she finally agreed, she went all the way. I was fascinated by how well she knew her character. I know a lot of women like Ayten and Nurgül is not one of them. Ayten is sort of a female version of me. She believes in one thing, but later she will surprise herself and change her ideas.

AM I POLITICAL?

I want to change the world - am I political? My film hopes the world will change - is it political? Probably more philosophical, but I think everything is political in today's world. In the times we live in, I think it's impossible to separate life and politics and art. I believe in the stuff I believe in, but I might change my mind tomorrow. I try not to be dogmatic. Whatever people believe in - religion or politics - everything has limits, everything heads in one direction. I wanted to make a film about going to the other side of all that, going beyond all that. I tried to make this film with some distance, as a viewer from the outside. But it didn't seem to be possible. Sometimes it's not the head which directs. I guess it's a part of me that's much more irrational, like the heart.

GERMANY AND TURKEY

As Germans, Susanne and Lotte represent the European Union, while Ayten and Yeter represent Turkey. Everything that happens between them in THE EDGE OF HEAVEN is representative of the relationship of those systems. I had some fun with the argument between Susanne and Ayten regarding the European Union. But where I stand is not the point. I wrote this dialogue based on what I have often heard from real people around me. By the end of the film, German Susanne and Turkish Ayten both experience a profound change in how they see and feel about things. In the bookstore scene at the end where they hug, I noticed a small detail only in the edit. Not far from the women, there are two small flags, one German, the other Turkish. My friend and partner, Andreas Thiel, who passed away during the last week of the shoot, put them there. This stands for something. I guess it's also a film about the relationship between the two countries.

CAST

BAKI DAVRAK as NEJAT AKSU

Baki Davrak made his debut performance in Kutlug Ataman's 1997 German Turkish drama LOLA AND BILIDIKID. He was seen in Harald Bergmann's 2006 film BRINKMANN'S ZORN. His other film credits include Willem Droste's PAST BY NIGHT, Ulli Schüppel's PLANET ALEX and Thomas Arslan's DEALER, a hit at the 1999 Berlin Film Festival. Baki is an accomplished theatre actor and he also frequently appears on TV in series such as "Kommissarin Lucas", "Wolffs Revier", "Eva Blond", "Der Puma" and "Tatort". He starred in Stefan Holtz's 2005 TV movie "Meine verrückte türkische Hochzeit". Baki is also an author and a collection of his poetry has recently been published.

NURSEL KÖSE as YETER ÖZTÜRK

Nursel Köse starred in Buket Alakus' 2002 film ANAM (MY MOTHER) as a mother trying to save her teenage son from the drug scene. She was recently seen in Alakus' IN ANOTHER LEAGUE (EINE ANDERE LIGA), a teenage drama which won the audience award at the Max Ophüls Festival. Her other film credits include Anno Saul's KEBAB CONNECTION and Hark Bohm's YASEMIN, the award-winning 1988 film about a traditional Turkish family in Germany. Nursel's television work includes the 2005 Turkish miniseries "Sessiz Gece" and Ruth Olschan's 2003 German TV movie "Savannah".

HANNA SCHYGULLA as SUSANNE STAUB

An icon of European cinema, Hanna Schygulla did not know that she would ever become a professional actor until a girlfriend invited her to join a performing arts course in Munich. There she met a young actor: Rainer Werner Fassbinder. They never finished school, but instead, founded their own theatre: the Anti Theatre, began filming, and became one of the most famous and productive couples in German cinema (EFFIE BRIEST, THE MARRIAGE OF MARIA BRAUN, THE BITTER TEARS OF PETRA VON KANT, LILI MARLEEN and many others). She has also worked with such luminary directors as Andrej Wajda (A LOVE IN GERMANY), Wim Wenders (FALSE MOVE), Volker Schlöndorff (CIRCLE OF DECEIT), Margarethe von Trotta (SHEER MADNESS), Jean-Luc Godard (PASSION), Ettore Scola (IL MONDO NUOVO), Marco Ferreri (THE FUTURE IS WOMAN, THE STORY OF PIERA, for which she won the Best Actress Award at the 1983 Cannes Film Festival), Kenneth Branagh (DEAD AGAIN), Amos Gitai (PROMISED LAND) and Bela Tarr (WERKMEISTERS HARMONIES). Hannah Schygulla also directed her own film, 1979's TRAUMPROTOKOLLE, an experimental revue of night dreams, which is now part of the film collection at New York's Museum of Modern Art (MOMA). She has recently begun to work with a new generation of filmmakers such as Till Franzen (DIE BLAUE GRENZE), Hans Steinbichler (WINTERREISE) and Fatih Akin (THE EDGE OF HEAVEN).

TUNÇEL KURTIZ as ALI AKSU

Kurtiz was born in 1936 in Bilecik, Turkey. With a career spanning over 40 years and dozens of films, Tunçel Kurtiz has become one of Turkey's most beloved actors. He can currently be seen in the Turkish TV series "Kara Duvak" and recently starred in the mini-series "Haci". Film credits include starring roles in seminal Turkish director Yılmaz Güney's DUVAR and UMUT, Ömer Kavur's AKREBIN YOLCULUGU / CLOCK TOWER, Reis Celik's HOSKAKAL YARIN, Dervis Zaim's TABUTTA RÖVASATA / SOMERSAULT IN A COFFIN, Zeki Ökten's SÜRÜ, Hiner Saleem's VIVE LA MARIÉE, Erden Kiral's KANAL and Peter Brook's film version of THE MAHABHARATA. He has won numerous awards, including Best Actor at the 1986 Berlin Film Festival for Shimon Dotan's HIUH HAGDI / THE SMILE OF THE LAMB and Best Supporting Actor at 1994's Antalya Festival for Tunca Yönder's BIR ASK UGRUNA. Recent film credits include Carlo Mazzacurati's A CAVALLO DELLA TIGRE / JAILBREAK and Semir Aslanyürek's THE WATERFALL.

NURGÜL YESİLÇAY as AYTEN ÖZTÜRK

One of Turkey's most admired young actresses, Nurgül Nurgül was born in Afyon and studied drama at the Anatolia State Conservatory and the Eskisehir University Drama School. Her stage performances include Ophelia in Shakespeare's "Hamlet" and Blanche DuBois in "A Streetcar Named Desire". She was recently seen in Baris Pirhasan's ADAM AND THE DEVIL (ADEM'IN TRENLERI), presented at the 2007 Istanbul Film Festival. Her other film credits include the Atif Yilmaz's 2005 comedy drama BORROWED BRIDE (EGRETI GELIN), Yucel Yolcu's SLEEPING BEAUTY segment of 2005's ISTANBUL TALES (ANLAT ISTANBUL), Haluk Özenç's 2002 comedy adventure RUNAWAY MUMMY (MUMYA FIRARDA), Semir Aslanyurek's 2001 historical drama WATERFALL (Sellale) and Omer Vargi's 1999 cult comedy EVERYTHING'S GONNA BE GREAT (HERSEY ÇOK GÜZEL OLACAK). Nurgül reprised her starring role in Abdullah Oguz's 2003 film ASMALI KONAK: HAYAT, based on the popular TV series

PATRYCIA ZIOLKOWSKA as LOTTE STAUB

Patrycia Ziolkowska was featured in Fatih Akin's SOLINO and Buket Alakus' ANAM. She has appeared in the German TV series "Stubbe", "Nikola", "Tatort", "Schimanski" and "Der Ermittler". An accomplished theatre actor, Patrycia has had leading roles for the past several years at Bonn's Schauspiel in "Dreigroschenoper", "Die Frau vom Meer", "Die Jungfrau von Orleans", "Woyzeck" and "Der Streit" and has appeared in leading theatres throughout Germany.

CREW

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY FATIH AKIN

**PRODUCERS:
ANDREAS THIEL
KLAUS MAECK
FATIH AKIN**

**CO-PRODUCERS:
ERHAN ÖZOGUL
FUNDA ÖDEMIŞ
ALI AKDENIZ**

**ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS:
ALBERTO FANNI
FLAMINIO ZADRA
PAOLO COLOMBO**

COMMISSIONING EDITOR: JEANETTE WÜRL (NDR)

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: RAINER KLAUSMANN (BVK)

EDITOR: ANDREW BIRD

CASTING: MONIQUE AKIN

**PRODUCTION DESIGN:
TAMO KUNZ
SIRMA BRADLEY**

MUSIC COMPOSER: SHANTEL

SOUND: KAI LÜDE

SOUND MIX: RICHARD BOROWSKI

MAKE-UP: DANIEL SCHRÖDER

COSTUMES: KATRIN ASCHENDORF

LINE PRODUCER: CHRISTIAN SPRINGER

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