

Strand Releasing presents

WETLANDS

BASED ON THE BESTSELLING NOVEL BY CHARLOTTE ROCHE

A FILM BY DAVID WNENDT

Starring Carla Juri, Christoph Letkowski and Meret Becker

PRELIMINARY PRESS NOTES

*Official Selection:
Sundance Film Festival
Locarno Film Festival
SXSW 2014*

Country of Origin: Germany
Format: DCP/2.39:1/Color
Sound Format: Dolby Digital
Running Time: 109 minutes
Genre: Comedy
Not Rated
In German with English Subtitles

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SYNOPSIS

Eighteen year-old Helen Memel (Carla Juri) likes to skateboard, masturbate with vegetables and thinks that body hygiene is greatly overrated. Struggling with her parents' divorce, she spends her time experimenting and breaking one social taboo after the other with her best friend, Corinna (Marlen Kruse). When a shaving accident lands her in the hospital, she sees it as a way to reconcile her parents and forms an unlikely bond with her male nurse, Robin (Christoph Letkowski). WETLANDS is an unapologetically vulgar coming-of-age tale about divorce, first love and anal fissures.

DAVID WENNDT – SCREENWRITER & DIRECTOR

THREE QUESTIONS FOR DAVID WENNDT

What was your biggest challenge in adapting Charlotte Roche's original novel?

The book is full of inner monologue. It is one long stream of thought, vivid associations, insights, jokes and erotic fantasies. Great for a novel, but not so great for a movie. So my co-screenwriter Claus Falkenberg and I had to transform a monologue into dialogue, create characters, dramatic scenes and carve out the plot. Once we had the screenplay, the next big challenge was to find the right cast. First of all I needed an actress with enough courage to play this part. She had to be able to bring to life the extreme sides of Helen. She had to be both strong and vulnerable at the same time. The language of the novel and of the dialogues is artificial. It's cool but unlike the way most people talk naturally. The actress had to make it sound real and authentic. And since I like to use improvisation during shooting, she had to be able to do that, too.

How was a male writer-director able to reach into this young woman's psyche, especially one with very particular aspects?

I don't agree with the notion that only a woman can truly understand another woman. In the end, men and women are not that different.

What kind of decisions had to be made about what your audience would actually see on screen?

In a way it was a tightrope walk. I didn't want the film to be only about sex. On the other hand, I didn't want it to be prudish either. Since so much of the novel is about the main character's body, it was important to show the body as nature created it. We used hardly any makeup and there was no digital retouching. The actress knew that full nudity would be required of her, but I made it also clear that there would be no real sex and no close up of her genitals. That was the deal we had from the start, making all the other decisions during the shooting easy. So there is more going on in the viewer's mind than can actually be seen. There are very few scenes where I pushed the limits a bit further. During the shoot, there was a constant debate on how far we could go.

DAVID WENNDT'S BIOGRAPHY

David Wnendt, born in 1977 in Gelsenkirchen, grew up as the son of a diplomat in Islamabad, Miami, Brussels and the German town Meckenheim. He made his first forays into the world of theatre and film production working in a variety of jobs, such as lighting technician, editor and production assistant. After graduating in business administration and journalism from Berlin Free University and completing a one-year film course at the Film and TV School of

the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, he was accepted at the renowned Film and Television University “Konrad Wolf” in Potsdam-Babelsberg in 2004. While still a student on the university’s directing program, he won an award at the International Shorts Film Festival, Interfilm Berlin in 2006 for his short film *California Dreams*. Wnendt’s first medium-length feature film, *Small Lights*, starring Rosalie Thomass was broadcast on Arte in 2008.

Wnendt’s powerful final degree film, *Combat Girls*, which he both wrote and directed, was met with great acclaim: the drama, depicting the right-wing scene in eastern Germany, won three German film awards shortly after its cinema release in 2012: the German Film Award in Bronze for Best Feature Film, Best Screenplay and Best Actress for Alina Levshin. He also received the Bavarian Film Award for Best Young Director, the Young German Cinema Award, the Prix Genève-Europe for Best Screenplay and the First Steps Award for Best Full-Length Feature Film.

FILMOGRAPHY (selected):

- 2013 *Wetlands (Feuchtgebiete)*
- 2012 *Combat Girls (Kriegerin)*
- 2008 *Small Lights (Kleine Lichter)*
- 2006 *California Dreams* (short film)
- 2005 *Hanna’s Hobby* (documentary short film)

CARLA JURI – LEAD ACTRESS

THREE QUESTIONS FOR CARLA JURI

What did you first think after reading the script? Was it a challenge for you to take on this role?

My first thought after I finished reading was: It's doable. In this film, we wanted to find the person behind the character of Helen. For me, the most essential thing was what was between the lines in *Wetlands*. And that's where the character can be found; that's where her story is. To me, that was what made Helen an interesting individual. With Helen, the challenge was to live up to her as a character. A lot of people are familiar with the book, so I had to meet those expectations as well.

What do you think about the character of Helen Memel? What drives her?

Helen Memel is unconventional. She plays by her own rules, which comes across as provocative and harsh to many readers. After all, a nice, clean girl is so much easier for people to love and accept. But, like everyone, Helen also has a strong desire for unconditional love, and she fights for this acceptance without a trace of self-pity or false pride – that's what makes her such a strong personality. On the other hand, it's also precisely part of what makes her so tragic. What drives Helen? I think her life is driven by hope.

What do you think is the core message of WETLANDS?

Being different is not intentional. Rebellion springs from necessity. Both can be quite strenuous and can sometimes hurt, but that's the way it has to be.

CARLA JURI BIOGRAPHY

In 2012 the Swiss actress Carla Juri was presented with the illustrious Quartz Swiss Film Award for the second year in a row: After receiving the Quartz 2011 as best supporting actress for her first cinema role in *180°* (directed by: Cihan Inan), she won it again in 2012 as best actress for her leading role in the film *Dällebach Kari* (directed by: Xavier Koller). In 2013 this was followed by yet another award: during the Berlinale she was a recipient of the renowned award "SHOOTING STARS – Europe's best young actors". Carla Juri was born in Ticino and studied acting in Los Angeles. Following her studies she gained stage experience and did further theatrical training at various institutions, such as the Theatrical Arts Theatre Company in Los Angeles, where she studied under Douglas Matranga, and the Actors Centre in London. Juri grew up in a multilingual environment and speaks Italian, English, French and German, giving her a decisive advantage in the European film business. In 2010 she landed a role in the Italian film series for RAI *L'uomo dei boschi* alongside Terence Hill, while in England she had a role in

2011 in *Fossil. Wetlands* is Carla Juri's first leading role in a German feature film. In October 2013 she will also be appearing in Frauke Finsterwalder's tragicomedy *Finsterworld*, which is based on a screenplay by Christian Kracht.

CHARLOTTE ROCHE – AUTHOR OF NOVEL WETLANDS

Charlotte Roche was born in 1978 in High Wycombe/England. At the age of eight she moved to Germany and grew up in the Lower Rhine region.

She gained initial fame through the music show *Fast Forward*, which she presented from 1998 to 2004 on the music television channel VIVA Zwei. In 2000 she started her second show *Trendspotting*. In 2001 she was nominated for the Adolf Grimme Award for her "competent and distinct presenting style". The "Queen of German pop television" (Harald Schmidt) conducted unconventional interviews, which made her a trademark character of the music channel. In 2002 Charlotte Roche received the Bavarian Television Award, followed by the Adolf Grimme Award two years later. From 2003 she presented the celebrity talk show *Charlotte Roche trifft...* on ProSieben, and in 2006 she joined the music magazine programme *Tracks* on ARTE.

In 2006 she played the leading role in the feature film *Eden*. She sat alongside TV presenter Harald Schmidt on the guessing team in the show *Pssst...*, which was relaunched in 2007 on ARD. In 2008, for the 3sat show *Charlotte Roche unter...*, she followed various professionals as they went about their daily work. Then, in September of 2009, she took over for Amelie Fried on the talk show *3 nach 9*. Charlotte Roche enjoyed particular success with her most recent show *Roche & Böhmermann* on ZDFkultur, a format modelled on the talk shows of the 1960s, which she presented together with the journalist, author and satirist Jan Böhmermann.

Charlotte Roche is also an accomplished musician. In 2002, she had a role in a music video by the band *Fehlfarben*, and in 2004 she sang the song *Träume* on the album by the band *Superpitcher*. In 2005 she provided musical support for Rocko Schamoni on his song *Mauern*; in 2006 she sang the duet *1. 2. 3.* with Bela B., drummer of the band *Die Ärzte*. She also caused quite a sensation in 2005 while touring with the actor Christoph Maria Herbst and reading excerpts from her dissertation on the topic of *Penis injuries caused while masturbating with vacuum cleaners*.

Finally, in 2008, her first novel *Wetlands* was published. For weeks the novel topped all the major bestseller lists. In the story she deals with the divorce of her parents and writes about the topic of body hygiene in her own characteristically blunt and creative style, which triggered considerable discussion in the media. *Wetlands* was also the first German title to make it to No. 1 on Amazon's international bestseller list. For more than seven months in a row, the book was also at the top of the literature charts, and in 2008 it was the year's best-selling book. *Wetlands* has been translated into 27 languages and, besides Germany,

Austria and Switzerland, has been published in 28 countries, such as Brazil, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Great Britain, Iceland, Japan, Canada, Korea, Croatia, The Netherlands, Spain, Taiwan, The Czech Republic, Hungary and the US. Roche's second novel *Wrecked* was published in the summer of 2011 with an impressive initial print run of 500,000 copies.

THE MUSIC

The music in *Wetlands* is based on three pillars: firstly on songs by artists such as *Peaches*, *Canned Heat* and *Thee Headcoates*, secondly on classical pieces and thirdly on music composed specifically for the film.

The songs help transport a particular attitude towards life; they reflect the personality and the inherent paradoxes within the main character Helen. They combine rebelliousness, punk and emotion all at the same time. They are raw, and yet they go straight to the heart. The film does without current chart hits. The featured songs are classics, which give the film a certain timeless quality.

The classical pieces fit the ironic narrative style of the main character Helen. The Strauss waltz *An der schönen blauen Donau*, made famous in Kubrick's film *2001 – A Space Odyssey*, accompanies a completely different type of scene in *Wetlands*: While Kubrick has a spaceship dancing in orbit around the space station in 3/4 tact, in *Wetlands* the dance partners are a pizza and swimming sperm.

The score, composed by Enis Rotthoff, deliberately does without orchestral effects and classical instruments. For the film, Enis Rotthoff used electronic sounds and band instruments to develop his own palette of sound. He implements and combines them to create an emotional impact that in film music is normally reserved for classical instruments. Where violins usually provide emotion and drama, in *Wetlands* you hear electronic sounds that Enis Rotthoff developed especially for the film. A significant part of the musical composition is based on finding and developing precisely the right sound and combining it with other sounds to create a very unique soundscape. This creates an unconventional, refreshing score that does not keep it cool, but instead packs a remarkable emotional punch. The title song *Wetlands* at the end of the film picks up on elements of music heard in the course of the film and fuses them together into a song sung by *Ezra De Zeus*.

SONG TITLES

YOU LOVE IT

Music & text: *Merrill Nisker*

Performed by: *Peaches*

Publisher: *KMG Germany*

VISSI d'ARTE VISSI d'AMORE

Music: *Giacomo Puccini*

Performed by:
Czech Philharmonic Orchestra
Master Owner: *Sonoton Music*

FUCK THE PAIN AWAY
Music & text: *Merrill Nisker*
Performed by: *Peaches*
Publisher: *KMG Germany*

LAND IN SICHT
Music & text:
Christoph Letkowski & Ilker Aydin

DAS GELD, DER RUHM UND DIE MÄDCHEN
Music & text: *Klaus Cornfield*

Performed by: *Katze*
Publisher: *Universal Music*
GOING UP THE COUNTRY
Music & text: *Alan Wilson*
Performed by: *Canned Heat*
Publisher: *EMI Partnership*

AN DER SCHÖNEN BLAUEN DONAU
Music: *Johann Strauss*
Master Owner: *Sonoton Music*

COME INTO MY MOUTH
Music & text: *Billy Childish*
Performed by:
Thee Headcoatees
Publisher: *Mute Song Int.*

CAST

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Carla Juri | Helen |
| Christoph Letkowski | Robin (Male Nurse) |
| Meret Becker | Mother |
| Axel Milberg | Father |
| Marlen Kruse | Corinna (Best Friend) |
| Peri Baumeister | Sister Valerie |
| Edgar Selge | Professor Notz |
| Harry Baer | New Boyfriend |

CREW

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Directed by | David Wnendt |
| Produced by | Peter Rommel (Rommel Film) |
| In co-production with | ZDF |
| Screenplay | Claus Falkenberg David Wnendt |
| Based on the novel by | Charlotte Roche |
| Cinematography | Jakub Bejnarowicz |
| Production design | Jenny Roesler |
| Costume design | Elke von Sivers |
| Makeup artists | Monika Münnich Johanna Hinsch |
| Sound | Paul Rischer |
| Music | Enis Rotthoff |
| Editor | Andreas Wodraschke |
| Casting | Ulrike Müller |
| Editorial staff | Doris Schrenner Lucas Schmidt |