

= The Edukators =

The Edukators (German : Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei) is a 2004 German @-@ Austrian crime drama film directed by Hans Weingartner . It stars Daniel Brühl , Stipe Erceg and Julia Jentsch as three young , anti @-@ capitalist Berlin activists involved in a love triangle . The friends , calling themselves " the Edukators " , invade upper @-@ class houses , rearrange the furniture , and leave notes identifying themselves .

Weingartner , a former activist , wrote the film based on his experiences and chose to use nonviolent characters . The film , shot in Berlin and Austria with digital hand @-@ held cameras , was made on a low budget which Weingartner said kept the focus on the acting . First shown at the Cannes Film Festival on 17 May 2004 and released in its home countries later that year , The Edukators was praised by critics and audiences . It grossed more than \$ 8 million worldwide and received a number of awards and nominations . It did , however , receive criticism mainly for its political statements and also for its long running time .

= = Plot = =

Set in 2004 , the film revolves around three young anti @-@ capitalist activists in Berlin 's city centre : Jule (Julia Jentsch) , her boyfriend Peter (Stipe Erceg) and his best friend Jan (Daniel Brühl) . Jule is a waitress struggling to pay off a ? 100 @,@ 000 debt she incurred a year ago when she crashed into a Mercedes @-@ Benz S @-@ Class belonging to a wealthy businessman named Hardenberg (Burghart Klaußner) . After her eviction for non @-@ payment of rent she moves in with Peter and Jan , who are often out all night . While Peter is in Barcelona , Jan tells Jule that he and Peter spend their nights " educating " upper @-@ class people by breaking into their houses , moving furniture around and leaving notes saying " die fetten Jahre sind vorbei " (" the days of plenty are over ") or " Sie haben zu viel Geld " (" you have too much money ") .

After hearing this , Jule convinces the reluctant Jan to break into Hardenberg 's home in the affluent Berlin suburb of Zehlendorf while he is away on business . During the break @-@ in , the thrill of the moment entices them to kiss before Jan leaves Jule alone for a few minutes ; he does not want to destroy his friendship with Peter . As she wanders around outside Jule accidentally sets off the house 's floodlights , and they quickly leave .

When Peter returns the next day , Jan and Jule do not tell him about their activities the night before . Jule realises that her mobile phone is gone , and she and Jan leave later that night to look for it in the house . After she finds it , Hardenberg walks in the door and struggles with Jule when he recognises her . Hearing them , Jan comes downstairs and knocks Hardenberg unconscious with a flashlight . Not knowing what to do , they call Peter and he comes to their aid .

The three cannot decide what to do with Hardenberg and take him to a remote , rarely used cabin belonging to Jule 's uncle in the Tyrolean Austrian Alps near Jenbach , overlooking Achensee . As they try to decide how to deal with their hostage , they learn that Hardenberg was a radical himself during the 1960s . A leader of the Socialist German Student Union , he was a good friend of Rudi Dutschke before marrying , getting a good job and abandoning his ideals .

As the story progresses , political ideology and the characters ' relationships become the main issues . Peter and Jan temporarily fall out over Jan 's developing romance with Jule , and Hardenberg seems to regain some of his former self .

The trio finally decide that kidnapping Hardenberg was wrong and take him back to his house to let him go . As they prepare to leave , Hardenberg gives Jule a letter forgiving her debt and promising not to involve the police . The film ends with Peter , Jan and Jule asleep in the same bed as a group of heavily armed police (Spezialeinsatzkommando) gather outside their flat and knock on the door . Jule wakes up when she hears a knock , and the police force their way into the almost @-@ empty flat . Apparently in Barcelona , Jule opens the door to a hotel maid who wishes to clean their room . In the Berlin apartment , the police find a note : " Manche Menschen ändern sich nie " (" some people never change ") . In the original German version , the Edukators set off in Hardenberg 's boat in the Mediterranean , presumably to disrupt the island signal towers supplying most television

programming to Western Europe .

= = Production = =

= = = Development and characters = = =

According to Weingartner , The Edukators was influenced by his past as a political activist : " There 's some of me in the film " . It describes the last 10 years of his life , an attempt to find a political movement satisfying his ideals . He considers it an autobiographical film , with Brühl playing Weingartner . The director opted for nonviolence because violence " only makes the system stronger " , citing the Baader @-@ Meinhof gang which " practically killed the Left movement in Germany ... because they gave the police an excuse to really arm up and create a more totalitarian system . " Instead , Weingartner gave his characters " poetic resistance . "

Although Brühl thought the film " very realistic " , he was dissatisfied with his character 's authenticity . The actor felt " attached " to Jan , admiring his " courage to want to change the way things are going , to act to defend his beliefs " , but thought it was " very utopian and naive , that they take so much risk to break into some rich man 's house to move things around . "

The authenticity of the love triangle was " very important " to Weingartner , who was once part of such a relationship . Although the actors were uncertain at first that Peter could forgive Jan and Jule 's betrayal , Weingartner uses the situation to explore his concept of friendship : " Friendship means more to him than bourgeois moral values . Peter loves Jule ? he doesn 't own her . He can tell that when she falls in love with Jan , their love is a wonderful thing , coloured by a joint rebellion ? a shared rejection of social constraint . "

= = = Production and filming = = =

Weingartner said he received an offer large enough that " I would not have to work for the rest of my life " from an American studio but refused it , opting to produce the film with his own studio , y3film , and coop99 , an Austrian studio . A low @-@ budget film , it was funded by a ? 250 @,@ 000 loan Weingartner obtained with his parents ' house as collateral . His second feature film , The Edukators was shot with hand @-@ held digital cameras , allowing the director " to explore the space and give actors license to go wherever they wanted . " Weingartner wanted a technically simple film focused on the actors . His decision to have a low budget was measured : " More money means more pressure . This way , I used a limited crew and was able to set the shooting schedule the way I wanted it - usually . The huge advantage of this kind of film @-@ making is that it 's rapid . " Most of the film was shot in Berlin , except for scenes in the Austrian Alps .

= = = Casting = = =

The character of Peter was written for Erceg , after Weingartner saw him " in a friend 's film . " Brühl , already a popular actor in Germany , was known to the director , who saw him as a " perfect match " for Erceg . Klaußner was cast because , according to Weingartner , " I knew the energy and vibe between us was right . " The most difficult role to cast was Jule ; Weingartner searched for eight months , and when he found Jentsch she was committed to another film . Since he was certain that the actress was " the perfect cast " , he rescheduled filming .

= = Themes = =

Weingartner commented that the film is " about economic revolution , about poor vs. rich . " He also tried to explore in the film the fact that , in his opinion , " Today , we live in a society in which revolution is on sale . " However , it deals with " lots of themes , " and " the theme of revolution , of rebellion , " and of " how a person can change the course of his life " are the main ones . Similarly ,

Brühl commented that " there are different things you can take out of it " as the film also deals with generational conflict and stories of love and friendship .

Hardenberg 's " psycho @-@ sexual powerplay " against the main characters while in the Alps stands for what Weingartner considers " a betrayal of European Left by hippie @-@ era survivors including Joschka Fischer , Gerhard Schröder ? and Tony Blair . "

Even if the subject of the film is political , Weingartner said , " the whole idea of ' Edukating ' is playful . The movie is full of jokes . And happiness . I read somewhere that kids laugh out loud more than 150 times a day . Adults laugh only 10 times a day . Well , I want people to laugh . I want people to go see the film and have fun . "

= = Release and reception = =

= = = Accolades and public reception = = =

The Edukators premiered on 17 May at the 2004 Cannes Film Festival , where it received a standing ovation , and was nominated for the Palme d 'Or . Cinematographers Daniela Knapp and Matthias Schellenberg were nominated for the 2004 Camerimage . The film won the Giraldillo de Plata (second place) at the 2004 Seville European Film Festival , and that year Brühl was nominated for a European Film Award for Best Actor . Of the German Cinema New Talent Awards at the 2004 Munich Film Festival , Weingartner was Best Director , Erceg Best Actor , and writers Weingartner and Held received a jury award .

Erceg and Jentsch were nominated for the 2005 New Faces Award . At the 2005 German Film Awards The Edukators shared the Best Feature Film Silver Award with Sophie Scholl ? The Final Days , Klaußner was Best Supporting Actor and Weingartner was nominated for the Best Director Award . It was the Best Film and Jentsch the Best Actress at the 2005 German Film Critics Association Awards . At the 2005 Bavarian Film Awards , Jentsch won Best New Actress . The film shared the Audience Award for Best Dramatic Feature at the 2005 Miami International Film Festival with The Overture and Red Dust .

The Edukators debuted in German theaters on 25 November 2004 , and the following day in Austria . According to the European Audiovisual Observatory , the film was seen by over 1 @.@ 4 million people in Europe : almost 890 @,@ 000 in Germany , 71 @,@ 000 in Austria and 67 @,@ 000 in Switzerland . The highest attendance in non @-@ German @-@ speaking countries was in France (over 72 @,@ 000) and Turkey (almost 69 @,@ 000) . Box Office Mojo reported gross earnings of \$ 8 @,@ 152 @,@ 859 in Argentina , Austria , the Czech Republic , Germany , the Netherlands , New Zealand , Norway , Portugal , Slovakia , Taiwan , the United Kingdom and the United States . In Germany and Austria , the film 's home countries , it grossed \$ 4 @,@ 540 @,@ 541 and \$ 479 @,@ 678 respectively . Since its release The Edukators has become a cult film , according to CBS News , and The Epoch Times called it " a landmark film and international cultural phenomenon " .

= = = Critical reception = = =

The film was generally well received by critics . Based on 75 reviews collected by Rotten Tomatoes , it has an overall approval rating of 69 percent from critics and an average score of 6 @.@ 5 out of 10 . According to the website 's consensus , " The Edukators engagingly plays out the clash between youthful idealism and older pragmatism . " Metacritic , which assigns a normalised rating from 100 top reviews by mainstream critics , calculated a score of 68 based on 28 reviews , indicating " generally favorable reviews " . Stephanie Bunbury of The Age wrote that in Germany it was a " huge hit ... Abroad , however , it has been the butt of plenty of criticism . It is too earnest , too naive , too Teutonic and sincere . "

Joe Morgenstern of The Wall Street Journal called The Edukators " an uncommonly smart and interesting " film , and the Austin Chronicle 's Marc Savlov said the film was a " smart , kicky little gem that owes as much to Guy Debord and the Situationists . " According to Sean Axmaker of the

Seattle Post @-@ Intelligencer , it was " a rare film that gets smarter as it goes along ... inject [ing] a satisfying dash of pragmatism every time it seems ready to slip into either unearned idealism or cynical fatalism . " Ray Bennett wrote for The Hollywood Reporter , " The Edukators is that rare beast , a terrific movie that boasts intelligent wit , expert storytelling , delightful characters and grown @-@ up dialogue plus suspense and a wicked surprise ending . "

A. O. Scott of The New York Times wrote that despite " its shortcomings " on political subjects , it " succeeds brilliantly in telling the story of a man who falls in love with his best buddy 's girlfriend and doesn 't know what to do about it . " Tim Appelo of Seattle Weekly praised " the marvelous acting , the sensitive , utterly realistic treatment of the young @-@ love triangle , " adding : " The Edukators is educational ? not intellectually , but emotionally . " Washington Post critic Stephen Hunter praised the film 's realism : " The whole thing feels messy , painful , funny and believable , just like that hideous circus known as real life . " The Times ' Howard Swains wrote that it " manages to combine political discourse , a love @-@ triangle and a hostage plot , all without sacrificing its graceful humour . " Los Angeles Times critic Carina Chocano described it as a " sweet , funny and gripping romantic adventure , " and " The only accurate , ironic and poignant depiction of what it 's like to be young and socially committed in the WTO era " . Chocano choose it as one of the 13 best films released in 2005 .

Not all reviews were positive . The Orlando Sentinel 's Roger Moore called The Edukators " a surprisingly generic German ' Stockholm Syndrome ' romantic triangle thriller , " adding : " It ends interestingly , but it would 've ended better , and played better , had it been half an hour shorter . " In Slant Magazine , Jason Clark wrote that the film needed " a touch of the perverse " , but " Weingartner plays out the drama far too earnestly , and the story barely sustains the length of a movie half of its running time . " According to Jack Mathews of the New York Daily News , " The dialogue between the captive and the captors gets a little didactic , and the ending is as contrived as it is cynical . " Similar criticism of the film 's didacticism was made by Brett Michel of Boston Phoenix , Kriss Allison of Stylus Magazine and Glenn Whipp of the Los Angeles Daily News .

Andre Wright wrote for The Stranger , " [It] starts strong , with an ingratiatingly anarchic vibe , but quickly devolves into a dust @-@ dry , hectoring socialist lecture : a cinematic version of Kenner 's My First Revolution playset . " Jonathan Romney of The Independent said that Weingartner " presents his indictment of the System in crudely stacked terms that make The Edukators very much a teen movie rather than a plausible political statement . " In The Times , Wendy Ide wrote : " What could have been an effective piece of drama , a dialogue to cause both sides to question the very foundations of their belief systems , is just a two @-@ hour rant from a wispy bearded idealist whose idea of brotherhood is to sleep with his best friend 's girlfriend . "

= = = Cultural impact = = =

In 2006 a group of left @-@ wing activists calling itself " Hamburg for Free " dressed as superheroes , robbing food from upper @-@ class stores to distribute to the underclass . The media considered the crimes inspired by the film , and some protesters had T @-@ shirts and banners reading " Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei " (The Edukators ' original title) . In 2009 , a statue stolen from Bernard Madoff was returned with a note (" Bernie the Swindler , Lesson : Return stolen property to rightful owners ") signed by " The Educators " .

It gained international attention and in 2006 it was announced that Brad Anderson would adapt and direct a version of the film set in the United States .