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From the "People" Archives:

INTERVIEW: Run Tykwer Run; From Lola to "The Princess and the Warrior"

by Anthony Kaufman /indieWIRE

"Run Lola Run" launched the international careers of director **Tom Tykwer** and actress **Franka Potente**, made flame red hair a European craze, and even caused the German Film Awards to change their name to the Lolas. It's hard act to follow for the 36-year-old German filmmaker. With "**The Princess & The Warrior**," Tykwer's forth feature outing, he tells another kinetic tale of romance and fate, but with arguably more emotional backbone. Sissi (Potente), a shy, quirky nurse, encounters the man of her dreams, an ex-soldier with intimacy problems (**Benno Furmann**) while he performs an emergency tracheotomy on her after a car accident. It's the kind of moment that true love is made of.

Just as soon as "Princess" premiered at last year's **Venice Film Festival**, Tykwer was off on his first English-language assignment, the **Miramax**-produced "**Heaven**" from an unproduced screenplay by the masters of intermingled fates, **Krzysztof Kieslowski** and **Krzysztof Piesiewicz** ("**Blue**," "**White**," and "**Red**," and "**The Decalogue**," among others). Meanwhile, Tykwer's German film company **X-Filme Creative Pool** is on board to produce French enfant terrible Gaspar ("**I Stand Alone**") Noe's next shocker, "**Enter the Void**." Says Tykwer excitedly, "You can imagine that script; it's going to be unbelievable, mind-blowing!"

The same could be said for Tykwer's energy. His enthusiasm for film -- likely derived from his many years as an art-house projectionist in Berlin -- comes forth in our conversation on the eve of the release of "Princess," which opened last weekend in New York and Los Angeles, and during post-production on "Heaven," which he claims, "is already one of the most brilliantly edited films of all time." Modest, maybe not, but passionate, definitely. indieWIRE's Anthony Kaufman spoke with the writer-director-composer about cutting, contradictions, creativity and clocks.

indieWIRE: When "Run Lola Run" came out, some critics likened it to MTV, shallow and slick. Was "Princess" a more personal experience, a reaction against that?

Tom Tykwer: Maybe it's two sides of the same coin. The core of both films is how passion relates to fate. And maybe "Lola" is

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looking at the structural potential of the subject; the other one is looking more to the emotional conception of it.

iW: In the press notes, you speak about going from external in one to internal in the other?

Tykwer: In a way, yes. In "Princess," I was trying to take a voyage into experiencing the development of falling in love up to facing that love. Both characters [Lola and Sissi] couldn't be more different in energy, but the force that's driving them is very similar. They're trying to force a fate that's totally against them, make it organizable, and rule their fate.

iW: In "Princess," you also go from internal to external and external to internal in your visual transitions, such as the interior of Sissi's seashell to the exterior chase scene that introduces us to Bodo?

Tykwer: I'm totally obsessed with transitions. I think they're one of the key elements that make films work or not work. That's what makes a film float. We see so many films where parts of them are interesting and others are not. I always admire films that establish a complete system, a closed universe, where once you've entered it, it's absolutely consistent. I want consistent language, and consistent atmosphere. If you cut from contradictions, it's always spectacular. In the smallest detail, you find the biggest truth. This whole idea of contradiction is hidden everywhere in the film. Even in the title -- you have this title that feels like this epic, adventure film with big heroes. And I do feel like it is a big, epic film with huge heroes, but it's set in this shitty German village and there's this strange nurse and ex-soldier. But the film takes them as epic and hyper-dimensional as if they were Lawrence of Arabia and Queen Elizabeth. You can make regular people become those heroes. I love that it's rooted in simple reality, but dares to touch the myth behind that and go into a fairytale, unknown territory.

iW: If you look back at all your films -- except maybe for "Wintersleepers" -- from your first film "Deadly Maria" to Lola and Sissi, the films are concerned with these women characters with a strong goal, yes?

Tykwer: In "Princess and the Warrior," I think the two characters are equally strong, and emotionally, you're bound to both of them. It's not that she's driving the movie alone. But I agree that the creative energy is mostly female. All of the films have in common problematic situations surrounding passionate encounters. It's not very conscious, but it just happens when I'm writing that I realize that from my experience, it's always the female part of a combination of people that is more daring to break the rule, and overcome a static situation of behavior -- and who is also more able to free themselves from a system that is already set up, because they are socially determined to live in such a way. Men are socially determined to be conservative.

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I recently saw a film, which is really a masterpiece, **Danny DeVito's "The War of the Roses."** It's incredible; it's so anarchistic. Douglas is so typically male; it's a movie that touches every cliché and finds the truth about it. It's the most radical thing you can imagine. They kill each other in the end! I was really impressed. It's a relationship movie classic.

iW: Is it true that "Princess" was inspired by music? Did the music come first or did they come at the same time?

Tykwere: It's always like that; I really listen to a lot of music. It always plays an element. It sets off basic energies when I'm writing a script. There's these moments that are not only visual, but an atmosphere that I'm always trying to find. It's never an image, but a situation that I'm interested in exploring. In this case, it was the woman under the truck, especially the radical subjectivity of it. I didn't exactly know what the film was about, but I knew I wanted that scene to happen.

iW: And it ends with that nice white out effect, with her eyes almost looking as if under x-rays?

Tykwere: It's something that we discovered in the editing. It's kind of an effect. We took an interim frame of the flash frame at the end of the cut where some of the picture is still left. And we took one of those images and worked on it digitally, and made it longer.

iW: So going back to music, what inspired you for this film?

"We wanted a much more hypnotic style for the film's music, something which transports the mood of the film, very much together with the image. I'm not interested in a final picture and

Tykwere: I was listening a lot to the **Penguin Cafe orchestra**, which has stayed in the film. The end piece when we come back to the house at the seaside. I listened to it a lot when I was writing and had my first inspirations. Sometimes, the music is just a center for it and I'm building the mood of our own music around it. I show that music to my collaborators and I say, "Listen to this; let's find something in our style that might fit to this." It was clear we wanted a much more hypnotic style for the film's music, something that transports the mood of the film, very much together with the image. I'm not interested in a final picture and putting music over it. These two elements really need to be one. We worked parallel. In the daytime, we worked on picture editing, and in the nights, I was in the music studio. So we made them grow parallel: the music became not just a part of the film, but became the film.

iW: So when you locked picture, did you lock music at the same time?

Tykwere: Yes, the layouts of the music were finished. We did the final mix, of course, later but yes, we didn't finish cutting on the film until we had done all the music sketches.

iW: I wanted to ask you about clocks. Ticking clocks. Besides the fact that it's time, a constant concern of yours, it's also fundamental to the electronic beat. And time, of course, is music, right?

Tykwere: I like the fact that a ticking clock always reminds of us two things: that there's a rhythm to life and that rhythm is very constant. We have decided that time has

putting music over it. These two elements really need to be one."

several units -- a second, a minute -- and of course, that's something that very much operates inside the cinematic system. We organize time within films. I am so fond of that fact that music can organize time in a way that time becomes a subjective factor. You can slow down time, you can make time become what it is: something totally unprecise and subjective. It's a very globby system. Sometimes a second is endless and sometimes months pass by and it feels like a split second. This is what I like to capture with film; this is what I like to capture with the combination of film and music -- the musical pacing that influences the rhythm and pace of the film and the other way around. There's this amazing communication between all the

elements of film that can recreate this subjectivity of experience. In "The Princess and The Warrior," in that moment under the truck, is she lying there for 15 seconds or 15 minutes? You don't know, because she doesn't know. I love that. I think it's the most exciting part of filmmaking. Subjectivity, that's all what it is. And the ability to transport subjectivity to such a high degree, and relate it to other people. I really want films to throw me into someone else's subjectivity. That's what we always want when we meet people and fall in love with them: we want to share what they see.

iW: For your next film, "Heaven," this is not a movie that come directly from your subjectivity. What it was like to take on Kieslowski and Piesiewicz's script?

Tykwier: I'm so much in the process of making the film that it's hard for me to reflect on it. I really appreciate Kieslowski's work and that he's one of the masters of modern cinema. I could only connect to the screenplay -- not because I wanted to do something that was Kieslowski's -- but that for the first time in my life I read a script that felt like I would have loved to write this. It actually felt like something I always wanted to write, but was not able to. So it felt super-personal and absolutely identifiable. So I thought this was a sign of fate that this is landing on my table. In an intuitive way, I absolutely know what it's about. I wasn't afraid to take it over. But it was difficult. If you've written it, you know every detail, so that was different. What I had to do to understand the story was that I did a complete rewrite in a way; I wrote the script one more time in my own words, and changed some of the dialogue. In typing in the 100 pages myself, but changing certain details along the way. Then I went over it again with **Anthony Minghella**, who was producing the film with us. He came from writing to be a director. I always wrote to be a director, so he was a good teacher.

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