

# EMMA'S BLISS

BY SVEN TADDICKEN WITH JÖRDIS TRIEBEL & JÜRGEN VOGEL



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## SYNOPSIS

EMMA'S BLISS BY SVEN TADDICKEN

EMMA lives as a pig-breeder at the shabby and hopelessly indebted farm of her ancestors. She slaughters the pigs in her own true way: she treats them lovingly till the last day, the lethal cut shows something like tenderness and in Emma's strong arms the dying animals cease bleeding calmly and submittingly. // But Emma is lonely. Only HENNER, the good-natured and somehow simple country policeman proposes to her in regular intervals. Emma refuses, because she lives in mutual hatred with his intrusive and omnipresent mother. If need be the missing man is replaced by her motor-bike with its wonderfully noncircular flywheel, for which she especially has laid out a length behind the house, and the bike's heavily vibrating saddle pleases her extremely from time to time. But the loneliness stays. // One night a Jaguar smashes on her farm. Inside the wrecked car lies an unconscious man and a bag full of money. Emma's luck seems to be perfect: fate has thrown money into her lap and furthermore has given a man to her, who smells exactly the way she has always dreamt of. MAX – that's the man's name, a neurotic vegetarian and music lover – has stolen the bag with the illicit money from HANS, his only and best friend and employer, who is as shrewd as they come. This robbery doesn't correspond with his "wait and see"-nature, but Max is seriously ill: because of cancer of the pancreas he has only a few weeks left to live. // Emma doesn't even think of coming down with Max and the money. She burns the wrecked car, hides the man in her bed and the money inside the pigsty. She guesses Max has stolen the money and therefore must be in trouble. He would accept anything that will save him from getting caught. // When Max wakes up he is startled by the sight of the strong woman and the dirty farm. Only by and by he realizes that the state of affairs couldn't be any better for him and that his miserable life has given him a break. Even Emma's occasional fits of rage – for instance when Max is cleaning the kitchen or unsuspectingly mending her rattling motor-bike – help him to forget about his illness and keep him from thinking about his forthcoming death. Of course, Hans has got upon his thievish friend's track. One night he sneaks onto the farm and is quickly locked inside the pigsty by Emma, who is always on the alert. When he finally manages to free himself he calls Max to account and realizes the seriousness of his friend's condition. Hans forgives him and takes him to the nearby hospital. // Emma finally gets over her shyness of the city and takes her lost lover out of the hospital and brings him back home. When they reach the farm Max finds himself enervated and exhausted in Emma's arms. Their last days together are sweetened by happiness. Their wedding could have been a disaster would have Emma not been able to handle Max's retching onto her dress while he tries to carry the bride over the doorstep. But he is inevitably running short of life. Eventually he takes an example from the pigs and surrenders to Emma's tender art. //

## THE DIRECTOR

SVEN TADDICKEN ON WHAT MAKES A GOOD FILM

I really do believe in a coexistence between tragedy and comedy, honesty and fantasy and also between an acid tongue and poetry. A romance can only unfurl its strength if the figures are honest. // Reading EMMA'S BLISS for the first time underlined this belief. I was amazed and moved that a story about death could be written so lively. I took this as my motto in my approach for the film EMMA'S BLISS: a film about dying that tells of the love of life. // Max Bienen has had it: the diagnosis suggests he only has a few months to live. Has he lived his life the "right" way? What can he do to die a "happy" man? Such questions can only mean despair. // Then along comes an absolute brazen-faced blessing in disguise in the form of Emma, the pig farmer. Emma is the kind of person who gives you answers before she even knows the questions. She has both feet firmly on the ground and completely down to earth. With her own special way of slaughtering pigs, death is something quite natural for her – it's part of her day-to-day life. // Max has no idea that he is to spend the happiest days of his life with this woman, who, under other circumstances,

he would not even have noticed. But Emma too is driven by a longing, even if she would never admit this in her most honest moments. Max and Emma have one thing in common: they are both lonely. And because they have more or less nothing to lose, they can risk everything! A one-of-a-kind chance that almost everyone secretly longs for! A good film doesn't just pass you by without leaving its mark. It can be absurdly funny, sometimes it can be biting, or it can move you to tears. In the end you leave the cinema and the film and realise you have new ideas and new courage. And so what, even if it's just trying out a new recipe or repairing your old, abandoned moped ... Films spur us on – that's why we need them. *Sven Taddicken / Berlin, May 2006*

## THE PRODUCERS

RALPH SCHWINGEL, STEFAN SCHUBERT and HEJO EMONS ON PINK DIVAS AND DEAD RIGHT DECISIONS

It all started with the story, in autumn 2002 when the WUESTE producers, Ralph Schwingel and Stefan Schubert were lucky enough to get a preprint of a book from their WUESTE Film West partner and publisher, Hejo Emons. The novel EMMA'S BLISS by Claudia Schreiber not only fascinated them all from the word go, but it also moved them. So in Spring 2003 they secured an option on the film version of the novel even before it was published (Reclam Verlag Leipzig). In EMMA'S BLISS it's all about the bread-and-butter basics of life – maybe with a slice of bacon thrown in – in any case it's all about happiness in the here and now and to the end. If there ever was a way of cheating death then the headstrong pig farmer, Emma and Max, who knows he has not long to live, certainly found it: their happiness and love, short as it may be, is larger than life! Going by Sven Taddicken's not so voluminous, but nevertheless impressive work history – COUNTING SHEEP (Schäfchen zählen) and his feature film debut GETTING MY BROTHER LAID (Mein Bruder der Vampir) – the producers offered Taddicken the novel for the film version and he was immediately hooked. Taddicken had taken his time with his second feature film, waiting patiently for the right project to come along, the one that would best suit his particular skills and EMMA'S BLISS met the mark. To give the somewhat over-board playfulness of the novel a structure suitable for a film, they called in the author herself, Claudia Schreiber and the experienced screenplay writer, Ruth Toma (GLOOMY SUNDAY, SOLINO, KEBAB CONNECTION). The adaptation process from book to script that followed was certainly challenging, but nothing compared to finding the right cast. The idea of casting the powerful and energetic Juergen Vogel as the terminally ill Max was certainly a case of thinking out of the box, but it was soon clear that it was the right decision. But what about Emma – this woman: agile yet fragile, naive yet cunning, content yet full of longing? When, after innumerable castings, Joerdis Triebel stepped in front of the camera, a general sigh of relief could be heard: there she was at last, our Emma! No one else should have played this role. Meanwhile the financing of the film had progressed well and the quality of the presentation made it possible to win such outstanding actors as Martin Feifel, Hinnerk Schönemann and Nina Petri for supporting roles. Soon there was a highly professional team in and around Cologne. A farm, that couldn't have been more picturesque, was also found for Emma in Bergisches Land. So now all that was left to be organised was the pigs ... The animals were trained for months before shooting started, but pretty soon it was clear to everyone that pigs can be really difficult and most unpredictable on the set: pink divas! Once again Joerdis Triebel was the producers' lucky star. She had done a lot of preparatory work for the role on an organic farm, and so it turned out that no one on the set could "manage" the pigs quite so well as she did – obviously not just spot on for the role, but maybe she even missed a second possible vocation. Scenes such as the almost gentle slaughtering simply could not have been done without Joerdis Triebel's empathy and special click with the animals. In making EMMA'S BLISS no animal was mishandled in any way or killed. All the slaughter scenes were posed and Emma's meat processing scenes were shot during a real home slaughte-

ring, so that the meat could really be processed afterwards. So, in the end the casting of the two main roles turned out to be dead right: just as Juergen Vogel brought over the fragility and tragedy of Max to a tee, Joerdis Triebel entirely captured Emma's love of life and sensuality. Taddicken stages the encounter of two such opposed characters as a sensitive hymn to life and love – which in the end is even more powerful than death. *Ralph Schwingel, Stefan Schubert, Hejo Emons / Hamburg, May 2006*

## THE NOVELIST CLAUDIA SCHREIBER ON EMMA, BLISS AND STORIES WITH NO IFS AND BUTS.

How does such a story come into being? It started off with a personal question. I asked myself what would have become of me if I hadn't left the farm where I spent my childhood? I'm certainly no Emma, but some of the stages in her life I know only too well: slaughtering pigs, driving the tractor, the weird villagers, friendship with animals and freedom between hay and fields. All this was interlinked with another idea: in the mid 1980s I had the opportunity of interviewing Astrid Lindgren for a radio broadcast. We discussed how Pippi Longstocking would have been as an adult; Ms. Lindgren didn't like the idea of that at all – but she let me talk her round and reckoned Ms. Longstocking, even as an adult, certainly wouldn't acquiesce. She would be a woman, courageous in thoughts and deeds, with power and certainly ecologically minded. Emma has some of this mentality, moulding the world to suit herself. But Emma's not as happy as Pippi. My third idea was to tell the story of a traumatised child that finds consolation in a close relationship to animals. What dolphin therapy does nowadays, Emma's pigs can do any day. This explains why the adult Emma is on the one hand so able, and on the other, so incapacitated when it comes to some things in life. Emma longs for life but knows what death is, and so she is able to see Max through his last weeks as he at last learns to love and, in Emma's arms, need no longer fear death. From the start I knew – hoped – EMMA'S BLISS would be a book and a Film. My novel was a first-class chance for the film version to portray the figures as truly as possible, a story with no ifs and buts. I was really lucky with my work – EMMA'S BLISS was in the best possible hands with WUESTE Film and Ralph Schwingel as producer and Sven Taddicken as director. *Claudia Schreiber / Cologne, May 2006*

In Germany (EMMAS GLÜCK / Reclam, Hard Cover resp. Goldman, Paperback), the book sold 110.000 copies. Up until now translated in five languages, EMMA'S BLISS was published in the Netherlands (EMMA'S GELUK / Uitgeverij Sirene), Norway (EMMAS LYKKE / Ganesa Forlog), France (LES AMIS D'EMMA / Laffont, Edition Nil), South Korea (Bertelsmann Korea) and Spain – where the novel was published by Maeva under the title LA FELICIDAD DE EMMA.

## IN THE MAIN ROLES

### JOERDIS TRIEBEL (EMMA)

After studying at the "Hochschule für Schauspielkunst Ernst Busch" in Berlin (1997–2001) Joerdis Triebel was an ensemble member at the Bremen Municipal Theatre in 2002. For her many different leading roles she received enormous praise from both audience and critics. After only one season she was awarded the much coveted Kurt-Hübner Prize. In the season 2004/2005 she had a guest appearance in Arthur Schnitzler's "Das weite Land" in Zurich. Following several German television roles (e.g. WOLFF'S TURF (Wolffs Revier)) EMMA'S BLISS is her first feature film.

### JUERGEN VOGEL (MAX)

Juergen Vogel was born in Hamburg in 1968, his father is a waiter, his mother a housewife. At the age of nine he modelled for a mail-order catalogue, and at 16 he was discovered for the film KINDER AUS STEIN (1984). For his second film role in ROSAMUNDE (1988) he received the Bavarian Film Award.

Juergen Vogel's breakthrough came with Sönke Wortmann's Film **LITTLE SHARKS / ACTING IT OUT** (Kleine Haie, 1991). The actor, who sees himself more as a performer, is no beauty. But what makes him irresistible is how he can bare himself: not that he knows no shame, but he has no genteel inhibitions or fear of coming over as an un-likeable figure. // Without any classical acting training, but with an excellent instinct, Vogel always plays part of himself in this disrupted world. "He has a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards the seal of authenticity the press has donned on him as the suburban lad. His 'working-class' background certainly gives him a treasure trove of experience which he can fall back on for his roles, but at the same time he clearly turns his back on identifying his life with roles." (www.filmportal.de) // To date Juergen Vogel has received practically every German film and television award at least once. For his triad in Matthias Glasner's **THE FREE WILL** (Der freie Wille) – as an actor, screenplay writer and co-producer – he was awarded the Silber Berlin Bear at the International Berlin Film Festival 2006 for his Outstanding Artistic Achievement. //

**FILMOGRAPHY (Selection):**

- 2006 **EMMA'S BLISS** (Emmas Glück) / Director: Sven Taddicken
- 2006 **THE FREE WILL** (Der Freie Wille) / Director: Matthias Glasner
- 2005 **KEINE LIEDER ÜBER DIE LIEBE** / Director: Lars Kraume
- 2002 **ROSENSTRABE** / Director: Margarethe von Trotta
- 2001 **NAKED** (Nackt) / Director: Doris Dörrie
- 2000 **SASS** / Director: Carlo Rola
- 1998 **MANILA** / Director: Romuald Kamarkar
- 1997 **FAT WORLD** (Fette Welt) / Director: Jan Schütte
- 1996 **SMILLA'S SENSE OF SNOW** (Smillas Gespür für Schnee) / Director: Bille August
- 1996 **THE PHARMACIST** (Die Apothekerin) / Director: Rainer Kaufmann
- 1995 **STILLE NACHT** / Director: Dani Levy
- 1996 **SEXY SADIE** / Director: Matthias Glasner
- 1997 **LIFE IS ALL YOU GET** (Das Leben ist eine Baustelle) / Director: Wolfgang Becker
- 1991 **LITTLE SHARKS / ACTING IT OUT** (Kleine Haie) / Director: Sönke Wortmann
- 1990 **ROSAMUNDE** / Director: Egon Günther

## THE CREW

**SVEN TADDICKEN** (Director)

Sven Taddicken was born in 1974 in Hamburg. He has been studying at the director's programme of the Baden-Wuerttemberg Film Academy in Ludwigsburg from 1996 to 2002. // Winning numerous international awards, including the National Short Film Prize at Dresden 1999, the Main Prize at the Finnish festival Lappeenraanta, and the First Prize at Short Cuts Cologne 1999, he was also nominated Honorary Foreign Student Award / Student OSCAR® 2000 for his film **COUNTING SHEEP** (Schäefchen Zaehlen, 1999), which also opened the Max Ophuels Festival Saarbruecken that same year. //

**FILMOGRAPHY as director:**

- 2006 **STÖRTEBEKER** (WT) / in Pre-Production
- 2006 **EMMA'S BLISS** (Emmas Glück)
- 2002 **STAY LIKE THIS** (Einfach so bleiben) / Short
- 2001 **GETTING MY BROTHER LAID** (Mein Bruder der Vampir)
- 1999 **COUNTING SHEEP** (Schäefchen Zählen) / Short
- 1998 **EL CORDOBÉS** / Short

- 1998 **ICE CREAM** / Short
- 1998 **WHODUNIT** / Short
- 1997 **FISH!** (Fisch!) / Short

**DANIELA KNAPP** (Director of Photography)

Daniela Knapp was born in Tyrol in 1972. During her studies at the film academies in Bolzano and Ludwigsburg she helped out on many film and advertising productions. She worked as a materials assistant, in video operating or lighting in several productions: e.g. **IT'S A JUNGLE OUT THERE** (Nach fünf im Urwald), **THE SUPERWIFE** (Das Superweib), **KNOCKIN' ON HEAVEN'S DOOR**. // At the film academy in Ludwigsburg she got to know Benjamin Quabeck, Sven Abel and Sven Taddicken, and was the main cinematographer for their student films. In Taddicken's **GETTING MY BROTHER LAID** (Mein Bruder der Vampir) she was head of the camera team and in 2002 received the Brooklyn International Film Festival Award for this work. // In 2004 she shared the camera work with Matthias Schellenberg in Hans Weingartner's **THE EDUKATORS** (Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei). //

**FILMOGRAPHY (Selection):**

- 2006 **EMMA'S BLISS** (Emmas Glück) / Director: Sven Taddicken
- 2005 **WELTVERBESSERUNGSMASSNAHMEN** / Director: Jörn Hintzer, Jakob Hüfner
- 2004 **FREUNDINNEN** / Director: Tobias Stille / Short
- 2004 **THE EDUKATORS** (Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei) / Director: Hans Weingartner
- 2004 **BIN ICH SEXY** / Director: Kathrin Feistl
- 2002 **STAY LIKE THIS** (Einfach so bleiben) / Director: Sven Taddicken / Short
- 2001 **GETTING MY BROTHER LAID** (Mein Bruder der Vampir) / Director: Sven Taddicken
- 1999 **COUNTING SHEEP** (Schäfchen zählen) / Director: Sven Taddicken / Short
- 1998 **ERTRÄNKTE ANGST** / Director: Benjamin Quabeck / Short
- 1998 **EL CORDOBÉS** / Director: Sven Taddicken / Short

**CLAUDIA SCHREIBER** (Author of the novel)

Claudia Schreiber was born in 1958 on a farm in North Hesse. As a child she fed the pigs, sold strawberries and financed her studies later from her own cherry plantation. // Under the name of Claudia Siebert, she worked as a journalist at the radio station SWF3 in Baden-Baden, then changed to television (ZDF) in Mainz, where she was involved in the development and realisation of the news programme logo. // She has received many distinctions for ZDF documentaries, among others Prix Jeunesse in 1990. From 1992 to 1996 she lived and worked abroad (Moscow and Brussels) and started writing books. **EMMA'S BLISS** is her second novel. This was followed by her highly acclaimed children's book "Sultan und Kotzbrocken", which has already been adapted for radio for SWR and as a play. // She now lives with her sons in Cologne, her next witty novel will appear in Spring 2007 at Piper. //

**RUTH TOMA** (Screenwriter)

Ruth Toma was born in 1956. After studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich (1976–1981) she was an actress and writer in the "Fliegende Bauten" theatre. Since the 1990s she has concentrated on writing. Her stage works include "Ada und das Universum" (premiere 1991 in Kampnagel-Fabrik in Hamburg) and "Beiß mich" (premiere 1992 in Tivoli on Hamburg's Reeperbahn). // She has received many awards for her work: in 2002 the Bavarian Film Award and the Northrhine-Westfalian Award for the screenplay to Fatih Akin's **SOLINO**. For Hermine Huntgeburth's **ROMEO** she was awarded both the Adolf Grimme Award and the German Television Award, and for **GLOOMY SUNDAY** (Gloomy Sunday – Ein Lied von Liebe und Tod) the German Screenplay Award. //

