

THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE NOTORIOUS NAZI FILMMAKER
AND THE FAMILY THAT LIVES WITH HIS LEGACY



Harlan

IN THE SHADOW OF *JEW SÜSS*

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A ZEITGEIST FILMS RELEASE

Harlan

IN THE SHADOW OF *JEW SÜSS*

A FILM BY FELIX MOELLER

Though almost forgotten today, Veit Harlan was one of Nazi Germany's most notorious filmmakers. Millions all across occupied Europe saw his films, the most perfidious of which was the treacherous anti-Semitic propaganda film *Jew Süß*—required viewing for all SS members. An unrepentant and blindly obsessive craftsman, no figure—save for Leni Riefenstahl—is as closely associated with the cinema of the Holocaust years as that of Joseph Goebbels' top director. (Harlan's 1945 epic *Kolberg* was the basis for *Inglourious Basterds*' pivotal film-within-a-film *Stolz Der Nation*.) Harlan was also the only artist from the Nazi era to be charged with war crimes.

With never-before-seen archival footage, unearthed film excerpts, rare home movies and new interviews, *Harlan – In the Shadow of "Jew Süß"* is indeed a searing portrait of the controversial filmmaker and an eye-opening examination of World War II film history. But it also shows how Veit Harlan's family—especially the youngest generation—struggles even today with the dark myth of his artistic immorality. It's the story of a German family from the Third Reich to the present, one that is marked by reckoning, denial and liberation.

THE FAMILY OF VEIT HARLAN



THOMAS HARLAN. Son of Veit Harlan and his second wife Hilde Körber. Author and filmmaker.



MARIA KÖRBER. Daughter of Veit Harlan and Hilde Körber. Actress and acting coach. In her second marriage, spouse of actor and voice-over artist Joachim Kerzel.



SUSANNE KÖRBER. Daughter of Veit Harlan and Hilde Körber. Actress, later in life veterinarian. Married Jewish photographer Claude Jacoby in 1953. She committed suicide in 1989.



CASPAR HARLAN. Son of Veit Harlan and his third wife Kristina Söderbaum. Filmmaker, screenwriter, playwright and environmental activist.



KRISTIAN HARLAN. Son of Veit Harlan and Kristina Söderbaum. Architect and industrial designer. Resides in Zurich.



JAN HARLAN. Nephew of Veit Harlan and son of Veit's brother Fritz Moritz. Film producer and production manager. Worked with his brother-in-law Stanley Kubrick from the late 1960s until Kubrick's death.



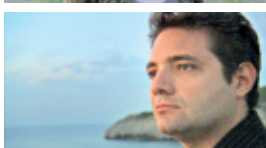
CHRISTIANE KUBRICK. Niece of Veit Harlan and daughter of Veit's brother Fritz Moritz. Actress and painter. Married filmmaker Stanley Kubrick in 1958. Executor of the Stanley Kubrick estate. Head of an art school in the UK.



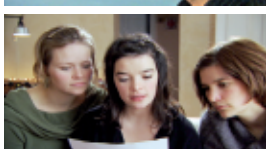
JESSICA JACOBY. Granddaughter of Veit Harlan. Daughter of Susanne Körber and Claude Jacoby. Journalist and film critic for the German-Jewish newspaper *Jüdische Allgemeine* in Berlin.



ALICE HARLAN. Granddaughter of Veit Harlan and daughter of Thomas Harlan. Physical therapist in Paris.



CHESTER HARLAN. Grandson of Veit Harlan and son of Thomas Harlan. Jazz musician and composer. Leader of the "Chester Harlan Group."



LOTTE, NELE AND LENA HARLAN. Granddaughters of Veit Harlan and daughters of Caspar Harlan. Lotte is a set decorator and set dresser, Nele studies cultural studies in Berlin, and Lena is a film costume assistant.

With the additional participation of film scholar **STEFAN DRÖSLER**, Director of Film Museum Munich. Organizer of a complete Veit Harlan Retrospective at the Film Museum in 2005. Editor and producer of documentaries on Veit Harlan on DVD, including *Anders als Du und Ich*.

ABOUT VEIT HARLAN

To this day, Veit Harlan's 1940 film *Jew Süss* remains a symbol of the most perfidious form of Nazi propaganda. Along with Leni Riefenstahl, no name is as closely associated with the cinema of the Holocaust years as that of Joseph Goebbels's favorite director. A master of melodrama, nationalist kitsch, and exultations of death, he was an artist as blinded as he was talented. With his monumental 1945 film *Kolberg*, he produced the major enduring epic of a declining regime. To this day, many remain fascinated by the driven, crafted aesthetics and darkly seductive power of Harlan's films.

Millions of Germans and other Europeans saw Harlan's films. Heinrich Himmler ordered SS and concentration camp teams to see *Jew Süss*, and there is little doubt that, in various cities throughout Europe, it set pogroms in motion. Harlan's films were box-office hits. Shown in theaters across Europe, they affected the mentality of countless viewers, who anxiously followed the fate of the Swedish actress Kristina Söderbaum—Harlan's second wife and his recurring leading lady—in films like *The Golden City* and *The Great Sacrifice*.

In Germany today, Veit Harlan is still essentially a taboo subject and many of his films remain under lock and key; recently, Warner Brothers temporarily halted the distribution of his prewar films on DVD.

Harlan directed twenty films under the Third Reich and ten after the war in the Federal Republic of Germany. In 1958, when he announced that he was making a film dealing with homosexuality, *Bewildered Youth* (aka *The Third Sex*), many thought that the director of *Jew Süss* had found a new target.

During his lifetime, Veit Harlan never showed remorse. Unrepentant and unbroken, he became the focus of much condemnation and hatred, even as other propaganda directors from the Nazi era got off largely scot-free. He was accused of crimes against humanity in two controversial trials, yet he was acquitted both times.

He died in Capri, Italy, in 1964 at the age of 64.

VEIT HARLAN'S FILMOGRAPHY

- 1962 Die blonde Frau des Maharadscha (The Maharajah's Blonde)
- 1958 Ich werde dich auf Händen tragen (I'll Carry You on My Hands)
- 1958 Liebe kann wie Gift sein
- 1958 Es war die erste Liebe (uncredited)
- 1957 Anders als du und ich (Bewildered Youth/The Third Sex)
- 1955 Verrat an Deutschland (aka Der Fall Dr. Sorge)
- 1954 Die Gefangene des Maharadscha (Circus Girl)
- 1953 Sterne über Colombo (Stars Over Colombo)
- 1953 Die blaue Stunde
- 1951 Hanna Amon
- 1951 Unsterbliche Geliebte
- 1945 Kolberg (Burning Hearts)
- 1944 Opfergang (The Great Sacrifice)
- 1943 Immensee
- 1942 Die goldene Stadt (The Golden City)
- 1942 Der große König (The Great King)
- 1941 Pedro soll hängen (1941)
- 1940 Jud Süß (Jew Süss)
- 1939 Die Reise nach Tilsit (The Excursion to Tilsit)
- 1939 Das unsterbliche Herz (The Immortal Heart)
- 1938 Verwehte Spuren (Covered Tracks)
- 1938 Jugend (Youth)
- 1937 Mein Sohn, der Herr Minister (My Son the Minister)
- 1937 Der Herrscher (The Ruler)
- 1937 Die Kreuzersonate (The Kreuzer Sonata)
- 1936 Maria, die Magd (Maria, the Servant)
- 1936 Fräulein Veronika (All for Veronica)
- 1936 Der müde Theodor (Tired Theodore)
- 1936 Kater Lampe
- 1936 Krach im Hinterhaus (Trouble Backstairs)
- 1935 Die Pompadour (Madame Pompadour) [uncredited]

ABOUT THE HARLAN FAMILY

Veit Harlan had five children, born between 1930 and 1946: Thomas, Susanne and Maria from his second marriage to the actress Hilde Körber, whom he divorced in 1939; and Caspar and Kristian from his third marriage to Kristina Söderbaum, also an actress. His first wife Dora Gershon, whom he divorced in 1924, was Jewish and was killed in Auschwitz in 1943.

As a child, Thomas Christoph Harlan, Veit's oldest son, was a staunch Hitler Youth and fan of Joseph Goebbels, the notorious propaganda minister who secretly met with his lover in the Harlan home. After the war, Thomas initially collaborated on screenplays with his father before turning radically against him, even setting fire to movie theaters that showed Veit Harlan's postwar films. In the early years of the Federal Republic, he fought former Nazis in high positions. In 1948 Thomas moved to Paris, later becoming a Nazi-hunter in Poland who delivered documents for thousands of war-crime proceedings. Himself a director of several powerfully political films, he was also an anarchist and Communist revolutionary in Portugal and Chile, the darling of Rome's glitterati and a close friend of actor Klaus Kinski. He remembers many pleasant moments with his father; but *Jew Süß* he calls a "murder instrument."

His sister Susanne Christa Harlan wanted to become an actress. As a twenty year old, under the name Susanne Körber, she played a part in Veit Harlan's first postwar film, *Hanna Amon*. During the shooting of the film, she suffered under the direction of her despotic father, who tormented her just as he had his actress wives. Giving up acting, Susanne Harlan became a veterinarian, married the Jewish salesman Walter Jacoby (whose entire family had died in the gas chambers) and converted to Judaism. In January 1989, she committed suicide.

Maria Harlan assumed her mother's maiden name after the war and has gone by the name Maria Körber ever since. When Hilde Körber divorced Veit Harlan she was given custody of Maria, Thomas and Susanne. Maria married twice, had children and grandchildren, became a theater and film actress and founded a renowned acting school. Until very recently, she appeared frequently in films and television. Of her father she now says, rather reticently, "I regret that he never apologized." She tends to defend him, which has led to fierce fights with her brother Thomas.

Kristian Veit Harlan is the first son from Veit Harlan's marriage to Kristina Söderbaum. When he was just a baby, his father included him in his Prussian film *The Great King*. Shortly before the end of the war, his parents took him to Sweden, where he suffered as a result of being separated from his family. In the Fifties, he was also hard hit by hostilities provoked by his father's past. When the harassments in school got out of hand, he was sent to boarding school in Salem. At the height of the attacks against his father, he demonstratively allowed himself to be called Veit. He is the only Harlan who never aspired to a career in film, becoming an industrial designer and founding his own small company. He lives in Switzerland.

Caspar Veit Harlan, Kristina Söderbaum's youngest son, played small parts in his father's films as a boy, later becoming a director and writer of children's films. An environmentalist, he is one of the most active protesters against the nuclear storage site Gorleben in Lower Saxony. "Protesting is Casper Harlan's way of coming to terms with his family's history," the German news magazine *Der Spiegel* wrote. He lives in a renovated farmhouse with his wife and three daughters.

The family's cinematic tradition was also continued most notably by Veit Harlan's nephew and niece, Jan and Christiane Harlan, the children of Veit's brother Fritz Moritz. Christiane married director Stanley Kubrick after playing the lone female role in his film *Paths of Glory*. Jan Harlan became the production manager for many of Kubrick's films. Kubrick was so fascinated by Veit Harlan that he wanted to make a film about him and notes for the project still exist. "After all, it's my family too," he told his wife.

Harlan – In the Shadow of "Jew Süss" is a film about radically different survival strategies against the backdrop of an infamous past. With the exception of Thomas Harlan, none of Veit Harlan's children have publicly discussed their father's legacy until now. The oldest son's aggressive attempts to rectify the past stand in sharp contrast to Kristian Harlan's quiet flight into solitude and Caspar Harlan's rational-critical reappraisal. And some may see in Susanne Harlan's suicide the most extreme reaction of all to their father's past.

Veit Harlan's eight grandchildren now live throughout Europe—in Berlin, Rome, Paris and Zurich. Their relationship with the family legacy covers the spectrum from angry defensiveness to disinterest to sheer discomfort to recently-sparked curiosity.

Chester, a jazz musician in Rome, the son of Thomas's first marriage to an Italian woman, barely speaks German and claims that he cannot understand his grandfather's films, which his aunt Maria has sent him. "I feel a strange connection to my grandfather, even though I've never known much about that period—maybe because I've read about the theory that certain characteristics skip a generation."

Jessica, a journalist and the daughter of Susanne Körber, considers herself Jewish. She is completely absorbed in researching her family's history: while one of her grandfathers directed *Jew Süss*, the other died in the Holocaust. She still remembers Veit Harlan, with whom she spent much time as a child. She is the only family member to believe that he was also anti-Semitic because his Jewish first wife, Dora Gershon, left him.

Then there is Alice Harlan, a physiotherapist in Paris. "For years, in history class in school here in France, I suffered terribly from a vague sense of shame. It's only now that I can talk about it more openly." Until recently, she did not know about her seven cousins; there is little contact between the members of this generation of grandchildren.

Some of Veit Harlan's grandchildren have put the name behind them, others have made a conscious decision not to. While the familial attraction to the film business has grown weaker, it is still alive—among Casper's three daughters, for example. But what do Veit

Harlan's films mean to them today? Do they sense the abstract messages in them, such as a the glorification of sacrifice and death, or do they simply see the beautiful blond Kristina Söderbaum—their grandmother?

This film is not meant to be another chapter from a "Children of the Perpetrators" tale. Nor is it a denunciation of Veit Harlan. Rather, it shows the unusual biographies of a family of artists against the backdrop of the myth of artistic immorality. It is the story of a family in Germany from the Third Reich to the present, marked by reckoning, defense, denial and liberation. The shadow of *Jew Süss* is growing weaker; whether it will ever disappear remains uncertain.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Documenting the work of a filmmaker of the Third Reich one necessarily encounters the so-called “Mephisto Problem” which defines the artist in terms of his relationship to the dictatorship and towards the people in power. Clearly Harlan’s relationship with propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels was quite ambivalent. However, since this type of relationship has already been widely examined by looking at people like Heinrich George, Gustav Gründgens, Leni Riefenstahl and Wilhelm Furthwängler, it was not the aspect I was primarily interested in. I knew we wouldn’t gain radically new insights from this kind of examination since the typical mix of seduction, opportunism, cowardice and a little conviction certainly also pertained to Veit Harlan.

However, the case of Harlan is unique. In all standard works about the Nazi era—which usually don’t feature artists at all—one always finds Harlan’s name next to Hitler’s, Himmler’s and the other Nazi criminals because of one film: *Jew Süss*. Whatever the circumstances were, it remains an exceptional and indelible stigma. I became increasingly interested in how long the shadow of *Jew Süss* remains to this day, especially since this film is one of the few Nazi era films that still legally can’t be shown. How is the film considered today? And, how does one deal with such a legacy in one’s own family?

The story became more complex, the more I talked with the family. Obviously, their points of view are private, subjective and limited, but no one declined to talk about the legacy.

Members of the second and third generation of Harlans have all kinds of different opinions of their father and grandfather, ranging from critical to defensive to indifferent. The image of “Dear Daddy” who had many Jewish friends is in sharp contrast to the one of “the culprit at the editing table” who created a murder weapon with *Jew Süss*. Especially interesting to me was what kind of impression the third generation had of their grandfather: If there would be no interest left for this period where immediate family was concerned, how could one expect any interest from the younger population in general? How would it be possible then to prevent the memory of this from disappearing?

Thus emerged a mix of biography, history, film history and family portrait. It is a look at the father and grandfather Veit Harlan, at his involvement and his culpability and at the repercussions of this “damned story” for one’s own life.

–Felix Moeller

ABOUT FELIX MOELLER

Felix Moeller studied history, political science and communications in Munich and Berlin. He earned his doctorate in 1994 from the Free University in Berlin.

He is the writer and director of the documentaries *The Verhoevens* (2003), *Hildegard Knef - The Early Years* (2005), *Katja Riemann* (2006), *Harlan - In the Shadow of Jew Süß* (2008).

He was a researcher and historical advisor for numerous documentary and feature films including the Emmy-winning *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl* (1992), the Oscar-winning *One Day in September* (1999), *Marlene Dietrich - Her Own Song* (2001), Margarethe von Trotta's *Rosenstrasse* (2002) and *Napola* (2004).

He has written numerous articles on history and film, including pieces on Third Reich Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, Leni Riefenstahl, Hildegard Knef, and the women's protest in the Rosenstrasse in Berlin 1943.

Moeller is the son of renowned New German Cinema director Margarethe von Trotta (*Marianne and Juliane*, *Rosa Luxemburg*).

Harlan

IN THE SHADOW OF *JEW SÜSS*

Written and Directed by FELIX MOELLER
Cinematography LUDOLPH WEYER
Sound MARTIN NOWECK
Film Editing ANETTE FLEMING
Original Music MARCO HERTENSTEIN
Narrator AUGUST ZIRNER
Producers AMELIE LATSCHA
FELIX MOELLER

a BLUEPRINT FILM production
in co-production with WDR/RBB/NDR
in cooperation with YLE TEEMA ATELJEE
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In German, French and Italian with English subtitles

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