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# HUMAN FACTORS

By Ronny Trocker

Germany, Italy, Denmark  
2021 | 102' | Suspense drama



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## LOGLINE

A mysterious home invasion triggers off a shake in the core of a cosmopolitan middle-class family and unveils the fragility of truth and the power of individual perspective.

## SYNOPSIS

At the advertising agency they co-own, French-German couple Nina and Jan have signed a new politically charged client, forcing them to confront their clashing priorities. To escape mounting tensions at work, they whisk their kids, Max and Emma, away to their seaside vacation home. But what's meant to be an idyllic off-season retreat turns sinister when a mysterious home invasion sets everything off balance. Though at first the aftermath brings the family closer, as they try to put the incident into perspective, their accounts of what took place begin to unravel alongside the couple's faith in each other.



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## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

HUMAN FACTORS tells the story of a young, modern family from a big German city: open-minded cosmopolitans, successful in their creative jobs, and dedicated parents. At first glance, a picture-perfect family.

When a mysterious housebreaking in their beloved holiday home threatens the fragile family idyll, it becomes the triggering element of a creeping decomposition of the marriage. I was interested in recreating the general malaise we can observe in our contemporary society, through the microcosmos of the family. Fear and incertitude manipulate the characters of the story. Their middle-class ideal is betrayed by their own high demands on personal and social security.

From different points of view and resembling a radiograph, the film emphasizes the internal conflicts of the family. The narrative loops, which are not immediately recognizable as such, push the narration forward step by step. The chronology of the events becomes less important and the perspective from which they are told more significant.

In a hyper-mediatized world, where everything becomes image and marketing, from private life to politics, perception is easily manipulated. The communication strategies are more and more sophisticated, but also more superficial, with almost no time to process all the flux of information. The emotional drama of the family is related to this phenomenon, as there is a paradox in which the couple seems to be caught. As the owners of an advertising agency, they are storytellers and professional communicators

themselves. Nevertheless, they seem to have lost the capacity to speak to each other or to listen to their children. Probably that's where this film becomes somehow a mirror and attends a self-reflective level.

The multiple perspectives in the film are a formal aspect which does not only help to dig deeper into the family conflicts, but also offers different access points to the story and the characters. It is certainly a challenging viewing experience, as the audience will have to constantly redefine and probably also question their own point of view.

## **DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY**

Ronny Trocker was born in Bolzano, Italy, and grew up in a small village in the Northern Italian Alps. After graduating from high school, he moved to Berlin, where he worked for several years as a sound engineer and collaborated with various radio and sound artists. In 2006, he moved to Argentina to study at the Universidad del Cine in Buenos Aires. Four years later, he returned to Europe and he was admitted to the French art school Le Fresnoy – Studio National des Arts Contemporains in Lille.

He lives and works mainly in Brussels. His works include documentary, fictional and experimental short films as well as video installations, which have been shown at various festivals worldwide. In 2016, his first feature film *THE EREMITES* premiered in Venice Film Festival's Orizzonti section. The film was nominated for the FIPRESCI Prize at the European Film Awards 2017.

## **DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY**

(selection)

2021 *Der Menschliche Faktor / Human Factors* | fiction

2016 *Die Einsiedler / The Eremites* | fiction

2016 *Sommer / Estate* | short

2013 *Gli Immacolati / The Immaculates* | short documentary

2012 *Eiszeit / Frozen* | short

2011 *Grenzland -Terra Di Confine / Land of Borders* | documentary

2007 *Amor Precario / Precarious Love* | short

## **IN CONVERSATION WITH RONNY TROCKER**

*The film tackles multiple issues and discusses some topical matters. What was the initial idea that made the film come to life?*

At the beginning of the script work, I was very concerned about the question of perception. The reason for this is probably that I believe that in our age of social media something is changing in the way we're perceiving the world around us. For example, if an important event happens, we will immediately consume countless opinions, views, and perspectives on the event via the timelines of our social channels, which they often become more important than the event itself. The way "realities" are built, has deeply changed nowadays. Personally, I'm often overwhelmed by the everyday flow of information and I was wondering how this affects our private lives. Having said that, it was clear from the beginning that I didn't want to make a film about social media. It's just the contemporary social context which the story is embedded in and the characters are influenced by.

In addition, probably the fact that I am father of two children myself was an important element when I started writing the screenplay. I have often noticed how we remember common experiences within the family in an apparently different way. Everybody has they own "reality" of the facts. As I'm concerned about the question of perception, I started asking myself, what are the differences between adults seeing the world and the perspectives of the children. How much is our way of perceiving our environment manipulated by the high number of media and information we're consuming every day? Is the children perspective purer and probably more sincere? Many questions that I don't have the answers to, but that helped me start writing the story of this film.

*Just like in your first feature film, The Eremites (2016), you place a family in the core of the narrative. What makes the family environment an attractive topic for you?*

Family can be a lot of different things, but if we understand it as an emotional relationship between two partners or between parents and kids, it's an inexhaustible source of conflicts. The idea of family full of conventions, expectations and contradictions. There are moments in life when you'll try to get rid of it and moments when you'll try to be close. It's a bunch of individuals playing an assigned "role" in a collective. A highly explosive microcosmos. Nevertheless, I think I'm not focused so much on the family itself. It's more the interaction with the world around them, which makes it interesting for me.

*Tell us a few things about choosing narrative loops to tell the story.*

Cinema is by definition a question of "viewing" and when you start telling a story, you'll do it from a particular point of view. Experimenting with different approaches, I quickly

realised, that repeating same scenes from different angles creates an interesting formal and dramaturgic tension. It was important for me that the event itself is not changing, but only the angle through which we're looking at it. The audience should watch through different eyes and experience the subjective "reality" of the characters. It demands the audience to be actively watching, but I think it is an interesting experience.

*What was the most challenging part in the creation of the film?*

One of the most difficult tasks was the long shot with "Zorro", the rat. I really wanted the rat to be filmed like an actor, not like an animal; seen from above, from a human perspective, so to speak. We had to come up with a system that allowed the camera to be at the rat's eye level. In preproduction, we did some tests with an older rat. This went quite well, because the rat was mainly interested in food and so it was relatively easy, using baits, to get it to go the way we wanted. The "real Zorro" was a young rat. Very excited and never hungry. Nothing worked anymore and it was almost miracle that we could use the take at the end.

The narrative loops were also a difficult and very unusual task during the shooting. Technically, because we had to wait for or to create the same lighting over and over again, often at dusk, but also for the actors, because they had to put themselves in the same situation several times, and do the same thing, identically and often days later. The shooting schedule was complex and several times there was somebody who "got lost" in the loops and didn't understand anymore from which point of view we're shooting the current take.



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## Written and Directed by Ronny Trocker

**Editor** | Julia Drack

**Director of Photography** | Klemens Hufnagl

**Cast** | Sabine Timoteo (Nina), Mark Waschke (Jan), Jule Hermann (Emma), Wanja Valentin Kube (Max), Daniel Séjourné (Flo), Hannes Perkmann (Alexander), Steve Driesen (Frédéric) Spencer Bogaert (Lucas) Marthe Schneider (Amelié) Marie Rose Tietjen (Hanna), Hassan Akkouch (Hendrik), Karen Margrethe Gotfredsen (Laura), Katja Fellin (Maja)

**Produced by** | zischlermann filmproduktion

**Co-produced by** | Bagarrefilm, Snowglobe, ZDF - Das Kleine Fernsehspiel

**Producers** | Susanne Mann, Paul Zischler, Martin Rehbock

**Co-producers** | Ronny Trocker, Eva Jakobsen, Katrin Pors, Mikkel Jersin

**Countries of production** | Germany, Italy, Denmark

**Production design** | Stefan Oppenländer

**Costumes design** | Ildiko Okolicsanyi

**Make-up** | Malaika Katharina Boserup

**Music** | Anders Dixen

**Assistant director** | Kristian Portz

**Sound** | Jacques Pedersen

**Sound mix** | Kristian Selin Eidnes Andersen, Jacques Pedersen

**Production manager** | Jennifer Mueller von der Haegen

**Production assistant** | Ann-Kristin Bardi

**VFX** | Rudi Germann

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