

Presseheft

THE HAPPY FILM



Kinostart: 5. Januar 2017

Ein Film von Stefan Sagmeister & Ben Nabors

USA 2016 - 93 Min – OmdtU

polyfilm

FILMVERLEIH

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<http://verleih.polyfilm.at/TheHappyFilm/index.htm>

SYNOPSIS

Haben Sie Einfluss auf Ihr persönliches Glück? Die meisten von uns haben sich mit Karrierezielen, Beziehungen und mit dem eigenen Glück auseinandergesetzt. Aber wie viele von uns haben sich wirklich die Zeit genommen zu erforschen, was uns glücklich macht? Kann man Glück gestalten?

Der österreichische Designer Stefan Sagmeister hat es gut. Er lebt in seiner Traumstadt New York und gestaltet sehr erfolgreich Album-Cover für die Rolling Stones, Jay-Z und die Talking Heads. Aber in seinem Kopf geistert die Frage herum, ob das wirklich alles ist. Er entschließt sich dazu, ein Design-Projekt aus sich selbst zu machen. Kann er seine Persönlichkeit umgestalten und so ein besserer Mensch werden? Kann er durch Übung lernen, glücklich zu sein?

Doch in den Selbstversuch schleicht sich sein Leben ein und bringt alles durcheinander: Das Netz aus Kunst, Sex, Liebe und Tod scheint undurchdringbar. Seine Selbst-Gestaltung und schmerzvolle Erfahrungen führen ihn auf eine Reise, die ihn näher zu sich selbst bringt, als jemals geplant.

HINTERGRUND

Als Experte in Sachen Freizeit hat Stefan Sagmeister sich einen Namen gemacht. Alle sieben Jahre schließt er für zwölf Monate sein Studio für ein Sabbatjahr und widmet sich in dieser Zeit Projekten, die außerhalb seines üblichen Dienstleistungsgeschäfts laufen. So verbrachte Sagmeister im Sabbatjahr 2009 seine Zeit auf Bali in dem Bergdorf Ubud zwischen den örtlichen Kunsthandwerkern und anderen Glückssuchenden. Inspiriert von der balinesischen Tradition, seiner Umgebung und geleitet von seiner ganz eigenen Geisteshaltung, taucht Sagmeister dort in die Kunst des Möbeldesigns ein.

Doch ein enger Freund, der ihn während seines Sabbatjahres besuchen kommt, stellt sein Schaffen in Frage. „Du hast eine Menge schöner Stühle gemacht, Stefan.“ Sagt der Freund. „Nach dieser außergewöhnlichen Erfahrung hier wirst du also mit ein paar schönen Stühlen nach Hause kommen. Und dann?“

„Und dann?“ dachte Sagmeister. Das war eine schwierige Frage.

Mit der Kritik seines Freundes im Hinterkopf und dem Schaffensdruck, der in dem Versprechen und den Möglichkeiten eines Sabbatjahres liegen, beschließt Sagmeister sich mit einer Frage zu beschäftigen, die in ungeahntem Ausmaß sein zukünftiges Leben bestimmen wird. Was kann er tun, um sich zu einem glücklicheren Menschen zu machen? Er liest Artikel, Bücher und geht zu Konferenzen, die ihm einen Einblick in die aktuelle Debatte zum Thema Glück geben sollen. Schließlich stößt er auf die Arbeiten des Psychologen Jonathan Haidt. In ihm findet er einen verwandten Geist, einen Forscher, der seine Theorien an sich selbst ausprobiert, um herauszufinden, was wirklich funktioniert. Er überlegt außerdem, wie ein Film zum Thema aussehen könnte. Wie jeder Designer, der was auf sich hält es tun würde, hat Sagmeister die Tiere der Region überreden können sich am Vorspann des Films zu beteiligen.

Als das Sabbatjahr endet, kehrt Sagmeister nach New York zurück, öffnet sein Studio wieder und ruft seine Freunde, die Filmemacher Hillman Curtis und Ben Nabors, zusammen. Die Frage nach dem Glück löst bei allen gleichsam Neugierde aus, bringt die drei Herren zusammen, und THE HAPPY FILM nimmt seinen Anfang.

Natürlich war es keine einfache Angelegenheit. Das auf achtzehn Monate angelegte Projekt blähte sich zu einer sieben Jahre dauernden Odyssee auf und zog dabei alle vorstellbaren Katastrophen magisch an. Es durchzustehen war nicht leicht, aber wir denken, es ist ein interessanter Film geworden. Und hier stehen wir nun ...



Regie Statements

Von Stefan Sagmeister: Wir haben vor sieben Jahren mit dem Film begonnen, ein Zeitraum von achtzehn Monaten war für das Projekt geplant. In den vierundachtzig Monaten, die wir für die Produktion dieses kleinen Films benötigten, passierten alle nur erdenklichen Katastrophen, der Tod unseres Ko-Regisseurs eingeschlossen. Die Arbeit am Happy Film hat mich zutiefst unglücklich gemacht.

By Ben Nabors: „Kann man seinen Geist darauf trainieren glücklicher zu sein?“ Die Beantwortung dieser Frage war der Auslöser für dieses Projekt. Sorgfältig gestalteten wir eine Versuchsanordnung, legten klare Parameter zur Bewertung fest und gingen an die Arbeit. Alles erschien sehr einfach und klar, gut vorbereitet und in achtzehn Monaten durchaus machbar – ein guter Plan also. Aber trotz dieser Vorbereitungen, kam Stefans Leben uns immer wieder in die Quere, blutete in unsere Versuchsanordnung und verdrehte unsere Messergebnisse.

Anstatt uns saubere Graphen und eindeutige Zahlen zu liefern, um unsere Frage nach dem Glück zu beantworten, nahm etwas anderes, verschwommenes, lustiges, trauriges, empfindliches und kühnes Formen an: Das aufrichtige Bild eines Mannes, der versucht ein

besserer Mensch zu sein.

Gegenstand eines Dokumentarfilms zu werden, zugleich besonders und alltäglich, allgemeingültig und individuell zu sein, gibt Stefan uns die seltene Chance einen genauen Einblick in grundsätzliche, menschliche Denkmuster zu erhalten: Die Fragen, nach deren Beantwortung wir uns sehnen, ob sie zu beantworten seien oder nicht.

Sich einer subjektiven Qualität, wie Glück, durch quantitative Prozesse, wie Wissenschaft, zu nähern, hat mir mehr über die Bedeutung und den Zweck diese Films gezeigt, als ein klares Ergebnis es vermocht hätte.



Credits

DIRECTORS: Stefan Sagmeister, Ben Nabors, Hillman Curtis

PRODUCER: Ben Nabors **EDITOR:** Sam Citron, Akiko Iwakawa-Grieve

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: Ben Wolf

VOICE OVER WRITTEN BY: Stefan Sagmeister

CINEMATOGRAPHERS: Ben Wolf, Julia Dengel , Stefan Sagmeister, Ben Nabors

ADDITIONAL EDITING: Jos Diaz Contreras, Carlos Pavan, Miki (Watanabe) Milmore, Hillman Curtis, Shelby Siegel

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER: Sagmeister & Walsh, Topiary Productions, {group theory}

ORIGINAL MUSIC: Colin Huebert (Siskiyou)

ADDITIONAL SCORE: Matt Abeysekera

GRAPHICS BY: Sagmeister & Walsh, New York

CREATIVE CONSULTANT: Gary Hustwit

PRINCIPAL APPEARANCES: Stefan Sagmeister, Jonathan Haidt, Hillman Curtis, Pak Merta Ada, Dr. Sheenah Hankin, Jessica Walsh, Dr. Tony Campo, Ben Nabors.

PRODUCTION COMPANY: So So Productions LLC



Directors' Bios



Stefan Sagmeister, Co-Director & Subject, formed the New York based Sagmeister Inc. in 1993 and has since designed for clients as diverse as the Rolling Stones and the Guggenheim Museum. Besides two Grammys he also won practically every important international design award. In 2012 young designer Jessica Walsh became a partner and the company was renamed into Sagmeister & Walsh. His Happy Show has attracted over a quarter of a million visitors worldwide, and counting, and is the most visited graphic design exhibit in history. The Happy Film is his first film. More info on his work is available here: <http://www.sagmeisterwalsh.com/>

- Sagmeister's best-selling design book "Things I Have Learned In My Life So Far" has served as a major influence on The Happy Film, lending typographical maxims culled from his personal journals that have become cinematic set pieces marking his journey through the film.
- "The Happy Film Pitch Book" was created as a printed accompaniment to the touring museum exhibition The Happy Show and features essays, illustrations and photographs from the show's staging at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia.
- Originally conceived as an extension of the film, The Happy Show has achieved international success in it's current 9-city global tour (Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Toronto, Vancouver, Paris, Vienna, Frankfurt). It has set records worldwide as the highest attended graphic design exhibition in the history of the planet.



Ben Nabors, Co-Director & Producer, is a New Yorkbased filmmaker. His debut feature documentary *William and the Windmill*, about windmill inventor William Kamkwamba, won the Grand Jury Prize at the 2013 South by Southwest Film Festival. He co-wrote and produced the short film *Palimpsest*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival (2013) where it won a Special Jury Prize. In 2015, he wrote and produced *Actor Seeks Role*, starring Alex Karpovsky and Dylan Baker, which won the Grand Jury Prize at IFFBoston and had its online premiere with *The New Yorker*. Filmmaker Magazine named Ben amongst the 25 New Faces of Independent Film, and GOOD Magazine recognized him as a GOOD 100. More info on his work is available here: www.grouptheory.com.



Hillman Curtis, Co-Director, was a filmmaker, new media designer, author, husband and father. His film work includes *Ride, Rise, Roar*, a feature length documentary about David Byrne which premiered at SXSW 2009, as well as the popular online documentary series *Artist Series*. He passed away in April 2012. More info on his work is available here: <http://hillmancurtis.com>.

Additional Team Members

Ben Wolf, Cinematographer, strives to bridge traditional divides - bringing documentary realism to fiction projects, dramatic storytelling to documentaries, and the latest digital cinema technology to the art of photography. His recent DP credits include the feature film 'East Fifth Bliss,' the David Byrne documentary 'Ride, Rise, Roar' directed by Hillman Curtis, and a series of national commercials for IBM. His directorial work includes a breadth of niche and Fortune 500 clients alike and he is developing his first narrative feature, 'Closed Circuit.' He holds a B.A. in philosophy from Yale and an M.F.A. in film from Columbia.

Jonathan Haidt, Scientific Advisor, is a social psychologist and Professor of Ethical Leadership at New York University's Stern School of Business. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1992 and did post-doctoral research at the University of Chicago and in Orissa, India. His research focuses on morality - its emotional foundations, cultural variations, and developmental course. He was the 2001 winner of the Templeton Prize in Positive Psychology and is the author of "The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom." His latest book, published in 2012, is 'The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion.' <http://people.stern.nyu.edu/jhaidt/>

Colin Huebert (Siskiyou), Composer, is one half of Vancouver-based indie rock band Siskiyou, formed in the late 2000s. Under the impetus of Huebert's hotel room and home recordings, Siskiyou forges an approach to songwriting that is decidedly more stark and emotionally tense, marked by a minimal aesthetic, an economy of effects and arrangements, and an appreciation for the timbral and textural qualities of sparse elements. The band combines a back porch, moonlit looseness with a controlled, self-contained country gothic formalism that often finds the music circling within the cusp of restrained fury or frenzy. This is Huebert's first film score.

Sam Citron, Editor, has worked as an editor on a long list of acclaimed projects, including Academy Award nominated writer-director John Milius's Emmy winning mini-series, Rough Riders, and Academy Award winning documentary director Davis Guggenheim's feature documentaries, The First Year, a winner of the Peabody Award, and Waiting for 'Superman', named Critic's Choice and National Board of Review best documentary. Most recently, Sam edited and executive produced Tough Bond, which premiered in competition at the Berlin International Film Festival and then went on to compete at Hot Docs and the Chicago International Film Festival. Sam also edited The Other Shore, which premiered at the SXSW Film Festival and aired on Showtime.

Akiko Iwakawa-Grieve, Editor, combines unconventional storytelling with a joyous appreciation for visual art. She is known for her contributions commercials for Jaguar, AT&T, Reebok, HBO, and Gillette as well as original music videos for The Johnny Cash Project, Depeche Mode, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Kanye West & Lou Reed, to name a few. Akiko has collaborated with groundbreaking directors Chris Milk, Marco Brambilla, Jeffrey Plasker, Patric Daughters and the late Nagi Noda on inventive, thought-provoking projects. She also edited feature films, including "Date and Switch" (Lionsgate) and the Oscar-nominated "Cutie and the Boxer".

Film Appearances

Jonathan Haidt, Scientific Advisor (described and pictured above)

Pak Merta Ada, Meditation

Since 1993, Pak Merta Ada has taught meditation to over 80,000 students. His courses observe noble silence and involve etheric exercises and sessions of meditative sitting. Pak Merta's knowledge of healing represents a combination of ancient Balinese healing, Chinese medicinal philosophy (understanding the meridian body) and Indian beliefs regarding the chakra body. In 2001, he was awarded the "K. Nadha Nugraha Award" by BaliPost for his achievements in teaching and helping thousands with his health meditation technique. This prestigious award is given out to individuals who use their various fields of expertise for outstanding contributions to Balinese society. <http://www.baliusada.com/>

Dr. Sheenah Hankin, Psychotherapist

Sheenah Hankin was named by New York Times Magazine as one of New York's most popular psychotherapists. She practices Cognitive Appraisal Therapy, an approach she developed with her husband, Dr. Richard Wessler. Born in England, Sheenah received her graduate diploma in counseling from Aston University in Birmingham, and a Ph.D. from International University. She is a member of both the American Counseling Association and the Mental Health Counselors Association, and is listed in Who's Who in America. She is the author of the final chapter in Howard Stern's best-selling "Private Parts", in which she profiles his controversial personality. Sheenah has been featured on Good Morning America, NBC's Today Show, ABC's 20/20, Entertainment Tonight, Maury, The O'Reilly Factor, NBC Today, and on Court TV, CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News Network, plus British, French and Russian television. She is a member of AFTRA. She is the author of "Complete Confidence".

Dr. Tony Campo, Psychopharmacologist

Tony Campo is the medical director at Caron, a world-class treatment and behavioral healthcare provider. Dr. Campo is certified by the American Board of Psychiatry & Neurology and is a member of the American Psychiatric Association and the American Academy of Addiction Psychiatrists. He is the former Medical Director at The Dunes East Hampton in Long Island, NY as well as Gracie Square Hospital in New York City. His treatment philosophy includes a bio-psychiatric as well as a spiritual healing approach. Dr. Campo is a strong advocate of early diagnosis and treatment of co-occurring disorders believing they play an essential role in achieving and maintaining a sober and healthful lifestyle. Dr. Campo has appeared on Fox's Good Day New York and lectures throughout New York on psychiatric issues and addiction.

Jessica Walsh, Designer and Partner at Sagmeister & Walsh

Jessica Walsh is a graphic designer and art director living and working in NYC. She is a partner at the design studio Sagmeister & Walsh, she teaches at the School of Visual Arts, and speaks internationally about design. She has been profiled in numerous publications, and her work has won numerous awards from the Type Director's Club, Art Director's Club, SPD, Print, and Graphis. She has been named Computer Art's "Top Rising Star in Design," an Art Director's Club "Young Gun," and Print Magazine's "New Visual Artist".