



[Home](#) > [Indie Film Festival](#) > [2017 Indie Film Festival](#) > [Life & Death. War & Peace. Dialogue & Film](#)

[WFA 2017 Home](#)

[WFA 2017 Official Selections](#)

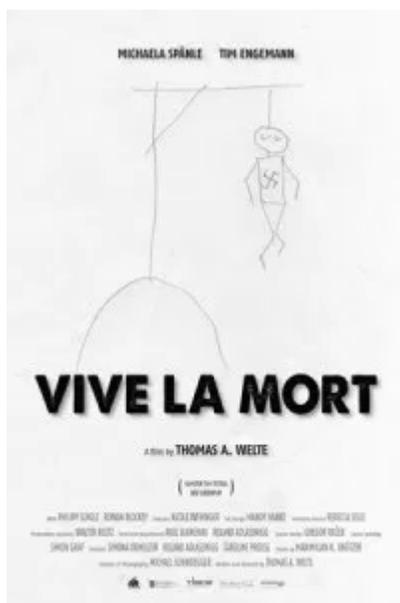
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## Life & Death. War & Peace. Dialogue & Film

February 25, 2017 [2017 Indie Film Festival](#), General Information



In his film [Vive La Mort](#), director Thomas A. Welte presents a captivating conversation about life and death, war and peace. Set in 1945, the film would intrigue history buffs, psychologists and fans of compelling acting and dramatic dialogue. After an anonymous tip, Wehrmacht deserter Paul Gmeiner is questioned by the French occupation and accused of the murder of a resistance fighter. Under interrogation, he must prove his own version of the events and refute the false accusations.

*Carolyn A. Schultz of the Winter Film Awards Team had the opportunity to ask Thomas about the film. See the NYC Premier of 'Vive La Mort' on Sunday February 26 as part of the 6th Annual [Winter Film Awards Indie Film Festival](#).*

**Q: What was your inspiration for directing and producing this film?**

For some time I was looking for a good story that was possible to achieve with a small budget. After I saw *Vive la Mort* on the stage I got the feeling it would be that story. For a long time, I have been a big fan of

Hitchcock's *Lifeboat* and that movie had a big influence on me. So it was easy to decide that I would try to do something similar.

**Q: From your background of previous writing and directing, what are some things that prepared you for this 108-minute feature film?**

My experience in directing for the stage was very helpful. Nobody is born to do a movie. Everybody needs practice. The stage gave me that practice – especially in working with actors. A movie like *Vive La Mort*

stands with a good performance. So that was a crucial part and I think it went pretty well but wouldn't have worked without my stage history.

**Q: How did you come up with the plot of the film?**

It's based on a true story I read about in a history book. Actually it was an interview about a German deserter in World War II. After that I was hooked and started writing.

**Q: Why do you believe this story is significant, and important to share as a film?**

What is important? It's a film. It's entertainment. Of course *Vive la Mort* is also a part of history. I don't know if that makes it important. I shot it because I thought the story is worth telling. Somebody else might decide that differently. Anyway I am glad I did it, and hopefully some people will like it.

**Q: How much is based on a true story, and based on the play you saw or the interview you read — compared to how much is fiction?**

The male character is vaguely based on a real life person. The interview I read about his life as a deserter inspired me to write the play. I didn't think the real deserter met the antagonist I invented for my main character. The female part respectively the antagonist is totally fictional. Of course it wasn't excluded that a woman would lead an interrogation at this time but it would be very unlikely. So what. It's a movie, I am the author, it's my film, I decide what's best for the story. I wanted her to be a woman because her pre-story couldn't be as strong as the deserter's story if she would have been a man. And I strongly felt the story needed that extend of dramatic fall.



**Q: Why did you do the entire film in black & white?**

I wanted the movie to look like the black & white films from the 1940s. For example: *Double Indemnity*, *Lifeboat* or *Citizen Kane*. I love the hard contrast and the shadows in those movies – as they create special atmospheres that I am very fond of. I wanted to create something similar, wanted to catch some of those atmospheres. Also there is the fact that my story takes place in that time and I think its contend is made for black and white.



**Q: This film strongly emphasizes dialogue over scenery. What made you want to do a film like this, and what advice would you have for other filmmakers trying to do a similar film?**

I didn't want to do a film like this — I was forced to because raising money for a first feature is no easy thing to do. I knew my budget would be more than low and days of shooting were extremely limited.

My goal was to do a movie which looked good. I do not like a cheap video look – and hopefully we achieved the goal of a film with a good look, but to do that I decided to shoot in one room. Changing locations cost a lot of time and money and we didn't have any of it.

I think there is no advice to give another filmmaker trying to do a similar film. You gotta do it first and afterwards you know what you should have done differently.

**Q: How did you find the actors who were the right fits for these challenging, dialogue-focused roles?**

I worked with the actors together before in a couple of different projects. When I asked them if they were interested in doing *Vive La Mort*, surprisingly they said yes. No, it was a challenge for all of us and they loved to do it. So did I.

**Q: While almost all the speaking was in German, why did you choose a few words to be in French?**

When talking in a second language, which the female character is doing, a certain kind of concentration is required. In a highly emotional state or tiredness, one is not able to keep this concentration, so you switch back in your mother tongue. I used this to emphasize such moments or this feeling. It also creates a more authentic atmosphere.

**Q: How was this film similar to other films you've done before, during your 10+ year career in film and writing? And how was it different?**

All my other films I shot in the last decade were shorts and not to compare with Vive La Mort. They shorts also had almost no dialogue. So it was a complete new experience.



## Carolyn A. Schultz, Fundraising & Communications

*Film, music and culture have always been very important to Carolyn A. Schultz, who joined the Winter Film Awards Team in 2016 as Marketing, Communications and Fundraising Consultant. As an enthusiastic believer in the power of effective communications bringing people together, Carolyn formed her own marketing and communications consulting business – Carolyn A. Schultz Marketing & Communications – after over 15 years leading creative, successful efforts for a wide variety of organizations in the public, private and cultural sectors.*

*Interested in sponsoring a Winter Film Awards event? Carolyn can be reached at (917) 525-3211 / [carolyn@carolynaschultz.com](mailto:carolyn@carolynaschultz.com)*

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## About Winter Film Awards Indie Film Festival

**Winter Film Awards Is New York City.** Like the city itself, we showcase the eclectic diversity and excitement of the independent arts world. Winter Film Awards is proudly one of the Top 10 Best Reviewed Festivals on FilmFreeway.

The rapidly growing [Winter Film Awards Indie Film Festival](#), now in its sixth year, is a dynamic and exciting event in the heart of the City. Winter Film Awards showcases films from emerging filmmakers from around the world in all genres with a special emphasis on highlighting the work of women and minority filmmakers. The Festival runs February 23-March 4 2017 in New York City.

**Among the 88 Official Selections** to be screened at Cinema Village in the heart of Greenwich Village (22 East 12th Street, New York, NY 10003), is a diverse mixture of 11 Animated films, 8 Documentaries, 11 Feature narratives, 10 Horror films, 12 Music Videos, 24 Narrative shorts and 7 Web series, including 12 student films and 33 first-time filmmakers. Filmmakers come from 30 countries; 42% of the films were created by women, 45% were created by people of color. Visit [www.WinterFilmAwards.com](http://www.WinterFilmAwards.com) for schedules, tickets and details!

## About Winter Film Awards

Winter Film Awards is an all-volunteer, minority- and women-owned registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization founded in 2011 in New York City by a group of filmmakers and enthusiasts. The program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

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### About Winter Film Awards

Winter Film Awards (WFA) is a volunteer-run and operated celebration of the diversity of local and international film-making. Our Mission is to recognize excellence in cinema and to promote learning and artistic expression for people at all stages of their artistic careers with a focus on nurturing emerging filmmakers and helping them gain recognition and contacts to break into this difficult industry. We pride ourselves on our diverse collection of Festival selections, allowing our audience to enjoy films they normally wouldn't think to seek out. WFA is a minority- and women-owned registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

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