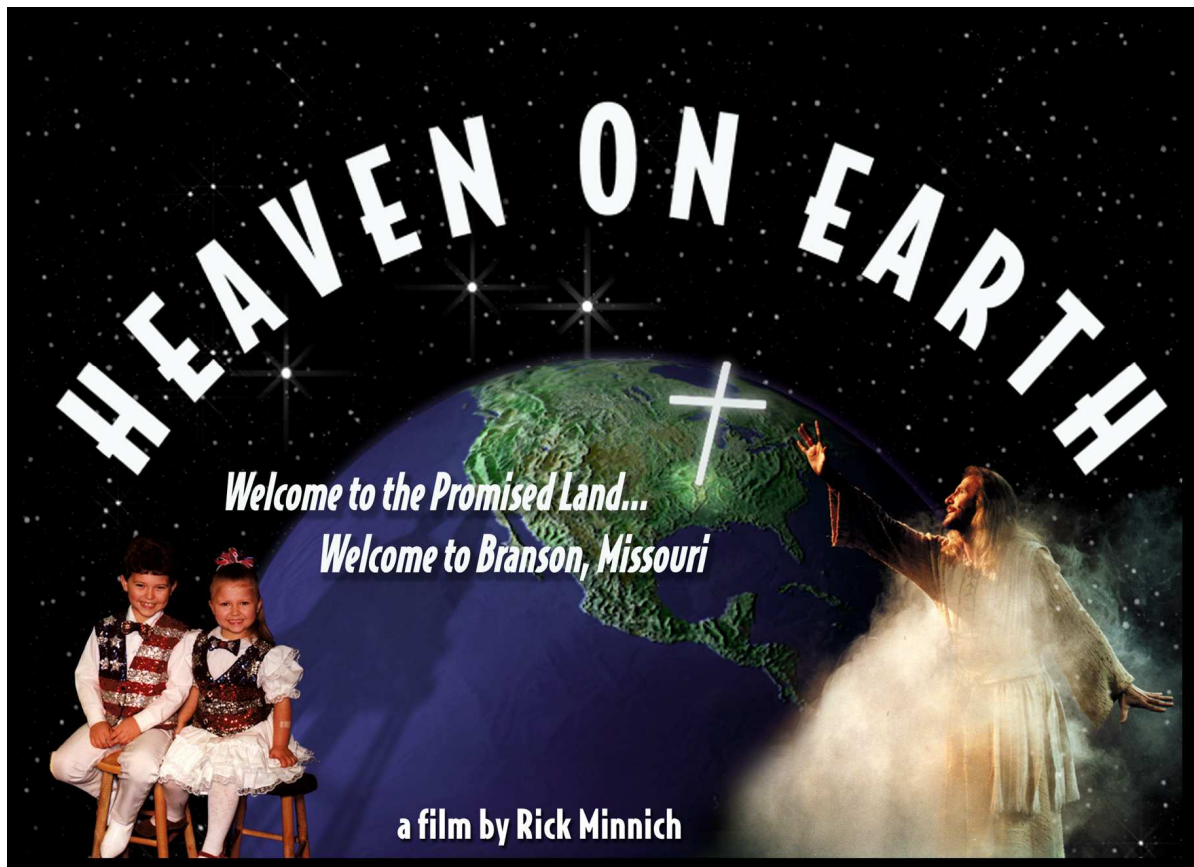


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Press Kit



A production of Hoferichter & Jacobs GmbH and  
Hochschule für Film & Fernsehen „Konrad Wolf“

2001

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### **125-WORD SYNOPSIS**

Branson, Missouri. Some call it the new Nashville or the Las Vegas of the Bible Belt. Over the past ten years, nearly 40 theatres have shot out of the ground in this once sleepy Ozark Mountain town of fewer than 4000 inhabitants. Here in America's heartland, country legends and television and stage stars from yesteryear have reincarnated themselves and offer up good ol'patriotic, Christian entertainment to six million tourists. Light-hearted and ironic, HEAVEN ON EARTH takes a behind the scenes look at this mythical American town. We meet colourful figures and see the spectacular resurrection of Jesus in the musical THE PROMISE. This is a film about God, country, and country music.

### **250-WORD SYNOPSIS**

Branson, Missouri. Some call it the new Nashville or the Las Vegas of the Bible Belt. Over the past ten years, nearly 40 theatres have shot out of the ground in this once sleepy Ozark Mountain town of fewer than 4000 inhabitants. Here in America's heartland, country legends and television and stage stars from yesteryear have reincarnated themselves and offer up good ol'patriotic, Christian entertainment to six million tourists.

HEAVEN ON EARTH follows filmmaker Rick Minnich's quest to find the perfect America which Branson promises to be. Seeped in nostalgia, and wallowing in stars, stripes and neon lights, Branson is populated by such colourful figures as USO pin-up girl Jennifer Wilson, country music star Barbara Fairchild, boy wonder Matthew Matney, and of course, Jesus Christ himself in the bombastic musical "The Promise". Mixing show numbers, interviews, and behind the scenes shots, the film weaves a dense portrait of the making of the American myth. The film climaxes with the largest Veteran's Day celebration in the United States, including a rare, chilling interview with General Paul Tibbets, pilot of Enola Gay, in which he reflects upon his dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

Still only a small dot on the map, Branson now offers ore theatre seats than Las Vegas and Broadway combined, and has established itself as the second most popular drive-to holiday destination in the United States.

## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

*Heaven On Earth* is a personal documentary about my quest for the perfect America. After nearly ten years in Berlin, I have begun toying with the idea of returning to the United States. Until now, I haven't known where to go. My chance encounter with Branson (my mother moved there in 1996) left me with ambivalent feelings about the U.S., and the image my homeland presents of itself. The mythical America I found in Branson struck me as both irresistible and horrifying – a nightmare vision of the fundamentalist, patriotic attitudes I fled a decade ago, but which continue to fascinate me even today. The culmination of my quest was clearly my interview with General Paul Tibbets, pilot of the Enola Gay. His hair-raising account of dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, and how he "did the right thing," was for me the ultimate tale of heroism which Branson likes to hold high -- a kind of heroism I want no part of.

*Heaven On Earth* is my attempt to convey in an entertaining, ironic, yet disturbing manner my ambivalence, fascination and repulsion at the country where I spent the first twenty years of my life. In many ways, the patriotic fervor which has erupted throughout the United States following the terrorist attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup> has proven the fulfillment of the vision of America Branson propagates on stage and off. It is my hope that "Heaven on Earth" provokes audiences to think twice about what it means to be an American, and not simply wave the flag because everyone else is.

*Rick Minnich*

Berlin, 2001

## **CREW**

Writer/Director	<b>Rick Minnich</b>
Director of Photography	<b>Eeva Fleig</b>
Sound Recordist	<b>Dietrich Körner</b>
Editors	<b>Robert Schneider, Xina Graff</b>
Music	<b>Antonin Dvorak, Jennifer Wilson, Matthew Matney, Barbara Fairchild, Randy Brooks</b>
Executive Producer	<b>Olaf Jacobs</b>
Production	<b>Hoferichter &amp; Jacobs GmbH (Berlin/Leipzig) and Hochschule für Film &amp; Fernsehen „Konrad Wolf“</b>

## **PRODUCTION FACTS**

Original title	<b>Heaven on Earth</b>
Year of completion	<b>2001</b>
Country of production	<b>Germany</b>
Shooting format	<b>Super 16, colour</b>
Sound	<b>Dolby SR</b>
Sprache	<b>English with German or French subtitles</b>
Length	<b>52 min</b>
Shooting location	<b>Branson, Missouri (USA)</b>
Shooting period	<b>November 4-27, 1998</b>

## **EXTENDED BIO-/FILMOGRAPHY OF DIRECTOR RICK MINNICH**

14.6.1968	Born in Pomona, California
1988-90	Internship at film distributor Kino International, NYC
1990	B.A. in English literature from Columbia University, New York Internship as camera assistant for Latvian TV in Riga
1991-1992	Graduate studies in the School of Film and Video at CalArts
1995-2001	Graduate Studies in the directing program at the Hochschule für Film & Fernsehen "Konrad Wolf," Potsdam-Babelsberg, Germany
1993-97	Free-lancer responsible for making documentary trailers for DW TV in Berlin
since 1997	Freelance film and translation work
2002	Director of the SAT.1 series "So gesehen" (German TV) 30 x 3'
2003	Participant in the Berlinale Talent Campus

### **Selected Filmography**

1993	<b>DELPHI 1830</b> , experimental film, 16mm, color, 3'
1994	<b>Next Time Everything Will Be Better</b> ("Beim nächsten mal wird alles besser") fiction, 16mm, col., 9'
1993-96	<b>The Book of Lenins</b> , doc., 16mm, col. & b/w, 24'
1996	<b>Untitled Picture</b> ("Bild ohne Titel"), fiction, 35mm, Dolby SR, color, 4', ARTE/HFF
1997	<b>Good Guys &amp; Bad Guys</b> , doc., S16, Dolby SR, col., 73', HFF/ORB
2001	<b>Heaven on Earth</b> , doc., S16, Dolby SR, col., 52', HFF/Hoferichter / Jacobs GmbH

### **Awards, Grants, Residencies (selection)**

1992	German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) grant
1995	Writer's grant, Schloss Wiepersdorf, Germany; Best of Festival Award, Short Attention Span Film and Video Festival, San Francisco
1997	Honorable mention, Leipzig Documentary Film Festival; Rector's Prize, HFF "Konrad Wolf"
1998	Jury prize, Cinarchea Int'l Archeology Film Festival Kiel, Germany; Bronze Plaque, Columbus Int'l Film & Video Festival (The Chris Awards)
2001	Babelsberg Media Prize–Best Graduation Film (doc.) in Germany Hans W. Geissendoerfer Young Talent Award (Ger.) Bronze Plaque, Columbus Int'l Film & Video Festival (The Chris Awards) Audience Award, Williamsburg Brooklyn Film Festival Special Prize of the European Film Schools Jury, SEE Docs in Dubrovnik Nominated for the IDA/David L. Wolper Student Doc. Achievement Award Nominated for the German Cinematography Award
2002	FIPA d'Or (1 <sup>st</sup> prize), FIPA TV Festival, Biarritz, France

## **AWARDS**

- May 2001            **Audience award for best documentary**, Williamsburg Brooklyn Film Festival, New York
- German Cinematography Award** nominee
- June 2001           **Special Prize of the European Film School Jury**, SEE Docs in Dubrovnik
- July 2001            **Babelsberg Media Prize** - Best German Graduation Film
- Oct. 2001           **Bronze Plaque, The Chris Awards**, Columbus Int'l Film Festival USA
- Dec. 2001           **IDA/David L. Wolper Student Documentary Achievement Award** nominee
- Jan. 2002           **FIPA d'or (first prize) and honorable mention from the youth jury**, International Festival of Audiovisual Programs (FIPA) Biarritz, France

## **FESTIVALS**

- April 2001           **Sehsüchte International Student Film Festival**, Potsdam
- May 2001            **Williamsburg Brooklyn Film Festival**, New York
- June 2001           **Art Film Festival, Trencianske Teplice**, Slovakei
- SEE Docs in Dubrovnik**, Croatia
- Oct. 2001           **Denver International Film Festival**
- International Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated Film**
- The Festival of Festivals**, Palm Springs, USA
- Nov. 2001           **Competition „First Appearances“ Amsterdam IDFA**
- Sleepwalkers Student Film Festival 2001**, Tallinn
- Sept. 2002           **St. Petersburg Filmfestival "Message to Man"**
- International Filmfestival Split**
- Oct. 2002           **Independent Filmfest of Osnabrück**
- Nov. 2002           **Kassel Documentary Film and Video Festival**
- Sept. 2006           **Werkleitz Biennale, Halle**

## CONTACT

### Production



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