



WEYDEMANN BROS.

# When Paul came over the Sea

## Journal of an Encounter

A feature documentary by Jakob Preuss



*An unusual friendship grows in the context of the ongoing European debates on migration.*

PRESSBOOK

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Original title: **Als Paul über das Meer kam – Tagebuch einer Begegnung**

English title: **When Paul came over the Sea – Journal of an Encounter**

Written & directed by: **Jakob Preuss**

Cinematography: **Juan Sarmiento G.**

Editing: **Franziska von Berlepsch, Karoline Vielemeyer**

Produced by: **Jakob D. Weydemann, Jonas Weydemann**

Commissioning editors: **Diana Kraus, Milena Seyberth**

A **Weydemann Bros. GmbH** production

in co-production with **ZDF – Das kleine Fernsehspiel.**

The film was supported by **Film- und Medienstiftung NRW** and **Nordmedia.**

Length: **97 Min.**

Country of production: **Deutschland**

Year of production: **2017**

Languages: **German, French, Spanish**

Subtitles: **German, English**



### *Short synopsis*

Paul has made his way from his home in Cameroon across the Sahara to the Moroccan coast where he now lives in a forest waiting for the right moment to cross the Mediterranean. This is where he meets Jakob, a filmmaker from Berlin, who is filming along Europe's borders. Soon afterwards, Paul manages to cross over to Spain on a rubber boat. He survives - but half of his companions die on this tragic 50 hour odyssey. Held for two months in a deportation centre, upon his release Paul meets Jakob again at a shelter for migrants in Southern Spain. When Paul decides to continue on to Germany, Jakob has to make a choice: will he become an active part of Paul's pursuit of a better life or remain a detached documentary filmmaker?



### *Press text*

Jakob Preuss' first feature documentary „The other Chelsea – A story from Donetsk“ won numerous awards, including the German First Steps Award and Grimme Award, as well as 'Best Documentary' at the Filmfestival Max-Ophüls-Preis 2011.

In his second feature documentary, „When Paul came over the Sea – Journal of an Encounter“, Jakob accompanies the tragic journey of Paul Nkamani, a migrant from Cameroon. In the context of the ongoing European debates on migration the film tells the story of an unusual friendship.

The world premiere of „When Paul came over the Sea – Journal of an Encounter“ takes place as part of the 38. Filmfestivals Max-Ophüls-Preis ‚Documentary Competition‘. Only a few days later the film celebrates its international premiere at the Filmfestival Rotterdam in the ‚Bright Future‘ section.



### *Long synopsis*

Paul is a migrant from Cameroon. He has made his way across the Sahara to the Moroccan coast where he now lives in a forest waiting for the right moment to cross the Mediterranean Sea. This is where he meets Jakob, a filmmaker from Berlin, who is researching a film about Europe's borders.

Soon afterwards, Paul manages to cross over to Spain on an inflatable rubber boat. He survives – but half of his companions die on this tragic 50 hour odyssey. Once in Spain, instead of getting psychological help, he is sent to an immigration detention centre on a prison island. It is only upon his release that Jakob and Paul meet again, at a Red Cross shelter in Granada. Because of the economic crisis in southern Europe Paul decides to

continue on to Germany, the former colonizing power in Cameroon and the country of his dreams.

To get to know another perspective as well, Jakob goes on „the other side“ and spends time with the Spanish Guardia Civil at the exclave Melilla, on a Portuguese patrol vessel on a Frontex mission in the Mediterranean and with the German federal police on a Schengen border. He meets the persons whose job it is to make the journey of people like Paul more difficult and he manages to get into surprisingly close and open conversations with the border guards. Thereby he questions the concept of who is an enemy and puts Paul’s journey into a larger context.

When Paul comes to Jakob’s homeland, Jakob has to decide: will he become an active part of Paul’s pursuit of a better life, or remain the detached filmmaker? In the end the film takes a twist that neither Paul nor Jakob could have expected when they first met in the forest in Morocco. The film tells the story of their unusual friendship; a friendship that grew in the politically problematic context of the ongoing European debates on migration.



*A commentary by director Jakob Preuss*

I began my research on the external borders of the EU back in 2011, quite some time before the term “migrant crisis” was coined by the European media. My working title at the time was “Europe’s Borderlands” and I met border guards and refugees in Greece, Turkey and Malta, visited a refugee camp in Tunisia, drove to the Polish-Ukrainian border and went to the FRONTEX headquarters in Warsaw. My focus was rather on the view from the inside, from a European perspective, somehow a border guard’s perspective.

But when I met Paul in 2014 – a migrant from Cameroon – in the forests near the city of Nador in Morocco I changed my plans. Paul’s story became the core of the film – watch it and you will understand why. I still included a few excursions to “the other side”, the border guard side, since I had spent so much time in this environment and felt it was an important piece of the puzzle of migration and border policy. So you find scenes with the Spanish police at the fence in Melilla, with naval officers on a Portuguese patrol boat on the Mediterranean in the framework of a Frontex mission, and two young German police officers at a Schengen border.



From the moment that I became an indirect witness to Paul’s dramatic journey across the Mediterranean, I knew that the core of my film would be his journey through Africa and Europe which took him more than four years to complete. Over the course of the shooting on his travels through Europe I felt increasingly uncomfortable with my detached role as the “observing filmmaker”, and by the time Paul arrived in Germany a bond had undoubtedly formed between him and me; a bond that has outlasted the film.



At film school they teach you to maintain a distance from your protagonists – maybe it’s a stroke of luck that I never studied at one. Even if every story is unique, my encounter with Paul stands as an example of many other stories that people are experiencing in these days of substantial refugee movements. My encounter with Paul has been both very personal and political, and throughout our journey together many of my convictions were put to the test. For me the crucial question, over and above the current debates on refugees, remains the one I highlighted by the quotations featured at the beginning of the film: should there be a universal right to migration?



## *Biography – director*

**Jakob Preuss**, born 1975 in Berlin, is a documentary filmmaker. His films, shot in Iran, Bosnia, and Ukraine, have been broadcast in over ten countries and screened at numerous festivals. His last film “The Other Chelsea” won the First Steps-Award and the Grimme-Award in Germany. In addition to his activities as a filmmaker, Jakob Preuss is also engaged in political work.



He coordinated the writing of the electoral manifesto of Bündnis 90/ The Greens for the 2014 European Elections and has worked as an adviser on European Affairs for the Greens’ parliamentary group at the German Bundestag. In the past he has also worked as desk-officer for the Commonwealth of Independent States at the NGO “Reporters without Borders” and participated in numerous Election Observation Missions mostly in the former Soviet Union and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

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In 2014 Jakob co-founded the initiative GehtAuchAnders ([www.geht-auch-anders.de](http://www.geht-auch-anders.de)), whereby artists engage with political issues and take a stance. Since 2014, he is regularly invited to speak as a migration expert, direct result of the four years of research conducted for “When Paul came over the Sea”.

Jakob Preuss holds a law degree from the Sorbonne in Paris and a Masters degree from the College of Europe, Natolin.

## *Filmography (feature length)*

2010 „The Other Chelsea“, 89min, premiered at IDFA 2010  
Max-Ophüls-Award 2011 (Best Documentary), First Steps Award, Grimme-Award 2012

2017 “When Paul came over the Sea”, 97min  
National Premiere at Max-Ophüls-Preis, Saarbrücken & International Premiere at IFFR

## Profile – Productionscompany

**Weydemann Bros.** produces films for the national and international market. We have a vision of a narrative cinema that is both entertaining and political. For us film is always a critical look at the world and the times we live in. With our films we do not only hope to get people laughing and crying, but to inform them and inspire them to contemplate.



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Films by Weydemann Bros. have been selected as official entry to the Oscars Best Foreign Language Film, won numerous prizes like the Rome IFF CinemaXXI Award, Guadalajara Best First Feature Award, IDFA Best First Appearance Award, Robert Bosch Co-Production Prize and the German FIRS STEPS Award and screened successfully at international film festivals as Berlinale, San Sebastian, Sarajevo, Moscow, Shanghai, Rome, Guadalajara, Rotterdam, Bafici, Los Angeles, Sofia, Thessaloniki, IDFA and many more.

We are members of the German Producer's Association (VDFP), the Film and Media Association NRW, the German-French Film Academy and the European Film Academy.

## Filmography (selection)

- 2016 "Anishoara" - Fiction/Drama, 106 min., director Ana-Felicia Scutelnicu  
*\*San Sebastian 'New Direct@rs' 2016, Guadalajara 2017, Warsaw IFF 2016*  
*\*winner WEMW Best Pitch 2013*
- 2016 „Sex & Crime“ - Fiction/Comedy, 82 min., director Paul Florian Müller  
*\*starring Wotan Wilke Möhring, Fabian Busch, Pheline Roggan, Claudia Eisinger*  
*\*Max-Ophüls-Preis 2016, nominated for New Faces Award 2016*
- 2015 "Vorstadtkrocker" (Bikers of the burbs) - Fiction/Comedy, 90 min., director Martina Plura  
*\*TV comedy for German broadcaster NDR, starring Fabian Busch, Aljoscha Stadelmann*  
*\*winner Best TV Feature Biberach 2015, \*Filmfest Hamburg 2015, FF Lünen 2015, etc.*
- 2014 "Drifter" - Documentary, 72 min., director Gábor Hörcher  
*\*winner IDFA Best Feature First Appearance Competition 2014, \*winner goEast Festival*  
*Special Mention of the Jury 2015, \*winner Fünf-Seen-Festival Best Documentary, etc.*
- 2014 „Los Ángeles“ - Fiction/Drama, 97 min., director Damian John Harper  
*\*Berlinale 2014, nominated for Best First Feature, \*winner FIRS STEPS Award 2014,*  
*\*winner Best First Feature Film Guadalajara IFF 2014, \*winner LA Muse Award, etc.*
- 2013 „Silencio en la tierra de los sueños“ – Fiction/Essay, 94 min., director Tito Molina  
*\*Ecuadorian entry for Best Foreign Language Oscar 2015, \*winner Special Mention*  
*Guadalajara IFF 2014, \*Torino IFF 2013, BAFICI 2014, Hamburg FF 2014, etc.*

## *Biography of the producers*

**Jonas Weydemann** was born in Hamburg, Germany. He studies film production at the German Film and Television Academy (dffb) in Berlin and is alumni of: EAVE Producer's Workshop, ep2c, Cannes Producers Network, Berlinale Talent Campus, Rotterdam Lab, IDFAcademy.

Jonas is winner of the Robert Bosch Co-Production Prize and programming director at the short film festival Wendland Shorts. He is EAVE's national coordinator for Germany and member of the European Film Academy.



**Jakob D. Weydemann** was born in Hamburg, Germany, and lived in Milan, Italy, where he carried out his civilian service. He studied political sciences in Germany and film directing at the CECC in Barcelona, Spain. He is alumni of: Reykjavík TalentLab, Sarajevo Young Producers Programme, Documentary Campus Masterschool, ESoDoc and the International Film School (ifs) in Cologne 'International Producing Class'.

Jakob is winner of the Gerd-Ruge-Grant for documentary filmmakers and member of the European Film Academy.



Jakob and Jonas founded the production company Weydemann Bros. in the end of 2008 to produce short films during their film studies. Today they are acting together as managing directors of Weydemann Bros..



*Contact – Production Company*

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