

# Toronto Hidden Gem: 'Ever After' Is a Feminist Take on a Zombie Apocalypse

4:15 AM PDT 9/8/2018 by Scott Roxborough



Courtesy of TIFF

Gro Swantje Kohlhof is pursued by the undead after her train breaks down in the German countryside.

**In addition to putting a new spin on a well-worn genre, the filmmakers behind the TIFF entry broke new ground with an all-woman creative team.**

A few years ago, Olivia Vieweg was on the train, halfway between her home in Weimar in eastern Germany and the city of Jena, when the train broke down.

“I was sitting there, looking out the window at the open green landscape, with nothing around. And I thought: What if a huge horde of zombies come out of the forest and attack the train?”

That image — with its combination of the bucolic and the horrific — was the start of *Endzeit*, a graphic novel Vieweg published in 2012 about a zombie invasion and two women — the fragile, emotional Vivi and the hardened soldier Eva — struggling to survive. Thinking the story had potential as a movie, Vieweg penned a screenplay version. That film, directed by Carolina Hellsgard, premiered in Toronto's Discovery section Friday under the English title *Ever After*. Picture Tree International is handling worldwide sales.

The action kicks off two years after a viral zombie epidemic has left the German cities of Weimar and Jena the sole uninfected places on Earth. Maja Lehrer and Gro Swantje Kohlhof play Eva and Vivi, young women who flee their brutal existence in Weimar and hop on an automated train for what they hope is the safe haven of Jena. But on the way, in the middle of the Thuringian Forest, the train breaks down. And the zombies attack.

So far, so expected. But what follows owes as much to the Brothers Grimm as to zombie film pioneer George A. Romero. And despite the violence and gore, *Ever After* does not view the zombie apocalypse as entirely a bad thing. Mother Earth, it seems, has served humanity an eviction order, and a strange new evolution is taking place.

"I think a lot of us are stressed about the environment, about how we exist in the world, and the zombies also embody this," says Hellsgard.

Another thing that sets *Ever After* apart: Every major position in the film — from producer, director and screenwriter to cinematographer, set designer and the leads — was filled by a woman.

"It was the producers' idea, not mine, but we thought it was a great opportunity," says Vieweg. "It's so odd that while film schools graduate the same number of female directors, screenwriters and cinematographers [as men], so few women get work."

The all-female approach particularly suits the story, which takes place, literally, in no-man's land and has at its core the evolving relationship between Vivi and Eva.

"I don't really think of it as a feminist film, but there are a lot of times we slow down the action just to watch them talk," says Hellsgard. "I guess it's feminist in that it's still rare to see two women on film talk about their lives, hopes and fears — and not about guys."

SOURCE:

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/filmmakers-carolina-hellsgard-olivia-vieweg-talk-ever-2018-tiff-1141172>