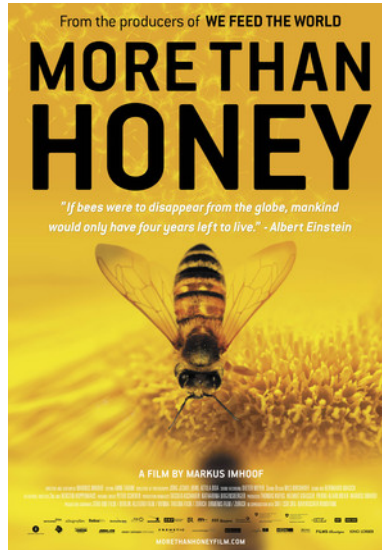


KINO LORBER

MORE THAN HONEY

A film by MARKUS IMHOOF



A KINO LORBER RELEASE
of a production by

Thelma Film and Ormenis Film, zero one film, allegro film

In co-production with

SRF Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen / SSR SRG, Bayerischer Rundfunk, ORF

Year: 2012

Running time: 91 minutes

German and English with English Subtitles

Dolby Digital – 1:1,85

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Credits:

Director / Script	Markus Imhoof
Editor	Anne Fabini
Director of Photography	Jörg Jeshel
Macro camera	Attila Boa
Sound	Dieter Meyer
Sound design	Nils Kirchhoff
Sound mix	Bernhard Maisch
Music	Peter Scherer
Producers	Pierre-Alain Meier
	Markus Imhoof
	Thomas Kufus
	Helmut Grasser

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ABOUT THE FILM:

Over the past fifteen years, numerous colonies of bees have been decimated throughout the world, but the causes of this disaster remain unknown. Depending on the world region, 50% to 90% of all local bees have disappeared, and this epidemic is still spreading from beehive to beehive – all over the planet. Everywhere, the same scenario is repeated: billions of bees leave their hives, never to return. No bodies are found in the immediate surroundings, and no visible predators can be located.

In the US, the latest estimates suggest that a total of 1.5 million (out of 2.4 million total beehives) have disappeared across 27 states. In Germany, according to the national beekeepers association, one fourth of all colonies have been destroyed, with losses reaching up to 80% on some farms. The same phenomenon has been observed in Switzerland, France, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Austria, Poland and England, where this syndrome has been nicknamed “the Mary Celeste Phenomenon”, after a ship whose crew vanished in 1872.

Scientists have found a name for the phenomenon that matches its scale, “colony collapse disorder,” and they have good reason to be worried: 80% of plant species require bees to be pollinated. Without bees, there is no pollination, and fruits and vegetables could disappear from the face of the Earth. *Apis mellifera* (the honey bee), which appeared on Earth 60 million years before man and is as indispensable to the economy as it is to man’s survival.

Should we blame pesticides or even medication used to combat them? Maybe look at parasites such as varroa mites? New viruses? Travelling stress? The multiplication of electromagnetic waves disturbing the magnetite nanoparticles found in the bees’ abdomen? So far, it looks like a combination of all these agents has been responsible for the weakening of the bees’ immune defenses.

Fifty years ago, Einstein had already insisted on the symbiotic relationship binding these pollen gatherers to mankind: **“If bees were to disappear from the globe,” he predicted, “mankind would only have four years left to live.”**

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THE PROTAGONISTS

My goal wasn't to shoot a global film that would go at top speed from one place to the next, but rather to take the time to get to know and understand the different protagonists – most of them, beekeepers. All of them expressed their personal opinions. Even if they inspire or suggest a number of broader themes, we mainly sought to get to know them as human beings. We observed their daily work, took their existential anguish quite seriously and suffered with them when yet another bee colony disappeared or had to be destroyed.

Markus Imhoof, Director

FRED JAGGI



Fred Jaggi sets great stores by tradition. For him, it is an ingredient in his recipe for success. This implies that he exclusively keeps bees of a “local black breed”, known for swarming a lot, but also for producing more honey. “Their place is here, in the mountains, and it has to remain so.” The yellow bees (belonging to a beekeeper in the nearby valley) that sometimes wander over to his place are a great source of annoyance for him. One of his queens was just fecundated

by a yellow drone and has been laying eggs bearing little half-breeds. With assured gestures, Jaggi seizes the treacherous queen, scolds her for her infidelity, and then severs her head by pressing his thumbnail on the edge of the honeycomb.

JOHN MILLER



Enormous machines move like great robot insects between the rows of almond trees planted at a precise distance from one another – they shake the trees to make its fruits fall. John Miller stands at one end of the orchard, observing the harvest. “Blowers” suck up the almonds on the ground and the seasonal workers sort them on a conveyer belt. Miller is satisfied. “These almond trees were pollinated by bees that came from Australia, the almonds grew in the US and now they’re sent to Spain where they’ll be peeled and grilled. Then they’ll take a plane to Japan, where they’ll be used for the

preparation of a traditional dessert. It will have taken four continents to make a cake. A gigantic collective performance, if you will.” Yet, all the self-derision in the world won’t fool anyone: John Miller has doubts. He is one of the wheels in a mechanism that generates billions of dollars of income, but it is obvious that this unlimited growth cannot be maintained indefinitely. Miller can’t jump ship; the agricultural economy needs bees, and he needs this job.

HEIDRUN AND LIANE SINGER



Heidrun Singer is wearing magnifying glasses and, armed with a minuscule spoon, she scoops the young larvae out of the honeycomb. “We’re giving nature a little nudge,” she said, laughing. We can dupe the bees and ‘reprogram’ them, a bit like a hacker! In principle, these larvae are destined to become ordinary workers, but once they’ve been placed in an artificial royal cell, the workers start

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feeding them royal jelly and thus turn them into queens!” Heidrun’s family has been in beekeeping for three generations, and her daughter is already learning the ropes of the trade. “My breed of bees results from centuries of rigorous breeding: they aren’t aggressive and produce a lot of honey. Which means that my queens are much sought-after throughout the world.”

PROFESSOR RANDOLF MENZEL



A neurobiologist from the Freie Universität of Berlin, professor Menzel is “the bee whisperer”. “A bee can’t survive on its own. This is why we speak of ‘super-organism’.” This means that we consider a bee colony as one single large animal, whose workers constitute the ‘body’, while the drone and queen are the male and female ‘sexual organs’. A colony consists of approximately 50,000 bees, and each of them has 950,000 nervous cells. Connecting them adroitly, they have at their disposal the calculation power of nearly 500 billion nervous cells! A human brain has a mere 100 billion....

The deeper professor Menzel takes us into the extraordinary organism constituted by the swarm, the more remote and unreal human life appears.

FRED TERRY



In Arizona, Fred Terry places the killer bees that he’s just captured in a separate structure, but instead of killing them, he gives them sugared water. The bees drink avidly. “These are not lapdogs like the “normal” domestic bees; these are wolves. That’s why they don’t get sick. They are perfect honeybees too. You just need to avoid provoking them...”

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DIRECTOR STATEMENT – By Markus Imhoof, director and producer

My intention with MORE THAN HONEY was to allow the spectator to understand the drama at play and also, highlight the pressures of the global economy on these small insects. Their immense, hairy eyes, as well as their unique carapace, make them look like fascinating creatures that have come from another planet – on the big screen, they appear as large as (and often larger than) men.

In the struggle between bees and the neo-liberal market economy, bee brokers push beekeepers, who respond by pushing bees, to further increase their performance. Bees have become chain workers, a machine expected to function upon the simple push of a button.

In that sense, (and assuming the risk of sounding presumptuous), I could almost say that MORE THAN HONEY is a bit like Chaplin's "Modern Times" – as told by bees.

– Markus Imhoof

Markus Imhoof was born in 1941 in Winterthur. He studied Literature, Art and History at the University of Zurich. He worked as assistant to Leopold Lindtberg at the Zurich Schauspielhaus.

Filmography (selection) :

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| 1980 | DAS BOOT IST VOLL
with Tina Engel, Curt Bois, Mathias Gnädinger |
| 1986 | DIE REISE
with Markus Boysen, Corinna Kirchhoff, Will Quadflieg |
| 1990 | DER BERG
with Susanne Lothar, Mathias Gnädinger, Peter Simonischek |
| 1991 | LES PETITES ILLUSIONS |
| 1996 | LES RAISONS DU COEUR
with Elodie Bouchez, Laurent Grévill, Sylvie Testud, Bruno Todeschini |
| 2012 | MORE THAN HONEY |

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PIERRE-ALAIN MEIER - producer

Markus Imhoof first started developing this project with his son-in-law Boris Baer, and his daughter Barbara Imhoof – both passionate bee researchers with PhDs in Biology. Currently based in Australia, they study the differences between the immune systems of wild and domestic bees.

He then managed to convince the German producer Thomas Kufus, of Zero One Film, to join in the project. Thomas Kufus placed his whole structure (his company based in Berlin includes fifteen or so employees, a number of whom were associated quite directly with project development, location, dramaturgy, etc.) at the disposal of the Swiss director. Later on, Helmut Grasser, Allegro Film's Austrian producer, also joined the project.

In Switzerland, I made Markus a proposal, as for our previous production (Fire in Paradise, 1996), to share 50/50 the production risks, as well as the rights on the revenues.

Before we even started filming, we had to invent 'made to measure' tools to film the bees the way actors are filmed in fiction films: with the ability to accompany their actions in space with tracking shots, crane movements and panoramic views so as to give them the stature of true protagonists. A fourth of the film was thus filmed in a studio, but a studio located in nature.

Given this fact, the film was relatively costly, nearly 3 million francs. But this is mainly due to the fact that Markus is proposing a different film, shot on four continents, a shoot that took over a year, with material that was sometimes sophisticated, that we were able to convince both the Schweizer Radio Fernsehen (and RTS & RSI) in Switzerland and the Bayerische Rundfunk in Germany, as well as the ORF in Austria to take an interest in our project.

Pierre-Alain Meier

Within Thelma Film, which was founded in 1988 in Zürich, and Prince Film, taken over in 2006 in Geneva, **Pierre-Alain Meier** has produced and co-produced thirty or so fiction feature films and documentaries for the cinema in several countries, notably in Argentina (*Social Genocide* by Fernando Solanas, 2004 Berlin Film Festival, Honorary Golden Bear), Cambodia (*The Rice People* by Rithy Panh, 1994 Cannes Film Festival, in competition), India (*Fire in Paradise* by Markus Imhoof), Senegal (*Hyenas* by Djibril Diop Mambéty, 1992 Cannes Film Festival, in competition), Burkina Faso (*Yaaba* by Idrissa Ouedraogo, 1989 Cannes Film Festival, Directors' Fortnight, opening film), Italy (*Les Hommes du Port* by Alain Tanner, 1995 Cinéma du Réel Festival, opening film), Algeria (*Bab el Oued City* by Merzak Allouache, 1995 Cannes Film Festival, official selection), Switzerland (*Charmants Voisins* by Claudio Tonetti, 1999; *Thelma* by Pierre-Alain Meier, 2001; *A Parting Shot* by Jeanne Waltz, 2007 Berlin Film Festival, Forum), and more recently in Palestine (*Salt of this Sea* by Annemarie Jacir, 2008 Cannes Film Festival, official selection), Serbia (*Ordinary People* by Vladimir Perisic, 2009 Cannes Film Festival, official selection), France (*A Burning Hot Summer* by Philippe Garrel, with Monica Bellucci, 2011 Venice Film Festival, in competition), and last but not least *More than Honey* by Markus Imhoof, was filmed in 2011 and 2012 in China, the USA, Australia and various European countries. Also, currently in post-production, *Win Win* by Claudio Tonetti, filmed in 2012 in the Swiss Canton of Jura and China.