

Copros the key for Gebrüder Beetz

Not even halfway through the year, it's clear that 2010 is one for the books for Gebrüder Beetz Filmproduktion Berlin GmbH. For example, the German prodco brought three of its feature docs to the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival in the spring, and two of those - *Autumn Gold* and *My Life With Carlos* - made the Top 10 audience favorites list, while the former was given the Filmmaker Award, which was voted on by attending filmmakers. Currently the prodco is working on another 11 documentary coproductions.

Executive director Christian Beetz (pictured) points to two factors as the reasons for the German documentary prodco's success. "On the one hand, from the very beginning we decided to work internationally," says Beetz, referring to his brother Reinhardt Beetz who is co-executive director at the company, and their mandate to work almost exclusively on coproductions. "On the other hand, our company has a special spirit. Even if we have four offices in different parts of Germany, it is a company run by our family. We are not only interested in making money, we want to tell good stories in high quality - and in a good working atmosphere."

The trio of films that came to Hot Docs in the spring included *My Life With Carlos*, which follows director German Berger Hertz as he searches for the body of his father who was killed by Pinochet's "Death Convoy" in 1973; *I Bought a Rainforest* which also follows its director, Jacob Andren, as he takes a more lighthearted personal journey in search of a rainforest he and his classmate "bought" through donations 20 years ago and *Autumn Gold*, which tells the amusing and heartwarming story of five athletes in their eighties as they prepare for a track and field championship competition. Another one of the company's documentaries, *The Most Secret Place on Earth - The CIA's Covert War in Laos*, was also nominated in the Political Documentaries category for Banff's 2010 Rockie Awards.

Autumn Gold, which was a coproduction with Austria, was picked up by Films Transit during Hot Docs and the company is currently working on a U.S. release for the film, which will be released theatrically in Germany and Austria this year. *My Life with Carlos*, a copro with Spain and Chile, is also debuting theatrically in Germany this year, while the company has not yet found a U.S. distributor for *The Most Secret Place on Earth*. "Every year it is getting harder and harder to sell films with political or social content," notes Beetz. "The European market is more and more into light entertaining stories and talk shows." Currently Gebrüder Beetz's regular copro partners are Scandinavia, The Netherlands and Austria, while they have also worked with Ireland and Spain, among others.

Beetz notes the company is looking beyond theatrical to new media. Gebrüder Beetz also opened an interactive department this year. "This strategy we want to follow in the next years [is] to get a younger [audience] interested in our subjects," says Beetz.

Lindsay Gibb