



## School of Life

Filmmuseum Potsdam 15.–19. Mai 2006

Pädagogisches Dossier

### Mouth to Mouth

UK/Germany 2004

Director: Alison Murray, Producers: Jody Tossell, Anne Beresford, Running Time: 102 minutes

Won Grand Chameleon Award at Brooklyn International Film Festival 2005

„A gripping and painful story of mind control and forced conformity.“ (National Post)

„...one of those films that crawls under your skin and doesn't let go.“ (Kino Magazine)

### SYNOPSIS

„We don't believe in Mainstream Bullshit. TV. Parents. Junk Food. Consumer Fascism. Fashion. Possession and Materialism. Escaping through drugs that the state wants us to take to keep us numb.

We do believe in Freedom. Hard work. Dedication. Intellectual self-defense. Communal living.“

Sherry is searching for a place to belong where she can still be herself. She thinks she has found this in SPARK - Street People Armed with Radical Knowledge. She takes off in SPARK's camper van as they cross Europe recruiting a membership of the down and out. They arrive at a disused vineyard in Portugal that promises to be their paradise. Harry, the group's leader, begins harvesting both ripe grapes and ready minds through his own methods of hard work and punishment. The stakes are high within this volatile group. Two deaths ensure the submission of most of the recruits but not Sherry, or the apparently craziest street person, Mad Ax. Mad Ax is the least taken in by SPARK's rhetoric.

He is also in love with Sherry. Into this Shangri-la comes Sherry's mother. Failing to persuade Sherry to leave, she decides that SPARK has more to offer than single parenthood in London. Disillusionment complete, Sherry stands up for what she knows is right, denounces SPARK, and escapes with Mad Ax into the unknown.

### INHALTSANGABE (deutsch)

Sherry ist jung, unangepasst und auf der Suche nach einem Leben jenseits gesellschaftlicher Konventionen, das ihr trotzdem Halt und Geborgenheit bietet. Dieses Leben meint sie bei SPARK - Street People Armed with Radical Knowledge, gefunden zu haben, einer Gruppe junger Aussteiger, die unabhängig, anders und „besser“ leben wollen. Was zunächst nach Freiheit, Freundschaft und Abenteuer aussieht, entpuppt sich spätestens auf einem paradiesischen Weingut in Portugal als eine Gesellschaft im Kleinen, in der sich genau die Unterdrückungsmechanismen wiederholen, gegen die sie behauptet anzukämpfen. Auch Sherrys Mutter findet eine neue Heimat bei den Leuten von SPARK, wenngleich dies bedeutet, dass sie sich manchmal gegen ihre eigene Tochter stellen muss. All das wird Sherry allmählich zuviel und nachdem auch noch ihre beste Freundin Nancy stirbt, verlässt sie mit Ex-Junkie Mad Ax die Gruppe um „Soulsucker“ Harry und macht sich auf die Suche nach ihrem eigenen Weg.

### CAST

Harry	Eric Thal
Sherry	Ellen Page
Laurie (Mother)	Natasha Wightman
Tiger	August Diehl
Mad Ax	Maxwell McCabe-Lokos
Nancy	Beatrice Brown
Dog	Diana Greenwood
Blade	Jefferson Guzman
Manson	Elliot McCabe
Red	Jim Sturgess

## THEMEN

Familie, gesellschaftlicher Widerstand, Gruppenzwang, Loyalität, Gewalt, Sexualität, Geschlechterrollen, Mutter-Tochter-Konflikt, Freiheit, Manipulation

Mouth to Mouth zeigt den Widerspruch zwischen utopischer, freiheitlicher Rebellion und dem Entstehen und Missbrauch von Macht in sogenannten „alternativen“ Gruppen. Alison Murrey zeigt, wie der Wunsch nach Zugehörigkeit zu einer Gruppe Menschen dazu bringen kann, Einschränkungen der persönlichen Freiheit und Ausbrüche sinnloser Gewalt hinzunehmen und mitzutragen. Das Ausbrechen aus der Gesellschaft führt die Teenager im Film in eine Gesellschaft im Kleinen, die genau die Mechanismen der Gesellschaft reproduziert, aus der sie entflohen oder ausgestoßen worden sind. Der Film bietet Diskussionsstoff für eine ganze Reihe von Themen: der Möglichkeit gesellschaftlichen Widerstands, der Beziehung zwischen Eltern und Kindern oder zwischen Gruppenzwang und persönlicher Freiheit und dem Spannungsfeld von Sexualität und unsichtbaren Machtstrukturen.

## STILISTISCHE MITTEL

Die Reise, auf die sich Sherry im Film begibt, ist auch eine visuelle Reise - aus dem grauen, kühlen und engen England bewegt sie sich immer weiter in Richtung Süden, bis sie schließlich im scheinbaren Paradies ankommt: im heißen, bunten und weitläufigen Portugal. Parallel zur Handlung werden auch die Bilder und Farben immer intensiver und spannungsgeladener, bis es am Ende in der größten Hitze zum Eklat kommt.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I left home when I was 15.

The energy and vitality of youth is paramount to the film. Like me at that age, the film's heroine Sherry is searching for a place to belong where she can still be herself. She thinks she has found this in SPARK - Street People Armed with Radical Knowledge. I tried to create an organisation I would want to join, SPARK was the result. Harry, SPARK's leader, says "Most organisations aimed at helping the homeless want you to fit back in, and contribute to society, like you should get off the street, into a house, into a 9 to 5 job ... but maybe there's another way." To me, SPARK's appeal lies in offering those who have fallen through the cracks a chance to pull their lives together, without having to become cogs in the wheel.

The down and out characters SPARK recruit are clever, witty and sardonic. I tried to show the tenacity of these people on the margins in an irreverent, humourous way.

Sherry leaves the group after compromising what she believes in order to find acceptance. At the end of the film she stands up for what she knows is right, aware that she will go out into the world totally alone, but with her freedom and individuality intact. Others joined the group easily prepared to give their power away, in exchange for the security and sense of righteousness that being part of a group can bring. George Orwell's Animal Farm was a classic inspiration for exploring this meeting point of politics and human nature.

Although SPARK helps some of its members, my own disillusionment with 'alternative lifestyles' is reflected in the story. In my teens I lived for several years in squatted buildings in London, teetering on the edge of homelessness. I met and was inspired by political activists who wanted to change the world. The let down was hard when I discovered so many of these people to be armchair anarchists whose daily lives were little different to anyone else's. The utopia we were meant to be building never materialised. But at least there was a good party along the way.

I intend the film to look to the audience as the world looks to Sherry as she experiences it. As she travels from Northern to Southern Europe the dramatically changing landscape illustrates the mood. I used my background in dance and physical theatre to express the deeper emotions of the characters. With MOUTH TO MOUTH I was able to create choreography where the audience knows exactly why the characters move as they do, because they have spent the previous thirty minutes getting to know the characters' stories. The choreography flows naturally from the characters' interactions and does not reflect conventional dance styles. I tried to work with the unique physicality of the individual actors to create something believable yet heightened.

## FILMOGRAPHY ALISON MURRAY

2004 Mouth to Mouth

2003 Aeroplane Man - Channel 4

2000 Train on the Brain - Channel 4/TVOntario

2000 Jewess Tattooes - Arts Council of England

1998 Bare Feet and Crazy Legs - Arts Council of England

1997 Cat Food Woman - Lux Cinema

1997 Teenage Rampage - Channel 4

1997 Bloody Mess - BBC

1995 Bad Mood Woman - Channel 4

1995 Horseplay - BBC

1995 Sleazeburger - Royal College of Art

1994 Pantyhead - Royal College of Art/Channel 4

1993 Wank Stallions - Brighton University

1992 Kissy Suzuki Suck - Brighton University/Channel 4