

CICERO | Documentary feature



LOGLINE |

CICERO pays tribute to the exceptional musicians: *Mr. Golden Hands* Eugen Cicero and his son, singer Roger Cicero - portraying the cracks, the highs and lows of their outstanding life and careers. Well-known companions, contemporary witnesses and family members create a **dense cinematic oeuvre with a high contemporary historical and world-wide artistic relevance.**

CICERO reveals a unique father-son relationship and focuses on an incredible musical legacy: a genius that reinvented himself repeatedly and on the other hand: the talented and exceptionally successful singer, one of the best in his country, who died at the height of his career. An homage to two extraordinary artists, a deep tracking to fathers and sons fascinating stages of life: their story, their transcendent musical expertise and careers - and the incredible gap that they leave in our time.

Starring: Eugen Cicero (p.m), Roger Cicero (p.m), Till Brönner, Christiana Cicero, Charly Antolini, Astrid North, Katarina Witt, Hervé Jeanne, Johannes Oerding, Ulita Knaus, Matthias Meusel, Joja Wendt, Sven Bünger, Gregor Meyle, Paul Kuhn (p.m.), Robert Davi i.a.

PROTAGONISTS |

50 interviews of the closest companions and family members



Fleurine Mehdau | Eugen Cicero | Roger Cicero | Paul Kuhn | Till Brönner | Lili & Eugen Cicero

PRODUCER`S NOTE |

Crossing borders in a literal and metaphorical sense is what the protagonists Eugen and Roger Cicero have done with their musical skills. Being a political refugee, Eugen Cicero has also crossed national borders and thereby settled in Germany and Switzerland. Both have broken undiscovered musical ground, in their own manners. A father, who marked the life of his son, that he was unable to banish him from his mind. Their strong artistic signatures, the astonishing reinvented musical artwork of both artists and the parallels between their remarkable lives will captivate our filmic audience.

Following the death of 46-years old Roger Cicero all of Germany were in a shock status: from the city of Hamburg, the town that had been the singer's home for the past twenty years, to his place of birth and first home of the Ciceros: Berlin. Not only the people in Germany were taken by indefinite sadness, also the Swiss, Austrian and European neighbours. Roger had a big and devoted fan base in all these countries, just like his father Eugen.

The ties between both protagonists are strong and diverse enough, the experiences and life paths are unique and emotionally touching to such an extent that the story can even be told to a large audience by the close companions, family members and contemporary witnesses, and in particular by Eugen`s and Roger`s music. The story will be intensified by live performances, crucial interviews, impressive concerts as well as backstage footage.

The son who struggled with his father throughout his entire life, who emulated him, failed and eventually found his own way. During the last weeks of his life, it seemed as if he had finally achieved what he always wanted - meant to be as a new starting point, but instead it turned into the endpoint. This tragedy of an unfinished artistic work and creation is to be found in both lives. Father and son died far too early at a very young age – Roger aged 45 and Eugen aged 57.

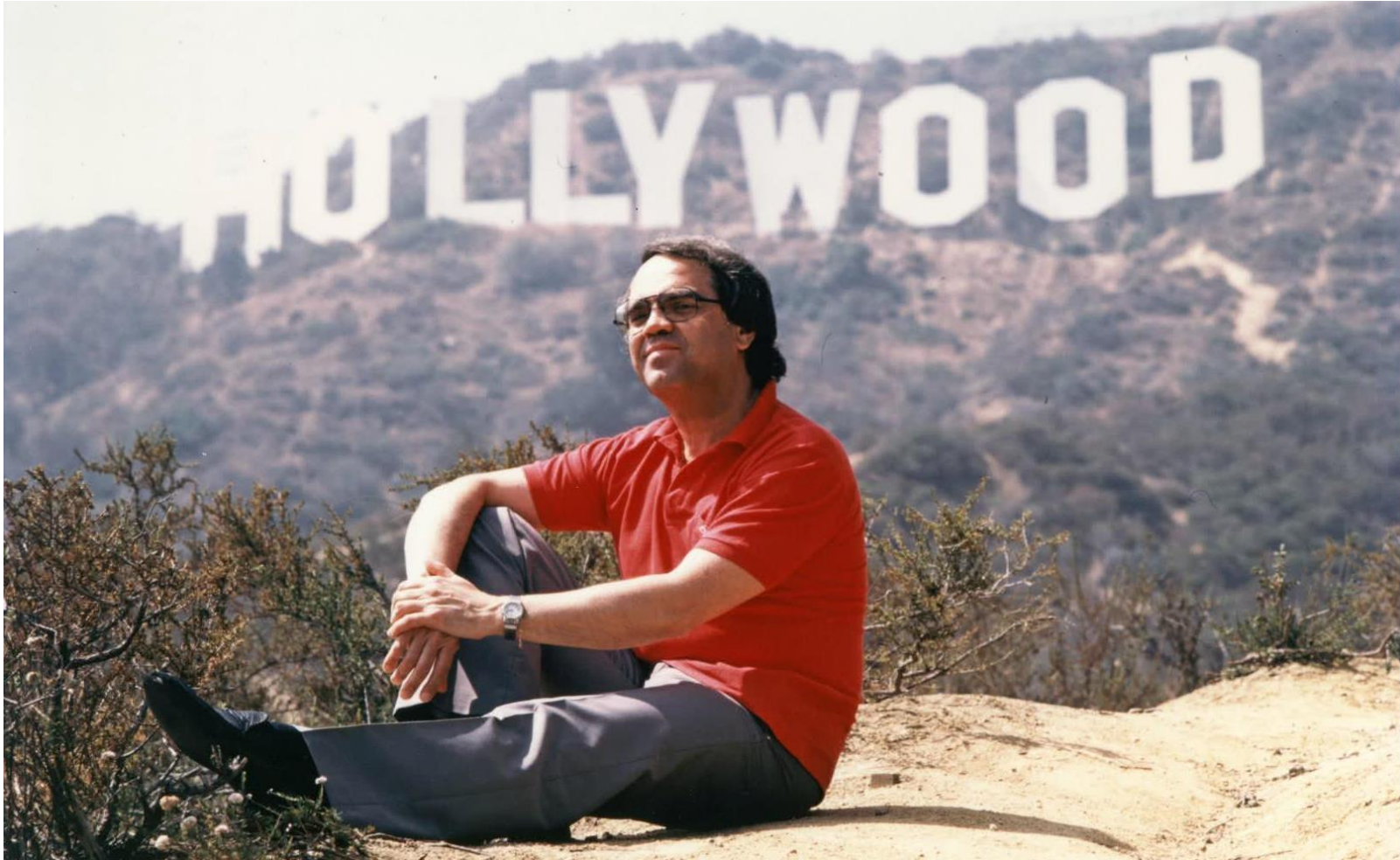
They pushed themselves to their limits, made mistakes, broke the boundaries of limitation, and all their endeavours took them a step further - sometimes to an entirely different stage of life or to an intensified version of the former one, to another musical style or to an extended artistic expression. One might have wished for the coda of their lives - that it should have been longer, taking many further loops.

Both protagonists were playing a significant role within the musical landscape - from the 1960s to 2016. Even more: they perfectly mastered to remove any musical categorization and bring it into a nouveau cosmos and to their own unprecedented artistic universe.

This film embarks on the search of these unique artists, their connection to each another, their talents, their genius, their struggle of everyday life, leading to a revival of the protagonist's extraordinary existence and their esprit.

We are connecting the different lines very subtly and sinuously, the documental narration is constantly in the flow, with smart transitions and dense tapestry of sounds. The music will play the role as a third protagonist. We are interweaving the different time levels, multi-perspectives, and life stations in a commuting, swinging manner to create an own visual and acoustic artwork standing for its own. In the end, the quote by Charlie Parker gets to the heart of these two life journeys: It unites the spheres of music and the art of improvising with the ability to master life – to a level where the father-son-relationship is ludically weaved together, becomes inseparably intertwined and reveals their outstanding musical endowment: perfectionism is paired with lightness, uniting everything -

“Music is your own experience, your own thoughts, your wisdom. If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn. They teach you there's a boundary line to music. But, man, there's no boundary line to art.” Charlie Parker



EUGEN CICERO, “Mr. GOLDEN HANDS” at the Hollywood Hills in Los Angeles

STORY |

Eugen Cicero's temperament and pursuit of the ultimate perfection made his role as a father difficult. Until his death, Roger tried to do justice to the role of the son following the footsteps of a musical legend. There are strong parallels between the careers of father and son, both working themselves into the ground in order to succeed on stage – a tendency towards the extreme of always aspiring to the highest standards in terms of their own musical abilities. Addiction or deep passion? An inevitable destiny.

CICERO is concerned with Eugen Cicero's meteoric rise, his success that left its trails all over Europe. For more than ten decades he was an internationally appraised pianist, but this time of glory also marked his personal low point. We return to his roots, and the starting point of his career, following him and his band colleagues to the divided Berlin, he got from the East to the West where he eked out a living as a bar pianist. He continuously worked on perfecting his style, a mixture consisting of brilliant classical technique and jazz elements, which lead to his art of improvisation taking on dimensions previously unimagined. The great breakthrough was only achieved with the first disk recordings at the notable and historically important music studio MPS. This is the place where he worked with internationally renowned musicians during the following years as Oscar Peterson or Caterina Valente. However, consistency was missing and he constantly struggled with mastering his life.

His son's life then was dominated by a certain helplessness caused by the ambivalent behaviour of his father: paternal affection combined with strong expectations. Roger had to find his own way to step out of his father's shadows. He refrained from the piano - Eugen's instrument - which would have led to an inevitable competition between father and son. Roger focused on playing the guitar and singing, performing concerts with his father and some of his famous colleagues in his youth. He led the hard life of a musician including daily performances in ever changing constellations - at the beginning in less known bands, later on in more renowned ones as Soulounge. He toured through the country: For many years, he played gigs at Angie's Nightclub in Hamburg or

performed as a background singer for Motown stars such as George Benson. These years of Roger's life strongly resemble his father's early working period in Germany as a musician playing at various bars.

Even so, Roger Cicero only achieved success in his late thirties. 2007 he gained nationwide attention due to his participation at the Eurovision Song Contest in Europe. Following his participation, he began playing for bigger audiences, filled entire halls, generated high sales and enjoyed commercial success. Finally leaving behind the small venues, Roger enjoyed performing in front of thousands of people and refused letting this success come to an end. But the huge success revealed the other side of the coin, namely deprivation.

His personal privacy became barely existent. Roger Cicero tried to fulfil the immense workload displaying a great deal of discipline and ignored any indicators for his deteriorating health. He couldn't find another way than returning to stage.

The emotional rollercoaster of two singular lives: stages that are portrayed by family members, companions and fellow musicians. Selected archive footage and existing film material from Roger and Eugen Cicero complement the interviews, which will be conducted at special locations in Europe that are closely linked to the two protagonists.

A unique search for traces from father to son: examining, challenging, superior!



ROGER CICERO, Recording in 2015

DIRECTOR`S NOTE |

"Improvisation, that`s a big element of freedom" Roger Willemsen

My motives: There is no question: A documentary film about these two musical legends should and has to trace and reproduce their oeuvre. The musicians were too significant in their time not to focus on their work and their brilliance. A film about father and son, who both put the universal language of music and Jazz at the center of their lives in their own way - such a film must try to capture this attitude to life in terms of content and form.

So, it doesn`t have to follow the rhythm of linear documentations. A film about those genius artists has to find its own style and tone. It has to be wild, bring its themes, play with them, transform and improvise them in order to resume one topic again and deepen it within the continuous appearance of new tonalities.

The high level of personality and originality that this music demands from each of the individual musicians, the ability to enter into a musical dialogue and creative process with his/her colleagues at anytime and anywhere in the world, far from any language or every dialect - this opens up unlimited possibilities and offers unlimited freedom.

"Life is a lot like jazz ... it`s best when you improvise!" George Gershwin

In addition to my previous sentences I am interested in the following topic: Eugen and Roger Cicero have dedicated their lives to music. Mostly to Jazz. But what is Jazz? Is Jazz just another type of music? Is it just a label for another genre - pigeonholed in a way - or is it not a sense of life and a special way to live? I passionately try to figure that out in our far-reaching and in-depth documentary movie.

"Jazz is not just music - It`s a way of life, it`s a way of being, a way of thinking" Nina Simone

Theatrical release in 2021 |

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the CICERO production process was immediately interrupted. The following post-production steps became very difficult to realize within the last 3 months and has enormously delayed the whole process, including last shooting days, editing, colour grading, sound editing and mixing, titling, visuals, graphics and the release problematic at the end.

The workflow was slowed down due to our Corona quarantine cases by two creative heads and staff members. The challenge to move on was very high, and we still try to find a way to handle the additional costs. All in all, the entire production process has been postponed by 3 months.

“CICERO stands out amongst others as an excellent film subject that manages to captivate the audience with the unique musical and artistic heritage, the multifaceted nature of the protagonists and their journey by weaving them together sophisticatedly, creating an emotionally convincing and profound cinematographic work.

We want to submit the final cut version to the first international film festivals in 2021 and hope to start the festival premiere of CICERO in February 2021 at the International Film Festival Berlin (Berlinale), and the Sundance Film Festival in January 2021.

We are convinced that this film will achieve a broad audience across multiple generations all over the globe. A long research process and searching for the best and unpublished archives material, our high ambitions throughout the years and elaborate search to find and convince the most authentic characters and companions with the closest relations to our protagonists, and a splendid quality of documentary storytelling - will help to achieve our goal.

The theatrical release is planned in spring 2021 as a high-quality Arthouse cinema production.

OVERVIEW |

Renowned German director **KAI WESSEL** worked on his feature film HILDE (about famous singer Hildegard Knef) together with **ROGER CICERO** and hold the connection until he died. Author and producer **KATHARINA RINDERLE** started writing and producing the film when the protagonist Roger Cicero was still alive.

Broadcast partner: NDR, RBB (Germany) in cooperation with SRF (Switzerland) and TVR (Romania)

Production: LATEMAR FILM, Katharina Rinderle

Co-Production: Aspekt Telefilm GmbH, PROVOBIS FILM, Moviepool, Martin Richter Filmproduktion, Evolution Art & Film

Co-financier: Vincent Film Produktion, K-Motion, Lopta Film

Length/Format: 110 Min. HD/2K | DCP Digital Cinema Package

Shooting time: Start: End of 2018 until 2020 | Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, Austria

Completion Date: December 2020 / January 2021 (expected)

Budget: 450.000,- € / 500.000,- \$

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