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**Bijker Film en TV**

**Rinkel Film**

production in collaboration with

**Living Stone**

**Tarantula**



director **Dennis Bots**

screenwriter **Karen van Holst Pellekaan** based on the book by **Jacques Vriens**

producers **Harro van Staverden** and **Reinier Selen**

distributor **Dutch FilmWorks**

## Synopsis

Summer 1943. Tuur (Maas Bronkhuyzen) and Lambert (Joes Brauers) have been inseparable since they were very small. The two boys know their South-Limburgian village and the surrounding area like the back of their hand. From the farm owned by Lambert's father (Stefan de Walle), who is also the mayor, to the exciting caves nearby - this is their world. But the war does not pass by the idyllic village.

Tuur's parents (Loek Peters and Eva Duijvestein) join the resistance and his big brother (Nils Verkooijen) acts secretive as well. Lambert's family are members of the NSB (the Dutch National-Socialist Party) and side with the Germans. Then Maartje, a girl from the west of Holland, unexpectedly joins their class. She has a big secret and decides to share this with Tuur alone. That decision drives the boys apart and puts Maartje in grave danger. Tuur could lose not only his friendship with Lambert, but his entire family. He will have to do everything in his power to save both.

Director: Dennis Bots (The House Of Anubis, Cool Kids Don't Cry)  
Screenplay: Karen van Holst Pellekaan, based on the book by Jacques Vriens  
Cast: Maas Bronkhuyzen (Alfie The Little Werewolf, Mike Says Goodbye!)  
Joes Brauers (musicals: Little Crumb, Dik Trom)  
Nils Verkooijen (Cool Kids Don't Cry, Regret!)  
Pippa Allen (Taking Chances, Van Gogh - A House For Vincent)  
Also starring Loek Peters (Cool Kids, Red Widow), Stefan de Walle (The Marathon), René van 't Hof (Matterhorn), Faas Wijn (Tony 10), Eva Duijvestein (The Intern) and Beau Schneider (Good Times Bad Times, SpangaS)

Genre: Youth/drama  
Length: 94 minutes  
Rating: 6+, violence, fear, coarse language  
Website: <http://www.oorlogsgeheimdefilm.nl/>  
Release: 3 July 2014

## **The occupation seen through children's eyes**

Jacques Vriens (1946) has been writing children's books since 1976. At first while still teaching, it became a full-time job in 1993. His books are popular. Of the almost hundred titles, million of copies have been sold in The Netherlands. Vriens twice won a Zilveren Griffel (Silver Slate-Pencil, annual prize for second-best children's book), but says he doesn't write for the critics. 'I write my books for children. And at the end, they shouldn't close it disheartened - there must always be hope. I think I am, somehow or other, able to touch children. A girl wrote me she loves my books so much because they make you laugh and cry.' Vriens has all the years he spent in the classroom for inspiration, as with the popular Teacher Jaap-series or COOL KIDS DON'T CRY. He based the latter on the true story of a girl in his class who developed leukemia. With 150.000 copies sold, it's one of Vriens' most successful novels.

Just like Jacques Vriens, director Dennis Bots (ZOOP IN AFRICA, ANUBIS: THE PATH OF THE SEVEN SINS) grew up in Gemert, Brabant. After adapting TEN TOWERS DEEP, another Vriens' book, the author sent him a copy of COOL KIDS DON'T CRY - inscribed: 'A book is like a film.' Bots accepted the challenge and made it one for producers Bijker Film and TV and Rinkel Film. And with result: its performance at the box-office was one of the best for youth films in recent years, good for 300.000 tickets sold. Not so strange then that the Cool Kids-team optioned another Jacques Vriens-book: SECRETS OF WAR (2009).

'When I wrote SECRETS OF WAR, I wanted to show how war really is - just like that, you can lose people you love.' In Jacques Vriens' oeuvre SECRETS OF WAR stands out. A novel about collaboration and resistance against the backdrop of Limburg's marl caves. A novel too about life and death. Twelve year-old Tuur discovers that the new girl in class is really a Jewess in hiding, who escaped a razzia and fled Amsterdam. Both her parents were put on a train east, their fate unknown. Vriens: 'In my teaching days I read BORIS by Jaap ter Haar in class - about a boy who survives the German siege of Leningrad. But he does lose his Nadja. I wanted to emulate that honesty. It's no coincidence my oldest son is called Boris.' In SECRETS OF WAR Jacques Vriens looked at the years of occupation through the eyes of curious teenager. It gained him the 2009 Archeon Youth Books Prize.

When producers Reinier Selen (Rinkel Film) and Harro van Staverden (Bijker Film and TV) wanted a follow-up to their successful collaboration COOL KIDS DON'T CRY (2012) they didn't need to look far. With SECRETS OF WAR the same hit-team could simply re-up. Screenwriter Karen van Holst Pellekaan was the first in. 'Working with Bijker Film and Harro especially had been such a good experience, I said yes immediately. Together with Dennis we are a very strong team.' Dennis Bots too couldn't wait to start filming. 'What I found interesting about SECRETS OF WAR is having children grow up in a time of war. How at first it's all just

one big playground for them, the harsh realities of war are something on the edges of their experience. That's what I like about the scene in which Tuur looks up to the planes flying over: he sees the war but doesn't feel directly involved. At the same time that image is a pinprick: something is about to happen.'

Van Holst Pellekaan recognized the challenge in Vriens' book. 'SECRETS OF WAR is different from earlier youth films about WWII because it takes place in the south of Limburg. The war had come to an end there in 1944, the people hadn't known the Hunger winter's famine, and 'good' and 'bad' weren't so clear cut. Because of the area's geographical position interaction with Germans was very common. They were almost neighbors, Limburgians and Germans traded, they were family or friends. This gave me the opportunity to think and write very much in 'grey tones'. Good and bad are not black and white in this case. The landscape of Limburg is important in this film as well, for instance the marl caves which did offer shelter to refugees back then, and formed a passage to Belgium.'



*The three friends in a marl cave*

Of course there were obstacles. Producer Harro van Staverden - Bijker Film: 'We got stuck with the script for a while. We wanted to stay very close to the book initially, but with Karen on board we discussed a slightly less reverential approach with Jacques. That's when Tuur and Lambert became best friends.'

Van Holst Pellekaan: 'I thought it would be stronger if the betrayal came from someone much closer to the lead character, namely his best friend. And I also thought it would be interesting to show that children do not have a say in who their parents are or what they do. That is why I made Tuur and Lambert best friends. Only once it's war do the political leanings of their parents become an issue, drawing heavily on their friendship. They both consider Maartje a fun and exciting girl. The timeless aspect of those first blossoming feelings for the other sex and the resulting jealousy, were beautiful ingredients for a coming of age film.'



Kept was Tuur's psychological development. When the film starts, war is a thrilling boy's story to him, but the occupation's grave reality encroaches more and more. Producer Selen: 'The book impresses on you that war sets out as a relatively innocent venture. As the characters are drawn into the action, war reveals its true face.'

The most disquieting revelation is that of Maartje being in fact Tamar, a Jewish girl on the run. Van Holst Pellekaan did not shy away from incorporating the horrors of the Holocaust: 'We all know that Jewish people were deported. And also that they were betrayed. This film shows how something like that could happen. That this sometimes involved a terrible twist of fate had to do with very human emotions as exclusion and jealousy. It was clear to me that things would not end well for Maartje/Tamar. That was how it was, I wasn't going to gloss over that reality even if though it was a youth film. I want to take children seriously, I don't like childish films.'

By introducing trains as a *leitmotiv* in the film, Van Holst Pellekaan subtly integrated the Jewish transports into the story. 'When Tuur sees a little hand sticking out of such a train and next finds a stuffed bear on the rails, he comes to realize it holds an extraordinary cargo. Personally I find one hand coming out of a freight car far more suggestive and gripping than showing dozens of Jewish prisoners.' Considerable changes, but the core of Vriens' book remained intact. Van Staverden: 'The great thing is that Jacques is very happy with the film, and that he recognizes the story he wrote. And that is how it is: the soul and spirit of the book have been preserved.'



*Tuur runs after the last car of the train...*

## **Grown-up director with a child's point-of-view**

With *SECRETS OF WAR* Dennis Bots has completed his sixth feature film in ten years time. A tremendous feat for the Zambia-born but North-Brabant-raised filmmaker, but that is only half the story. For his television output is enormous. Fresh from the Film Academy Bots shot episodes of almost every well-known Dutch drama series, from *GOOD TIMES BAD TIMES* to *WEST WIND*, from *THE SCENT OF ROSES & WODKA LIME* to *WITHOUT A TRACE*. He also added a few telefilms to his résumé. For Karen van Holst Pellekaan *SECRETS OF WAR* is the second time she has worked with Dennis Bots, following *COOL KIDS DON'T CRY*. And the third collaboration has already been put to paper. 'As a screenwriter I am very pleased that Dennis is always so happy with my screenplays. He really wants to shoot them exactly as they are written. Dennis is pretty much without ego, he doesn't feel the need to pee over it. If he likes what's on the page, then he'll start working on that with all his expertise and imagination. In many ways, Dennis and I have the same taste, which makes ours a pleasant working relationship. We have already moved on to the next one, *FALKO: LETTER OF FIRE* will be our third cinematic outing.'

While still working as a TV director, his name cropped up more and more on youth series: *ZOOP*, *THE HOUSE OF ANUBIS*, *SPANGAS*. Bots denies that his feature project-choices are intentional, but acknowledges that he gets along well with children. 'I communicate easily with children, perhaps because in some way I'm still a child myself. I can assume their point of view. Children's imagination, their outlook on the world: I can really relate and also put it into words. And I take them seriously. Working with children is tremendous fun. Making a film has to be an adventure for them. They shouldn't play their part - they should experience it, be right 'in' it.'

Producer Reinier Selen confirms these qualities. 'Dennis' strength lies in the fact he is able to get really close to children. He is not one of those grown-ups who, when making a youth film, goes down on his knees - figuratively speaking; he doesn't talk down to them. A big part of him is still a 'child', and he can use that.' Van Holst Pellekaan too has great praise for Bots' work with his young actors. 'I don't know anybody who does that so well. He gives them a lot of confidence in a very playful manner, and pushes them to great heights. It's truly beautiful to see him achieve that on set.'

On set it's clear what Bots' attention is focused on. Van Staverden: 'During breakfast and lunch Dennis is with the kids, while the adults of crew and cast seek out each other. Then they'll be messing around a bit together. And when he acts out the scenes he is almost indistinguishable from his young leads. That makes the children feel very safe on set, and makes it easy to give the performance expected from them. To them Dennis is a beacon on set. So I feel his qualities shine most on films in which there is an important part to be played by children.'

Van Holst Pellekaan: 'Dennis might just be the best children's or youth film director we have in The Netherlands. Besides that, he has enormous flair and a very

creative mind. He also helps think up solutions when things turn out to be technically or financially problematic.'

### **A couple of young veterans**

For the young leads the production decided on new faces with extensive experience. Pippa Allen (Maartje) for example, had the main role in the youth film TAKING CHANCES, and caught the eye in the series VAN GOGH: A HOUSE FOR VINCENT and the telefilm SWEET LOVE. Joes Brauers (Lambert) paid his dues in the musical scene, with starring roles in LITTLE CRUMB and DIK TROM. 'But acting is just that bit more fun than being on the musical stage. There are many ways to interpret a character.' Brauers had heard stories about the occupation at home. 'I'm from the south of Limburg, and my grandmother had told me a few things about the war. Our village was close to the German border and horrible things did happen. But the stories were always stories about grown-ups. That's what's so cool about SECRETS OF WAR: you find out what children experienced back then. Including children of collaborationist parents.'

Maas Bronkhuyzen (Tuur) already played the lead in Maria Peters' MIKE SAYS GOODBYE! A very different experience, according to Maas. 'While shooting MIKE SAYS GOODBYE! I could go home in the evenings, on this we slept in a hotel. But it was actually helpful because we developed an even better bond.' He describes Tuur as 'adventurous and cheeky, but a good friend as well. He stands up for Lambert for a long time. But once Maartje has shared her secret with him, they grow apart.'

Joes Brauers doesn't consider Lambert to be 'on the wrong side' per se. 'He is not evil. His father decided to join the NSB (Dutch National-Socialist Party), and the family had to follow suit. Lambert is really a very normal boy. When the story starts he is still good friends with Tuur, and they both fall in love with the same girl. But when Tuur lies about that, and sort of steals Maartje away for himself, excluding Lambert - it's not strange that jealousy makes him take such a terrible decision.'

The role was a major challenge for Joes. There are so many sides to Lambert, it's great to play him. He is nice, but sometimes angry as well, and then we feel pity for him. What I learnt is that occasionally horrible things can have very small, simple beginnings. Choices can have great consequences. Not all Germans were bad, and some children did not consciously resolve to side with the Germans, it just happened. So you shouldn't be too quick in judging people.'

Dennis Bots is extremely happy with his three leads. 'This is such a complex film for young actors. Because of the multi-layered story, but also because of the psychological journey all three characters had to go on. Maas, Pippa and Joes managed exceedingly well to put that process on screen.' Especially Brauers' role wasn't an easy one to tackle. 'Joes' role is so tricky, because it carries such emotional weight. These two boys are very different. Tuur is adventurous, a straight

shooter, is really the hero. Lambert goes through several changes. He starts out as a friend, then commits betrayal, regrets his actions and shows remorse. Joes has to take all those steps, and that is quite a big acting arch. But his someone with a considerable interior life, and so you believe him.'

The three children pushing each other away emotionally, then pulling the other(s) back in, is what Bots considers one of the strongest aspects of the story. 'Films dealing with relationships between children are very beautiful. A film which has influenced me is Rob Reiner's *STAND BY ME*. There too the whole world is waiting. All kinds of adventures to be had. But then the world starts closing in. You no longer know who to trust.'

All three leads agree that Bots gives them a lot of his time. Joes Brauers: 'Dennis can explain things just so well. That was really important here, because the story takes place such a long time ago. But after you had talked with Dennis, you could easily relate to the characters. His explanations were often a lot of fun. And they helped us to make the role our own. Occasionally the right emotions wouldn't come, and he'd take us aside. Then we'd stand there screaming to get in the appropriate mood. He really knew how to get the best out of us.' And Maas Bronkhuyzen: 'Dennis acts out every scene. And if we had to clamber over something, he'd be up there first. He sometimes is a child himself!'

One of the most beautiful scenes is the scene in which Maartje reveals her secret to Tuur. It goes on for six minutes and is only two children sitting on a bed and talking. Bronkhuyzen: 'Normally we'd complete about five acting scenes a day, but that day we concentrated almost exclusively on that one moment. It wasn't really hard, but it took some effort to maintain focus, so Dennis would call for breaks. We'd have a drink or a bite to eat, and then continue.' These are the moments Bots is in his element. 'To keep it interesting you have to really motivate the children. I treat them like true, professional actors, supply the background - story-wise and emotionally. Then we're over the moon when they deliver in one take. But you need to create the right atmosphere on set. Playful, never heavy. And you have to give them time.'

## **Limburg in Luxembourg**

To profit maximally from the international tax benefits, it was decided to shoot most of the film in Belgium and Luxembourg. Producer Harro van Staverden - Bijker Film: 'Shooting in Luxembourg turned out to be quite complex, especially finding locations that can pass for Limburg. The forest and the train were simple enough, but aunt Anna's house? It was almost impossible.' The village exteriors were filmed in Belgian Mélin. Dennis Bots: 'It was actually pretty hard to find the right village. I didn't want to have to film one house here, and the other ten kilometers further on. But authentic villages in Limburg are rare. Everything is too neat, too fixed up. Our brilliant location scout then brought us to Mélin, where we found all we needed. The position of the houses in relation to the church, the cob-



blestone streets, everything was perfect. Except for one house, and we put a temporary facade in front of it.'

The interiors were mostly reconstructed in the Luxembourgian Filmland Studio, including two of the famous marl caves. Bronkuyzen: 'It were basically two stretches of corridor, but by shooting a different angle every time they seemed to go on and on.' Selen: 'It was the only way, as the accessibility and atmospheric humidity of the actual caves are pretty bad. We did shoot in Maastricht for half a day, because it's important to us to show that the story originates there.'



*Lambert and Tuur running past the crashed Dakota*

The book describes an allied plane crashing. In the film the Dakota is already on the forest floor, a silent reminder of the violence of war. A conscious choice, as Selen explains: 'There have been a number of Dutch war films in which a plane crashes down, and we didn't want to draw comparisons. It's not that kind of film. The great thing now is that we first see the children play around it, it's part of their adventure, while it gains in importance later on. Delayed impact. That Dakota was transported to Luxembourg especially for that one shot, and came from SOLDIER OF ORANGE. The musical was on holiday hiatus. On Monday it was delivered by a lowboy, who took it back Tuesday evening.'

The plane supplied the film's most beautiful shot. Selen: 'For director of photography Rolf Dekens it's: the more beautiful, the better. The shot in which the kids go by the Dakota could have been achieved with a dolly and rails, but in this case the camera was attached to track cables of some two hundred meters in length. Before these cables are up, the camera functions as it should, and you've determined the exact route for the actors on the ground: it takes a lot time. But it gets you cinematic gold.'

After careful consideration it was agreed not to have the characters in the film speak with a Limburgian accent. 'It's essential for us to pull the children into the film right from the start, and language is key to that. So our main characters speak Standard Educated Dutch, and they behave the same as the children of today. We

thought it important to tell a universal story about the war's impact on the lives of children, so not a regional, very particular story. War is of all time.'

Still, there is a clear Limburgian quality to SECRETS OF WAR. Just consider all the people from the region offering their services to the production. Selen:

'Like Pierre Rieu, the son of André. He owns a huge collection of military vehicles which have seen actual service in Limburg, and that was of considerable help to us. A lot of the vehicles you see in the film are his, including the German ones. But Pierre also managed to track down an anti-aircraft gun somewhere in Belgium, and hired a fork-lift truck to get it on set. A few years ago I saw him on television showing his collection, so I went round with Jacques Vriens' book. Now he plays a small role in the film!'

### **A lesson for our times**

Unusual for a youth film, it will premiere on 3 July, right before the summer holidays. Producer Reinier Selen: 'Cinemas, but the Film Fund as well, have come to realize the value of releasing Dutch youth films during the summer. Because these films can be shown for a longer period of time. Children who go on holiday for a few weeks, come back to three weeks of boredom. REGRET! was one of the first films that proved how successful this strategy can be.'

To involve school children directly in the themes of SECRETS OF WAR, the producers had special educational material made for both primary and secondary schools. Van Staverden: 'Those have more than sold out, in spite of the high number produced. A hundred thousand sets have been ordered by primary schools and fifty thousand by secondary schools.'

And more special activities have been organized. 'In September it is seventy years ago that the south of The Netherlands was liberated, a fact that will be celebrated in a grand way. We will do something that has never been done before. In Margraten lies the Netherlands American Cemetery and Memorial, and we have shown the film to the American caretakers. They have in turn conferred with the White House, and now we get to present the film during the festivities, with the international dignitaries present. George W. Bush was one of those at last time's anniversary, so we hope for other distinguished guests this year. And a film shown at a war cemetery, that has never happened: a world first!'

## Cast & crew

**Maas Bronkhuyzen** (Amsterdam, 2001) was first called to the set after landing the part of Tommie, foster brother and best friend of Alfie the little werewolf - in the 2011 film of the same name. He gained national attention when he appeared as Mike in Maria Peters' beloved children's drama MIKE SAYS GOODBYE! In this film he plays a boy who has successfully conquered a critical disease, but must face new difficulties when he returns home. There was much praise for the bravura and energy with which Maas tackled the role. He was also one of the participants in the TV improvisation series OUT ON THE STAGEFLOOR JR.

It was the carnival revue that made 5-year old **Joos Brauers** (Bocholtz, 1999) realise he enjoyed being on a stage. That is how he came to join a youth theatre group. After reaching the finals of a regional talent show, Joos was asked to audition for the musical CISKE THE RAT. It resulted in a part, and a musical career was born. Joos would go on to play the lead in both LITTLE CRUMB and (in *fat suit!*) DIK TROM.

In 2014 Joos can be seen in theatres all across the country in ON GOLDEN POND, as directed by Peter Tuinman. He will also show off his improvisational skills in a new season of OUT ON THE STAGEFLOOR JR., starting in September. Having already starred in the shorts ANATOLE and THE FORBIDDEN ATTIC, SECRETS OF WAR will make his feature debut.

**Pippa Allen** (Amsterdam, 2000) got off to a flying start with the role of Kiek in the youth film TAKING CHANCES (2010). She plays the daughter of a doctor (Johnny de Mol) who is regularly sent to war zones. Kiek deduces that her father has a better chance of coming home unscathed if she sacrifices one of her pets. TAKING CHANCES and Pippa received much praise, and the film did well in the cinema. Following that, she starred in the minimusical SWEET LOVE, in which children play all the grown-up characters. Pippa got to sing as well. After a supporting part in the TV drama series VAN GOGH - A HOUSE FOR VINCENT (2012) SECRETS OF WAR is another big feature film project for Allen.

**Loek Peters** (Papendrecht, 1974) graduated from the Theatre school Amsterdam in 2000. He became one of the resident actors of the Noord Nederlands Toneel (North Netherlands Theatre Company), and was part of a wide range of plays such as OTHELLO, THE TAMING OF THE SHREW, THE RESISTABLE RISE OF ARTURO UI en CHILDREN OF THE SUN.

Peters (guest)starred in television series such as SPANGEN, WITHOUT A TRACE, IC, SPRINT!, COPS MAASTRICHT, THE SECRETS OF BARSLET and TOWER C. He has been a mainstay on the popular show PENOZA (RED WIDOW) and will return in the fourth season as gangster Berry. He played the lead in the telefilm SECURITY (Nicole van Kilsdonk, 2010) and the titular part in telefilm THE STRONGEST MAN IN HOLLAND

(Mark de Cloe); it won the 2011 Prix Europa in the Best Television Fiction-category.

Loek often turns up in Dutch feature films as well. Think of *YOUNG KEES*, *DANGEROUS TO THE STATE*, *TONY 10* and *MY FATHER IS A DETECTIVE*. Peters played the father in Boudewijn Koole's *KAUWBOY* (2011), a youth film which won many international awards including Best European Youth Film at the Berlin Film Festival. He also had a major part in Dennis Bots' *COOL KIDS DON'T CRY* (2012). His most recent feature was hit comedy *MEN IN THE CITY*.

The oeuvre of **Stefan de Walle** (Den Haag, 1965) is one of the broadest in the Dutch film, TV and theatre world. De Walle graduated from the Theatre School Arnhem in 1989. He became a resident at the Ro Theatre, and joined the National Theatre in 2001. His portrayal of *CYRANO DE BERGERAC* got him a Louis d'Or-nomination in 2003 (the highest male theatre actor-prize). For his role as Lopachin in *THE CHERRY ORCHARD* he was awarded the 2010 Arlecchio, the theatre prize for best male supporting actor. He won the same award in 2013 for *GAMING INSTINCT*. Between 1993 and 1998 Stefan starred as Kees Flodder in the *FLODDER* TV-series, as well as the third *FLODDER* feature film. His other TV roles are too many to mention, but notable appearances include *UNIT 13*, *WE ALEXANDER*, *BAANTJER*, *ACCESS DENIED*, *WALTZ* and *GOOISCHE VROUWEN (A/K/A VIPERS NEST)*. Especially memorable was his portrayal of minister Dries van Agt in *BEATRIX, A QUEEN BESIEGED* (2012).

The list of feature film roles is just as long, but stand-outs are *YOUNG KEES*, *EEP!*, *MAJESTY* and *THE AVIATRIX OF KAZBEK*. Stefan played garage owner Gerard in *THE MARATHON* (2012), the film about four friends who take up running to shore up the garage's finances. The role earned him a Golden Calf-nomination at that year's NFF. *THE MARATHON* was eventually awarded a Golden Calf for actress Georgina Verbaan, the Audience Award, and the Dutch Film Critics Award.

In 2014 Stefan can be seen in *SECRETS OF WAR*, the new season of *OUT ON THE STAGEFLOOR JR.*, and TV-series *NEW NEIGHBOURS*.

In ten years time **Nils Verkooijen** (Haarlem, 1997) managed to become one of the most experienced actors in Dutch (youth) cinema. He debuted in 2004 when he was seven, playing the 'brother' in *ANGEL AND BROTHER*. His big break came in 2001, when he had major roles in both *SECRET LETTER* and *DIK TROM*. You couldn't miss him in *COOL KIDS DON'T CRY*, *BOBBY AND THE GHOSTHUNTERS* and *REGRET!* either. Nils isn't afraid to portray the baddie: 'I've been the obnoxious teenager a few times. But hey, almost all the boys my age are obnoxious teenagers, and I'm no exception!'

Verkooijen has appeared on television in *SPANGAS*, *VAN SPEIJK* and *KEYZER & DE BOER*. He is very happy with his performance in the telefilm *20 LIES*, *4 PARENTS AND A LITTLE EGG*.

For the past year Nils has been working on his own feature film-project, *DANCING ON THE VULCANO*, with which he hopes to raise awareness of children suffering in-born errors of metabolism. Nils co-wrote the screenplay, produces, and plays the



lead. This film, developed with a high school-classmate, will be released in cinemas in November 2014. Nils can also shortly be seen in TV-series MERRY CHRISTMAS and feature film THE ADMIRAL.

**Rinkel Film** was founded in 1997 by Reinier Selen as an independent production company. The Amsterdam-based outfit can look back on a successful run of developing and producing feature films and TV drama that shows their social engagement and is often inspired by true stories. Rinkel Film always tries to co-produce with both national and international partners, as with LUCIA DE B. (2014) and historical drama SÜSKIND (2012). Youth films (COOL KIDS DON'T CRY) are a new string to Rinkel's bow, but art-house films with great festival potential (NOTHING PERSONAL, THE OTHER SIDE OF SLEEP, LOVE ETERNAL) are spearheads as well. The company strives to forge long-lasting relationships with established screenwriters, directors and actors, but is also on the look-out for new talent. Goals supported by a worldwide network of sales agents, producers and investors from the international film world.

In 2008 Reinier was Producer On The Move at the Cannes Film Festival, the first Dutch representative at the 2010 Producers Lab in Toronto, and is currently taking part in the prestigious training programme INSIDE PICTURES, conducted in London and Los Angeles.

Production company **Bijker Film & TV** is located in Amsterdam and focuses on content for youth and family, in the fields of film, television, VOD and internet. Producers David-Jan Bijker and Harro van Staverden joined forces with (now neighbor) Rinkel Film to produce 2010's van COOL KIDS DON'T CRY. The film directed by Dennis Bots was a great success in cinemas and won, among many others, the Audience Award at the TIFF Kids International Film Festival in Toronto and the Griffon Award for Best Film (13+) at the Sao Paulo Giffoni Film Festival. It has since been remade in Norway, where it is called KULE KIDZ GRÅTER IKKE. After COOL KIDS and SECRETS OF WAR, Bijker will work with director Dennis Bots and screenwriter Karen van Holst Pellekaan once again on the THE SWORD OF D'ARTAGNAN and FALKO: LETTER OF FIRE, both European co-productions. David Bijker was the European Film Promotion 2014's selectee for Producer On the Move at the Cannes Film Festival.

Director **Dennis Bots** was born in 1974 in Kitwe (Zambia). In 1996 he graduated from The Netherlands Film And Television Academy in Amsterdam as screenwriter and director. One of his first directorial efforts was EMERGENCY EXIT (2001), a short film that won the award for 'most innovative short' at the Reel2Real Film Festival in Canada, and was selected for the '4th Kodak European Showcase For New Talent' on the 55th Cannes Film Festival.

Apart from several other shorts, Bots directed episodes of popular TV-shows like GOLDCOAST, THE SCENT OF ROSES & WODKA LIME, WEST WIND, TRAUMA 24/7, GOOD TIMES BAD TIMES, CELLBLOCK H AND WITHOUT A TRACE. From 2004 onwards, he started concentrating more on feature films and series for younger audiences. He

made the adventure film *ZOOP IN AFRICA* in 2005, which reached Golden Film-status and went on to win Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Award for best Film. *ANUBIS AND THE PATH OF THE SEVEN SINS* followed in 2008 and in 2009 saw the premiere of the even more successful *ANUBIS AND THE REVENGE OF ARGHUS*, which achieved Platinum Film-status.

In 2012 *COOL KIDS DON'T CRY* was released, a feature based on the children's book of the same name by Jacques Vriens. It became a major hit and a Golden Film, and received many national awards including a Rembrandt and several Golden Calves. The film didn't go unnoticed abroad either. *COOL KIDS* won, among many other prizes, the 'Audience Award' and the 'Honorable Mention Jury 11-13 years' at the Toronto International Film Festival For Children (TIFF); 'Best Feature Film – Jury Award' at the Vienna International Children's Film Festival; and 'Best Children's Feature' at the China International Children's Festival.

In fifteen years time, director of photography **Rolf Dekens** has become one of the most diverse cameramen in The Netherlands. His career is closely linked with that of director Tim Oliehoek. They both grew up in the province of Brabant, attended the Film Academy together, and Rolf was responsible for the photography on Oliehoek's first shorts *ISABELLE* and *THE HORSELESS PRINCE*. Dekens remained Oliehoek's first choice. *TOO FAT TOO FURIOUS*, *SPY OF ORANGE*, *PIZZAMAFFIA* and *CHEZ NOUS* all had Rolf behind the camera. He also lensed *ALIBI* (Johan Nijenhuis) and *USHI MUST MARRY* (Paul Ruven), both features, and *SHOUF! SHOUF!*, *THE SHEEP WITH FIVE LEGS*, *SOCCER WIVES*, *BACKSLIDE* for television.

**Karen van Holst Pellekaan** is one of the most successful Dutch film and TV-writers. Together with Marnie Blok she scored a great number of boxoffice hits. Their writing collaboration started in 2004 with the telefilm *SWINE*. Van Holst Pellekaan (1955) had already built a respectable acting career. She starred in youth series *THE LADIES* and was one of the driving forces behind hit comedy *LOONIES*, which also yielded two feature films. Since 2004 Van Holst Pellekaan and Blok have written telefilm *NIGHBOAT*, *THE HAPPY HOUSEWIFE* -based on Heleen van Royen's infamous book, drama series *LINE 32* and, for director Antoinette Beumer, the road-movie *JACKIE*, starring sisters Carice and Jelka van Houten, and Holly Hunter. Their most recent collaboration is historic epic *KENAU*.

Karen van Holst Pellekaan has several juvenile novels to her name.

**Kurt Loyens** (Antwerp, 1968) is a renowned art director and production designer, who just as easily creates sets suitable for present day scenes as for historical drama. He gained his first experience in the mid-nineties as an assistant prop master on such films as *ANTONIA'S LINE* and *CHARACTER*. In 1998 he decorated his first set - that of Patrice Toye's *ROSIE*. Having become an art director he worked on both Flemish TV productions (*RUSSIAN DOLLS: SEX TRADE*, *THE PEARL FISHERS*, *MISSING*, *WITH ALL ONE'S MIGHT*) and features (*REDEMPTION*, *HELL IN TANGIER*, *BEN X*, *MADLY IN LOVE*). A recent Dutch film that features his work is the romantic comedy *SOOF*. Kurt is especially proud of his credits on *FLESH AND BONES* (2009), a Flemish

fictional TV-series depicting a butcher's family. Noteworthy as well is association with LOFT. Loyens was responsible for the production design on all three versions of Erik van Looy's celebrated thriller: the Flemish one (2008), the Dutch one (2010, director Antoinette Beumer) and the American one (2014).

**Filmmore** is a leading full-service post-production facility, providing editing and visual effects for the film and TV market. By opting right from the start in 2006 to not do any commercials, Filmmore was able to specialize in long term-finishing of features and TV-series, and on-set supervision. This quickly translated to a significant share of the market. In 2012, the Netherlands Film Festival screened no less than 42 films for which we delivered grading, editing and/or visual effects.



*Maas Bronkhuyzen and Joes Brauers as Tuur and Lambert, friends in wartime.*

## **Press Clippings**

### **Spits (4 out of 5 stars)**

“‘Secrets Of War’ never talks down to its audience, but gives children an honest insight into the realities of war. The film, with its three disarming young actors, does end with hope for the future – and it is with that feeling you’ll leave the cinema.”

### **Veronica Magazine (4 out of 5 stars)**

“This deliciously sentimental and wonderfully acted Dutch film hits all the right notes.”

### **Moviescene (4 out of 5 stars)**

“The film takes its young audience seriously: betrayal and loss are dealt with in a harsh and realistic manner.”

“You almost forget that these are children. Their actions and emotions are very grown-up. It mustn’t have been easy for the young cast, but they have pulled it off.”

### **Tubantia (3.5 out of 5 stars)**

“Solid adaptation.”

“Secrets Of War shows that the war’s impact on children and adults was equally big.”

### **Preview Magazine**

“Impressive”

“Strong parts for Peters and De Walle”

### **TV-Film (3 out of 5 stars)**

“Exciting and solid youth film”

### **VPRO guide (4 out of 5 stars)**

“Dennis Bots gets the most out of his visuals in this tight adaptation of Jacques Vriens’ children’s novel.”

“Sharply edited adventure which might sweep up at many an award ceremony, both domestically and abroad.”

### **Troskompas (4 out of 5 stars)**

“First-rate piece of work.”

“Dennis Bots clearly knows the secret of creating children’s films which have something to say.”

“Convincing in every way.”

### **Algemeen Dagblad (4 out of 5 stars)**

“Again Bots proves that he is an excellent director of young acting talent.”



“The children portraying Tuur, Lambert and Maartje are effective in almost every scene.”

“Compares very favourably with ‘Winter In Wartime’.”

**Metro (4 out of 5 stars)**

“Very strong adaption of a book about friendship in wartime.”

“Probably the best Dutch (youth) film of 2014.”

**NRC Next (3 out of 5 stars)**

“Admirable.”

**De Telegraaf (3.5 out of 5 stars)**

“Atmospheric and heart-rending family film.”

“A well-executed adaptation of the book.”

“It hits you where it counts: the heart.”

**Trouw (4 out of 5 stars)**

“All three leads are very talented”

“Maas and Brauers have you reaching for a handkerchief in no time.”

**De Volkskrant (3 out of 5 stars)**

“Bots’ direction is workman-like, but he lets the child actors shine.”

**Nu.nl (3.5 out of 5 stars)**

“Beautifully made youth film”

“A suspenseful film about two ordinary boys in an extraordinary time.”

**Cinemagazine.nl (4 out of 5 stars)**

“‘Secrets Of War’ isn’t just for 16 and under – on the contrary. It is highly recommended for a broad audience.”

“Maas Bronkhuyzen’s portrayal is fantastic.”

“Joes turns Lambert into an unforgettable character.”

“Visually, ‘Secrets Of War’ is bliss.”

“With ‘Secrets of War’ Dennis Bots goes straight for the hearts of young and old.”

“Moments of suspense and humour are expertly timed, emotionally affecting moments come when you least expect them. A gripping story and a wonderful cast. Maybe the makers should start clearing shelves for a few Golden Calves...?”

**Filmpjekijken.com (4 out of 5 stars)**

“The leads may be very young, they sure can act!”

“The way these young actors put across the development of their characters is especially impressive, when you take into account how multi-layered this film is.”

“A very enjoyable youth film, in particular because of the strong acting with a humorous touch. It will teach children a lot about the Second World War as the exciting story unfolds.”

**FilmTotaal.nl (3 out of 5 stars)**

“Will definitely impress its young target audience.”

**XGN.nl (3 out of 5 stars)**

“Secrets Of War is a solid war film. Director Dennis Bots concentrates mostly on the adventures of the two boys Tuur and Lambert and shoots these beautifully.”

**Onno Hoes**

*“Secrets Of War is an important story that we must keep on telling. Part of the film was shot in Maastricht and the south of Limburg. I recommend that everybody goes and sees this film, reads the book, and downloads the accompanying educational material”*: so says the mayor of Maastricht.

a film by  
DENNIS BOTS

screenplay by  
KAREN VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN

Bijker and Rinkel film present

in co-production with  
TARANTULA  
LIVING STONE BELGIUM  
KRO

this film is supported by  
THE NETHERLANDS FILM FUND  
THE FILMFUND LUXEMBOURG  
COBO FUND  
THE BELGIAN TAX SHELTER

CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

TUUR	MAAS BRONKHUYZEN
LAMBERT	JOES BRAUERS
BOY 1	MICHAEL NIERSE
BOY 2	TONKO BOSSEN
HORST BAUMHAKEN	LUC FEIT
MRS. WITTEMAN	JUUL VRIJDAG
MR. WITTEMAN	AD VAN KEMPEN
MR. RAMAKERS	LOEK PETERS
LEO	NILS VERKOOIJEN
KATRIEN	PIEN WESTENDORP
MRS. RAMAKERS	EVA DUIJVESTEIN
AUNT ANNA	ANNEMARIE PRINS
MR. NIJSKENS	STEFAN DE WALLE
MRS. NIJSKENS	MARGO DAMES
PIEKE	BAS VAN PROOIJEN
HOLTERMANS	HELMERT WOUDEBERG
ROELAND	BEAU SCHNEIDER
SJENG	FAAS WIJN
ROLF	BO KAMPHUES
FONS	TYEPPE TROOST
WELTEN	RENÉ VAN 'T HOF
PIERRE	JORIS KWINT
MAARTJE DRIESSEN	PIPPA ALLEN
TULKENS	JACQUES VRIENS
GERMAN SOLDIER 1	HERVE SOGNE
GERMAN SOLDIER 2	MARC BAUM
VICCAR	BRAM VAN DER VLUGT
GERMAN SOLDIER 3	MILLI SCHLESSER
OFFICER	PIERRE RIEU
PRISON GUARD	ERNST DEKKERS

casting

**JANUSZ GOSSCHALK**

**LEONIE LUTTIK**

**ELSKE FALKENA**

production design

**KURT LOYENS**

costume design

**ULI SIMON**

make-up & hair design

**KATJA REINERT**

sound recording

**BAS LOOKMAN**

sound design

**HERMAN PIEËTE CAS**

music

**ANDRE DZIEZUK**

editor

**PETER ALDERLIESTEN NCE**

director of photography

**ROLF DEKENS NSC**

line producer

**MICHIEL BARTELS**

co-producers

**DONATO ROTUNNO**

**MARTIN DEWITTE**

**BRIGITTE BAAKE**

producers

**HARRO VAN STAVERDEN**

**REINIER SELEN**

**DAVID-JAN BIJKER**

based on the novel by

**JACQUES VRIENS**

unit production manager

**HANS HEERSCHOP**

1st assistant director

**MARJAN LAMMERS**

2nd assistant director

**SOPHIE SLABBEKOORN**

production supervisor Luxembourg

**ELISE ANDRÉ**

assistant production manager

**SARAH DE REEPER**

3rd assistant directors

**ERIK GLIJNIS**

**MARIJKE DRIESSEN**

script continuity

**HILDE WOULDSTRA**



children's dialogue coach

**KARINE ROLDAAN**

nanny

**MARIA FALKENA**

video-assist

**TIMO HENSEN**

storyboards

**GIJS VAN DER LELIJ**

production assistants

**DANIEL BERENDS**

**FERNAND DE AMORIN**

**EVA BOON**

**BO WIJGERTS**

1st assistant set designer

**MARC RIDREMONT**

coordinator art-department

**ELKE FARO**

prop master

**STEVEN LIÉGEOIS**

assistant prop master

**JOKE VANDENABEELE**

set dresser

**MARIEKE WINTERS**

assistent set dresser

**TINNELOU DE LEEUW**

3D visualisations

**JAN VAN DEN BUSSCHE**

graphic artist

**MAARTEN DE WITH**

runners art department

**BEN LACROIX**

**THOMAS KAYAERTS**

construction manager

**GEERT PRINSMEL**

carpenters

**DRIES CLEIREN**

**KOBE DE BONTRIDDER**

**OLIVIER FIMMERS**

**JEF GOETHEM**

**STEFAAN LEJON**

**GEERT LOYENS**

**LUC RIDREMONT**

head painter

**WIM KLEWAIS**

painters

**GABY MATEUS**

**INGE LOYENS**

**EDOUARD PALLARDY**

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**MARIE DRIES**  
**EVIE HAMELS**  
**MARINO LAMBRIX**  
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**KASPER DE BONT**  
B-camera 1st assistant  
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ALAIN CLARK  
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