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**HANNES
JAENICKE**

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Hannes Jaenicke

'Becoming an actor was an accident'

Actor, environmental activist, author: Hannes Jaenicke is many things in one. He speaks to *Discover Germany* about his latest projects, why the world needs more mavericks, his motivation to change the world and more.

TEXT: NANE STEINHOFF | PHOTOS: OLAF KROENKE

Born in 1960, Hannes Jaenicke grew up in Germany and the USA before he became one of Germany's most respected actors. "As a boy, I wanted to become a trucker. Later on, ski and motorcycle racer or ice hockey pro. Becoming an actor was actually more of an accident. During and after my school days I tried quite a lot of different things. I worked in a record store, as a waiter, was briefly enrolled at university to become an English and sports teacher. Then, actor guests who were regulars at the restaurant that I worked in put the bee in my bonnet that I should try to get into drama school," smiles Jaenicke. He followed their advice.

After completing his acting training at Vienna's Max-Reinhardt-Seminar, theatrical engagements at Germany's most renowned stages soon followed. In the '80s, he became known to a wider audience through the thriller *Abwärts* and has starred in numerous TV series, documentaries and films, including *Hindenburg*, *Lost Treasure* and *Allein unter Töchtern*. He was also seen in several international productions, such as the CBS series *Due South* or *The Highlander*. Personally, his most memorable role was playing "Peter III. in *Catherine the Great* alongside Catherine Zeta-Jones, Jeanne Moreau and Omar Sharif. We really got something to play there, which is unfortunately not often the

case in German screenplays. Apart from this, I loved all roles that I was able to develop with film director Dominik Graf", explains Jaenicke.

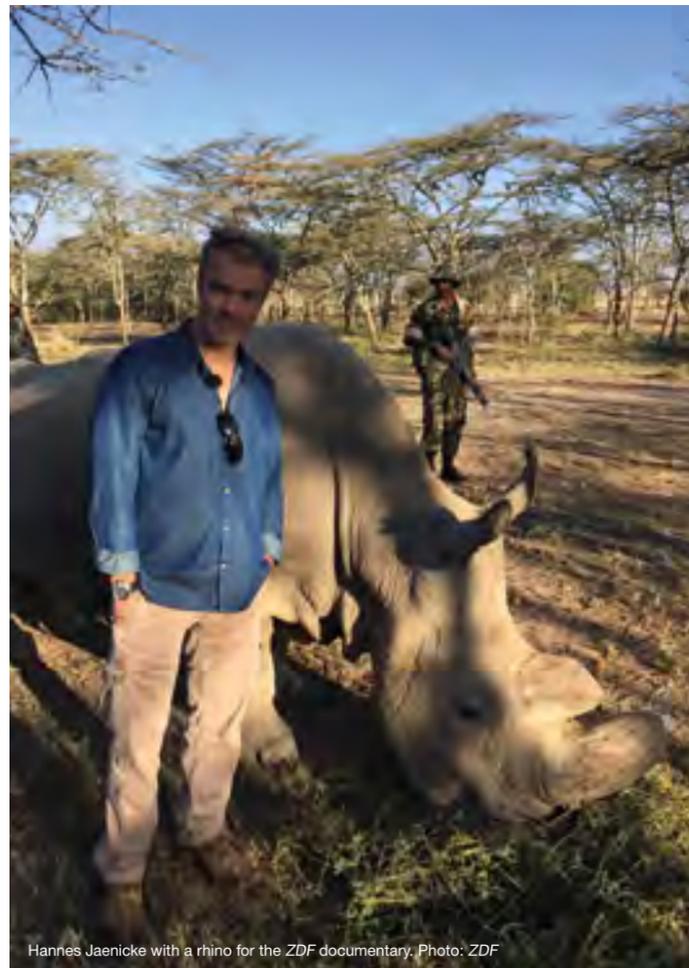
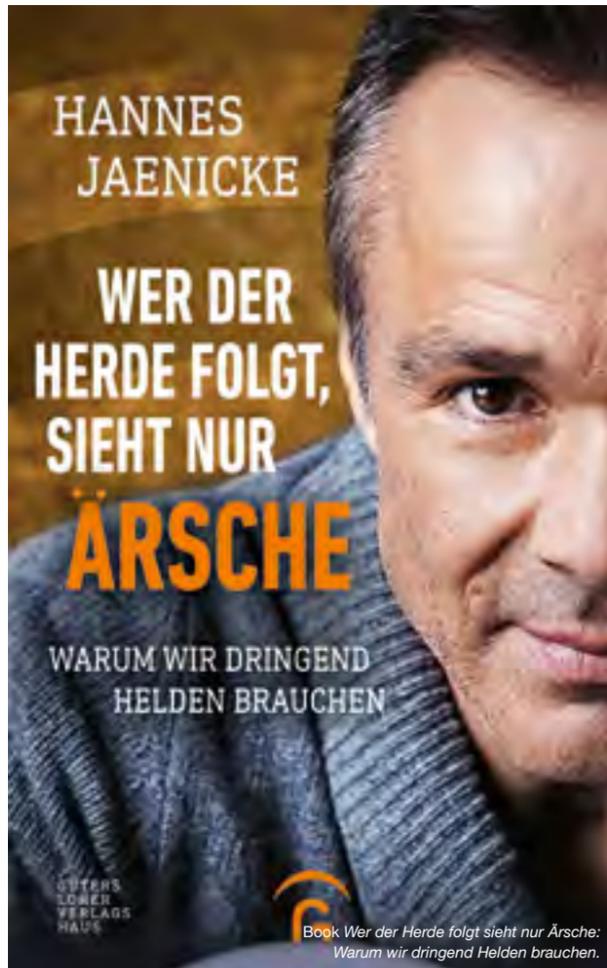
About rhinos and mavericks

Since 2007, Jaenicke has also produced his own documentaries – some of them award-winning, all of them with a wider purpose. For example, his documentary on sharks was able to help enforce an international, much-needed finning ban. After a documentary about orangutans was shown on TV, a seven-digit sum was donated by viewers for the reforestation of the rainforest in Indonesia. Jaenicke recalls: "Documentaries make more of a difference, movies entertain better – I find both important." In his personal life, Jaenicke is committed to different topics of environmental protection and advocates numerous caritative organisations like the Christoffel Blind Mission (CBM), and the Tibetan human rights organisation International Campaign for Tibet (ICT). His first book *Wut allein reicht nicht* (*Anger alone isn't enough*), published in 2010, quickly got on to the *SPIEGEL* bestseller list.

A project Jaenicke is currently working on is a documentary for ZDF on the last remaining rhinos. For this, Jaenicke travelled from Africa to Asia to trace the illegal trade of rhino horn. This project is especially

important to him because "rhinos are the earth's oldest land mammals and they are nevertheless on the verge of extinction – at least in the wild. Due to the lack of German legislation they are still allowed to be hunted, the trophies can get imported to Germany, and the animals still get chased through the ring at circuses as an audience attraction", he explains. An airdate is planned for autumn 2017.

Another interesting project that we want to know more about is his recently released book *Wer der Herde folgt, sieht nur Ärsche: Warum wir dringend Helden brauchen* (*Those who follow the herd only see arses: why we need heroes*). In the book, Jaenicke explains why mavericks are the real heroes for him and why he thinks that comfort and herd mentality lead towards mediocrity. He calls upon individuality and stepping out of the system, while meeting the small and large heroes of everyday life. Jaenicke explains: "There are two types of herd mentality: the healthy, biologically and socially needed one, like in the animal kingdom, which offers support and security to children, the elderly and the less well-off. And then there is the unhealthy, populist, advertising and media-driven one: this one leads to questionable election results like National Socialism in the 1930s in Germany, Trump, Putin, Erdogan, Orbán, Kaczinski and so on. And it leads to a consumerism that turns our so-called 'mother earth' into a rubbish dump and plundering site. Change always comes from lateral thinkers and non-conformists, even when they initially are smiled at, mocked or fought."



As we probably all know, it is quite difficult to abandon old structures in everyday routines and to not lose sight of one's own goals. Thus, we want to know whether Jaenicke has any tips or tricks to not become too comfortable and to dare more in life: "I use some of my favourite quotes in the book: 'Our heads are round so our thoughts can change direction' (Francis Picabia) or 'The purest form of insanity is leaving everything as it is and still hope that something will change' (Albert Einstein). The human being is a creature of habit that doesn't want to realise that the only constant in life is change. Insofar, one should enjoy curiosity and should try to look beyond one's own nose occasionally. Life is significantly more fun then."

So what can we all do to bring positive change to the world? "We can treat our environment, our resources and our wallets a bit more consciously. Us consumers have a far greater influence on the mar-

ket than we are aware of. This starts with plastic waste, our tendency towards heavy SUVs and big cars and doesn't stop with the waste of energy, meat consumption and the associated factory farming."

'I would love to play in a mafia film'

As if all of this was not enough, Jaenicke has filmed another three movies this year which will be shown in autumn: the judiciary and rape drama *Meine Fremde Freundin* from director Stefan Krohmer for ARD; Dominik Graf's *Der Rote Schatten*, which is about the involvement of the Federal Intelligence Service with the RAF (ARD); and *Oben Ohne (Sat 1)*, which deals with the breast implant scandal in which thousands of women became ill or even died because cheap, German industrial silicone was used in breast implants. "In France, all 30,000 patients were reimbursed, in Germany: zero. Additionally, the above-mentioned ZDF documentary on rhinos, *Im Einsatz für Nashörner* is al-

most finished. Thus, quite a lot is happening," says Jaenicke.

Having played a variety of roles and genres in his career, we want to know whether he has any dream roles. He recalls: "Actually there are many. As I grew up with Coppola's *The Godfather* and Martin Scorsese films, I would love to play in a mafia film at some point. After all, people like to think that there is no mafia in Germany – what a misconception. Apart from that, I've always looked up to Al Pacino and his movies and roles. He always played things that I would call dream roles." What about other wishes and dreams after having achieved so much in life already? Jaenicke smiles: "The list is long. Learn foreign languages. Play musical instruments. Sail around the world, with surfboards on board. Make the world a tiny bit better. And at some point, I want to die being a bit smarter than when I came into this world. Is that enough for a guy in his mid-fifties?"