'The Whisperers': A journey into the world of interpreters

This documentary portrays the day-to-day working lives of four generations of conference interpreters.

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Since 2002 AIIC has been in touch with filmmakers David Bernet and Christian Beetz regarding a documentary about interpreters. "The Whisperers" seeks to reveal the essential qualities that conference interpreters possess, and to portray the day-to-day working lives of interpreters by approaching the subject from various angles. And now we are about to get a chance to see it!

In a 2003 interview with Communicate, David Bernet said:

"The point of a documentary film is to show the viewers things that are not absolutely normal and don’t enter into their usual field of vision. We promoted this project on the grounds that interpreters are often very colourful characters and, to a certain extent, inhabit a world of their own which can be made accessible by a film of this kind."

Mr. Bernet thought about making a documentary on interpreters for quite some time before finally finding the right opportunity. And he seems to have acquired insight into their makeup and perhaps even some affinity for them.

"What I very much admire in interpreters - speaking at a very general level now - is their unending curiosity, their boundless thirst for knowledge and the almost painful precision of their work, as it appears to the observer. But without a doubt all interpreters love talking. That certainly seems to me to be linked with the profession. Some of our interviewees have described this spontaneity of communication as a “déformation professionnelle”. That may be so. But quite frankly I find it very endearing.”

The 80-minute version of the film will be unveiled at the Kölner Filmhaus in Cologne at 12h00 Sunday 28 August 2005, and at the Hackesche Höfe in Berlin at 20h00 on the 29th of the same month.

The 60 minute small-screen version will be premiered on German channel WDR Friday 2 September 2005 at 23h20.

ARTE Television will showcase the French/German television version at 17h50 on 22 October 2005 as part of a theme program dedicated to language matters under the title BABYLONISCHES SPRACHVERGNÜGEN. It currently looks like an interview with AIIC member Edgar Weiser will also be aired as part of the special. Check the ARTE website as the date approaches.
In the coming months other channels are scheduled to broadcast the film in Switzerland, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Sweden and Latvia. Sometime this autumn a DVD version, available to AIIC members at a discount, will be out.

**Recommended citation format:**