

# VARIETY - The Deflowering of Eva van End

Pasolini's "Teorema" is successfully transplanted to Dutch suburbia in the effective tragicomedy "The Deflowering of Eva van End."

By [BOYD VAN HOEIJ](#)



With: With: Vivian Dierickx, Jacqueline Blom, Ton Kas, Abe Dijkman, Tomer Pawlicki, Rafael Gareisen. (Dutch, English, German dialogue)

**Pasolini's "Teorema" is successfully transplanted to Dutch suburbia in the effective tragicomedy "The Deflowering of Eva van End." The story of the arrival of an impossibly perfect German boy into a deftly dysfunctional Lowlands family exposes the bourgeois clan to their true desires and inner selves. With an assist from newbie feature scribe Anne Barnhoorn, rookie helmer Michiel ten Horn, who has a background in animation, finds exactly the right tone for this quirky tale, which is also reminiscent of the ironic, oft-devastating insights of Todd Solondz's work. A Toronto slot was the first of no doubt many fest stops.**

Though the title might suggest otherwise, the pic is really a portrait of how an apparently picture-perfect middle-class family comes apart when it is confronted with actual perfection. Blond-haired, white-clad teenager Veit (Rafael Gareisen), who looks like an escapee from a Rugby Ralph Lauren catalog, takes on the Terence Stamp role, here imagined as a faultless German exchange student who arrives on the family's doorstep to general surprise, though the van Ends' slightly zaftig 15-year-old daughter, Eva (Vivian Dierickx), told everyone he was coming — not that anyone actually listens to her.

In Barnhoorn's perceptive, well-structured screenplay, inspired by events that actually befell helmer ten Horn in his youth, Veit's extremely kind, attentive persona — he cooks breakfast for whoever deserves it most, has adopted a child in Africa and is a vegetarian — soon throws everyone else's imperfect ways into high relief. Those shown up include the milquetoast father (Ton Kas), the inner-peace-seeking mother (Jacqueline Blom), Eva and her two older brothers, reserved and about-to-be-married Erwin (Tomer Pawlicki) and rude, gluttonous Manuel (Abe Dijkman).

That bourgeois families aren't all that happy behind their white picket fences isn't exactly a surprise, but "Deflowering" goes beyond that simple statement to show how, to paraphrase Tolstoy, each family member is unhappy in her or his own way. Ten Horn uses the contrast with Veit as a litmus test for each character's sanity, while also laying bare how the lack of communication among the van Ends has made anything other than anesthetized cohabitation practically impossible.

It's quite an achievement that the pic manages to suggest so much while seemingly coasting from one oddball event to another, with the ensemble cast delivering riveting, entirely co-dependent performances.

Craft contributions, including d.p. Jasper Wolf's slightly saturated lensing, production designer Rikke Jellier's fantastic bourgeois habitat, and costume designers Minke Lunter and Rebekka Wormann's telltale duds, all help bear out the film's central idea that a little less perfection never hurt anyone.

The Deflowering of Eva van End - Netherlands

PRODUCTION: A Pupkin Film presentation and production, in association with Avro.

(International sales: M-Appeal, Berlin.) Produced by Iris Otten, Sander van Meurs, Pieter Kuijpers. Co-producers, Mylene Verdurmen, Simone van den Ende. Directed by Michiel ten Horn. Screenplay, Anne Barnhoorn.

CREW: Camera (color, HD, widescreen), Jasper Wolf; editor, Sander Vos; music, Djurre de Haan; production designer, Rikke Jellier; costume designers, Minke Lunter, Rebekka Wormann; sound, Michael Sauvage; line producer, Stine Flex; casting, Job Castelij, Shanti Besseling, Elske Falkena, Julliette van Ardenne; assistant director, Dirk Achten.

Reviewed at Toronto Film Festival (Discovery), Sept. 14, 2012. Running time: 95 MIN.

CAST: With: Vivian Dierickx, Jacqueline Blom, Ton Kas, Abe Dijkman, Tomer Pawlicki, Rafael Gareisen. (Dutch, English, German dialogue)

# HOLLYWOOD REPORTER:

## The Deflowering of Eva Van End: Karlovy Vary Review

6:07 PM PDT 7/3/2013 by Stephen Dalton

*An angelic guest wreaks havoc in suburbia.*

### Todd Solondz meets Pasolini in this bittersweet Dutch coming-of-age comedy.

KARLOVY VARY, Czech Republic -- An impossibly perfect visitor exposes the hidden faultlines within a dysfunctional suburban family in this darkly funny cautionary tale from the Dutch directing debutant **Michiel ten Horn**, which is showing at Karlovy Vary International Film Festival this week. The deadpan tone and ironically sunny aesthetic recalls the bracingly sour tragicomedies of **Todd Solondz**, but there is more redeeming lightness in this highly engaging Eurodrama, which has enough bittersweet charm and universal relevance to appeal to discerning audiences beyond the festival circuit. Having much of its multilingual dialogue in English may also prove an added selling point. Our main window on the story is the family's teenage daughter Eva (**Vivian Dierickx**), a sensitive ugly duckling who is bullied at school and largely ignored at home. But the arrival of her German exchange student pal Veit (**Rafael Gareisen**), a strapping Aryan blond with movie-star looks and an apparently angelic nature, sends shockwaves through the entire family. While Eva is consumed by unrequited love – and unspoken lust -- her older brothers reveal themselves as racist idiots and pompous jerks. Meanwhile, their bickering parents go off the rails in a doomed bid to match Veit's New Age lifestyle and charitable good works. The consequences prove catastrophic, and almost fatal.

The film was purportedly inspired by events in the director's youth, although first-time screenwriter **Anne Barnhoorn** is also clearly referencing **Pier Paolo Pasolini's** 1968 quasi-Biblical political parable *Theorem*, in which **Terence Stamp's** beautiful stranger emerges from nowhere to seduce every member of a bourgeois Italian household, transforming their lives but plunging them into despair. Barnhoorn borrows many of Pasolini's plot developments, but removes most of the sex and leftist social critique. Still, were he still alive, the veteran Italian radical might have been gratified to see history repeating itself just as Marx predicted. His film was tragedy, this is farce.

Ten Horn has a background in animation, hinted at by the film's bright toybox palette and stylized, cartoonish look. Editing is crisp and camerawork agreeably fluid, most notably in the single bravura tracking shot that frames the final scene. Although it never takes the simplistic option of making Veit an evil sociopath with a smiling face, *The Deflowering of Eva Van End* essentially inverts Pasolini's message. Eva and her family are irrevocably changed by their angelic visitor, but his smug superiority eventually proves destructive, and his departure is ultimately a healing process for everyone. Be careful when you wish for perfection, it may just turn up on your doorstep.

*Production company: Pupkin Film*

*Producers: Peter Kuijpers, Sander van Meurs, Iris Otten*

*Cast: Vivian Dierickx, Rafael Gareisen, Abe Dijkman, Tomer Pawlicki, Jacqueline Blom, Ton Kas*

*Director: Michiel ten Horn*

*Screenwriter: Anne Barnhoorn*

*Cinematographer: Jasper Wolf*

*Editor: Sander Vos*

*Music: Djurre de Haan*

*Sales company: M-Appeal*

*Unrated, 98 minutes*



# The Deflowering of Eva Van End

Posted on

October 29, 2014 by [bernardovillela](#)

I've discussed the fact that I quite enjoy the Film Movement film-of-the-month club. One aspect I've mentioned less frequently than the included short films on each DVD release, is the fact that on the inside cover there is usually a statement about the film from both the company and the director of the film. I make it a point to not read either until after I'm done watching the feature. The reason I mention that is because what struck me from the first frame is what Eva's (Vivian Dierickx) look, her persona; reminded me of Dawn Wiener, the protagonist of Todd Solondz's *Welcome to the Dollhouse*, and as the opening scene played out that notion was reinforced. Those sentiments were echoed in the statement. However, I agree this is its own film because it's not a myopic view of a world but rather a portrait of an entire family.

Eva is our entry into their world. She gives us our first glimpse of them and thus we see them in a very broad stroke. As Veit (Rafael Gareisen), the German exchange student who turns their world upside down, changes their behavior we learn about them, what their insecurities were and what they try to do to take control of an alter their lives. It's a very funny film in both its exaggerated renditions of reality, but also a very real one with dramatic consequences. The characters progress but are not perfect; they remain flawed in the end, but better for the experience. Veit could be the only one who walks through it unchanged. He is what he always is, it's what the family projects him to be that alters.

Through artful cinematography, editorial finesse and music that enchantingly encapsulates this odd world, there are well-executed tonal shifts and visceral impact that far overcome any minor quibbles I may have. *The Deflowering of Eva Van End* is a film that paints the portrait of a family far more fully than its title suggest and is recommended viewing if you see it about.

***The Deflowering of Eva Van End*** is a bit of an oddball dark comedy and drama from relative newcomer Michiel Ten Horn, a first-time feature-length director from the Netherlands who previously made some acclaimed short films (two of which are included on this DVD release). Released by Film Movement in the United States, this is a independent film reassembling our perceptions of the typical films considered to exist within the 'growing up' genre that is common with productions in the US by sharing a story from a different cultural perspective (and that still fundamentally shares a lot in common with Americana tales of teenage maturation). In this case, the story centers upon an entire family of characters instead of on one lone protagonist (despite what the time might lead some to think).

In *The Deflowering of Eva Van End*, Horn explores a family in transition who are faced with some uncomfortable changes as they are helping to host a foreign-exchange student from Germany (named Veit) who has moved in with their family. It's a story of family and it explores the family of this bizarre story through a sequence of odd events that lead to the transformative conclusion. The story begins with Eva (Vivian Dierickx) at a table with her family. They are all around her yet not one of them seems to really recognize or acknowledge her. She is a 15 year old girl who lacks the ability to speak up for herself and who others take for granted. The film establishes a journey with this character that guides the audience through the rest of the oddball characters of *The Deflowering of Eva Van End*.

Over the course of the story, Eva is able to transform herself and she recognizes some things (good and bad) that she hadn't before (and all the while without saying hardly anything at all). The rest of the family contributes to the dysfunctional nature of them all. The parents are also often preoccupied with working and are within their own worlds so they don't tend to pay that much attention to children Eva, Erwin, and Manuel. It's a family of 'E's (except the *one* son) as the parents are named Evert and Etty. No one seems to understand each other as well as they could. The family is not nearly as close as the "E" names would seem to initially suggest.

Throughout the film the new character to their household, Veit (Rafael Gareisen) causes some dramatic commotion as a number of the family's doubts and personal troubles are brought to light within themselves. One of the sons in the family is engaged but is actually homosexual, another is dealing with the fact that his one major strength is at winning an eating contest each year (plus the fact that he is usually smoking-dope), and the daughter Eva is usually ignored by those at school and at home - except when she is being bullied or teased - and must deal with a number of self-doubt and body-image issues that she seems to struggle with on a daily basis. The parents deal with their own issues too as Etty confronts stresses in trying to raise her children while finding time for personal peace while Evert tries to figure out his calling when he learns about how he could help a poor African child that Veit speaks to through web-chat: a process that leads the father to take out the family's entire savings to try and help establish a business with the young boy so that he can do something that might help him out of his poverty.

Out of every aspect of the film's production, the thing that stood out the most to me as being something impressive and noteworthy was the filmmaking by director Michiel Ten Horn. It certainly felt like a film from a relative newcomer to the world of directing but it was an entirely well-realized effort from a visual standpoint, with a solid grasp of visual storytelling apparent by the director. The screenplay was written by Anne Barnhoorn based on concepts established from herself and the director, and while it is well-written in the sense that everything flows well and connects in the film's final moments, I thought that the attempts towards humor in the script were mostly unsuccessful (which isn't helpful for a film that is supposed to be a comedy, dark or not).

The performances by the cast were quite good, and I thought everyone did a solid job at creating a feeling of being a part of an actual family. This is also a complement to the directing. There are moments where I felt like this could have been a much better film with a slightly revised script or had some additional work been done with regards to the origins of the idea. I thought the characters were not too likeable in characterization (aside from, perhaps, Etty... who does a good thing by trying to help out the poor African kid but he also messes with his family by taking out their entire savings) but they were believably portrayed even with some of the outlandishness fundamentally inherent in this effort. The character most perplexing was perhaps Veit. In bringing out these different elements of the characters it often felt like it was done with an intentional purpose by Veit. Yet the character is so odd and is never explained to the audience in a way that makes sense. Something feels alien about this 'stranger' to the storyline. At times it felt more like Veit was simply a storytelling concept projecting and propelling the story forward rather than an actual character within the film.

**The cinematography by Jasper Wolf impressed me.** This was a very well filmed movie in terms of the lighting and the unusually drab color palette. The overall impression of the film was certainly helped by authentic and artistic photography. It is never too bright or overly-cheerful. Instead, it offers up quirkiness with a dark palette that seems appropriate for the material.

In exploring these characters, I found that *The Deflowering of Eva Van End* was an ambitious project for filmmakers who are still clearly newcomers to making movies. The script has some good ideas and is convincing at portraying a family even if it's humor isn't so good. The directing was solid and shows promise for future films by Michiel Ten Horn. The performances felt genuine. I didn't wholly appreciate the end result and even at less than two hours the film is something that feels a bit overlong. Nonetheless, there are some interesting elements to this odd character study and it is worth checking out.

### **The DVD:**

#### **Video:**

Michiel Ten Horn's *The Deflowering of Eva Van End* is well photographed by cinematographer Jasper Wolf and the photography is well-preserved with the Film Movement DVD release as it preserves the original theatrical aspect ratio of 2.35:1 and with anamorphic widescreen enhancement. The colors aren't that vibrant but the look of the film does match the storytelling approach rather effectively.

#### **Audio:**

The original language track is preserved and the film is presented in Dutch with English subtitles. Dialogue is well-reproduced on the release and sometimes music is utilized for the film to be a more robust experience from a sound-design standpoint. The film is presented with both stereo and basic 5.1 surround sound options.

#### **Extras:**

This Film Movement release expands the typical offering of one monthly short film to include two different shorts. Both short films are from director Michiel Ten Horn. *Basta* is his second short film (the first one on this release) and I couldn't stand it. I wasn't so sure what was even happening for most of the brief runtime. It felt like the work of a director trying to imitate the filmmaker Jean-Pierre Jeunet (*Amelie*) while telling a "whimsical" story without any dialogue and the effort failed miserably at understanding why Jeunet's films are successful. It was not a successful effort as far as I am concerned.



The second short film included on this release is *Arie*, which Horn directed two years after the previous short. I found it to be an emotional and captivating short film about old age, friendship, and compassion.

The story centers upon Mr. Manders (Aart Staartjes), who lives in a retirement home with his friend Arie: a bird. The loss of the bird's life leads Mr. Manders into a surprising evening with events that lead to a new friendship. Unlike the first short film on this set, this is actually a coherent, emotional, and effective piece of filmmaking. It also feels genuine and it works as something original. It also doesn't feel like an attempt to copy from another director. Surprisingly, *Arie* demonstrated that Horn had improved his skills as a filmmaker dramatically.

The release also contains filmmaker bios, trailers for other Film Movement releases, comments from the director, and a note about why *The Deflowering of Eva Van End* was selected by Film Movement.

### **Final Thoughts:**

Michiel Ten Horn does a solid job as the director of *The Deflowering of Eva Van End*. The film manages to feel unique and noteworthy without managing to be as entertaining, enjoyable, or as successful as one would hope to find. It's biggest issue as a film is that it isn't really successful with being funny for something that is supposed to be a dark comedy. It works more purely as something that is a character study. The film is at least worth renting, though.

The DVD release by Film Movement is worth consideration for the surprisingly effective short film *Arie* (from director Michiel Ten Horn), which I considered the highlight of the release. It was a short film that delighted and enchanted me and I imagine others will find it to be a well done exercise in short-narrative filmmaking.

### **Rent It.**

Neil Lumbard is a lifelong fan of cinema. He aspires to make movies and has written two screenplays on spec. He loves writing, and currently does in Texas.