

GFO

GERMAN FILMS QUARTERLY



ISSUE 1-2023

WITH ARTICLES AND PORTRAITS ON
FACE TO FACE WITH GERMAN FILMS 2023
DIRECTORS **KAROLINE HERFURTH & LUKAS RINKER**
PRODUCER **KRISTINE M.I. KNUDSEN**
ACTOR & EUROPEAN SHOOTING STAR **LEONIE BENESCH**
SALES COMPANY **PICTURE TREE INTERNATIONAL**

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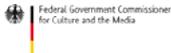


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Dear Readers,

Perhaps James Cameron should pin his hopes on Germany. Unlike in the USA, in December AVATAR: THE WAY OF WATER enjoyed the best opening weekend of 2022 in Germany. This could also be seen as a sign of the new strength of the German cinema market. Because after the barren years of the pandemic, finally the trend is upwards - and presumably for good, since the Corona catastrophe ought to be a thing of the past, according to universal expert opinion.

The fact that German films are achieving new countable successes at the box office - in a wide range of genres - also corresponds to such positive signals. For example, Karoline Herfurth's EINFACH MAL WAS SCHÖNES is recording excellent figures. The sequel to the children's book adaptation SCHOOL OF MAGICAL ANIMALS 2 has already reached a larger audience than the already extremely popular first part. And the ailing arthouse sector received welcome support with Fatih Akin's RHEINGOLD as well as the Cannes winner TRIANGLE OF SADNESS by Ruben Östlund.



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In the international award season, German movies are also poised to leave their mark, with Edward Berger's ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT having been nominated in nine key Oscar categories for *Best Picture*, *Best International Feature Film*, *Cinematography*, *Makeup and Hairstyling*, *Music (Original Score)*, *Production Design*, *Sound*, *Writing (Adapted Screenplay)* and *Visual Effects*, and being nominated for 14 BAFTAs. At the same time, the flagship of the German industry is ready to sail again: after the truncated editions of the previous two years, the Berlinale will be held as a full face-to-face event from 16 to 26 February, 2023. This edition of the film festival could be record-breaking, if the number of visitors to the European Film Market is anything to go by. Two months before the start, the exhibition spaces were already almost fully booked. And the awarding of the Honorary Bear is also sending out a signal in advance: in Steven Spielberg, the festival management have chosen perhaps one of the most prominent and crowd-pleasing award winners of the last ten years. Jury president Kristen Stewart, who received an Oscar nomination for SPENCER in 2022, not only brings her Hollywood nimbus with her, but also represents a time in which young female perspectives are shaping the film industry more than ever before. These are all encouraging signs. But it is important to remember nonetheless that the positive developments are taking place against the backdrop of global crises. And that these crises are more firmly linked to massive economic effects than they have been for a long time. The costs of energy and material have also risen enormously for film and television production. According to the autumn survey of the German Producers' Alliance, the increases amount to an average of 15 per cent. In view of the fragile global political situation, no reliable calculations can be made for 2023. It is impossible to predict to what extent such problems will be alleviated by political relief packages this year. But despite these financial burdens, we should not forget our colleagues who are struggling with incomparably tougher issues. We are talking about the creative workers in Ukraine and Iran, and wish to support them with every means at our disposal.

But unlike those involved in many other industries, the representatives of cinema have a decisive advantage: they create stories. The film industry's bounce back from the lows of the pandemic proves that these stories continue to exert tremendous traction. And reflecting on the telling of these stories can provide the focus and mental energy to keep us on course during these risky times.

Yours, Simone Baumann
Managing Director

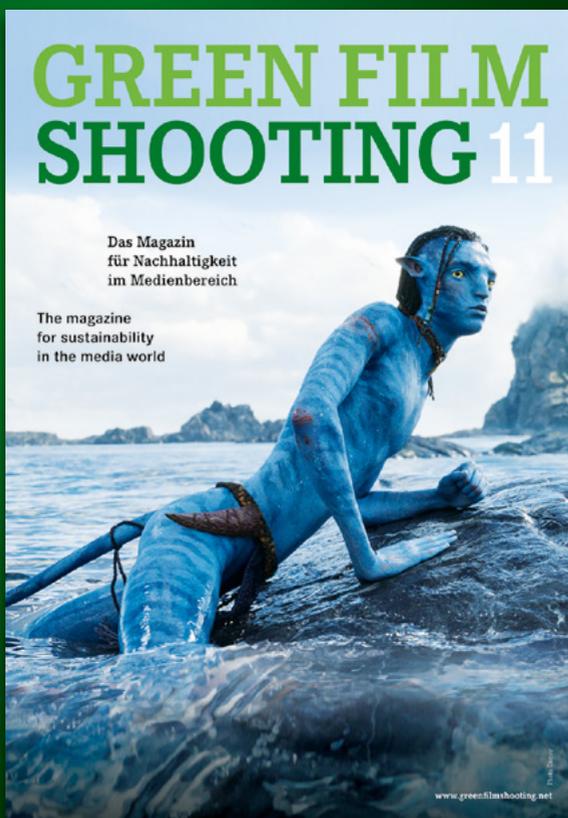
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ACTOR

LUKAS NATHRATH
DIRECTOR, ACTOR & WRITER

ALISON KUHN
DIRECTOR, ACTOR & WRITER

WELKET BUNGUÉ
ACTOR



FACE TO FACE WITH GERMAN FILMS

THE FILMMAKERS

Since its first edition in 2016, the annual FACE TO FACE campaign by German Films, the national information and advisory center for the promotion of German films abroad, has established itself as a platform with a signal effect, providing the German film talents with international visibility and drawing the attention of the global film industry to a selection of the country's most exciting newcomers and professionals. Since 2021, it has been important for German Films not only to focus on actors, directors and screenwriters, but to also include other trades within the film industry so as to pay respect to those talents who are also doing outstanding work behind the camera. Film more than any other art form relies with its complex creative process, in particular, on the collaboration of creative minds with diverse skills and backgrounds.

In 2023, the FACE TO FACE WITH GERMAN FILMS - THE FILMMAKERS campaign is once again presenting the entire range and diversity of German filmmaking, introducing seven new FACES: screenwriter SÖNKE ANDRESEN, actor WELKET BUNGUÉ, composer DASCHA DAUENHAUER, director, actor and writer ALISON KUHN, director, actor and writer LUKAS NATHRATH, writer and director REZA MEMARI and actor LENA URZENDOWSKY.

"German Films is not only about promoting and supporting German films, but also about spotlighting the professionals who create them", Managing Director Simone Baumann declares. More than ever before, this year's line-up of FACE TO FACE shows how diverse and versatile the talents of local filmmakers are. Not only in terms of their origins and influences, but their fields of work and skills. Not to mention the fact that a glance at these young creatives give a very clear indication of the high reputation the quality of German film and series productions now enjoy internationally. The work of this year's campaign ambassadors has been and continues to be featured at festivals around the globe, and quite a few of them are regularly collaborating with colleagues from all over the world for their projects.

SÖNKE ANDRESEN

Born in Hamburg in 1977, Sönke Andresen initially studied Screenwriting at the German Institute for Literature in Leipzig before completing teacher training for German at the University of Utrecht. In 2007, he received a scholarship to attend the Drehbuchwerkstatt München (Script Lab Munich) and has since worked as a screenwriter for film and TV series. In addition, he frequently writes plays for the theatre.

Andresen has collaborated on a regular basis with the director Axel Ranisch since the internationally multi-award winning film I FEEL LIKE DISCO (2013). They also worked together on two TATORT episodes and the Grimme Award-winning TV film FAMILIE LOTZMANN AUF DEN BARRIKADEN (2019). In addition, Andresen has frequently been involved as a writer on various series such as the second season of OTHER PARENTS, which earned him a nomination for the German Comedy Award in 2020.

2023 will see the German theatrical releases of the screen adaptation of Isabel Bogdan's novel THE PEACOCK, with Lavinia Wilson, Jürgen Vogel and Tom Schilling, for which he wrote the screenplay together with Christoph Mathieu, as well as the opera film ORPHEA IN LOVE, which is another collaboration with Ranisch. They also worked together on adapting Ranisch's novel NACKT ÜBER BERLIN as a series to also be premiered this year.

WELKET BUNGUÉ

Welket Bangué, who was born in Guinea-Bissau in 1988 and moved to Portugal with his family at the age of three, had his breakthrough in German-language cinema in 2020 with the lead role in Burhan Qurbani's highly acclaimed adaptation of the Döblin classic BERLIN ALEXANDER-PLATZ. The film celebrated its world premiere in competition at the Berlinale, was nominated in several categories for the European Film Awards and, among other prizes, received the German Film Award in Silver. Bangué himself was nominated for the German Film Award and also picked up a prize at the Stockholm International Film Festival.

As an actor, he has appeared in as many as 40 films over the past 15 years, including Ivo Ferreira's historical drama *LETTERS FROM WAR* (2016) and *BODY ELECTRIC* (2017) by Marcelo Caetano. Most recently, he could be seen in David Cronenberg's *CRIMES OF THE FUTURE* (2022), which had its world premiere at Cannes.

In addition, the Berliner-by-choice, who studied in Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro, runs the production company *KUSSA* together with his brother Welsau based in Paris. As a director, Bungué has also directed numerous short films screened at festivals worldwide, such as *MUDANÇA* which premiered in Forum Expanded at the Berlinale in 2020 and *CALLING CABRAL* (2022).

DASCHA DAUENHAUER

Music played a role from early on in the life of Dascha Dauenhauer who was born in Moscow in 1989. She learned to play the piano and to compose at the age of five. After her family moved to Berlin, Dauenhauer attended at the "Academy for exceptionally gifted children and young people" and was accepted as a young student at the "Hanns Eisler" Academy of Music in Berlin. During this time, Dauenhauer was already composing her own pieces and had numerous public performances with self-composed pieces. Her orchestra piece *SINFONIETTA* celebrated its world premiere at the Berlin Philharmonic in 2004. She completed her studies in Music Theory at Berlin's University of the Arts (UDK), followed by a master's degree in Film Music at the Film University Babelsberg Konrad Wolf. Since then, she has been working as a film composer.

In 2018, she was nominated in no less than three categories for the German Film Music Award and won in the category "Best short film" and "Newcomer". Two years later, she received the German and European Film Awards, among others, for her score to Burhan Qurbanî's *BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ*. She also wrote the score for Kornél Mundruczó's *EVOLUTION* (2021), which was premiered at Cannes International Film Festival, and Peter Thorwarth's Netflix success *BLOOD RED SKY* (2021), and won an award at the Max Ophüls Prize Film Festival for Alison Kuhn's *THE CASE YOU* (2020). She received

another award at the Cannes International Series Festival for the TV series *SOULS* in 2022. Dauenhauer also wrote the scores for the TV series *THE SWARM*, which will have its world premiere during the 2023 edition of the Berlinale, as well as Guy Nativé's upcoming historical drama *GOLDA* with Helen Mirren.

ALISON KUHN

Born in Saarbrücken in 1995, Alison Kuhn already won numerous awards for her first feature-length film *THE CASE YOU* (2020). The impressive examination of abuse of power and sexual exploitation was awarded the German Documentary Film Award for Arts & Culture, won Best Documentary at the Achtung Berlin festival as well as awards at DOK.fest Munich and the Max Ophüls Prize Film Festival, among others. The film was also screened at IDFA and CPH:DOX and was on general theatrical release in Germany in 2022.

After Kuhn's short film *FLUFFY TALES* (2021) was nominated for the German Short Film Award, shortlisted for the BAFTA Student Award and screened in Cannes as part of the Next Generation Short Tiger programme, her medium-length film *THE SWARMERS* (2022) was recently nominated for the First Steps Award and the Michael Ballhaus Award and screened in Hof, Palm Springs, Krakow and at the AFI, among others. In addition, the German-Vietnamese directed the first three episodes in the eighth season of the prize-winning series *DRUCK* (2022), and she is currently directing a new mini-series that will be released in 2023. Following that, she will be shooting two feature-length films for a theatrical release.

Kuhn, who studied at the Film University Babelsberg Konrad Wolf, has also frequently appeared in front of the camera as an actor. As a writer, she received the German National Award for Young Poetry *LYRIX* in 2017 and regularly contributes screenplays for films and series.

REZA MEMARI

Born in Iran and raised in Bavaria from the age of three, Reza Memari is a director and screenwriter, and the co-CEO of Telescope Animation.

After studying Marketing Communications and working as a product manager for a major US video game publisher, he initially gained a foothold in the film industry as an editor. Memari's debut animated feature film RICHARD THE STORK (2017), which he wrote, co-directed and edited, premiered at the Berlinale in 2017 and received the Bavarian Film Award, among other prizes.

After this global success, Memari co-founded Berlin-based Telescope Animation together with Maite Woköck in 2018 to develop, finance and produce gripping story universes across multiple media platforms. Two years later they launched Telescope Animation Studios in Hamburg, and most recently Telescope Game Studios in Brandenburg. Memari is currently working on several projects, including THE LAST WHALE SINGER, an epic underwater adventure that will be launched as a feature film, game and television series.

LUKAS NATHRATH

After appearing as an actor during his teenage years in films by renowned filmmakers such as Joseph Vilsmaier and Achim von Borries, Munich-born Lukas Nathrath initially studied North American Studies majoring in Film and attended an acting semester at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. He then completed his Master's degree in Film Directing at the Hamburg Media School.

In 2018, he was invited to German Films' Next Generation Short Tiger Programme at the Festival de Cannes with his short film MORALE (2018), while his graduation film KIPPA (2019) was screened at more than 50 international festivals and won the European Young CIVIS Media Prize and the Studio Hamburg Young Talent Award, among others. In 2020, he was Filmmaker in Residence at Basel House of Film; the following year, he participated in the Munich script lab Drehbuchwerkstatt München, where he developed a feature film script.

Nathrath's tragicomedy ONE LAST EVENING (2022), shot in just seven days, won the top prize in the First Look section at the Locarno Film

Festival last year. The film, which he also co-wrote and produced, was subsequently invited to screen at both the Tiger Competition of the International Film Festival Rotterdam and the Max Ophüls Prize Festival in early 2023. The director, who recently also took over the second unit on several high-end series productions, is currently developing various new projects, including a darkly comedic psychological thriller and an episodic tragicomedy.

LENA URZENDOWSKY

Born in Berlin in 2000, Lena Urzendowsky discovered her love of acting at a young age. She attended the renowned Stagefactory in her hometown, appeared on stage in the title role of the musical ANNIE and eventually made her debut in various TV productions. She received the Günter Rohrbach Film Prize and the Grimme Award, among others, for her performance in the TV drama THE WHITE RABBIT (2015) and was presented with the German Television Award, the German Acting Award and the Hessian Television Award for the critically acclaimed biopic DER GROSSE RUDOLPH (2018). She was also feted for her lead role in the feature film CO-COON (2019) which opened the Generation section at the Berlinale in 2020. Urzendowsky's performance in this film attracted prizes at international festivals as well as the Bavarian Film Awards. The Berliner is now also known to audiences far beyond Germany thanks to various roles in series of major international streamers such as the German global success DARK (2017/2019, Netflix) and HOW TO SELL DRUGS ONLINE (FAST) (2020, Netflix), Philipp Kadelbach's WE CHILDREN FROM BAHNHOF ZOO (2021, Amazon Prime), as well as the international co-production THE DEFEATED (2020) with Taylor Kitsch and Nina Hoss.

In 2023, Urzendowsky will not only be starring in the new Amazon series LUDEN (2021), but can also be seen in such feature films as BEYOND THE BLUE BORDER (2021/2022) by Sarah Neumann, Birgit Möller's FRANKY FIVE STAR (2022), Michael Klier's DAS SCHÖNSTE IST DER FLUSS (2022/2023) as well as FROM HILDE, WITH LOVE (2022) by Andreas Dresen.

Patrick Heidmann

A close-up portrait of director Karoline Herfurth. She has dark, wavy hair pulled back, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. Her hand is resting under her chin. She is wearing a black, off-the-shoulder top with small white dots. The background is a plain, light grey.

HER KIND OF RECIPE FOR SUCCESSFUL FILMMAKING

A PORTRAIT OF DIRECTOR KAROLINE HERFURTH

Karoline Herfurth is no longer a newcomer, not even as a director. Born in Berlin in 1984, the actor has now directed four feature films in parallel to her acting career. Two of them, *WUNDERSCHÖN* and *EINFACH MAL WAS SCHÖNES*, were released in German cinemas in 2022 (following delays due to Covid). But she is still as nervous as ever in face of an upcoming premiere.

Certainly, Herfurth laughs loudly at my question whether a cinema release six years after her debut *SMS FÜR DICH* cannot be casually chalked up as routine: "It's not as if I have the recipe for a film that works perfectly. Besides, every film takes two to three years of work, and not just for me. That's why as a filmmaker you bear a lot of responsibility for every story. And it never becomes commonplace to make yourself naked somehow and visible in this way, because there is a lot of personal stuff in every film, from humour to values."

Herfurth, who is also involved in each of her films as a screenwriter, does have a kind of recipe for success: like few others in German-language cinema, time and again she manages to deal with issues that are important to her while deliberately appealing to a wide audience, skillfully balancing seriousness and light-hearted humour. "I want a film to have great emotional moments," she comments. "It has to be able to go deep, emotionally, as well as being dramatic. And at the same time, I want to keep intercepting that and framing the story with lightness." Which doesn't mean that she wants to commit herself to tragicomedies for ever: "Maybe the humour will take a back seat at some point. But the emotions are unlikely too; for me, they are simply part of storytelling."

Choosing which material has whatever it takes to become her next work as a director is anything but an impromptu decision. "A project like this is not something I can just pick up casually. You need to love both the story and the characters a lot if you are really going to spend several years rethinking, defending and protecting them," Herfurth emphasises. "I immerse myself in every little detail, from sound design to editing, and follow a film completely, from front to back.

That's why such decisions are never easy or frivolous for me."

Whereas other actors who are drawn to work behind the camera place a special emphasis on working with the ensemble, Herfurth is still attracted to directing by those aspects that were strange to her: "I know the daily routine on the set, I grew up with it, although of course from a different perspective. That's why I find it particularly exciting to get to know the other fields that I wasn't familiar with before. Getting to know areas like preparation and especially post-production - that was a real feast for me."

According to Herfurth, a team of trusted colleagues who accompany her from one project to the next is also crucial to the success of her films. "I'm a big fan of having a familiar space, a basis. It creates a protective field that you have built up together and that is the be-all and end-all on set," she says, referring to long-term companions such as writer Monika Fäßler, cameraman Daniel Gottschalk, set designer Christian M. Goldbeck and composer Annette Focks. "Of course, there are also new encounters on a regular basis; after all, not all our team members always have the time. That can be very nice, and inspiring as well. But it simply makes the work easier and deepens it tremendously when - like in the editing room with Linda Bosch - I have someone at my side that I know I can rely on 100%."

She is also a permanent member of the team. So far, she has been in front of the camera as an actor in each of her directorial works, "simply because I still like acting very, very much and feel very lucky to be able to do both at the same time. At least as long as I fit into the story as an actor." But as far as 2023 is concerned, first Herfurth is looking forward to having someone else direct her again: "I haven't been able to concentrate completely on acting for a long time. I think it will be nice to be able to work on someone else's vision once more and to implement ideas that I might not have thought of myself. After all, that's also very enriching."

Patrick Heidmann



LIFE IS CRAZY

PORTRAIT OF DIRECTOR LUKAS RINKER

In 2008, Lukas Rinker went on a ride that shaped his destiny. The 22-year-old was working as a cycle courier and had to drop off a package at a film production company. Spontaneously, he asked, "Do you take interns?" After looking him up and down, the recipient answered, "Yes". This one word enabled him to participate in a total of 16 festivals as a director in 2022 – most recently at Tallinn Black Nights Festival, where his feature-length debut *HOLY SHIT!* was frenetically applauded by the audience. But one thing more than any other distinguishes him from many young German directors: He makes genre films.

"If I were allowed to work in the way I want, I would never end up in the A section of a festival," he says. *HOLY SHIT!*, is set in the tradition of 'confined spaces' thrillers such as *BURIED*, except that Rinker locates the action in a portaloo. The protagonist, pierced by a metal rod, awakens there from a swoon and realises that he only has 30 minutes before an adjacent building will be blown up. "One world sales was interested, but he wanted me to take out the humour to reach bigger audiences." Rinker remembers. He remained true to himself, however, and a € 300,000 debut film grant from the federal state of Hessen and funding from Studio Hamburg and The Playmaker Munich gave him the freedom to realise his personal vision.

His tastes were shaped by the action and horror films of the 80s and 90s, from *ROBOCOP* to *RE-ANIMATOR* and *BRAINDEAD*. Like Quentin Tarantino, he built up his cinematic know-how by working in a video store and studying films until midnight. Admittedly, this kind of film is not en vogue in the German cinema mainstream. "The film goes down tremendously well at European festivals, but as long as it doesn't bear a label like 'the latest undercover hit from Canada', it doesn't stand much chance in this country right now." Lukas Rinker has met a number of international producers on his festival trips, who are all keen to see his next script. Currently, he is developing three or four exposés. The positive response to *HOLY SHIT!* has had a lot to do with the low-budget project's craftsmanship. "People praise the timing, the editing, the storytelling. That makes me proud, and I am beginning to believe that I

do have some talent." His maxim has been "don't bore people". "There is not a page in the script or a minute in the film where nothing is happening." Despite the limitations of the setting, he also managed great variation in the visuals of his film: "We storyboarded it completely. We didn't want to get repetitive, but to constantly change the settings, colours and moods."

He did not learn his profession at a classical film school. After his nine-month internship, during which he got to know all the facets of image film production, he enrolled in a media design degree programme at Mainz University of Applied Sciences. In its experimental laboratory atmosphere, he discovered another credo: "just do it". Instead of dwelling on a single project for months, he shot one short film after another. "It's only when you keep trying things out that you can see what does or doesn't work." In 2016, his graduation film was a four-minute fictional trailer for the weirdly provocative action horror satire *LASERPOPE*. Twentieth Century Fox Germany even wanted to produce the associated feature-length film. The project fell through for strategic reasons, but Lukas Rinker had been bitten by the bug: "I realised that it's possible to make films from a start in Mainz, without any Film School training."

To earn a living, since then he has "shimmied" his way through "empty image films" and "soulless advertising films". But the international response to *HOLY SHIT!* encourages him to concentrate on his true passion. His dream projects still include the *LASERPOPE* movie. "It needs to become the German *ROBOCOP*." Like his great idols, Lukas Rinker has the potential to break the boundaries of genre cinema, since he is not interested in action and horror per se. "I want to address things where I see injustice – just with the twist of the genre." And he understands that it's not about pure thrills. His absolute favourite film is Roberto Benigni's *LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL*: "It tugs at all the emotional strings. I laugh and then shed torrents of tears. It's precisely that emotional touch that makes a terrific film."

Rüdiger Sturm



NO LIMITATIONS

A PORTRAIT OF PRODUCER KRISTINE M.I. KNUDSEN

"I've really come to love working in animation because all the options for storytelling are open," says Norwegian-born producer Kristine M.I. Knudsen who came to Germany to study Film Production at the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg in Ludwigsburg. "There are no limitations to realism, and unlimited possibilities for creating characters and whole worlds," she explains. "You can be as fantastic as you like, and I love this way of working, also because you are basically editing the film before you shoot it: you draw and make sketches and then edit it, and then you keep reworking it until you are happy before you finally go into production."

Knudsen's first foray into the world of animation came in 2014 with the feature film *RICHARD THE STORK*, directed by Toby Genkel and Reza Memari following the adventures of a feisty little sparrow adopted by a stork family. This was after she had already built up a track record as a producer of live-action films with such productions as Ingo Rasper's comedy *FASHION VICTIMS*, Matthias Glasner's German-Norwegian drama *MERCY* and Kjersti G. Steinsbo's Norwegian-Canadian thriller *REVENGE* and *RICHARD THE STORK*, which premiered in the Berlinale's Generation sidebar in 2017 and was named Best German Children's Film at the 2018 Bavarian Film Awards, was sold to more than 150 countries around the globe and grossed over \$ 20 million box office worldwide. The last two years have now seen the production of a sequel, *RICHARD THE STORK 2*, which has already been sold to a number of territories including Scandinavia, German-speaking countries, BeNeLux, France, Portugal, Israel, Turkey, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Former Yugoslavia, CIS and Baltic States. "My live-action films were all very different from one another, but it's always been important for me to work on projects that have relevance," Knudsen observes. "Similarly, with animation, it needs to be entertaining as well as relevant for the audience."

"While I love the artistic and technical aspects of animation, there is also the greater access to the cinema audiences because the films are well developed, have high production value and essentially - we are not limited by language thanks to the dubbing," she explains. Indeed, experiences

of *RICHARD THE STORK* and other animated feature productions such as *THE AMAZING MAURICE*, *DRAGON RIDER* and *MOONBOUND* in the international market show that there is a strong demand for animation "made in Germany".

"We are really good at 3D family entertainment in Germany, with a high quality technically, great production value and high levels of storytelling," Knudsen notes. "However, we need to have more of a range of formats. There aren't enough animated TV series and TV specials being produced in Germany because that's unfortunately not a priority for the broadcasters." Through her two production companies - Knudsen Pictures in Berlin and Den siste skilling in Norway's Bergen - Kristine M.I. Knudsen is keen to develop long-standing working relationships as well as be on the lookout for new talents. "With *RICHARD THE STORK 2*, Denmark's Mette Rank Tange and Germany's Benjamin Quabeck brought quite different skillsets onboard," she explains. "We've been conscious of wanting to have a strong female voice on our project because animation has been a very male-dominated industry until now."

While *RICHARD THE STORK 2* will be coming into the cinemas around the globe during 2023, Knudsen is already busy developing new animation projects. One project pitched at the last Cartoon Forum is *COCOBANANA* about a boy who is half coconut, half banana and 100% a genius inventor. Based on Norwegian Rolf-Magne Golten Andersen's popular audio and picture books, the project could spawn both a feature film and TV series. In addition, she has a 3D CGI feature film with the working title *CHECKMATE* about the chess pieces coming to life and rebelling against the rules of the game and then leaving the chessboard for adventures in the real world.

And she has optioned the film rights to the Norwegian feminist comics *THE FALL OF THE PATRIARCHY* by the author Marta Breen and illustrator Jenny Jordahl for her first foray into 2D animation.

Martin Blaney



EUROPEAN SHOOTING STAR 2023

A PORTRAIT OF ACTOR LEONIE BENESCH

For over 25 years, the “European Shooting Stars” has directed attention to the most promising young actors from all over Europe, proving itself a vital springboard for their international careers. The list of German participants reads like a veritable Who’s Who of the national acting elite. In the last five years, Franz Rogowski, Emma Drogunova, Jonas Dassler, Albrecht Schuch and Emilio Sakraya were the chosen candidates. In February 2023, Leonie Benesch will be stepping into the spotlight as the German Shooting Star 2023 at the Berlinale. Good choice. Through prudence and smart career decisions, the 31-year-old has gradually acted her way to the top, making a name for herself abroad in the process. “That was important to me from the beginning and also the reason why I wanted to go to drama school in the UK,” she says. “The British market is very exciting. It was always one of my big dreams to get a foot in the door over there.”

Her studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London honed her ability to think outside the box, ultimately landing her roles in prestigious productions such as *THE CROWN* and *AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS* or *COUNTERPART*. It wouldn’t be going too far out on a limb to predict that her career will take another huge leap forward in 2023. Leonie Benesch is playing one of the leading roles in the event series *THE SWARM*, based on Franz Schätzing’s international bestseller: one of the most lavish and costly European television productions of all time, it was developed by the American showrunner Frank Doelger (*GAME OF THRONES*). The most appealing aspect for Benesch was collaboration with colleagues from different countries. “It was incredibly enjoyable, also because it’s an ensemble piece with so many women,” she says. She recalls a dinner with Sharon Duncan-Brewster, Cécile de France and Krista Kosonen. “I sat at the table and I was thinking: Wow, all four of us women are playing fantastic roles. It was also a moment that showed me how the industry is changing, in a good direction.”

The mammoth project, shot mainly in Italy in the early summer of 2021, is celebrating its world premiere at the Berlinale: How fitting! A double reason, then, for Benesch to look forward to the

German A-festival. She notes that being chosen as a “Shooting Star” could not have come at a better time: “I think it’s good that I can take part at almost 32, that I didn’t get the award when I was 18 or 20. That would have completely overwhelmed me. Now, I’m looking forward to the opportunity because I’ve developed a good sense of what kind of work and what kind of people interest me. That means I can view a highlight like the “Shooting Stars” programme at the Berlinale as a real gift.”

Leonie Benesch also shows good instinct in her choice of roles, among others with her latest feature film, which will be launched on cinema screens in 2023: She plays the lead role in *THE TEACHERS’ LOUNGE*, the new film by writer and director Ilker Çatak. Here, she can be seen as a young, dedicated teacher who gets herself into a seemingly hopeless situation at her new school due to convoluted circumstances. The actor describes the work as “enriching, one of the most wonderful experiences, because it goes to the very heart of what filmmaking means to me”. It is all about a search, a questioning. “Ilker has captured something totally relevant with his material. It’s a commentary on our current culture of debate. *THE TEACHERS’ LOUNGE* is the kind of project that explains why I do what I do,” Benesch sums up. And she feels comfortable in her current situation, which allows her to realise her idea of an acting career: “What’s important to me is the collaboration, people’s attitudes, the approach to telling stories as a group. The longer I do this, the more important those aspects become. It’s about how you shape the shooting experience together.” Let us wait and see what opportunities arise for the German European Shooting Star 2023 in the future.

Barbara Schuster



Berlin-based sales company Picture Tree International (PTI) is celebrating its 10th company anniversary at this year Berlinale / European Film Market with new high profile acquisitions including the Berlinale Special Gala premiere of Robert Schwentke's *SENECA - ON THE CREATION OF EARTHQUAKES*, starring John Malkovich, as well as Hans Steinbichler's best-seller adaptation *A WHOLE LIFE*, and Marc Rothemund's feature *WEEKEND REBELS*.

"From the outset, we had always aimed to be very eclectic in the acquisition strategy for our line-up and have wanted to offer a mix of titles that don't cannibalize one another," says the company founder and co-managing director Andreas Rothbauer who can look back on more than 20 years of experience in the fields of development, distribution and international sales. "This means that we're not limited in terms of content and see ourselves more as license traders than as a brand for just one type of film," Andreas explains.

"While we don't focus on specific genres, we're definitely aiming for more audience-driven films, films that can be entertaining or ones that have particular significance for society through the issues they raise," adds Yuan Rothbauer who became PTI's co-managing director with her partner Andreas in 2017 after initially joining the company as Head of Sales & Operations.

Prior to working for PTI, Yuan had headed the international department of Star Image Media Group, one of the first and leading theatrical distributors in China, and had been responsible for the acquisition of such titles as *SON OF THE MASK* and the Oscar winner *PAN'S LABYRINTH*. During its first ten years of operations, PTI has remained faithful to its goal of eclecticism with a mix of both mainstream and arthouse titles.

From the very beginning, the company developed into a tried-and-trusted partner for established production companies in German-speaking Europe such as Constantin Film, Pantaleon, Wiedemann & Berg, Hellinger/Doll, UFA Fiction as well as Austria's *EPO FILM*. Titles from these production houses handled by PTI have included the *FACK JU GÖHTE* blockbuster fran-

chise, Sönke Wortmann's *CONTRA*, Wolfgang Petersen's heist comedy *FOUR AGAINST THE BANK* as well as Simon Verhoeven's comedy *WELCOME TO GERMANY* and the biopic about the legendary downhill skiing icon Franz Klammer titled *CHASING THE LINE*.

"We don't have any formalised output or first look deals with these production companies," Andreas explains, "they are long-standing relationships that we have developed with companies operating at the more commercial end of the business."

At the same time, PTI is continuously scouting and representing international films. Most recent examples include Jordan's Oscar entry *FARHA* by Darin J. Sallam's, the Slovak/Czech Tallinn Black Nights premiere *THE CHAMBERMAID* by Mariana Cengel-Solcanská's, the Iranian arthouse thriller and Venice premiere *WITHOUT HER* by Adrian Vazirdaftari or Toronto premiere *THIS PLACE* by V.T. Nayani, starring Devery Jacobs. "We tend to want to come on-board projects as early as possible," Yuan notes about PTI's acquisitions strategy. "We evaluate a lot of projects and aim to join the most promising ones, but that doesn't mean that we don't take finished films as well. However, we prefer to become involved as early as possible to prepare and succeed within a competitive market environment."

Meanwhile, 2023 is set to become the year when PTI is aspiring to make some strategic moves beyond the international sales business including the set-up of a separate production outfit and closer identification of strategic partnerships towards a more vertically integrated structure in order to ensure that the company is well positioned for the next ten years.

"PTI had anticipated production and vertical integration from the very beginning and our venture capital-driven start-up financing had supported this strategy. As a sales agent, you are already constantly acting as a developer and executive producer alongside your main function as a trader, so making these moves is just a logical step," Andreas concludes.

Martin Blaney

GERMAN FILMS PODCASTS



published every third Thursday



published every second Tuesday



© Jacob Waak, Wood Water Films

ALASKA

Instead of dealing with her father's death, Kerstin decides to become a ghost herself. In her red kayak, she glides circularly across the Mecklenburg Lake Plateau - until she meets Alima. As the two women get closer, someone else enters the idyllic stage to bring Kerstin back to the bitter reality.

GENRE Drama, Road Movie **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2023 **DIRECTOR** Max Gleschinski **SCREEN-PLAY** Max Gleschinski **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Jean-Pierre Meyer-Gehrke **CAST** Christina Große, Pegah Ferydoni, Karsten Antonio Mielke, Milena Dreißig **PRODUCERS** Jasper Mielke, Karoline Henkel, Arto Sebastian **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Wood Water Films **CO-PRODUCTION COMPANY** ZDF - Das kleine Fernsehspiel **RUNTIME** 124 min **LANGUAGE** German **GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR** missingFILMs

WORLD SALES Wood Water Films, Jasper Mielke
 jasper@woodwaterfilms.com • www.woodwaterfilms.com



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DER PFAU

THE PEACOCK

When investment banker Linda Bachmann and her team arrive at the country estate of Lord and Lady McIntosh for a team building seminar, the prospects for having a relaxing weekend in Scotland are not good: the annual balance sheet is lousy, the team is keeping a suspicious eye on each other and their boss, and there are rumours that a compliance officer will soon be restructuring the department. To make matters worse, the estate is not very comfortable, even the skilled cook Helen can't hide that fact, and the methods of young seminar leader, Rebecca, also seem rather questionable. When the Lord's favourite peacock and the Lady's favourite goose disappear, further quarrels and chaos are inevitable... THE PEACOCK based on the novel of the same title by Isabel Bogdan published in the UK, Spain, the Netherlands and Germany.

GENRE Comedy **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022 **DIRECTOR** Lutz Heineking Jr. **SCREENPLAY** Christoph Mathieu, Sönke Andresen, Lutz Heineking Jr. **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Philipp Pfeiffer, Matthias Schellenberg **CAST** Tom Schilling, David Kross, Lavinia Wilson, Svenja Jung, Serkan Kaya, Jürgen Vogel, Philip Jackson, Victoria Carling, Annette Frier, Peter Trabner, Linda Reitinger, Domitila Barros **PRODUCERS** Bastie Griese, Marco Gilles, Lutz Heineking Jr., Jens Wolf **LINE PRODUCERS** Peter Kreutz, Christophe Hollebeke **PRODUCTION COMPANIES** Eitelsonnenschein, MMC Film **CO-PRODUCTION COMPANIES** Tobis, Frakas Production **RUNTIME** 106 min **LANGUAGES** German, English **GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR** Tobis

WORLD SALES Picture Tree International
 pt@picturetree-international.com • www.picturetree-international.com



© Natalie MacMahon

DIE BEDEUTUNG EINES RITUALS

THE MEANING OF A RITUAL

A headstrong, young mobile plant doctor with extrasensory powers and an emotionally unstable, isolated artist are forced to save each other, in order to be able to live again.

A coming of age story about two women from different generations, who have more in common than they are willing to admit.

“You live life forward, but understand it backwards.”

“Dead people receive more flowers than the living ones, because regret is stronger than gratitude.”

GENRE Coming-of-Age Story, Drama, Magical Realism **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022 **DIRECTOR** Natalie MacMahon **SCREENPLAY** Natalie MacMahon **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Tom O’Keefe **CAST** Elli Treptow, Annette Pausch, Anna Pfungsten, Karin Mühlhoff, Katinka Muth, Alexandra Ebert, Sisi Forster **PRODUCER** Natalie MacMahon **CO-PRODUCER** Camilo Zamora **PRODUCTION COMPANY** MacMahon Media **RUNTIME** 84 min **LANGUAGE** German **GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR** MacMahon Media

WORLD SALES MacMahon Media, Natalie MacMahon
contact@nataliemacmahon.com • www.macmahonmedia.com • www.themeaningofaritual.com



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HAUS DER STILLE

HOUSE OF SILENCE

A screenwriter not only wants to write a new bestseller on a secluded property in the Lüneburg Heath, but also wants to come to terms with her post-traumatic experiences in the process. However, the heathland idyll is deceptive, and a series of mysterious incidents soon make her doubt her sanity. It is only by facing the spectres of her past that she manages to shed the victim role.

GENRE Thriller **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2023 **DIRECTOR** Simone Geißler **SCREENPLAY** Simone Geißler **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Anna Motzel **CAST** Simone Geißler, Aaron Thiesse, Lutz Scheffer, Cosma Dujat, Christiane Ostermayer, Julia Dordel **PRODUCERS** Simone Geißler, Linda Matern **PRODUCTION COMPANY** BABU Film **CO-PRODUCTION COMPANY** BILDSCHÖN Filmproduktion **RUNTIME** 84 min **LANGUAGE** German

WORLD SALES

BABU Film, sgeissler@babufilm.de

BILDSCHÖN Filmproduktion, linda.matern@bildschoen-multimedia.de

www.bildschoen-multimedia.de



© Filmgalerie 451

SENECA - ON THE CREATION OF EARTHQUAKES

Rome in 65 AD, the philosopher Seneca has been Emperor Nero's teacher, mentor and close advisor since childhood, he is significantly involved in his ascent. Nevertheless, Nero gets weary of Seneca and Nero uses a foiled attack on his life to falsely accuse Seneca of being an accomplice. While throwing a decadent party at his farmhouse, Seneca receives his surprising death sentence of Emperor Nero, delivered by a messenger. He must be dead by morning. He accepts his fate and, like Socrates, wants to depart from life after proffering a final lesson of his life philosophy to his followers. This last night becomes his final test: Who is he really? An opportunist, hypocrite and collaborator or, according to his selfimage, a morally upright, wise man looking death in the face without any fear?

GENRE Drama, Comedy **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022 **DIRECTOR** Robert Schwentke
SCREENPLAY Robert Schwentke, Matthew Wilder **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Benoit Debie **CAST** John Malkovich, Tom Xander, Geraldine Chaplin, Louis Hofmann, Lilith Stangenberg, Samuel Finzi, Julian Sands, Alexander Fehling, Wolfram Koch, Annika Meier, Samia Chancrin, Mary-Louise Parker, Andrew Koji **PRODUCERS** Frieder Schlaich, Irene von Alberti **CO-PRODUCERS** Annegret Weikämper-Krug, Karim Debbagh, Simon Ofenloch, Guido Broscheid **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Filmgalerie 451 **CO-PRODUCTION COMPANIES** Gretchenfilm, Kasbah Films, ZDF/ARTE **RUNTIME** 110 min **LANGUAGE** English **FESTIVAL** Berlinale 2023 **GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR** Weltkino

WORLD SALES Picture Tree International

pti@picturetree-international.com • www.picturetree-international.com



© Soilfilms

SHARAF

SHARAF, based on Sonallah Ibrahim's famous novel, is the story of a modern Candide in a dystopian Arab World. He is one of the countless poor guys, who long for a better future. When Sharaf kills a man in self defense and is put in jail, he has to wake up from his dreams of wealth and consumption. The microcosm of prison mirrors the complex situation of Arab societies living under dictatorship and poverty, dependent on an unjust global economic system. Sharaf decides to achieve his own social advancement behind prison bars. But he will have to pay a very high price for it.

GENRE Drama **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2021 **DIRECTOR** Samir Nasr **SCREENPLAY** Sonnallah Ibrahim, Samir Nasr **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Darja Pilz **CAST** Ahmed Al Munirawi, Fadi Abi Samra, Salha Nasrawi, Tawfik Bahri, Khaled Houissa **PRODUCER** Silvana Santamaria **CO-PRODUCERS** Bilal Athimni, Günter Moritz, Adolf El Assal, Monika Agler, Patrice Nezan **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Soilfilms Media **CO-PRODUCTION COMPANIES** ZoneArt Films (Tunisia), Wady Films (Luxembourg), Teamwerk.die Filmproduktion, Les Contes Modernes (France), Neue Mediopolis **RUNTIME** 95 min **LANGUAGE** Arabic **FESTIVALS** Red Sea Film Festival 2021, Hofer Filmtage 2022, JCC Carthage Film Festival 2022 **GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR** Barnsteiner Film

WORLD SALES Wady Media, Ady El Assal
silvana@soilfilms.com • www.soilfilms.com



© Christian Schulz

STELLA. EIN LEBEN.

STELLA. A LIFE.

Stella, a young German Jew, grows up in Berlin during the rule of the Nazi regime. She dreams of a career as a jazz singer, despite all the repressive measures. After she is forced to go into hiding with her parents in February 1943, her life turns into a culpable tragedy. Through a betrayal, she is caught by the Gestapo, tortured and becomes a "grabber": to save herself and her parents from deportation to Auschwitz, Stella begins to systematically betray other Jews. From September 1943 until the end of the war, Stella Goldschlag delivered hundreds of fellow Jews to the Gestapo.

GENRE Drama **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2023 **DIRECTOR** Kilian Riedhof **SCREENPLAY** Marc Blöbaum, Jan Braren, Kilian Riedhof **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Benedict Neuenfels **CAST** Paula Beer, Jannis Niewöhner, Katja Riemann, Lukas Miko, Bekim Latifi, Joel Basman, Damian Hardung, Gerdy Zint **PRODUCERS** Michael Lehmann, Katrin Goetter **PRODUCTION COMPANY** LETTERBOX Filmproduktion **CO-PRODUCTIONS COMPANIES** SevenPictures, Real Film Berlin, Amalia Film, DOR Film Group (Austria), Gretchenfilm Filmproduktion, ORF (Austria), DCM **RUNTIME** 119 min **LANGUAGE** German **GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR** MAJESTIC

WORLD SALES Global Screen - a TELEPOOL brand
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ALGORITHMEN - DIE UNBERECHENBARE GEFAHR

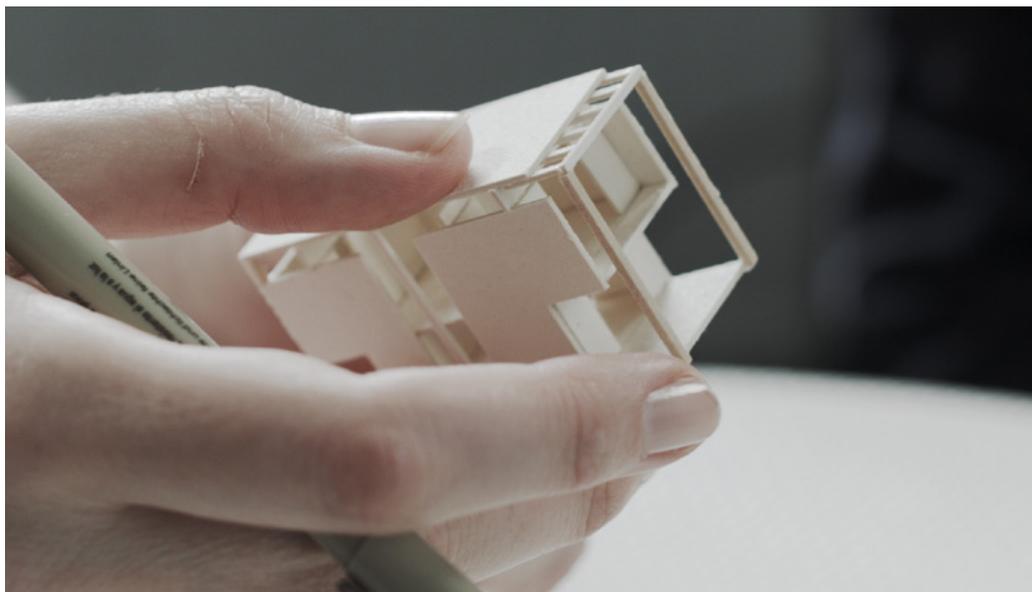
THE DARK SIDE OF ALGORITHMS

These days, it is algorithms that decide whether we are creditworthy or entitled to social welfare - or which partner is the right one for us. They are taking momentous decisions about our lives without our knowledge. They are said to be more efficient than us, eliminating human error with their cold logic. If we look behind the intimidating façade of artificial intelligence, we find a rather disturbing picture. We meet people whose lives have been turned upside down by algorithms. Like Marie, who was drawn into anorexia as a result of YouTube algorithms. Or Macarena, who had to go into hiding for years because an algorithm deemed her out of danger while her abusive husband remained at large. Or Derya, who was made homeless with her children because an algorithm branded her a fraud. Momentous artificial decisions whose errors, on close inspection, do not stem from the algorithms themselves but rather from the developers and their clients.

Who is responsible if AI turns out to be a curse rather than a blessing? And what needs to be done for the promise of AI to be kept? The promise of a better world for us all.

GENRE Current Affairs, Society, Human Interest, Science **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022 **DIRECTOR** Dorothe Dörholt **SCREENPLAY** Dorothe Dörholt **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Marie Zahir **PRODUCER** Birgit Schulz **CO-PRODUCER** Sonia Paramo **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Bildersturm Filmproduktion **CO-PRODUCTION COMPANY** Les Films Figures Libres (France) **RUNTIME** 52 min **LANGUAGES** German, English, French, Spanish

WORLD SALES New Docs, Elina Kewitz
sales@newdocs.de • www.newdocs.de



© Julie Pfeleiderer

DAS RETIRÉE OR THE LAST HOUSE OF MY FATHER

If you were to design your dream house now that you're at the end of your life, "What would it look like?" This question from the filmmaker to her father, retired architect Karlhans Pfeleiderer, is the starting point of *Das Retirée or the last house of my father*. Slowly but surely, the house takes form, first drawn on shifting layers of transparent paper, then glued into a scale model. Between the words and the gestures, the film of the daughter becomes the father's last house, a space in which unspoken words, unfulfilled desires can appear, disclosing coping-mechanisms that have survived several generations.

GENRE Experimental Documentary, Architecture **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022 **DIRECTOR** Julie Pfeleiderer in collaboration with Luca Mattei **SCREENPLAY** Julie Pfeleiderer **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Thomas Schira **CAST** Karlhans Pfeleiderer, Julie Pfeleiderer **PRODUCER** Steven Dhoedt **CO-PRODUCERS** Daan Milius, Hans van Hezik **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Visualantics **CO-PRODUCTION COMPANY** Video Power (The Netherlands) **RUNTIME** 43 min **LANGUAGE** German

WORLD SALES Visualantics, Steven Dhoedt
stephen@visualantics.net • www.visualantics.net



© Glotzenoff

GOLDHAMMER

Marcel Goldammer, a retired gay sex worker, wants to get into politics and reach the top fast. Not only out of conviction, but above all because it works. Indeed with the Alt-right parties.

However, Marcel leads his life less close to home than cosmopolitan, less conservative than queer, he is not the typical "little man", but an intellectual without a university degree and bon vivant with addiction problems. Born a German Christian, he now lives as a Jewish Israeli in Tel Aviv and Berlin, in a relationship with a young Shanghainese man whose seemingly endless wealth provides for Marcel's dissolute lifestyle.

GOLDHAMMER looks behind the facade of a millennial on his way to becoming a populist and traces a biography that could hardly be more contradictory - but for that very reason seems to suit our times perfectly.

GENRE Portrait **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2023 **DIRECTORS** Pablo Ben Yakov, André Krummel
SCREENPLAY Pablo Ben Yakov, André Krummel **CINEMATOGRAPHY** André Krummel **PRODUCER**
 Benjamin Leers **CO-PRODUCERS** Ümit Uludağ, Sebastian Lemke **PRODUCTION COMPANY**
 Glotzenoff **CO-PRODUCTION COMPANIES** Corso Film- und Fernsehproduktion, Fruitmarket
 Kultur und Medien **RUNTIME** 93 min **LANGUAGES** German, English **FESTIVAL** Filmfestival Max
 Ophüls Preis 2023

WORLD SALES Glotzenoff, Benjamin Leers • leers@glotzenoff.de • www.glotzenoff.de



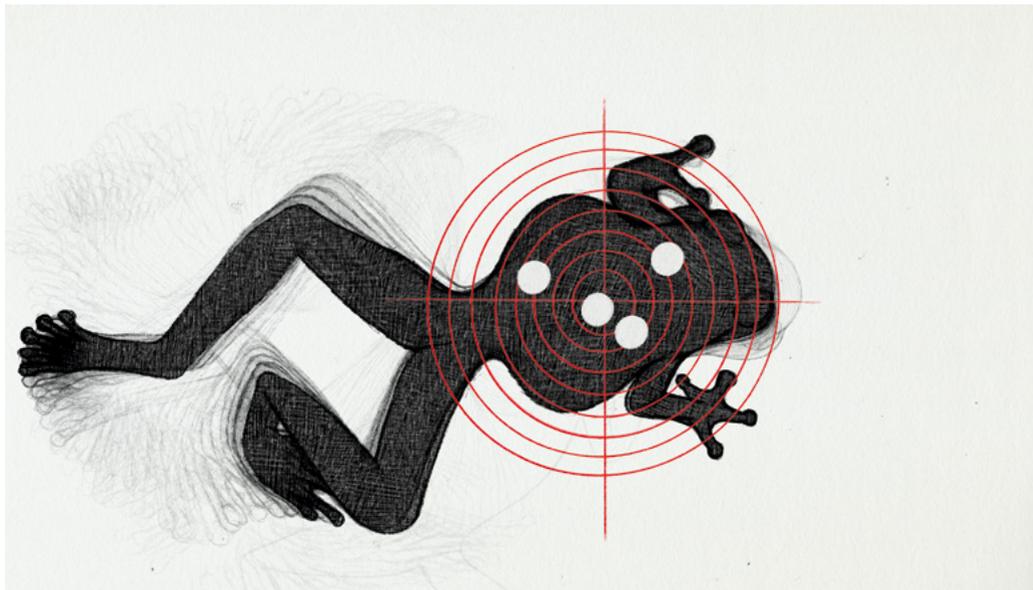
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LETTERS TO ORSK

Filmmaker Andreas and his sister Vanessa find letters previously unknown to them from Natalia, their mother, whom they never really knew due to her early death at the age of only 30. The words she once wrote to her parents in the Russian industrial city of Orsk open a small window into space and time - a second chance to listen to their mother. In her early 20s, Natalia emigrated to Germany to work as a music teacher, hoping to find a better life. The reality, however, was different. Since her diploma was not recognized by the German authorities, she found only odd jobs and felt more and more alienated from her new home. Natalia died far from home and without her parents by her side. For Vanessa and Andreas, their mother becomes real again - somewhere between her letters, the steppe of Orsk and the grandparents they grew up with.

GENRE Biopic, Family Doc, History **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2023 **DIRECTOR** Andreas Boschmann
SCREENPLAY Andreas Boschmann, Anastasya Stolyarov **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Clara Rosenthal, Aleksandra Medianikova, Andreas Boschmann **PRODUCER** Jenny Mathes **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Filmuniversität Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF **RUNTIME** 83 min **LANGUAGES** German, Russian
GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR Filmuniversität Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF

WORLD SALES Filmuniversität Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF, Cristina Marx
 cristina.marx@filmuniversitaet.de • www.filmuniversitaet.de



© Volker Schlecht

DAS WARTEN

THE WAITING

For two years, Karen Lips lived alone in a rainforest in Costa Rica to research a species of frog she had previously discovered there. In Miami, she wanted to write her dissertation, but soon realized that she was still missing some data. But when she returned, the frogs had disappeared. She could no longer find a single specimen. She soon realized that there are more cases around the world. At the same time and on different continents, thousands of miles apart, dozens of frog species had already disappeared. Something is sweeping through the forests and streams that they cannot withstand. Only what is it that is causing entire populations to disappear? And where does it come from?

GENRE Animation, Ecology **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2023 **DIRECTOR** Volker Schlecht **SCREEN-PLAY** Alexander Lahl, Max Mönch **ANIMATION** Volker Schlecht **CAST** Karen Lips **PRODUCERS** Alexander Lahl, Max Mönch **CO-PRODUCER** Volker Schlecht **PRODUCTION COMPANY** MobyDOK **RUNTIME** 16 min **LANGUAGE** English **FESTIVAL** Berlinale Shorts 2023 **GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR** MobyDOK

WORLD SALES MobyDOK, Alexander Lahl
al@mobydok.de • www.mobydok.de



© Natalie MacMahon

EL SECUESTRO DE LA NOVIA

THE KIDNAPPING OF THE BRIDE

Luisa from Buenos Aires and Fred from Brandenburg have a unique relationship in which they've created their own universe. At their wedding, the two lovers are increasingly confronted with their social roles and intercultural prejudices. In the maelstrom of the night, they lose their sovereignty and each other. The tradition of the kidnapping of the bride, still an integral part of many weddings in German-speaking countries, finally shatters the couple's equality. There is no room for love in this claustrophobic role play of marriage.

GENRE Comedy, Drama **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2023 **DIRECTOR** Sophia Mocerrea **SCREEN-PLAY** Sophia Mocerrea **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Jacob Sauermilch **CAST** Rai Todoroff, David Bruning, Anne Kulbatzki, Tatiana Saphir, Leon Dima Villanueva, Aroha Almagro Davies, Patricia Pilgrim, Daniel Wendler, Andreas Rogsch, Michaela Winterstein, Niels Bormann, Jeannette Urzendowskya **PRODUCER** Sarah Valerie Radu **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Filmuniversität Babelsberg **KONRAD WOLF CO-PRODUCTION COMPANY** RBB **RUNTIME** 30 min **LANGUAGES** German, Spanish, English **FESTIVALS** Sundance Film Festival 2023, Berlinale 2023

WORLD SALES Filmuniversität Babelsberg **KONRAD WOLF**, Clara Miranda Scherffig
c.miranda-scherffig@filmuniversitaet.de



© Jonas Schneider

THE BOY WHO COULDN'T FEEL PAIN

THE BOY WHO COULDN'T FEEL PAIN is set in Grants, New Mexico and tells the fictional small-town legend of Chester, a street fighter who can't feel any pain. When Annie, a bowling alley employee who just moved into town challenges him for a fight, things begin to change.

GENRE Coming-of-Age Story, Drama, Love Story, Tragicomedy **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022
DIRECTOR Eugen Merher **SCREENPLAY** Eugen Merher **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Mortimer Hochberg
CAST Catfish Jean, Delilah Napier, Dylan Sprayberry, DJ "Dawda" Jallow Jr. **PRODUCERS** Philip Chrobot, Sophie Lotsch **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg **CO-PRODUCTION COMPANY** Tempomedia Filmproduktion **RUNTIME** 20 min **LANGUAGE** English **FESTIVALS** Student Academy Awards 2022, Independent Film Festival 2022, Oaxaca Filmfestival 2022, Bolton Film Festival 2022, British Urban Film Festival (BUFF) 2022, Cinéfest Sudbury 2022, Montreal International Black Film Festival 2022, Norwich Film Festival 2022, Young Director Award 2022, Tirana International Film Festival 2022, ALCINE 51 - Festival de Cine de Alcalá de Henares 2022, 38th European Short Film Festival of Villeurbanne 2022 **AWARDS** Student Academy Awards Finalist 2022, Tirana International Film Festival Best Student Short 2022, Santa Fe Independent Film Festival Winner Best New Mexico Short 2022, Young Director Award Cannes Gold for Film School 6 min and up, Silver for Best Use of Music 2022 **GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR** Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg

WORLD SALES Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg, Sigrid Gairing
 sigrid.gairing@filmakademie.de • www.filmakademie.de



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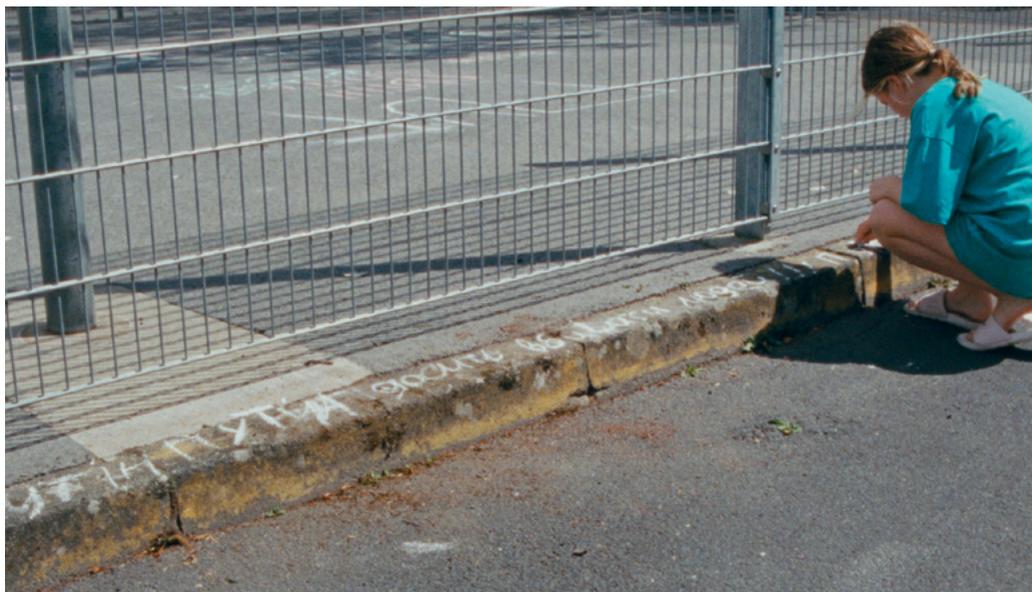
THEY WANTED TO BE LOVED

THEY WANTED TO BE LOVE is an oniric exploration of memory. Images of silent, deserted places are linked with texts that convey the narrative of a vague love story. A couple visits places in and around an unknown city. While they slowly get to know each other, the places they visit guard a memory of their encounter. The film's audiovisual form invites the spectator to enter a dream-like state of trance. Oscillating between presence, past and imagination, love is a dimension hard to grasp.

GENRE Documentary, Essay Film, Experimental **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022 **DIRECTOR** Bernhard Hetzenauer **SCREENPLAY** Bernhard Hetzenauer **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Bernhard Hetzenauer **PRODUCER** Bernhard Hetzenauer **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Bernhard Hetzenauer **RUNTIME** 14 min **LANGUAGE** English **FESTIVALS** Morelia Int. Film Festival FICM 2022, Yale University Latino and Iberian Film Festival LIFFY 2022

WORLD SALES Bernhard Hetzenauer

bernhard.hetzenauer@gmail.com • www.facesofathens.com



© Tobias Blicke

WAKING UP IN SILENCE

IM STILLEN ERWACHEN

A former military barracks of the Wehrmacht now serves as a refugee camp for people from Ukraine. **WAKING UP IN SILENCE** accompanies the children on their journey, where their own history meets that of the barracks. A moment between past and future, war and silence, departure and arrival, which depicts a portrait of German history and its present through the eyes of its young protagonists.

GENRE Documentary, Human Rights, Politics, Ukraine **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2023 **DIRECTORS** Mila Zhluktenko, Daniel Asadi Faezi **SCREENPLAY** Mila Zhluktenko, Daniel Asadi Faezi **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Tobias Blicke **PRODUCER** Daniel Asadi Faezi **CO-PRODUCER** Andrii Kotliar **PRODUCTION COMPANIES** Daniel Asadi Faezi, Lotas Film **CO-PRODUCTION COMPANY** Babylon'13 (Kyiv) **RUNTIME** 17 min **LANGUAGES** Ukrainian, Russian, German **FESTIVAL** Berlinale 2023

WORLD SALES Square Eyes, Wouter Jansen
info@squareeyesfilm.com • www.squareeyesfilm.com



© Mo Harawe

WILL MY PARENTS COME TO SEE ME

Somalia. A policewoman is sitting in her parked car. After a while, she gets out, puts on her service cap and enters the prison. There, decisive hours have dawned for young Farah. An organizational machinery begins to run around him. Farah will be examined by a doctor, instructed by the bailiff, and cared for by an imam. He waits for his parents to visit.

“How are you,” is the question Farah asks everyone that day. “Fine,” is his short answer, always the same. Only when the policewoman takes Farah out of town the next morning does the unspeakable become a painful reality.

GENRE Drama **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022 **DIRECTOR** Mo Harawe **SCREENPLAY** Mo Harawe
CINEMATOGRAPHY Steven Samy **CAST** Xaliimo Cali Xasan, Shucayb Abdirahman Cabdi, Geenyada Madaw, Mohamed Hersi, Maxamed Axmed Maxamed, Faysal Colaad Muxumed, Guuleed Xasan Saleebaan **PRODUCERS** Mo Harawe, Alexander von Piechowski **CO-PRODUCERS** Nuh Musse Berjeeb, Ahmad Farah **PRODUCTION COMPANIES** Mo Harawe, Alexander von Piechowski **RUN-TIME** 28 min **LANGUAGE** Somali **FESTIVALS** Berlinale Shorts 2022, Festival du Nouveau Cinéma 2022, Vienna Shorts 2022, Festival du Court-Métrage de Clermont-Ferrand 2023 **AWARDS** Deutscher Kurzfilmpreis 2022: Bester Spielfilm (10-30 min), European Film Awards 2022: Shortfilm Nomination, Festival du Nouveau Cinéma 2022: Grand Prix Short Film

WORLD SALES sixpackfilm

office@sixpackfilm.com • www.sixpackfilm.com/en/

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DER WUNSCH (AT) LOVE ALONE CAN'T MAKE A CHILD (WT)

Maria (38) and Christiane (46) have been lovers for 14 years and share a dream common to many couples: to have a child of their own. But physical limitations, medical concerns, time, and a discriminatory healthcare system turn this wish into an extreme challenge. Director Judith Beuth, who has been close friends with Maria since childhood, has been accompanying the couple on this emotional journey since it began, nine years ago. At times, their endeavour pushes them to their limits, but it also makes them grow - each in her own way as well as a couple. Beuth's debut feature-length documentary is both an intimate glimpse of a loving couple and an exploration into how long one should hold on to a wish before letting it go.

GENRE Documentary **CATEGORY** Documentary **DIRECTOR** Judith Beuth **SCREENPLAY** Judith Beuth **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Yannick Bonica, Julia Weingarten, Cristian Pirjol, Judith Beuth **PRODUCER** Stefan Kloos **CO-PRODUCER** Andrew Grant **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Kloos & Co. Ost in co-production with Mattima Films and ZDF/Das kleine Fernsehspiel **LANGUAGE** German

WORLD SALES

Rise and Shine World Sales, Stefan Kloos
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© Jost Hering Filme

FOSSIL

62-year-old Michael has worked on a huge bucket-chain excavator for more than 40 years, but refuses to accept the imminent coal phase-out. A flourishing landscape of lakes with floating solar panels is set to take the place of the open-cast lignite mine in the future. But working at the mine is more than just a job for Michael, and so he tries to convince his colleagues to protest against the rapid changes. He embarks on a final battle against his boss, the eco-activists, and his family, losing himself completely in his fight for his life's work. Michael simply cannot accept the feeling that he is no longer needed and eventually has to decide who he wants to be and for whom he is really fighting...

GENRE Drama **CATEGORY** Feature **DIRECTOR** Henning Beckhoff **SCREENPLAY** Bastian Köpf, Henning Beckhoff **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Sabine Panossian **CAST** Markus Hering, Ruth Reinecke, Victoria Schulz, and others **PRODUCER** Jost Hering **CO-PRODUCER** Andreas Brauer **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Jost Hering Filme in co-production with HUPE Film Fiktion **LANGUAGE** German **GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR** missing films

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© Benjamin Rost

HARRAGA - THOSE WHO BURN THEIR LIVES

“Harraga, those who burn their lives“ is the name given to Moroccan youths and kids who try in Melilla every day to smuggle themselves onto a ship going to Europe. They struggle with hunger, drugs and illegal pushbacks at Europe’s border. Some drown, some make it. But they are all united by hope and a longing for a better future. We accompany four teenagers Imad (15), Nourine (17), Wallid (18) and Hamza (17) over a period of five years, following their dreams, escape attempts, and international escalations, and being with them when they make their successful escapes to Europe. Some turn out to be lost souls, while others now have a bright future ahead of them.

GENRE Documentary **CATEGORY** Feature **DIRECTOR** Benjamin Rost **SCREENPLAY** Benjamin Rost, Hicham Bourais **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Jonas Schneider **PRODUCER** Márk Szilágyi **ASSOCIATE PRODUCER** Seloua Elgouni (Kasbah Films) **PRODUCTION COMPANY** MSZ Production and Consulting, with backing from MFG Baden-Württemberg and ARD/SWR **LANGUAGES** Arabic, Spanish

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© CALA Film

KLANDESTIN TURNING TABLES (WT)

The artist Richard can no longer afford his British home and is now living in Tangier. With his help, the young Moroccan Malik makes it to Europe, the destination of his dreams. There, of all people, the conservative politician Mathilda ends up hiding him. Mathilda’s assistant Amina, who finally wants to leave her Moroccan roots behind, is called in as a “cultural mediator“ to solve the problem. But Malik has plans of his own and unwittingly unleashes an avalanche.

Angelina Maccarone’s screenplay for TURNING TABLES received the German Film Award (“Lola“) for “the best script yet to be filmed“ in 2017, and the development was supported by BKM, FFA, Creative Europe and the eQuinox Europe programme.

GENRE Drama, Thriller **CATEGORY** Feature **DIRECTOR** Angelina Maccarone **SCREENPLAY** Angelina Maccarone **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Florian Foest **CAST** Barbara Sukowa, Lambert Wilson, Banafshe Hourmazdi, Habib Adda and Nicolette Krebitz **PRODUCERS** Martina Haubrich, Claudia Schröter **PRODUCTION COMPANIES** CALA Filmproduktion, CALA Film Central, CALA Film West in coproduction with Hessischer Rundfunk and in collaboration with ARTE **LANGUAGES** German, English, Arabic **GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR** Farbfilm Verleih

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LEERE NETZE

EMPTY NETS

The young Iranian Amir becomes entangled in criminal machinations of illegal caviar poaching when he signs on with a rural fishery on the rough coast of the Caspian Sea to raise the bride money for his great love Narges. However, Amir increasingly finds himself on uncertain ground, causing his relationship with Narges to falter...

Karamizade's feature debut tells a haunting story from contemporary Iran about the longing and search for a freer future, which symbolises the turmoil of a young generation that sees no future prospects for itself in Iran due to international sanctions, high unemployment and strong regimentation by the Islamic ruling system.

GENRE Arthouse Drama, Ecology, Drama, Melodrama, Love Story **CATEGORY** Feature

DIRECTOR Behrooz Karamizade **SCREENPLAY**

Behrooz Karamizade **CINEMATOGRAPHY**

Ashkan Ashkani **CAST** Hamid Reza Abbasi,

Sadif Asgari, Keyvan Mohamadi, Pantea Pana-

hiha **PRODUCERS** Eva Kemme, Ansgar Frerich,

Uschi Feldges **CO-PRODUCERS** Jörn Möllen-

kamp, Majid Barzegar **PRODUCTION COM-**

PANY BASIS BERLIN Filmproduktion in co-pro-

duction with Living Pictures Production, Rainy

Pictures, ZDF/Das kleine Fernsehspiel and ARTE

LANGUAGE Farsi **GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR** Port

au Prince Pictures

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Pluto Film

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www.plutofilm.de



© Hagen-Viel

LIVING BACH

LIVING BACH is a unique quest for Johann Sebastian Bach's universal secret, travelling across six continents to meet amateur musicians and singers whose lives are inseparably interwoven with the composer's music which transcends borders, cultures, religions and centuries. The film protagonists will all travel to Leipzig in June 2022 for the International Bach Festival. Their meeting becomes an emotional event when they sing together under the renowned conductor Ton Koopman in the „We are Family Choir“ in the Thomaskirche where Johann Sebastian Bach himself stood and made music for 27 years.

A film about the unifying magic that comes from Bach's music.

GENRE Art, Family Entertainment, Music **CATE-**

GORY Documentary **DIRECTOR** Anna Schmidt

SCREENPLAY Anna Schmidt **CINEMATO-**

GRAPHY Axel Schnepapat **PRODUCER** Anna Neu-

haus **PRODUCTION COMPANY** schmidtFilm

Filmproduktion in co-production with Depart-

ures Film and MDR **LANGUAGE** English **GER-**

MAN DISTRIBUTOR Weltkino

WORLD SALES

EuroArts Music International

Sandrine Laffont,

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www.euroarts.com



© Boris Laveen

PONYHERZ

PONY HEART

Usch Luhn's Pony Heart series of children's books, which have sold over a million copies and thrilled hundreds of thousands of children, is now finally coming to the cinema screen under the direction of Markus Dietrich whose credits include INVISIBLE SUE and SPUTNIK.

Twelve-year-old Anni has to adjust to a new environment after her family moves to the little village of Groß-Hottendorf. Lorenz is her only friend at the new school where she is subject to bullying from other classmates. Anni finds solace in the company of Pony Heart, the wild horse she feels magically attached to. Together, they hold their own against a ruthless gang of thieves who are wanting to steal Pony Heart and the other wild horses...

GENRE Children's Film, Family Entertainment **CATEGORY** Feature **DIRECTOR** Markus Dietrich **SCREENPLAY** Peter Freund **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Leah Striker **CAST** Nilam Farooq, Dieter Hallervorden, Sophie Lutz, Christoph Letkowski, Anna Schudt, Peter Lohmeyer, Martha Haberlandt, Franz Krause, Amelie Trinks, Felizia Trube **PRODUCERS** Michael Eckelt, Lennart Lenzing **CO-PRODUCERS** Peter de Maegd, Tom Hameeuw **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Riva Filmproduktion in co-production with Potemkino **LANGUAGE** German **GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR** PLAION Pictures

CONTACT PLAION Pictures, Moritz Peters
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© Felix Abraham, Mideu Films GmbH

SPUK UNTERM RIESENRAD

During a thunderstorm, lightning strikes the ramshackle amusement park of Tammi's late grandfather Jackel and strange things start to happen. Three figures in the park's ghost train - Rumpelstiltskin, a giant and a witch - come to life and begin wreaking all kinds of havoc with their wondrous, magical powers. Teenagers Tammi, Umbo and Keks have their hands full trying to save the amusement park and also bring the dysfunctional family back together again. Director Thomas Stuber's first family film after such productions as IN THE AISLES and DARK SATELLITES is inspired by the eponymous cult TV series broadcast in the former GDR from the end of the 1970s.

GENRE Children's Film, Comedy, Family Entertainment **CATEGORY** Feature **DIRECTOR** Thomas Stuber **SCREENPLAY** Die Köbris (Anja Kömmerling & Thomas Brinx) **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Conrad Lobst **CAST** Peter Kurth, Elisabeth Bellé, Lale Andrä, Noel Gabriel Kipp, Anna Schudt, David Bennent, Moritz Führmann, Sophie Lutz, Katja Preuß, Lina Wendel **PRODUCER** Ingelore König **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Mideu Films in co-production with MDR for Kinderkanal of ARD und ZDF in cooperation with ZDF and MDR **FUNDING** MDM and DFFF **LANGUAGE** German **GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR** Farb-film Verleih

CONTACT

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www.mideufilms.de



© David Wesemann

THOMAS SCHÜTTE - ICH BIN NICHT ALLEIN

How can one meet the awareness of human mortality with melancholy, anger and wit? For more than 40 years Thomas Schütte has been finding surprising answers on paper, and in clay, glass or bronze.

A three-metre high sculpture, a mermaid is placed in a New York gallery. Where does this enigmatic creature come from? The film shows the creation of the "Nixe" and Schütte's collaboration with various workshops for what it is: teamwork in which everyone contributes their knowledge, some of which is centuries-old. A fascinating game with various materials, ideas and forms. In the middle of it all is the artist smoking, thoughtful and always ready to rethink and comment on the world in his unique pictures and objects.

ENGLISH TITLE THOMAS SCHÜTTE - I AM NOT ALONE **GENRE** Documentary **CATEGORY** Documentary **DIRECTOR** Corinna Belz **CINEMATOGRAPHY** David Wesemann, Julia Katinka Cramer **CAST** Thomas Schütte, Paulina Pobocha, Rolf Kayser, Robert Fischer, Heide Jansen, Niels Dietrich, Dieter Schwarz, Pietro Spartà **PRODUCER** Corinna Belz **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Corinna Belz Filmproduktion **LANGUAGES** German, English, French

CONTACT

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corinnabelz@posteo.de



© Fortis Fem Film, Pascaru Production & Marmitafilms

VERTRIEBENE (DIE TOLLEN MENSCHEN) THE ALIENATED

A professor of Philosophy introduces her students to the concept of the death of God and questions herself about the presence of irrational evil in human nature. Immediately after this, her sister visits her: she is a gynaecologist who was sent to reduce the number of abortions in the city of N.. Shortly afterwards, she performs an illegal abortion - the woman claims to carry the Antichrist in her womb and takes the embryo home. But what is happening in the city of N.? Maybe the professor has just found the answers to her question?

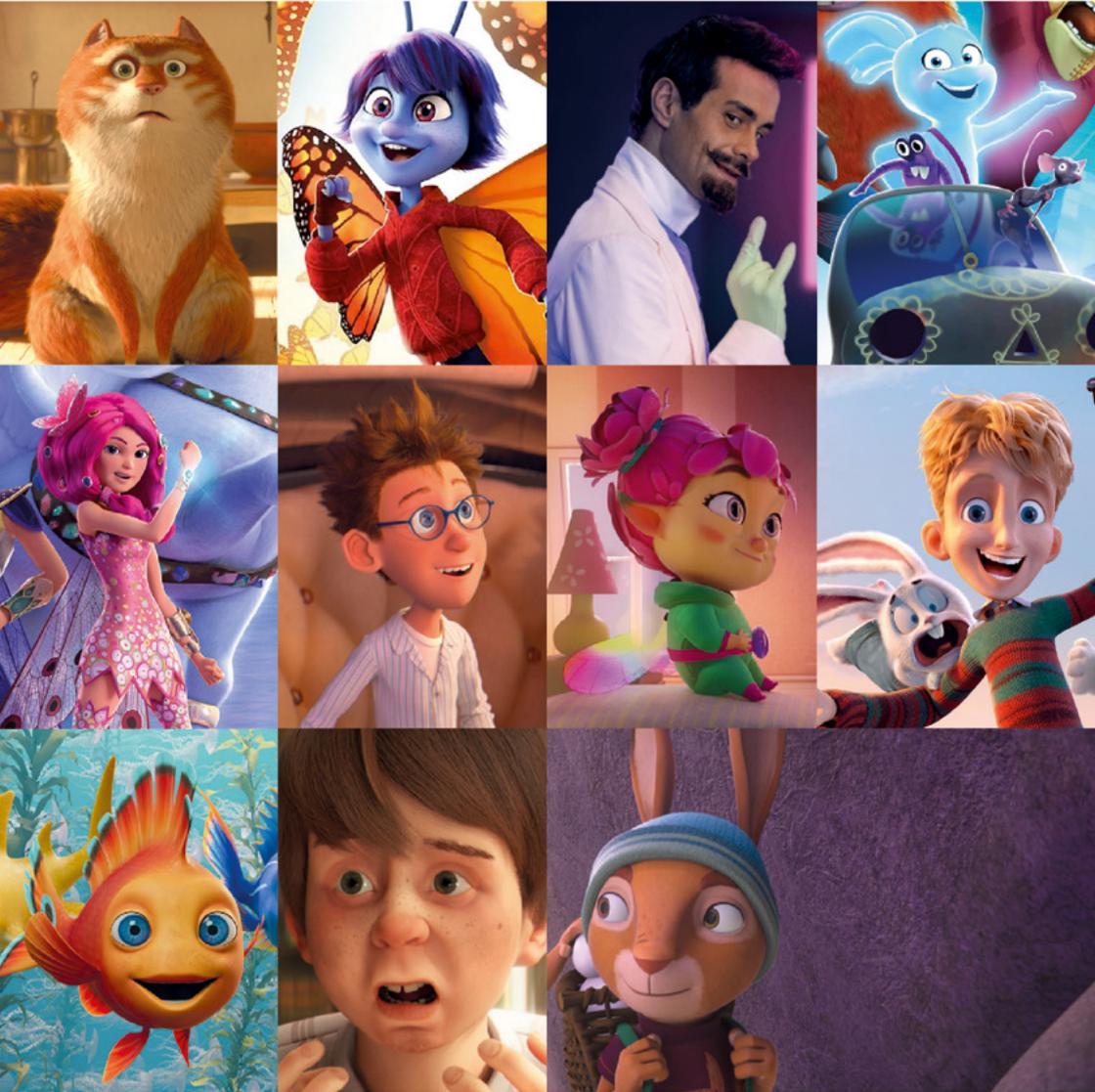
THE ALIENATED is Fortis Fem Film's second feature-length production after the documentary INSTRUCTIONS FOR SURVIVAL which won two awards on its premiere at the 2021 Berlinale.

GENRE Mystery **CATEGORY** Feature **DIRECTOR** Anja Kreis **SCREENPLAY** Anja Kreis **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Eugene Dedkov **CAST** Dana Ciobanu, Maria Chuprinskaya, Epchil Akchalov, Samson Hartmann, and others **PRODUCER** Anna Kruglova **CO-PRODUCERS** Sergiu Pascaru, Martine Vidalenc **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Fortis Fem Film in co-production with Pascaru Production (Moldova) and Marmitafilms (France) **LANGUAGES** Romanian, Russian

CONTACT

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New Feature Animation from Germany



GERMAN FILMS SERVICE + MARKETING



is the national information and advisory center for the promotion of German films worldwide. It was established in 1954 under the name Export-Union of German Cinema as the umbrella association for the Association of German Feature Film Producers, the Association of New German Feature Film Producers and the Association of German Film Exporters, and operates today in the legal form of a limited company. In 2004, the company was reorganized and now operates under the name: German Films Service + Marketing GmbH.

SHAREHOLDERS are the German Producers Guild, the German Producers Alliance, the Association of German Film Exporters, the German Federal Film Board (FFA), the Deutsche Kinemathek, the German Documentary Association, FilmFernsehFonds Bayern, Film- und Medienstiftung NRW, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, and the German Short Film Association.

German Films' budget of presently €4.8 million comes from film export levies, the office of the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, and the FFA. The eight main regional film funds (FilmFernsehFonds Bayern, MOIN Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein, Film- und Medienstiftung NRW, HessenFilm, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, MFG Baden-Württemberg, Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung, MV Filmförderung, and Nordmedia) make a financial contribution towards the work of German Films.

German Films is a founding member of the European Film Promotion, a network of European film organizations with similar responsibilities to those of German Films. The organization, with its headquarters in Hamburg, aims to develop and realize joint projects for the presentation of European films on an international level.

In association and cooperation with its shareholders, German Films works to promote feature, documentary, television and short films.

In addition, German Films has foreign representatives for the US, Eastern Europe and China/ Southeast Asia.

RANGE OF ACTIVITIES

- Close cooperation with major international film festivals, including Berlin, Cannes, Venice, San Sebastian, Locarno, Sundance, Karlovy Vary, Toronto, New York, Shanghai, Warsaw, and Busan
- Organization of umbrella stands for German sales companies and producers at international television and film markets
- Staging of Festivals of German Films in selected international territories in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut
- Staging of industry screenings in key international territories
- Providing advice and information for representatives of the international press and buyers from the fields of cinema, home entertainment, and television
- Providing advice and information for German filmmakers and press on international festivals, conditions of participation, and German films being shown
- Organization of the annual Next Generation Short Tiger short film program, which presents a selection of shorts and is internationally premiered in Cannes
- Publication of informational literature about current German films and the German film industry, as well as international market analyses and special festival brochures
- A website (www.german-films.de) offering information about new German films, a film archive, information and links to German and international film festivals and institutions
- Organization of the selection procedure for the German entry for the Oscar® for Best International Feature Film
- Organization of the German Films Previews geared toward arthouse distributors and buyers of German films
- Selective financial Distribution Support for the foreign releases of German films
- Organization with UniFrance of the annual German-French film meeting
- Presentation of the annual FACETOFACE WITH GERMAN FILMS campaign which shines a spotlight on some of the most influential German talents currently working in the industry, who represent just some of the many dynamic 'faces' of German filmmaking today.

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www.ffa.de



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