

GFAQ

GERMAN FILMS QUARTERLY

ISSUE 4-2022

WITH PORTRAITS OF
FILMMAKERS **HELENA WITTMANN** & **KILIAN RIEDHOF**
PRODUCER **SCHULDENBERG FILMS**
ACTOR **FARBA DIENG**
SALES COMPANY **THE PLAYMAKER MUNICH**

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Dear Readers,

With 60 percent more viewers than last year, the figures from Locarno Film Festival speak volumes. And they are representative of a trend that is crucial for cinema's survival: After the two most critical years of the pandemic, audiences are returning. This is evident in the great response to the various festivals, and also in the fact that Toronto is back as an in-person event this year. The blockbuster success of films like TOP GUN: MAVERICK is yet another indication.



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But this development needs to continue. In relation to the German market, this is quite obvious. According to a new representative survey by SL Research, 78 per cent of the cinema-goers questioned in August had visited a cinema again in the past twelve months - an increase of nine per cent compared to the equivalent survey in May. And although the success of the big audience hits offers cause for celebration, the figures in the arthouse sector still leave a lot to be desired. Nevertheless, the continuing high level of interest in German films abroad is a positive aspect. This year in Locarno, Germany was the focus of "First Look", the festival's "Work in Progress" section. In cooperation with German Films, the makers of six feature films currently in the post-production stage presented their work. Lukas Nathrath won the Cinegrell Award worth 50,000 euros for LETZTER ABEND, a production by Klinkerfilm.

The acknowledged status of German film has also been evident at the major autumn festivals so far. Edward Berger's ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT was feted in the 'Special Presentations' section, and this film adaptation of Erich Maria Remarque's legendary anti-war novel will be entering the Oscar race for Germany. The co-productions CORSAGE, HOLY SPIDER and last but not least TRIANGLE OF SADNESS, which caused a sensation in Cannes, were shown in the same section. Five German co-productions, including Ulrich Seidl's SPARTA, were shown in the Contemporary World Cinema section. There was a strong German presence in other sections as well, and also in the talent development programme TIFF Filmmaker Lab, including the world premiere of 1899, the new Netflix series by the makers of DARK, Baran Bo Odar and Jantje Friese. In Venice, German productions and co-productions were shown in various subsidiary sections, such as Pedro Harre's VR project FROM THE MAIN SQUARE in 'Venice Immersive', five films, including TRENQUE LAUQUEN by Laura Citarella, in the competition of the sub-section 'Orizzonti' and PADRE PIO with Shia LaBeouf by cult director Abel Ferrara in 'Giornate Degli Autori' - not forgetting Alex Schaad's SKIN DEEP in the 'Settimana Della Critica'. In addition to the major summer festivals, German film is also being represented at the upcoming film weeks in Buenos Aires, Paris and Beijing this autumn. German Films continues to play its part in supporting the worldwide theatrical release of German movies. Most recently, 200,000 euros were distributed for 24 productions, including Andreas Dresen's Berlinale competition title RABIYE KURNAZ VS. GEORGE W. BUSH.

Unfortunately, the general conditions remain difficult - especially on the German market. New measures to combat the pandemic are strict by comparison to other European countries and may again - theoretically - result in access restrictions to cinemas. The rapidly rising energy costs, combined with limited gas supplies, are equally problematic - a situation that is becoming more acute in Germany. The imponderables of the Ukraine war and inflation continue to be cause for concern. Ultimately, however, we are all left with this unwavering appeal to our industry's resilience: „The show must go on“.

Yours, Simone Baumann
Managing Director

New Feature Animation from Germany



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A close-up portrait of filmmaker Helena Wittmann. She has short, wavy brown hair and is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. She is wearing a dark, high-collared jacket. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting.

ENJOYING EVERY SINGLE STEP OF FILMMAKING

A PORTRAIT OF FILMMAKER HELENA WITTMANN

For a brief moment, I was amazed when Helena Wittmann talked about her work. "I wouldn't call myself a director," said Wittmann, who was born in Neuss in 1982 and lives in Hamburg by choice. This was in a Zoom interview just a few weeks after her new film *HUMAN FLOWERS OF FLESH* had celebrated its world premiere at Locarno Film Festival. There was not much time for surprise, however, because she quickly added: "For me, I find the description filmmaker much more appropriate."

Wittmann has not taken the classic German path as a director. "Actually, I developed a love for film and cinema as a child," she says, but in her youth – despite her interest in moving images – she tended to apply for internships with photographers and was interested in the technical side of image-creation. This was followed by studies in the humanities in Erlangen and Hamburg, but also an urge to "see something of the world first". The idea of active movie making was always at the back of her mind, not least after a spell at the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen. "I suddenly discovered films that interested me in a completely different way to what I had known before," she says in retrospect.

In the end, Wittmann did not study at one of the customary film schools from 2007 onwards; she went to the University of Fine Arts in Hamburg, where it was also possible to devote herself to film as a subject, albeit not structured according to the classic film professions. "It's not primarily about making a film for me, although that is definitely my medium," she explains. "It's more about finding the correct, appropriate form for the issues that move and interest me."

Whether the ideas that drive her eventually take the form of a short or feature-length film, are realised in experimental, documentary or more narrative form, and are possibly shown as a video installation or at the cinema – initially, that always remains open. "That's why I never have an answer when people ask what a film's starting point was," she says. "Because there isn't necessarily just one. It takes at least two ideas to start moving around in my mind and then something develops between them. And even then, I usually carry that around with me for a relatively long time before it takes shape and I can write something down."

Finding out that the Foreign Legion still exists in Marseille, and various unexploited reflections around seafaring and the sea in her feature-length debut *DRIFT*, as well as a female character in the novel "The Sailor from Gibraltar" by Marguerite Duras, among other things, served as inspiration for Wittmann's current film, which also features Denis Lavant alongside lead actress Angeliki Papoulia. Its premiere in the Locarno competition once again underlined for her that "there is no better place to show cinematic works than the cinema. I think this space is essential. Being together with other people and then really exchanging ideas about films – that's what I need."

Wittmann feels accordingly that her artistic home is less the art world than the film world with all its festivals. *DRIFT*, for example, celebrated its premiere at the *Settimana Internazionale della Critica* in 2017 and was subsequently shown in Toronto, Vienna, London and Mexico City; *HUMAN FLOWERS OF FLESH* has already been invited to New York and Hamburg (at the time of going to press). But she regrets the fact that there is comparatively little exchange between the two spheres – "interest in each other is rather limited" –, which she believes is because "film in Germany, unlike in France or South America, is not seen automatically as an art form," but is seen all too simply as entertainment.

Wittmann also contributes to the possibility of this changing in future as a camerawoman and editor of her own work. It is not to save costs or because she doesn't want to hand over the reins, "but because I enjoy every single step in the process of working on a film," she concludes – certainly a filmmaker rather than a director. And she adds: "Besides, the camera is an instrument that helps me to think myself into the film's respective situations. And the editing work allows me to understand every detail better. I don't think I would be able to grasp things as well if those things were done for me by others."

Patrick Heidmann



CREATING AN IMMEDIATE EXPERIENCE

A PORTRAIT OF FILMMAKER KILIAN RIEDHOF

“Cinema is the form that offers viewers more culture and sense of home than the world of streaming services”, director and author Kilian Riedhof asserts in a decisive statement. But there are good reasons for the fifty-one-year-old’s standpoint. After all, his film *YOU WILL NOT HAVE MY HATE* celebrated its world premiere in front of thousands of viewers on the Piazza Grande at Locarno Film Festival. “Series that you watch at home can’t offer you anything like that,” as he aptly points out.

Riedhof does not focus on flashy entertainment with superficial stimuli, but on a “cinema that moves people and in doing so does not shy away from reflection”. *YOU WILL NOT HAVE MY HATE* is an ideal example of this. The film is based on the memoirs of the French journalist Antoine Leiris, whose wife was killed in the terrorist attack at the Paris Bataclan club in 2015. “This material is extremely suited to cinema because it shows the impact of terrorism on a family – and that is an issue that disturbs us all.” The attack itself is not staged, since that would have meant “giving the assassins a stage”, according to Riedhof. “Instead, this is about overcoming our inner demons and hatred.”

STELLA. A LIFE., which Riedhof is currently completing and which is scheduled to be shown in cinemas in 2023, centres around other inner demons. Here, too, the starting point is a real story – the tragedy of the young Jewish woman Stella Goldschlag, who was caught by the Gestapo and forced to betray other Jews to the Nazis. With this, too, the filmmaker pursues the goal of “telling a story with public appeal and challenging the spectator emotionally and morally. Neither film will leave the viewer cold. They are a real physical experience. That’s what cinema is for me in its essence.”

He experienced the impact of cinema as a teenager, watching films such as *VERTIGO* or *THE THIRD MAN* with their “powerful subjective emotional focus”. “These movies captured my imagination and are the reason why I wanted to make films myself.” He trained his own narrative technique and aesthetics at what is now the Hamburg Media School - with teachers such as Michael Ballhaus, Slawomir Idziak and Nikita Michalkow. Storytelling as prime principle was their credo. Or in other words, “form follows function.”

He does not strive for simple realism, but says: “For me, the foundation of a movie is a gripping and stringent narrative structure, which is to be scratched on the surface.” By “scratching” he means “elliptical, fragmentary, unreliable storytelling”, with which he wants to make the film an “immediate experience” that has hopefully never been seen before. The “tightrope act” for him is to “risk an aesthetic experiment without losing the emotional connection to the audience.”

Luckily, he has been able to perfect this narrative style in recent years, particularly on television – especially in the two-part TV movie *GLADBECK* (2018) about a spectacularly tragic hostage situation in Germany in 1988, which won three German television awards and was nominated as the only non-British TV format at the BAFTA TV awards. At the same time, he also knows how to make classic crowd pleasers. The best example is the comedy *HIS LAST RACE* (2013) about a 70-something-year-old who wants to run one last marathon. That film drew more than 400,000 viewers to German cinemas.

He is quite ambivalent when it comes to streaming series. “I wouldn’t rule out making a series, but it’s not my first thought. I find the flood of streaming offers rather overwhelming and increasingly faceless.” He also dislikes how the supposed death of series characters is played around with, so that they can reappear in a next season. “At a certain point art is about saying, this is the end. Because that’s life. You can’t repeat it. It is only the end point that lends meaning to everything.”

Apart from that, the cinema provides the filmmaker with an experience that can never be duplicated on the television at home: “Sitting in a screening of your own film and seeing how the audience reacts is the most uplifting feeling for a film maker. Films must not become self-referential. It is always about truthfulness and unconditional emotionality. This is how I can build a relationship with an audience. And this is my hundred per cent interest as a filmmaker.”

Rüdiger Sturm



BRINGING SOMETHING NEW TO GERMAN CINEMA

A PORTRAIT OF SCHULDENBERG FILMS

Now approaching the sixth anniversary of being launched by Kristof Gerega, Fabian Altenried and Sophie Ahrens at the end of 2016, Schuldenberg Films has since carved a unique niche for itself in the German film landscape as a producer of genre-bending projects with a critical and political approach. Based in Berlin and Bavaria's Bad Endorf, the company was in effect a successor to the Schuldenberg Foundation collective in London which had brought artists from different artistic disciplines and backgrounds together to work on projects.

Indeed, this diversity of backgrounds is also reflected in the three co-founders' own biographies: while Altenried studied Fine Arts at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, Gerega had formal training as an actor, and Ahrens studied Applied Media Economics in Hamburg and Berlin before graduating with an M.A. in Film & TV Production from the Film University Konrad Wolf in Babelsberg.

"We complement one another very well with our different backgrounds," Altenried says, "and this means that we are also aware of other production processes and are thus able to find creative solutions for each project."

Initially, Altenried and Gerega were focusing at Schuldenberg Films on producing projects that they were also directing. However, Altenried and Ahrens now concentrate on producing films by other filmmakers, although Gerega has continued working in the producer-director role with his latest project, the documentary GENERATION EUROMAIDAN.

The long-term observation, which Gerega has been working on for the past six years about three activists struggling to bring about reform in Ukraine, will be aired by ZDF in its Das kleine Fernsehspiel slot at the end of November. "Most of the films we produce have a strong queer-feminist perspective, which is something very important to me," Ahrens explains. "Other projects that we are drawn to are ones dealing with environmental changes and the fear and hope in our current society."

"A strong characteristic is that our films are power critical and dare to have a very specific artistic language and point of view. And we often work with

writer-directors who have a background in art and therefore a different approach to cinema."

A case in point is visual artist Ann Oren's fiction feature debut PIAFFE which had its world premiere in the International Competition of this year's Locarno Film Festival and has since been invited to screen in San Sebastian's Zabaltegi-Tabakalera competition as well as festivals in Hamburg, London, Chicago, among others. "PIAFFE isn't a typical German film, not what one would normally expect from German cinema, but perhaps it's a chance to bring something new to German filmmaking," Gerega suggests.

The same goes for the company's first fiction feature production NEUBAU which saw theatre director Johannes Maria Schmit making his film directorial debut from a screenplay by lead actor Tucké Royale. That film premiered at the 2020 Max Ophüls Prize Film Festival where it was named Best Fiction Feature Film and won the award for the Most Socially Relevant Film and received the German Films Critics Association's award for Best Debut Feature in 2021.

The company has plenty of interesting projects on the boil – either from within the "family" of filmmakers they have worked with over the past six years or by way of recommendations and contacts from their international network of artists and filmmakers. At the same time, Schuldenberg Films would not consider compromising its role as a bridge builder and supporter of projects that don't conform to the usual norm. "We will grow as a company and evolve, but this will always be organic," Altenried declares, pointing out the Schuldenberg Films' current project slate sees a clear shift in focus towards European co-production.

The company recently wrapped shooting on Henrika Kull's third feature film SÜDSEE, a drama set in the mountains between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, and is now developing Austrian director Kerstin Neuwirth's debut feature ABITANTI as a German-Italian co-production, as well as Iranian writer-director Amina Maher's hybrid experimental film I LOOK LIKE MY MOTHER, which already has co-producers from the UK, Switzerland and Portugal onboard.

Martin Blaney

A close-up portrait of actor Farba Dieng. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. He has short, dark, curly hair and a light beard. He is wearing a bright orange crew-neck sweater. The background is dark, and the lighting is dramatic, highlighting his facial features.

A NATURAL TALENT

A PORTRAIT OF ACTOR FARBA DIENG

"I was really thrown into the deep end and just had to start swimming," says Farba Dieng describing his acting debut in Florian Dietrich's buddy comedy TOUBAB. In fact, Dieng hadn't had any aspirations to become an actor until fate struck one day and a friend of a friend told him about an open casting call for a film.

"I thought why not have a try, I've got nothing to lose," he recalls. "Flo had already seen around 200 people for the part of Babtou before I came to the audition, but he liked the way I spoke the dialogues and my style." Moreover, there was an immediate chemistry between Dieng and fellow lead actor Julius Nitschkoff who was subsequently cast as his buddy Dennis. "It was like a Tinder super-match, we bonded straightaway!" Dieng explains. "Julius taught me so much like that you don't have to learn the whole script off by heart. The important thing is for you to read and understand the script because you'll then be much better at understanding what the role is all about."

"I haven't have had any formal training on how to convey the emotions of a character and so I do it by drawing from own experiences," he admits. "If I have to portray something sad, then I think of some sad thing in my life and it's often music that helps me to get into a particular mood."

Dieng points out that he is "keen to learn as much as possible, but I'm becoming more and more confident with each new role I take on." In fact, it didn't take long after the shooting of TOUBAB wrapped before the film's casting director Nina Haun had recommended to the Berlin-based agent Patric Adam that he take Dieng into his ensemble of actors and the next roles started coming his way.

He has since appeared in series for television such as Netflix's SKYLINES and Amazon Prime's PASTEWKA as well as ZDFneo's BREAKING EVEN and ARD's THE NET. And his feature film credits to date have included Alain Gsponer's drama WOLKE UNTERM DACH, Katja von Garnier's dance and music film FLY and Carsten Unger's genre mix between romantic comedy and horror film KARIGULA – MONSTER DER LIEBE.

"When I'm choosing which roles to accept, the most important thing initially for me is the script," Dieng

explains. "And the role also shouldn't be any kind of stereotype like say a drug dealer. I'm always keeping a close eye on wanting to play different kinds of roles so that I can find out what I am best suited to." In fact, he has already had a chance to play quite a wide range of characters, including a banker in WOLKE UNTERM DACH, a footballer whose career is in jeopardy due to injury in THE NET to a police detective in KARIGULA and an American GI in the RTL+ series DISKO BOCHUM set in the West Germany of the 1970s.

Preparing for a role can lead him to find inspiration in seemingly unexpected quarters: for example, his portrayal of the football player Emmanuel Kanu in THE NET was based on a mixture of the Brazilian star Kaká and the Anime character Kojiro Hyuga.

While he is open to working in any kind of genre, Dieng suggests that he would "like to play someone who is far away from me personally and is mentally unstable as that would give me a real challenge. And I'd also like the chance to be in a real love story. At the same time, if there was a role in something like VIKINGS or GAME OF THRONES, I'd be there straightaway!" In addition, there is a good chance that the 28-year-old – who was born in Lille before moving with his family to Darmstadt – could be cast in French-language productions in the future. "As someone who is self taught and new to this business, I am continuing to learn so much," he continues. "But it's still been quite surreal to see how people have reacted to TOUBAB and my performance."

The flurry of nominations and awards began in 2020 with him and Nitschkoff being nominated for First Steps' Götz George Newcomer Prize and was followed the following year with the two receiving the Bavarian Film Award in the Best Newcomer Actor category and sharing the Best Actor Award at the Filmkunstfest MV in Schwerin. 2022 saw Dieng being nominated by members of the German Film Academy for the Best Leading Male Actor category of the German Film Awards along with Franz Rogowski and Albrecht Schuch. And Dieng and Nitschkoff were then named Best Duo at the German Screen Actors' Awards this September for their performances in TOUBAB.

Martin Blaney

THE PLAYMAKER MUNICH



It's almost 18 months since world sales company ARRI MEDIA International was relaunched with a new name – The Playmaker Munich – as a brand within the SL Group whose operations stretch from postproduction through VFX and restoration to camera rental, co-production and world sales under one roof. They may have a new name, but Antonio Exacoustos, The Playmaker's Head of International Sales and Productions, and his team are still as passionate as ever about their work as a sales company.

"We can now operate in a much freer and more flexible way as an independent limited company within the new group compared to the previous structure," Exacoustos explains. "We still see ourselves as a boutique sales outfit exclusively handling feature films and we will continue focusing on fiction films in the future"

"At the same time, the new name has given us an opportunity to create our own identity and corporate image for how we are seen by people outside the company," adds Moritz Hemminger, The Playmaker's Deputy Head of Sales and Acquisitions.

A cursory glance at The Playmaker's current line-up shows that the films on offer are listed under three headings: "Family & Fun", "Masters & Talents" and "Thrills & Chills".

"We are keen to continue working with the leading producers of family entertainment in Germany like SamFilm, blue eyes Fiction and Lieblingfilm who are now known internationally for the high quality of their productions," Exacoustos says.

"Before the pandemic we had mainly German art-house titles in the "Masters & Talents" strand, but we are now more selective in the titles we pick up there," Hemminger adds.

The past year saw The Playmaker take on international sales for such films as Stefan Jäger's MONTE VERITÀ, which had its world premiere on Locarno's Piazza Grande in August 2021, Swiss filmmaker Michael Steiner's AND TOMORROW WE WILL BE DEAD, which opened Zürich FF last year, as well as Jöns Jönsson's AXIOM which premiered in the Berlinale's Encounters competition in February 2022.

"Meanwhile, one area we would like to concentrate more in the future is on genre titles which can be thriller, action, horror, sci-fi or fantasy," Hemminger explains.

A start had already been made back in 2017 when the company had come onboard Oliver Kientle's psychological thriller FOUR HANDS on the basis of the screenplay. The debut feature screened at festivals like Tallinn's Black Nights, Les Arcs, Fantaspoa and Motelx Lisbon and was sold to distributors around the world from the USA to Japan.

Since then, The Playmaker has had growing success with genre films originating from German-speaking territories. For example, Austrian director Magdalena Lauritsch's English-language sci-fi disaster film RUBIKON was picked up by such leading genre distributors as the USA's IFC Films, the UK's Signature Entertainment and Australia's Rialto Entertainment. And Lukas Rinker's black comedy real-time thriller HOLY SHIT! sold to distributors in South Korea, Japan, China, France and the Baltic states after its market premiere in Cannes in June.

This commitment to genre cinema has now prompted The Playmaker and its sister company PHAROS to launch the PHAROS SHIVER SCREEN AWARD at this year's Hof International Film Festival

Genre shorts and first and second features selected for this year's programme will automatically be in the running for a € 2,500 cash prize which will also include mentoring and option for the handling of world sales by The Playmaker and a first look deal to represent the winner's next feature film.

"There has been a lot of positive feedback to the initiative," Exacoustos notes, pointing out that genre cinema is experiencing a real revival thanks to directors like Jordan Peele, Julia Ducournau and Ari Aster as well as German filmmakers like Baran Bo Odar, Christian Alvart or Peter Thorwarth. "We are now seeing more and more filmmakers from the German-speaking area active in this field, so we want to play our part in helping to create more genre diversity in the cinemas," he concludes.

Martin Blaney

MATTHIAS LUTHARDT
WRITER & DIRECTOR

ANNE ZANDER
ACTOR

JERRY HOFFMANN
ACTOR & DIRECTOR

SARAH NOA BOZENHARDT
WRITER & DIRECTOR



FACE TO FACE WITH GERMAN FILMS

THE FILMMAKERS



SARA FAZILAT
ACTOR, PRODUCER & WRITER



JULIA KOVALENKO
FILM EDITOR



ZAMARIN WAHDAT
CINEMATOGRAPHER & DIRECTOR



© Media Luna

BULLDOG

For as long as 21-year-old Bruno can remember, there has only been him and the unconditional love of his mother Toni, who is 15 years older. Nothing else seems to find room in the chaotic life of the two. It is only when Hannah, Toni's new partner, moves into the bungalow they share in Spain that Bruno is in danger of losing his mother's essential love. Displaced from the bed they share, Bruno must realize that his previous sense of responsibility for Toni, is a greater burden for him than he thought. Faced with the decision between his own life and the suffocating relationship with his mother, Bruno realizes that this will be the first decision he has to make on his own...

GENRE Drama **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022 **DIRECTOR** André Szardenings **SCREENPLAY** André Szardenings **CINEMATOGRAPHY** André Szardenings **CAST** Julius Nitschkoff, Lana Cooper, Karin Haczewski **PRODUCERS** Katharina Kolleczek, Lea Neu **PRODUCTION COMPANY** ifs internationale filmschule köln gmbh, in co-production with André Szardenings, Bayerischer Rundfunk **RUNTIME** 95 min **LANGUAGE** German

WORLD SALES Media Luna New Films UG, Ida Martins
idamartins@medialuna.biz • www.medialuna.biz



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DISTANZ

DISTANCE

During a worldwide pandemic the marketing director Laszlo (48) isolates himself in his apartment due to a fear of contracting the virus. He avoids all human contact- even to his wife, Sabina, and their two children, who are staying at a vacation house. But one evening, his new neighbour Zoe (29) appears at his doorstep. Zoe's uninhibited relationship with Karl, which he now watches from the window, seems a welcome distraction in Laszlo's struggle to land new business and avoid his company's impending bankruptcy.

DISTANCE was written during the lockdown, shot in just one apartment and produced completely independently. A modern drama that delves deep into the human soul and addresses questions of identity and the patterns of life.

GENRE Drama, Erotic **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022 **DIRECTOR** Lars Knorrn **SCREENPLAY** Lars Knorrn, Aleksandar Jovanovic **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Felix Leiberg **CAST** Aleksandar Jovanovic, Hannah Ehrlichmann, Anne Schäfer, Malik Blumenthal, Lucas Englander **PRODUCERS** Felix Leiberg, Walter Peitz **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Distanz Film **RUNTIME** 94 min **LANGUAGE** German

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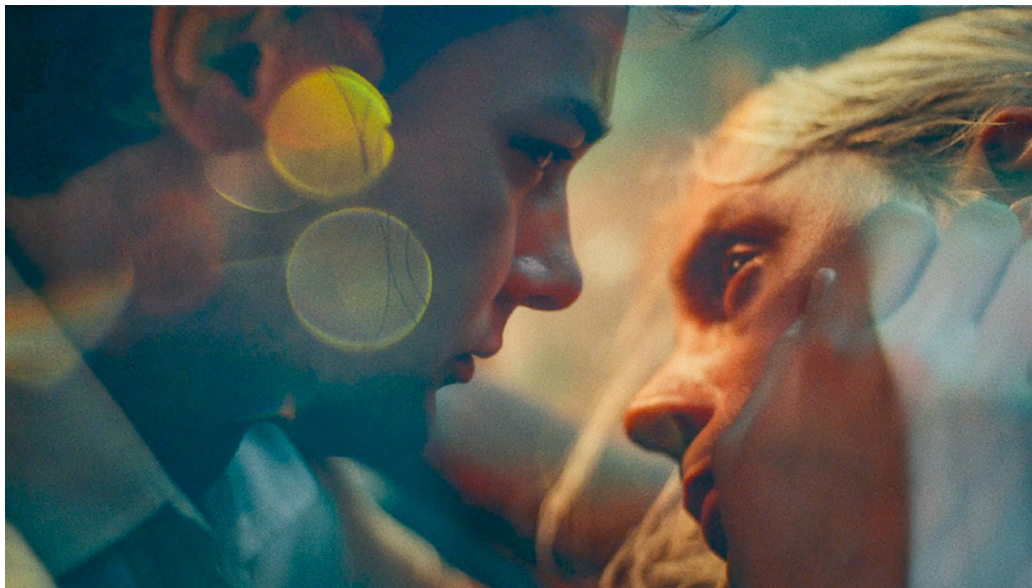
FÜNF FINGER SIND 'NE FAUST

FIVE FINGERS MAKE A FIST

Four former best friends who reunite at a funeral become an unintentional trafficking gang as a harmless road trip turns into a crazy journey through the Swedish landscape full of adversity, black humor and morbid encounters. What was supposed to be a short road trip in memory of their deceased friend Helene, quickly turns into an unforeseeable adventure after the group runs over a man, seemingly without identity, and decides to smuggle him to Sweden. The "Promised Land" for many refugees. On their way there, the unusual group meets the lively extrovert Maria who immediately finds a liking to the guys and joins them. But is Maria all that she seems? The four protagonists break out of their comfort zones driven by the willingness to help, their love for adventure, money and curiosity. All these events are the foundation for a morbid, uninhibited and exposing road trip, where all five have to confront themselves with their own differences, prejudices and the death of Helene to ultimately rekindle their friendship. And so they enter unknown territory with consequences that none of them could foresee.

GENRE Comedy, Road Movie **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022 **DIRECTOR** Laura Fischer **SCREENPLAY** Juri Sternburg **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Jakob Creutzburg **CAST** Lea van Acken, Murathan Muslu, Toni Gojanovic, Axel Schreiber, Benjamin Lillie **PRODUCERS** Laura Fischer, Laura Tille **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Volle Pulle Film Production **RUNTIME** 96 min **LANGUAGE** German

WORLD SALES Volle Pulle Film Production, Markus Breuer
markus.breuer@vollpulle-film.com • www.vollpulleberlin.com



© Media Luna

LASVEGAS

Tristan is a young and ambitious fashion designer searching for independence from his family. When he meets Sunny, a charismatic hustler, he sees what freedom can look like. But Sunny has secrets. What begins as a wild and beautiful love story slowly turns into an intense trip between dream and reality.

GENRE Drama **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022 **DIRECTOR** Kolja Malik **SCREENPLAY** Kolja Malik
CINEMATOGRAPHY Jieun Yi **CAST** Tim-Fabian Hoffmann, Daniel Roth, Robert Stadlober, Thomas Thieme, Nastassja Kinski **PRODUCERS** Susann Schimk, Jan Philip Lange **PRODUCTION COMPANY** solo:film GmbH, in coproduction with JUNIFILM GmbH **RUNTIME** 98 min **LANGUAGE** German

WORLD SALES Media Luna New Films UG, Ida Martins
idamartins@medialuna.biz • www.medialuna.biz



© Oliver Weisskopf

SANITATEM

Power Blackouts in Europe separate Ilay from his family - In his destroyed home country Germany, he is trying to find insulin to save, what's left from his family.

In a brutal fight with two brothers, Ilay saves the young doctor Loana, who is trying to help him now. Both are trying to find the medicine. Ilay realizes that Loana is not alone in this apocalyptic world...

GENRE Psycho Thriller, Road Movie, Science Fiction, Thriller **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022
DIRECTOR Michael Kleinfeld **SCREENPLAY** Michael Kleinfeld, Oliver Weisskopf, Christopher Spies
CINEMATOGRAPHY Oliver Weisskopf **CAST** Felix Hoefner, Margaux Tiltmann, Tobias Krebs
PRODUCERS Michael Kleinfeld, Oliver Weisskopf **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Weissfeldfilms **RUN-TIME** 96 min **LANGUAGE** German

CONTACT Weissfeldfilms, Oliver Weisskopf
 oliver.weisskopf@oliwe-films.de



© POISON, if... Productions

SCHWEIGEND STEHT DER WALD

THE SILENT FOREST

As a forestry student, Anja Grimm finds herself in the remote area of the Upper Palatinate Forest where she vacationed with her parents as an eight-year-old girl and where her father disappeared without a trace. Shortly after her arrival, a brutal murder takes place. Soon Anja's suspicion that the perpetrator knows something about her father's fate arouses wariness and hostility not only among the villagers. Even the police reacts extremely reservedly to her investigations. And when it turns out that the young woman can read the signs of the forest like an open book, forces mobilize in the village that seem ready for anything.

GENRE Thriller **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022 **DIRECTOR** Saralisa Volm **SCREENPLAY** Wolfram Fleischhauer **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Roland Stuprich **CAST** Henriette Confurius, Noah Saavedra, August Zirner, Robert Stadlober **PRODUCER** Saralisa Volm **CO-PRODUCER** Ingo Fliess **PRODUCTION COMPANY** POISON, in co-production with if... Productions **RUNTIME** 95 min **LANGUAGE** German **FESTIVALS** Berlinale 2022, Lichter Filmfest Frankfurt International 2022, Internationales Filmfest Emden-Norderney 2022, Guanajuato International Film Festival 2022, Semana de Cine Alemán Mexico 2022, HEIMAT EUROPA Filmfestspiele 2022 **AWARDS** Internationales Filmfest Emden-Norderney 2022: "Ein Schreibtisch am Meer" **GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR** Alpenrepublik Filmverleih

WORLD SALES Blue Fox Entertainment, Lisa Gutberlet
 lisa@bluefoxentertainment.com • www.bluefoxentertainment.com



SHORT TAKE

THE GERMAN FILMS

● ● ● PODCAST



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DREI FRAUEN

THREE WOMEN

Somewhere in the Carpathians between Ukraine, Slovakia and Poland lies the village of Stuzhytsia. In Ukrainian the name of the village means something like „cold place“. The film tells the stories of three women: the farmer Hanna, the postwoman Maria and the biologist Nelya. In the middle of the mountains, they have to cope with social reality and loneliness. The colder the Carpathian winter gets, the more human warmth the film team finds. In a tiny kitchen Hanna shares her loneliness with the filmmakers, who remind her of her deceased sons. In the villages post office, postwoman Maria has neither stamps nor heating, but customers are warmed with liquor and songs. Somewhere in the woods and caves, biologist Nelya looks for the animal droppings that are a treasure to her. The film portrays an unknown place in the middle of Europe, where people have to decide daily between leaving and staying.

GENRE Biopic, Family Entertainment, History **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022 **DIRECTOR** Maksym Melnyk **SCREENPLAY** Maksym Melnyk **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Florian Baumgarten, Meret Madörin **PRODUCER** Maksym Melnyk **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Filmuniversität Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF **RUNTIME** 70 min **LANGUAGE** Ukrainian **GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR** Filmuniversität Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF

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



© zero one film, Johann Feindt

IGOR LEVIT - NO FEAR

At 34, Igor Levit is an exceptional artist in the world of classical music. A young rebel, who - at the piano - transforms into a mature musician. At age nine he arrived in Germany, a Jewish immigrant of Russian descent. Having an opinion and publicly expressing it, is not a choice, it is a survival strategy. The film follows the artist over two years as Levit explores his "life after Beethoven", as he searches for his next challenge, his identity as an artist. We observe him recording new pieces, his intense immersion into the music, his collaborations with conductors, orchestras and recording artists, his warm embrace of the audiences. And then Covid hits. Having booked 180 concerts all over the world, just to see them being cancelled, Levit is among the first to adapt, establishing a musical life-line between him and his community on Instagram and twitter. And by doing so he discovers a new freedom, away from the constraints of touring, publishing and marketing.

Over the course of two years the film accompanies the artist while he navigates between a traditional career in the classics, his need for activism and an uncertain path as a musician who connects and inspires.

GENRE Art, Biopic, Music **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022 **DIRECTOR** Regina Schilling **SCREEN-PLAY** Regina Schilling **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Johann Feindt, Piotr Rosolowski, Axel Schnepat, Jule Cramer, Thomas Keller, Hajo Schomerus **CAST** Igor Levit **PRODUCER** Thomas Kufus **PRODUCTION COMPANY** zero one film, in co-production with RBB, ARTE **RUNTIME** 118 min **LANGUAGE** German **GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR** Piffil Medien

WORLD SALES zero one film GmbH • office@zeroone.de • www.zeroone.de



© Lasse Frobese

RE:PLAY DIE LETZTE SPIELZEIT

RE:PLAY THE FINAL SEASON

After ten years of common theater work, Schauspiel Dortmund will enter the last season under the artistic direction of Kay Voges in the summer of 2019. The artistic management team as well as the majority of the actors and actresses will leave the house and their artistic home of the last decade and go partly together, partly separate ways. With the production **PLAY: SEAGULL | DEMOLITION OF A JOURNEY**, Kay Voges and the entire ensemble will begin the year of saying goodbye, which is to end in a three-month goodbye showdown in July 2020. At this point, no one suspects that this final season will not allow for theater-going or a normal goodbye due to the worldwide pandemic. A film about leaving, community and a decade of working together and a pandemic that slows everything down.

GENRE History, Theater **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022 **DIRECTORS** Clara Schmieder, Laura N. Junghanns **SCREENPLAY** Clara Schmieder, Laura N. Junghanns **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Lasse Frobese **PRODUCER** Clara Schmieder **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Filmuniversität Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF **RUNTIME** 86 min **LANGUAGE** German **GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR** Filmuniversität Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF

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



© Alexander Gheorghiu, Büchner Filmproduktion, ZDF

RUKLA - MOMENTAN KEINE FEINDSICHT

RUKLA - CURRENTLY NO ENEMY IN SIGHT

The small Lithuanian town of Rukla, more forest than prefabricated buildings, is an important site for Germany in its security architecture. Here, the Bundeswehr leads a multinational NATO battlegroup on the alliance's eastern flank. In 2018, I went there because I was interested in the strong sense of threat that Lithuanians felt towards Russia. What is the purpose of regularly rehearsing a war with heavy weapons in Rukla? In times of cyber and information wars, this seemed to me like an outdated backdrop of deterrence. At the time, I could not imagine that this heavy equipment would become important again so soon. My film turns back the time seven months before Russia's attack on Ukraine. It shows military routines and a place that was already full of military secrets in Soviet times.

GENRE Current Affairs **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022 **DIRECTOR** Steffi Wurster **SCREENPLAY** Steffi Wurster **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Alexander Gheorghiu **PRODUCER** Tobias Büchner **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Büchner Filmproduktion, in co-production with ZDF Das Kleine Fernsehspiel **RUNTIME** 95 min **LANGUAGE** German, Lithuanian, Russian, English

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



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LAKE OF FIRE

The documentary film collage LAKE OF FIRE addresses the fear of death and hell and how a dualistic way of seeing and living fuels the climate change-related "hell on earth".

GENRE Experimental, Documentary Films **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022 **DIRECTOR** NEOZOOM
SCREENPLAY NEOZOOM **PRODUCER** NEOZOOM **PRODUCTION COMPANY** NEOZOOM **RUN-TIME** 11 min **LANGUAGE** English **FESTIVALS** Locarno 2022

WORLD SALES Studio NEOZOOM
mail@neozoom.org • www.neozoom.org



MOTHER PRAYS ALL DAY LONG

Confused between German bureaucracy and questions about sexuality, Hoda, an Iranian asylum seeker in Berlin finds herself emotionally and sexually hooked on Magdalena, who promised to grant her stay permission by marrying her. Due to changes in Magdalena's private life, the decision of marrying Hoda becomes more complex for her.

GENRE Experimental, Fiction, LGBTQ+ **YEAR OF PRODUCTION** 2022 **DIRECTOR** Hoda Taheri **SCREENPLAY** Hoda Taheri, Magdalena Jacob **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Jonathan Steil **ANIMATION** Juan Rmzv **CAST** Hoda Taheri, Magdalena Jacob, Jahandokht Safarian, Gabriele Barth **PRODUCER** Boris Hadžija **PRODUCTION COMPANY** AVA Film **RUNTIME** 24 min **LANGUAGE** English, Farsi, German **FESTIVALS** Locarno 2022 **AWARDS** Locarno 2022: Special Mention

WORLD SALES AVA Film, Boris Hadžija
boris.hadzija@gmail.com



© Paula Meuthen

ARTHUR & DIANA

Sara Summa's second feature centres on siblings Arthur and Diana setting off with Diana's 2-year-old son from Berlin to Paris for a quick, leisurely trip to renew the MOT certificate of their rusty old car. But the journey won't be leisurely, the direction won't be Paris, and whether the car will play along is definitely also rather doubtful. After an encounter with the police, an antagonistic stop at their mother's place, an overly sensual party, a flat tyre, a funeral, and repeated and tumultuous exchanges in the car, they will end up all the way down in Italy, with a few more friends and hopes than they had set out with from Berlin.

GENRE Road Movie **CATEGORY** Feature **DIRECTOR** Sara Summa **SCREENPLAY** Sara Summa **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Faraz Fesharaki **CAST** Sara Summa, Robin Summa, Lupo Piero Summa, Livia Antonelli, Claire Loiseau **PRODUCERS** Cecilia Trautvetter, Lisa Roling **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin in co-production with RBB **LANGUAGE** German, French, Italian

CONTACT

Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie GmbH,
Josephine Aleyt
j.aleytd@dfb.de
www.dffb.de



© LEONINE Studios / UFA Fiction 2022 / Stephanie Kulbach

DAS FLIEGENDE KLASSENZIMMER THE FLYING CLASSROOM

Carolina Hellsgård's contemporary take on Erich Kästner's classic book follows the gifted 13-year-old Martina from a Berlin high-rise housing estate as she takes up a scholarship at the highly respected Johann-Sigismund Gymnasium boarding school in the Alps. All she wants to do is study and just stay out of trouble, but Martina increasingly finds herself caught between the bitter rivalry existing between the boarders and the "externals" from the local village. The plan to settle their never-ending dispute by then putting on a play together at the end of term naturally doesn't go off well, but then a dramatic accident changes everything...

GENRE Children's Film **CATEGORY** Feature **DIRECTOR** Carolina Hellsgård **SCREENPLAY** Gerrit Hermans **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Moritz Anton **CAST** Tom Schilling, Trystan Pütter, Hannah Herzsprung, Leni Deschner, Lovena Börschmann Ziegler, Morten Völlger, Wanja Valentin Kube, Franka Roche, Holly Schiek, Leander Schumann, Aaron Sansi, Paul Lennard Sundheim **PRODUCERS** Sebastian Werninger, Benjamin Benedict **PRODUCTION COMPANY** UFA Fiction GmbH in co-production with Leonine Studios **LANGUAGE** German

CONTACT

Global Screen, Ulrike Schröder
ulrike.schroeder@globalscreen.de
www.globalscreen.de



© Kinescope Film / Christopher Behrmann

ELAHA

Milena Aboyan's debut feature centres on 22-year-old Elaha who is obsessively trying to recover a supposed innocence that she has lost through sex. A plastic surgeon is going to restore her so-called virginity, but she cannot come up with the money for the costly procedure. While looking for an alternative, she comes across a special product in the form of a capsule of artificial blood. This solution, however, forces her into self-exploitation. After some heavy setbacks, Elaha chooses her self-determined sexuality as a woman.

ELAHA was awarded the Kaiju Cinema Diffusion Prize as part of Locarno Film Festival's First Look showcase of German works in progress.

GENRE Drama **CATEGORY** Feature **DIRECTOR** Milena Aboyan **SCREENPLAY** Milena Aboyan, Constantin Hatz **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Christopher Behrmann **CAST** Bayan Layla, Derya Durmaz, Nazmi Kirik, Derya Dilber, Cansu Dogan, Hadnet Tafai, Homa Faghiri, Armin Wahedi, Slavko Popadić, Beritan Balci **PRODUCERS** Matthias Greving, Kirsten Lukaczik, Janina Sara Hennemann, Emina Smajić **CO-PRODUCER** Igor Dovgal **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Kinescope Film GmbH in co-production with Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg and Essence Film **LANGUAGE** German, Kurdish

CONTACT Kinescope Film GmbH
info@kinescope.de
www.kinescope.de



© Konstantin Minnich

KRZYK LOSING CONTROL

DFFB graduate Ewa Wikieł's first feature takes the audience on a sleepless and emotional ride with the main character along dark Polish highways.

A highway after the rain. Lena (38) is driving to Łódź when she hears a woman screaming and sees a burning car. Ever since that night, she has been unable to fall asleep. She needs to find out who the deceased woman, Nina, was. The more sleep-deprived Lena becomes, the more the borders between reality and dreams start to blur. Slowly, Lena becomes Nina. Stuck between her unresolved past and still not her own future, all the while driving fast on a highway, Lena tries to become herself again - before it's too late.

GENRE Drama, Psycho-Thriller **CATEGORY** Feature **DIRECTOR** Ewa Wikieł **SCREENPLAY** Ewa Wikieł, Halina Rasinski **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Konstantin Minnich **CAST** Gina Henkel, Anton Weil, Pawel Delag, Victoria Gorodeckaja **PRODUCER** Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin (DFFB) **CO-PRODUCER** Ibrahim-Uktu Erdogan **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin (DFFB) in co-production with Big Kedi Production **LANGUAGES** German, Polish, English

CONTACT
Konstantin Minnich
konstantinminnich@gmail.com
www.konstantinminnich.com



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MILCHZÄHNE (AT)

MILK TEETH (WT)

Writer-director Sophia Bösch, who won the German Short Film Award with RÅ (Berlinale 2018), has completed shooting of her debut feature MILK TEETH - a modern fairytale about motherhood and belonging. Edith arrives as a foreigner in a hostile environment and builds a life for herself and her daughter Skalde against all resistance. But Skalde increasingly distances herself from her mother, seeking to become part of the community. It is only when she discovers a foreign child, Meisis, in the woods and starts caring for her that she realises she has to reconnect with Edith to protect the child.

GENRE Drama **CATEGORY** Feature **DIRECTOR** Sophia Bösch **SCREENPLAY** Sophia Bösch, Roman Gielke **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Aleksandra Medianikova **CAST** Mathilde Bundschuh, Susanne Wolff, Ulrich Matthes, Viola Hinz, Lola Dockhorn, Karin Neuhäuser, Andreas Lust **PRODUCERS** Milena Klemke, Yvonne Wellie, Jakob D. Weydemann, Jonas Weydemann **CO-PRODUCER** Karin Koch **PRODUCTION COMPANY** Weydemann Bros. GmbH in co-production with Dschoint Ventschr Filmproduktion **LANGUAGE** German **GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR** Farbfilm Verleih

CONTACT

Weydemann Bros., Milena Klemke
milena@weydemannbros.com
www.weydemannbros.com



© Maja Classen

TRUTH OR DARE

An exploration of the relationship between bodies, spaces and touch as a form of longing, Maja Classen's latest documentary TRUTH OR DARE takes on an essayistic format inspired by the dramaturgy of a sex positive party in Berlin and the COVID lockdowns of the past two years when the freedom of these spaces seemed possibly lost forever.

The film's protagonists - which include the Chilean queer sex worker Jorge and the gender-queer person Puck - are afforded the space to share their stories of loneliness, desires, sexuality and identity and reveal how they have found a home and chosen family in Berlin's queer, sex positive community.

GENRE Erotic, Experimental **CATEGORY** Documentary **DIRECTOR** Maja Classen **SCREENPLAY** Maja Classen **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Alina Albrecht **CAST** Lo-Fi Cherry, Bishop Black, Jorge Benavides Alvarez, Ann Antidote, Jasko Fide, Puck Ellington **PRODUCER** Saralisa Volm **PRODUCTION COMPANY** POISON GmbH **LANGUAGE** German, English

CONTACT

POISON GmbH, Saralisa Volm
office@poison-berlin.com
www.poison-berlin.com

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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, 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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Philipp Kreuzer Chairman

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Simone Baumann
Managing Director
 phone +49-89-59 97 87 15
 baumann@german-films.de



Carmen Böhm
Head of Public Relations
 phone +49-89-59 97 87 28
 boehm@german-films.de



Johanna Buse
Head of Regional Desk Southern Europe, South- & Central America
 phone +49-89-59 97 87 14
 buse@german-films.de



Sylva Häutle
Head of Festival Relations & Producers Liaison
 phone +49-89-59 97 87 16
 haeutle@german-films.de



Anne Heidebrecht
Head of Distribution Support & Previews
 phone +49-89-59 97 87 44
 heidebrecht@german-films.de



Marita Luger
Head of Regional Desk Asia, Australia, Scandinavia & Turkey
 phone +49-89-59 97 87 13
 luger@german-films.de



Nicole Kaufmann
Head of Regional Desk USA & UK
 phone +49-89-59 97 87 11
 kaufmann@german-films.de



Julia Khramtsova
Assistant to Managing Director
 phone +49-89-59 97 87 21
 khramtsova@german-films.de



Eva-Maria Pellikan
Head of Communications & Marketing Liaison TV & Series
 phone +49-89-59 97 87 17
 pellikan@german-films.de



Marcos Rabelo
Head of Regional Desk Central and Eastern Europe, Festival Relations
 phone +49-89-59 97 87 10
 rabelo@german-films.de



Martin Scheuring
Head of Short Films & Market Projects
 phone +49-89-59 97 87 12
 scheuring@german-films.de



Andrea Schiefer
Deputy Managing Director, Director Administration & Strategic Development
 phone +49-89-59 97 87 24
 schiefer@german-films.de



Ina Sommer
Head of Animation Germany
 phone +49-89-59 97 87 13
 sommer@german-films.de



Julia Teichmann
Head of Documentary Marketing & Subtitling Support
 phone +49-89-59 97 87 20
 teichmann@german-films.de



Chen Zhang
Accounting
 phone +49-89-59 97 87 22
 zhang@german-films.de

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Verband deutscher Filmexporteure e.V. (VD FE)

Winterfeldstr. 56
10781 Berlin/Germany
phone +49-173-577 08 38
mail@vdf.de
www.vdf.de

Beta Cinema GmbH

Grünwalder Weg 28d
82041 Oberhaching/Germany
phone +49-89-6 73 46 98 28
beta@betacinema.com
www.betacinema.com

The Match Factory GmbH

Domstr. 60
50668 Cologne/Germany
phone +49-2 21-53 97 09-0
info@matchfactory.de
www.the-match-factory.com

Constantin Film Verleih GmbH

Feilitzschstr. 6
80802 Munich/Germany
phone +49-89-44 44 60 0
zentrale@constantin.film
www.constantin-film.de

Media Luna New Films UG

Kaiser-Wilhelm-Ring 38, 6th Floor
50672 Cologne/Germany
phone +49-2 21-51 09 18 91
info@medialuna.biz
www.medialuna.biz

Films Boutique GmbH

Köpenicker Str. 184
10997 Berlin/Germany
phone +49-30-69 53 78 50
contact@filmsboutique.com
www.filmsboutique.com

The Playmaker Munich (form. ARRI Media International)

Türkenstr. 89
80799 Munich/Germany
phone +49-89-38 09 12 88
worldsales@playmaker.de
www.playmaker.de

Global Screen - a Telepool brand

Sonnenstr. 21
80331 Munich/Germany
phone +49-89-24 41 29 55 00
info@globalscreen.de
www.globalscreen.de

SOLA Media GmbH

Rotebühlplatz 29
70178 Stuttgart/Germany
phone +49-7 11-96 89 44 40
post@sola-media.com
www.sola-media.com

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German Films Service + Marketing GmbH
Herzog-Wilhelm-Str. 16
80331 Munich/Germany
phone +49-89-5 99 78 70
info@german-films.de
www.german-films.de

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Editor
 Carmen Böhm

Contributors
 Martin Blaney, Patrick Heidmann,
 Rüdiger Sturm

Translations
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FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVES

USA - New York
 German Film Office
 An initiative of German Films
 and Goethe-Institut
 Sara Stevenson
 phone+1 212 439 8706
sara.stevenson@goethe.de
www.germanfilmoffice.us

China
 Anke Redl
 phone +86 136 01 35 59 19
redl@german-films.de

Eastern Europe
 Marcel Maïga
 phone +49 176 38 84 56 72
maiga@german-films.de



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