

## Box-office hitmaker Markus Goller's *My Brother Simple* opens German Film Week in Manila



Markus Goller, Brillante Mendoza, and Dr. Ulrich Nowak of the Goethe-Institut Philippinen

By **RICA AREVALO**

**L**ast Wednesday (Sept. 27), we sat down with one of Germany's hitmakers, film director **Markus Goller**, for the screening of his latest film, *My Brother Simple*, at the second German Film Week at the SM Mall of Asia.

Markus's previous films, *Frau Ella* (2013) and *Friendship!* (2010), were successful box office hits in Germany with over 1.5 million admissions.

He traces his beginnings in the film industry. "I started as an editor. After a couple of years, I decided to try it myself and start to direct," says the Munich-born director. "When you edit, you sit in a dark room all the time and, after a while, you think maybe I can shoot the stuff myself. You become curious. I got an opportunity and I took it!"

*My Brother Simple* was based on the French bestselling novel by **Marie-Aude Murail**. It tells of Ben's (**Frederick Lau**) devotion to his mentally handicapped brother Simple played by *The Reader* actor **David Kross**. In order to escape the authorities, they travel to Hamburg to look for their father so Simple will not be forced to live in an institution.

"I think it's fun, authentic, and emotional," reflects the 2017 Shanghai International Film Festival finalist.

Markus wanted Simple to be free. "He is just living in the moment. He just expresses his feelings as he feels it," says the 48-year-old first-time Manila visitor. "I thought that it was just beautiful and inspiring as a human being. That was how this took off."

Markus and his team went to an autistic institution to research about mental disabilities. "We decided we come out with our own version of it. One day we just went out in Berlin, with Frederick and David, both in their parts, just being in the streets and behaving naturally," he muses. "I had a camera and I filmed them. That was great. It was sort of a process."

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It was also an advantage that Markus grew up with a grandfather who used to head a "home" in the village for people with mental disabilities.

"The movie is not about disability," he confesses. "It's about caring for each other. It's about the joy of being together and loving each other." One of the highlights in the film is the heartstopping rooftop emotion-filled confrontation between the brothers.

Who are his influences? "Love and light," he says. When we prodded him to expound, he smiled, "My wife (**Katja von Garnier**). She's a director, too. She's my inspiration."

His advice for aspiring filmmakers: "Follow your heart. It's the most important thing. You just follow your heart, don't start to think, and follow your feelings."

The second German Film Week is ongoing until Oct. 5 at SM North Edsa and SM Mall of Asia organized by The Goethe-Institut Philippinen in partnership with SM Malls, SM Cinemas, and the Film Development Council of the Philippines.

Other films include Oscar nominee **Toni Erdmann** (2016), award-winning director **Chris Kraus'** *The Bloom of Yesterday* (2016), *Return to Montauk* (2017), *Fog in August* (2015), and **Brillante Mendoza's** *Captive* (2012). [Goethe.de/Manila](http://Goethe.de/Manila)



# Lifestyle

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