

GERMAN CURRENTS

20TH FESTIVAL OF GERMAN FILM | OCT 08-13, 2026



A CO-PRODUCTION OF THE GOETHE-INSTITUT AND THE AMERICAN CINEMATHEQUE

20 GERMAN
CURRENTS

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DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS,



the GERMAN CURRENTS Film Festival Los Angeles turns 20, and we want to celebrate this milestone with you!

From October 8-13, 2026, GERMAN CURRENTS will bring outstanding German cinema and acclaimed filmmakers to Los Angeles, continuing a two-decade-long tradition of fostering transatlantic dialogue through film.

Screenings will take place at the American Cinematheque's Aero Theatre, the Los Feliz 3, the Wende Museum, the Goethe-Institut Los Angeles and the Gardena Cinema.

The festival opens on October 8 with the red-carpet West Coast Premiere of *FATHERLAND* (VATERLAND), the new film by acclaimed director Paweł Pawlikowski, who will present his film in person.

The 2026 program features 12 screenings, including seven award-winning feature films, two documentaries, two youth films, and a short film program. Several filmmakers will present their films in person: Laura Laabs with the SoCal Premiere of *ROTE STERNE ÜBERM FELD* (RED STARS UPON THE FIELD), Villa Aurora fellow Florian Baron with the U.S. Premiere of his documentary *SPEARA*, and Michael Kofler for the LA Premiere of his film *A LAND WITHIN* (ZWEITLAND). Bernd Sahling will present three of his films, the documentary *IT'LL BE OK* (ALLES WIRD GUT), his latest family feature, *KOSCHKA*, and his youth film, *TOMORROW I'LL BE BRAVE* (AB MORGEN BIN ICH MUTIG) as part of the GERMAN CURRENTS' educational outreach program.

This 20th anniversary edition of GERMAN CURRENTS promises to be both a celebration of the festival's legacy and a forward-looking exploration of the future of German and European cinema.

On behalf of the entire GERMAN CURRENTS team, we thank our partners, sponsors and supporters! We look forward to seeing you at the festival and celebrating together.

Warm regards,

Luisa Rath-John
Director Goethe-Institut Los Angeles
Festival Director of GERMAN CURRENTS

GERMAN CURRENTS SCREENINGS

TICKETS AND INFORMATION:
WWW.GERMANCURRENTS.COM

THURSDAY, 10/8

@ AERO THEATRE



**FATHERLAND |
VATERLAND**

7:00 PM

WEST COAST
PREMIERE
OPENING
NIGHT FILM &
AFTERPARTY
GUEST: WRITER-
DIRECTOR
PAWEŁ
PAWLIKOWSKI

FRIDAY, 10/9

@ WENDE MUSEUM



**IT'LL BE OK |
ALLES WIRD GUT**

5:00 PM

WEST COAST
PREMIERE
GUEST: FILMMAKER
BERND SAHLING



**RED STARS UPON
THE FIELD |
ROTE STERNE
ÜBERM FELD**

7:15 PM

SOCAL PREMIERE
GUEST: FILMMAKER
LAURA LAABS

SATURDAY, 10/10

@ GOETHE-INSTITUT



SPEARA

12:00 PM

U.S. PREMIERE
GUEST: FILMMAKER
FLORIAN BARON

@ LOS FELIZ 3



**THE FROG AND THE
WATER |
DER FROSCH UND
DAS WASSER**

4:00 PM

SOCAL PREMIERE



**A LAND WITHIN |
ZWEITLAND**

7:00 PM

LA PREMIERE
GUEST: FILMMAKER
MICHAEL KOFLER

SUNDAY, 10/11

@ GOETHE-INSTITUT



KOSCHKA

11:00 AM

FAMILY MATINEE
WEST COAST
PREMIERE
GUEST: FILMMAKER
BERND SAHLING



**NEXT GENERATION
SHORT TIGER
2026**

2:00 PM

U.S. PREMIERE
SHORT FILM
PROGRAM



**PUNCHING THE
WORLD |
MIT DER FAUST
IN DIE WELT
SCHLAGEN**

4:30 PM

WEST COAST
PREMIERE



**PHANTOMS OF
JULY |
SEHNSUCHT IN
SANGERHAUSEN**

7:00 PM

MONDAY, 10/12

@ AERO THEATRE



**BERLIN HERO |
DER HELD VOM
BAHNHOF
FRIEDRICH-
STRASSE**

7:30 PM

U.S. PREMIERE
PRE-SCREENING
DRINKS RECEPTION

TUESDAY, 10/13

@ GARDENA CINEMA



**TOMORROW I'LL BE
BRAVE |
AB MORGEN BIN
ICH MUTIG**

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@ AERO THEATRE

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8TH | 7:00 PM

OPENING NIGHT | WEST COAST PREMIERE | AFTERPARTY

GUEST: WRITER-DIRECTOR PAWEŁ PAWLIKOWSKI

Discussion with Filmmaker Paweł Pawlikowski + reception following the screening. Presented with the support of the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Los Angeles, and in cooperation with the Villa Aurora & Thomas Mann House e. V.

FATHERLAND

VATERLAND



Set in the summer of 1949 amidst the rubble of a defeated Germany in the aftermath of World War II, *Fatherland* centers on the relationship between the Nobel Prize-winning novelist Thomas Mann (Zischler) and his daughter Erika Mann (Hüller) – actress, writer, and rally driver. Returning home after sixteen years of exile in the US, Thomas Mann must face not only a divided fatherland, but also a deep fissure within his own family, one that is both politically charged and emotionally challenging. As father and daughter embark on a fictionalized road trip across a torn Germany – still visibly scarred by battle and simultaneously in denial of its evils and culpability – they travel from US-dominated Frankfurt in the west to Soviet-controlled Weimar in the east. Pawlikowski and Handloegten's screenplay uses the Manns' own fractured relationship as the vehicle to examine a country at the crossroads of history, facing an impending moral crisis. Cinematographer Łukasz Żal's hauntingly stark black-and-white visuals skillfully capture Zischler and Hüller's masterfully restrained performances.



Poland, Germany, Italy, France (2026) 82 min.
DCP Projection.
German/English/French/Russian with English Subtitles

Director Paweł Pawlikowski

Screenplay Paweł Pawlikowski, Henk Handloegten

Cinematography Łukasz Żal

Editing Piotr Wójcik, Paweł Pawlikowski

Cast Hanns Zischler, Sandra Hüller, August Diehl, Anna Madeley, Devid Striesow, David Menkin, Joachim Meyerhoff, Enno Trebs, Theo Trebs, Waldemar Kobus, Milan Peschel, Daniel Wagner

Executive Producers Efe Çakarel, Michael Weber, Viola Fügen, Andrea Scarso, Timo Argillander, Ognjen Dizdarevic, Ilaria Zazzaro, Luke Rivett, Matthieu Prada, Julien Delajoux, Matthias Nicodeme

Producers Mario Gianani, Lorenzo Mieli, Ewa Puszczyńska, Jeanne Tremzal, Edward Berger, Dimitri Rassam, Lorenzo Gangarossa

Production Company Our Films (Rome), Extreme Emotions (Łódź), Nine Hours (Berlin), Chapter 2 (Paris)

AWARDS & NOMINATIONS

Cannes Film Festival 2026

Winner: Best Director Award ex aequo

DISTRIBUTOR

MUBI

www.mubi.com



Paweł Pawlikowski is a Polish filmmaker who began his career directing award-winning documentaries in Britain before moving into narrative features with *LAST RESORT* (2000) and *MY SUMMER OF LOVE* (2004), both BAFTA-winning films. His film *IDA* (2013) won the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film, the first Polish film to do so. It also won five European Film Awards, including Best Film, Best Director and Best Screenwriter. *COLD WAR* (2018) premiered in Competition at the Cannes Film Festival, where Pawlikowski was awarded the Best Director Prize, and later received three Academy Award nominations, including Best Director. It also won five awards at the 2018 European Film Awards, including Best Film, Best Director and Best Screenwriter.



Germany (1987–1990) 76 min.
DCP Projection.
German/English with English Subtitles

Writer-Director Bernd Sahling
Dramaturgy Anne Nestler
Cinematography Olaf Skrzipczyk, Le Dang Quan
Editor Carola Schäfer
Sound Thomas Thiele
Mentors Helmut Dziuba, Peter Rabenalt, Holger Lochau
Producer Peter Hartwig
Production Company EIKON Munich, Filmhochschule Munich, Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen "Konrad Wolf"
Remastering | Stereo Soundtrack Schwander-Sounddesign, Fxtogo, Studio Mitte, Filmuniversität Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF

DISTRIBUTION
Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF
www.filmuniversitaet.de



Bernd Sahling was born in Naumburg, East Germany. After a traineeship at the DEFA Studio for Feature Films, he worked as an assistant director on numerous children's films. From 1986 to 1991, he studied at the HFF "Konrad Wolf" in Babelsberg and served as assistant director under Helmut Dziuba and Rolf Losansky. From 1995–96 he studied at Columbia College Chicago, majoring in screenwriting. With his award-winning feature films DIE BLINDGÄNGER and KOPFÜBER and documentaries ALLES WIRD GUT and EDNAS TAG, Sahling established himself as one of Germany's prominent directors for children's and youth films. Since 2004, he has led film workshops with young people and has recorded podcast discussions on working methods in children's film. He is a member of the German Film Academy.

@ WENDE MUSEUM

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9TH | 5:00 PM
WEST COAST PREMIERE | POST-SCREENING DRINKS RECEPTION
GUEST: FILMMAKER BERND SAHLING

Discussion with Filmmaker Bernd Sahling and drinks reception in the Wende Museum sculpture garden following the screening.
Presented in cooperation with the Wende Museum and the Thomas Mann House.

IT'LL BE OK ALLES WIRD GUT



Bernd Sahling's long-term documentary captures nearly four years in the life of Michael, aka Stummel, a young punker living in East Berlin in the late 1980s. A punk since he was 13, Stummel uses aggression, provocation, drugs, and punk music to escape from his troubled childhood and the rigidity of GDR life. As a teenager, he fathers a child, and although his girlfriend remains in the GDR, Stummel applies to leave the country to follow his mother to West Germany. In 1988, while still a film student at the HFF "Konrad Wolf," Sahling released his portrait of Stummel in the short documentary LIVING MY WAY | ABER WENN MAN SO LEBEN WILL WIE ICH, the first film to capture the punk scene in the GDR. Less than a year later, following the fall of the Berlin Wall, Sahling interviews Stummel again, capturing his experiences as an outsider caught between two opposing political systems at the tail end of the Cold War. The resulting film, IT'LL BE OK | ALLES WIRD GUT, premiered in 1990 at the Mannheim International FF. In 2022, the film was remastered in HD with a stereo soundtrack.

@ WENDE MUSEUM

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9TH | 7:15 PM
SOCAL PREMIERE | PRE-SCREENING DRINKS RECEPTION
GUEST: FILMMAKER LAURA LAABS

Screening preceded by a drinks reception in the Wende Museum sculpture garden. Followed by discussion. Presented in cooperation with the Wende Museum and the German Film Office.

RED STARS UPON THE FIELD ROTE STERNE ÜBERM FELD



When the villagers in the idyllic rural community of Bad Kleinen in the East German countryside discover a mysterious, well-preserved skeleton in the murky moors outside of town, unresolved disappearances from the last 100 years are brought back to light, and rumors begin to spread. Suddenly, three dark chapters of German history collide: Was it a Wehrmacht deserter in 1944, a stubborn collective farmer during the final days of the GDR, or perhaps the shadowy third man from a notorious secret service mission against the left-wing Red Army Faction? Seeking refuge in her hometown while evading arrest for her clandestine activism as part of the "Aesthetic Left," Tine (Ehrlichmann) begins to investigate. Strangely, as all the threads seem to lead back to Tine's father's house, she finds herself entangled in a web of historical secrets that mirror her present struggles. Writer-Director Laabs' debut feature skillfully weaves historical drama with comedy brought to life through Dominik Kremerskothen's realism-bending production design, offering a fresh perspective on how the past continues to shape our present.



Germany (2025) 133 min.
Digital Projection.
German/English with English Subtitles

Writer-Director Laura Laabs
Cinematography Carlos Vásquez
Editor Emma Gräf
Production Design Dominik Kremerskothen
Set Design Diana Aldana Paez
Cast Hannah Ehrlichmann, Jule Böwe, Hermann Beyer, Andreas Döhler, Jenny Schily, Uwe Preuss, Rainer Reiners, Arnd Klawitter, Camill Jammal, Matthi Faust
Producers Maximilian Haslberger, Daria Wichmann, Balthasar Busmann
Production Company Amerikafilm GmbH (Berlin), in co-production with Magic Media Production GmbH (Essingen), Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF)/Arte (Mainz)

AWARDS & NOMINATIONS
Filmfestival Max Ophüls Preis 2025
Jury Of The Film Film Critics Award (Best Feature Film)
achtung berlin filmfestival 2025 - new berlin film award (Best Feature Film, Best Screenplay, Best Cinematography Feature Film, Best Production)
German Film Critics Award 2026
Best Debut Feature
Heimat Europa Filmfestspiele 2025
Youth Jury Award

WORLD SALES
The Playmaker Munich
www.playmaker.de



Laura Laabs was born in 1985 in East Berlin. She studied politics, cultural sciences, and journalism in Berlin (Humboldt University), Potsdam, and Paris (Sciences Po), and film directing at the Film University Konrad Wolf, completing a post-graduate program with Andreas Kleinert in 2017. Her first documentary film, SPINACH AND SUGAR (2012), won the Most Innovative Short Film award at Visions du Réel in Nyon, Switzerland. Her second film VOLKSBUHNE (2013) won the Emerging Talent Award at the Biennale of the Moving Image in Frankfurt. She teaches workshops at "Deutsche Kinemathek", "Komische Oper Berlin" and "Film University Konrad Wolf" and is co-founder of the feminist film collective r.O.K.S. Rote Sterne Überm Feld (2024) is her latest feature film.



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@ GOETHE-INSTITUT

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10TH | 12:00 PM
U.S. PREMIERE
GUEST: FILMMAKER FLORIAN BARON

SPEARA

SPEARA



Filmmaker Florian Baron's *SPEARA* follows the journey of Mitsuki, a 26-year-old world champion spearfisher, currently living in California. Originally from Japan, Mitsuki moved abroad when she was only 16, seeking a new start far away from difficult family dynamics. In the USA, Mitsuki discovered her passion for spearfishing, developing her practice while working as a private chef. Baron interweaves cinematographer Johannes Waltermann's immersive, atmospheric shots of Mitsuki hunting in the kelp forest along the California coast with Mitsuki's deeply personal reflections on her past trauma and her discovery of the ocean's beauty and transformative power. Baron's film is an intimate portrait of Mitsuki's personal journey that offers a sharp perspective on identity and migration, self-determination, sustainability, and the role of women in the spearfishing subculture.



Germany (2025) 40 min.
Japanese/English with English Subtitles

Writer-Director Florian Baron
Cinematography Johannes Waltermann
Editor Maja Tennstedt
Sound Designer Lorenz Fischer
Film Score Composer Jana Irmert
Cast Mitsuki Hara
Production Florian Baron
Production Company RAENDROP Film

DISTRIBUTION
RAENDROP FILM
www.raendrop-film.de



Florian Baron was born in 1984 in Berlin, Germany, taking his first steps as a filmmaker during high school. From 2004 until 2006 he lived in Japan, where he worked on several film and video art projects. From 2007-2012 he was a student in the director's department at the University for Film and Television "Konrad Wolf" in Potsdam where he directed the films *RADIO TAXI* for ARTE, as well as his graduation film *THE FINAL CALL*. In the following years he worked in the USA on his documentaries *JOE BOOTS* and *STRESS*. In 2020 he co-founded the production company RAENDROP Film. Florian Baron is a Villa Aurora Fellow (2023).



Germany, Switzerland (2025) 103 min.
DCP Projection.
German, Japanese with English Subtitles

Director Thomas Stuber
Screenplay Gotthard Kuppel, Thomas Stuber, Hyoe Yamamoto
Cinematography Filip Zumbunn
Editing Kaya Inan
Cast Aladdin Detlefsen, Kanji Tsuda, Bettina Stucky, Meltem Kaptan, Cornelius Schwalm, Yuki Iwamoto
Producers Christoph Friedel, Claudia Steffen
Co-Producers Christof Neracher, Magdalena Welter, Louis Mataré, Annegret Weitkämper-Krug
Production Company Pandora Film Produktion GmbH (Köln), in Co-Production with Hugofilm Productions GmbH (Zürich), Lomotion AG (Bern), Gretchenfilm GmbH (Hamburg), Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF) (Mainz)

AWARDS & NOMINATIONS
Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival 2025
Best Acting-Duo (Kanji Tsuda, Aladdin Detlefsen)

WORLD SALES
THE MATCH FACTORY
www.the-match-factory.com



Thomas Stuber was born in 1981 in Leipzig and studied at the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg. His short film ES GEHT UNS GUT won the Young Talent Award of the Film Industry in Baden-Württemberg in 2006. His first feature film TEENAGE ANGST premiered at the Berlinale/ Perspektive Deutsches Kino in 2008 and won the German Young Talent Award at the Sehsüchte International Student Film Festival. In 2011 his short film OF DOGS AND HORSES was nominated for the First Steps Award, won the German Short Film Award and, in 2012, a Student Academy Award in Silver. His feature films A HEAVY HEART (2015), IN THE AISLES (2018), and THE FROG AND THE WATER have premiered in Los Angeles at German Currents.

@ LOS FELIZ 3

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10TH | 4:00 PM
SOCAL PREMIERE

Presented with the support of the Consulate General of Switzerland in San Francisco, the Wende Museum, and the German Film Office.

THE FROG AND THE WATER

DER FROSCH UND DAS WASSER



Young Stefan “Buschi” Busch (Detlefsen) lives in an assisted group home in Cologne, where his structured daily routine leaves little room for surprises. Nevertheless, he longs for change. Setting out on his own in an unexpected act of self-determination, Buschi seizes the chance to leave an organized outing and casually joins a Japanese tour group. Having lived his entire life without speaking, Buschi discovers new ways to express himself and connect with others on this unusual trip. Along the way, a tentative, silent friendship develops between Buschi and the Japanese traveler Hideo Kitamura (Kanji), a man on his own personal journey. As this extraordinary road trip unfolds across Germany, Switzerland, and Japan, a bond develops between these unlikely friends that transcends words. Stuber, Kuppel, and Yamamoto’s screenplay provides the perfect roadmap for award-winning performances by Kanji and Detlefsen in this most unlikely of off-beat road movies.

@ LOS FELIZ 3

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10TH | 7:00 PM
LA PREMIERE

GUEST: WRITER-DIRECTOR MICHAEL KOFLER

Discussion with Writer-Director Michael Kofler following the screening. Presented with the support of the Austrian Consulate General, Los Angeles, the Italian Cultural Institute, Los Angeles, and the German Film Office.

A LAND WITHIN

ZWEITLAND



Alto Adige/Südtirol/South Tyrol, 1961. A series of separatist bomb attacks shakes the northern Italian region with a German-speaking minority. Paul (Prenn), a farmer’s son and free spirit, dreams of escaping his little village to study painting in Munich. When his hardliner older brother, Anton (Rupp), is exposed as one of the bombers and is forced to flee, he leaves the farm, his wife Anna (Schwarz) and young son Thomas (Carli) behind. Reluctantly, Paul stays to support the family, but as ethnic tensions and police repression in the village grow, he is drawn into a downward spiral of violence and toxic masculinity. As events spin out of control, Paul must choose between his dream and standing up against his brother. In his feature debut, director Michael Kofler delivers a powerful portrayal of the events surrounding the so-called “Night of Fire” in South Tyrol, highlighting the thin line between conviction and radicalization.



Germany, Italy, Austria (2025) 112 min.
DCP Projection.
Italian, German, South Tyrolean dialect with English Subtitles

Writer-Director Michael Kofler
Assistant Director Peter Fuchs, Jannis Skalieris
Cinematography Felix Wiedemann
Editing Florian Miosge
Cast Thomas Prenn, Laurence Rupp, Aenne Schwarz, Niclas Carli, Francesco Acquaroli, Andrea Fuorto
Producers Wasiliki Bleser, Nina Spilger
Co-Producers Martin Rattini, Barbara Pichler, Gabriele Kranzelbinder, Dr. Rainer Kölmel
Production Company Starhaus Filmproduktion GmbH (München) in co-production with HELIOS Sustainable Films (Bozen), KGP Kranzelbinder Gabriele Production (Wien), Bayerischer Rundfunk (BR) (München)

AWARDS & NOMINATIONS
FF Della Lessinia 2026
MicroCosmo Award
Bavarian Film Award 2026
Newcomer Director Award

WORLD SALES
Starhaus Filmproduktion GmbH
www.starhaus.de



Michael Kofler grew up in rural South Tyrol in the Italian Alps. He studied Directing in London, where he also worked for several years at a leading Film & TV production company. His short films and video works have been screened at various international film festivals. His screenplay for his debut feature film, A LAND WITHIN | ZWEITLAND, won the top award of Racconti Development Lab by IDM Film Commission. Michael is an alumnus of the Berlinale Talents, the talent development program of the Berlinale.



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@ GOETHE-INSTITUT

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11TH | 11:00 AM
WEST COAST PREMIERE | FAMILY MATINEE
GUEST: FILMMAKER BERND SAHLING

Discussion with Filmmaker Bernd Sahling following the screening.
Presented with the support of ELMA (European Languages and Movies in America) and in cooperation with the Thomas Mann House.

KOSCHKA KOSCHKA



Summer vacation is just around the corner, and eight-year-old Jan (Erbes) is set to go on a trip to the countryside with his mother and her new family. One day, while walking home with his best friend Sami (Yalcin), the two boys pass by a cat that unexpectedly follows Jan home, all the way into his apartment! Jan and his father Jörg quickly do all they can to care for their new houseguest, whom Jan names Koschka, until the real owner can be found. When Koschka gives birth to three kittens, it becomes clear that everyone's summer plans are on hold. Along with their friend Marta (Mortlock), Sami and Jan soon learn the joys and responsibility of caring for pets. An unexpected outbreak of fleas and Jan's allergies lead Jörg to change his mind about keeping the feline family and insist that the cats go to a shelter. The children, however, spring into action, doing all they can to find Koschka's owner and proper homes for her kittens. Sahling's film, which emerged from a concept developed in a film workshop for young people, is a heartwarming, family-friendly story about responsibility, independence, and friendship.



Germany (2026) 74 min.
German, Russian with English Subtitles.

Writer-Director Bernd Sahling
Assistant Director Martin Carolus Zillmann
Cinematography Sabine Ballnat, Piotr Rosołowski
Editing Evelyn Rack
Cast Sebastian Erbes, Ilkay Yalcin, Bella Mortlock, Benjamin Kramme, Boris Aljinovic, Petra Kalkuschke, Theresa Scholze, Lea Gerstenkorn, Peter Brachschoss, Anna Bahners
Producers Meike Martens
Co-Producers Erik Lötsch, Grischa Sautter, Patrick Schorn
Production Company Blinker Filmproduktion GmbH (Köln)

AWARDS & NOMINATIONS
66th Zlin IFF for Children and Youth
Honorable Mention

WORLD SALES
BLINKERFILM
www.blinkerfilm.de



Bernd Sahling was born in Naumburg, East Germany. After a traineeship at the DEFA Studio for Feature Films, he worked as an assistant director on numerous children's films. From 1986 to 1991, he studied at the HFF "Konrad Wolf" in Babelsberg and served as assistant director under Helmut Dziuba and Rolf Losansky. From 1995-96 he studied screenwriting at Columbia College Chicago. His award-winning features DIE BLINDGÄNGER and KOPFÜBER and documentaries ALLES WIRD GUT and EDNAS TAG established Sahling as one of Germany's prominent directors for children's and youth films. Since 2004, he has led film workshops with young people and has recorded podcast discussions on working methods in children's film. He is a member of the German Film Academy.

German Film Office

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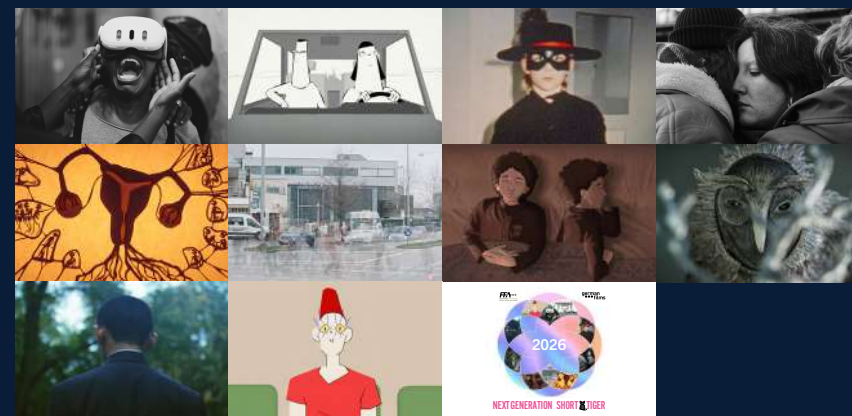
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for Culture and the Media

@ GOETHE-INSTITUT

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11TH | 2:00 PM
U.S. PREMIERE | SHORT FILM SHOWCASE

NEXT GENERATION SHORT TIGER 2026

NEXT GENERATION SHORT TIGER 2026



Presented by German Films and the German Federal Film Board (FFA), the 16th edition of this beloved annual showcase presents the year's most promising young directors and remarkable award-winning student short films from Germany. Selected by an expert jury from the German film industry: Director Anna Roller, Sarah Dombrinck (interfilm Berlin) and Andreas Heidenreich (Municipal Cinema Weiterstadt & German Association of Municipal and Cultural Cinemas), NEXT GENERATION SHORT TIGER 2026 combines new talents – the NEXT GENERATION of German cinema – with the best German short films up to 7 minutes – the winners of the FFA's SHORT TIGER AWARD 2026. Representing Germany's diversity of forms, genres, and skillful filmmaking talent that international audiences have come to expect from German shorts, these deeply personal and universal stories confirm the notion that short film is an independent art form deserving of the big screen and the awareness of audiences worldwide.



Germany (2026), 97 min.
Various Languages with English Subtitles

THE ADVENTURES OF THE BLACK GIRL IN HER SEARCH FOR MABEL DOVE

Nnenna Onuoha
(Experimental Documentary, 2025, 14:56)

AT LEAST | IMMERHIN

Jens Rosemann (Animation, 2026, 2:31)

BRAVE NEW PAST

Erik Schmitt (Fake Documentary, 2026, 4:32)

FRAGILE | FRAGIL

Miri Klischat, Laurenz Otto (Fiction, 2026, 6:33)

GAÏA

Gwenola Heck (Animation, 2025, 4:08)

IN RETROSPECT | RÜCKBLICKEND BETRACHTET

Mila Zhluktenko, Daniel Asadi Faezi
(Experimental Documentary, 2025, 14:56)

MY BROTHER, MY BROTHER

Abdelrahman Dnewar, Saad Dnewar
(Animation, 2025, 14:57)

RADIX

Anne Breymann (Animation, 2025, 4:14)

A SOIL A CULTURE A RIVER A PEOPLE | YOU JIAN CHUI YAN

Viv Li (Fiction, 2025, 14:28)

WITH TAPES AND TOASTS IN THE CAR | IM AUTO TAPES UND BUTTERBROT

Kiana Naghshineh (Animation, 2025, 14:17)

NEXT GENERATION SHORT TIGER 2026
German Films Service + Marketing GmbH
www.german-films.de



Germany (2025) 111 min.
German with English Subtitles

Writer-Director Constanze Klaue
Cinematography Florian Brückner
Editing Andreas Wodraschke, Emma Alice Gräf, Daniel McMahon (Assistant)
Cast Anton Franke, Camille Moltzen, Anja Schneider, Christian Nätke, Katrin Röver, Hannes Wegener, Meinhard Neumann, Steffi Kühnert, Johannes Scheidweiler, Moritz Hoyer
Producers Gabriele Simon, Alexander Wadouh, Roxana Richters, Martin Heisler
Production Company Flare Film GmbH (Berlin), Chromosom Film GmbH (Berlin)

AWARDS & NOMINATIONS
German Film Critics' Award 2026
Best Casting, Best Acting Ensemble
Friedenspreis des deutschen Films
Die Brücke 2025 (Newcomer Award)
Marburger Kinder- und Jugendfilmfestival
Honorable Mention

WORLD SALES
Across Nations Filmverleih GmbH
www.across-nations.de



Constanze Klaue was born in Berlin and studied German in Dresden and jazz music in Osnabrück. She then worked as a writer, copywriter, and director for an advertising production company in Cologne before studying at the city's Academy of Media Arts. In 2017/18, she was awarded a scholarship by the Academy for Children's Media and won the Boje Baumhaus Media Prize for developing her novel "Ausgerechnet Mops." In 2020, her graduation film Lychen 92 won the Max Ophüls Prize and the First Steps Award for Best Medium-Length Film. Mit der Faust in die Welt schlagen is her debut feature film.

@ GOETHE-INSTITUT

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11TH | 4:30 PM
WEST COAST PREMIERE

PUNCHING THE WORLD

MIT DER FAUST IN DIE WELT SCHLAGEN



2006: 12-year-old Philipp (Franke) and nine-year-old Tobi (Moltzen) are two brothers navigating a challenging childhood in the East German provinces. As the boys look forward to moving into a house their father, Stefan (Nätke), is building, Stefan loses his job due to excessive drinking, and their mother, Sabine (Schneider), struggles to hold things together. Stuck in the middle, Tobi and Philipp explore the nearby countryside, far from their suffocating family. In a life which offers few bright spots or role models, the only other outlet is a group of older boys whose promise of adventure brings violence and xenophobia. When Philipp joins them, he feels a new sense of purpose and belonging, despite crossing legal and moral boundaries. Tension escalates when, years later, a refugee shelter is scheduled to open nearby. Inspired by Lukas Rietzschel's critically acclaimed novel, PUNCHING THE WORLD, Constanze Klaue's debut feature is a powerful meditation on Germany's post-reunification era, the need to belong, and the dangers of alienation. For their powerful performances, newcomers Franke and Moltzen received the German Film Critics' Award 2026 for Best Acting.

@ GOETHE-INSTITUT

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11TH | 7:00 PM

PHANTOMS OF JULY

SEHNSUCHT IN SANGERHAUSEN



In the sleepy East German village of Sangerhausen, Ursula (Schwinning), a waitress with a broken heart, and Neda (Keshavarz), an Iranian Travel Vlogger with a broken arm, both feel trapped and lonely in their precarious lives. When Ursula meets a mysterious musician from Berlin (Confurius), it seems like she may have found the spark she has been missing. Neda, convinced that she's caught a glimpse of an old friend from Tehran, searches through the city, ultimately meeting Song-Nam (Kyung-Taek), a Korean tour guide who promises to show her sights not found in travel guides. As the winding paths of chance draw the two women together, they set out on an unexpected ghost hunt in the mountains. Cinematographer Faraz Fesharaki's visuals, captured in Super-16mm, add an almost dream-like quality to Radlmaier's fifth feature, which is as much a romantic adventure film about an unlikely friendship as it is a subtle rebuttal to a contemporary right-leaning political climate, choosing instead to find kinship between outsiders, immigrants, and laborers.



Germany (2025) 90 min.
Digital
German, Persian, Korean with English Subtitles

Writer Julian Radlmaier
Director Julian Radlmaier
Cinematography Faraz Fesharaki, Moritz Friesse (Additional Cinematography.)
Editing Julian Radlmaier
Cast Clara Schwinning, Maral Keshavarz, Paula Schindler, Henriette Confurius, Ghazal Shojaei, Kyung-Taek Lie, Buksori Lie, Jérémie Galiana, Marlene Hauser, Luise von Stein
Producers Daria Wichmann, Kirill Krasovskiy
Production Company Blue Monticola Film GmbH (Magdeburg)

AWARDS & NOMINATIONS
Online Film Critics Society Awards 2026
OFCS Award
Hainan Island Film Festival 2025
Golden Coconut
Filmfest Hamburg 2025
Producer's Award

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Julian Radlmaier was born in Nürnberg, Germany in 1984 into a French-German-Swiss family. He studied Directing at dffb Berlin and film theory and art history at Freie Universität Berlin and Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris. His films, EIN GESPENST GEHT UM EUROPA (2013), EIN PROLETARISCHES WINTERMÄRCHEN (2014), SELBSTKRITIK EINES BÜRGERLICHEN HUNDES (2017), and BLUTSAUGER (2021) have gained critical acclaim at festivals like Berlinale, Rotterdam, Viennale, Busan, São Paulo, AFI Fest, FICUNAM, BAFICI, and Melbourne. His latest film SEHNSUCHT IN SANGERHAUSEN (Phantoms of July) premiered in 2025 in competition at the Locarno Film Festival.

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@ AERO THEATRE

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12TH | 7:30 PM

U.S. PREMIERE | CLOSING NIGHT | PRE-SCREENING DRINKS RECEPTION

BERLIN HERO

DER HELD VOM BAHNHOF FRIEDRICHSTRASSE



Berlin, 2019: The 30th Anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall is approaching, but former East German Railway worker “Micha” Hartung (Hübner) is focused on saving his failing video store, not on the past. When tabloid journalist Landmann (Ullrich) uncovers a report from the Stasi archives linking Micha to a mass escape of GDR citizens via the city’s Friedrichstraße Station in 1984, he moves to secure the rights to the story. Denying his role at first, Micha bends the facts, confirming the report in exchange for the cash royalty. Suddenly, Micha is a media sensation. After Paula (Paul), who was a child on that train, sees Micha on TV, she travels to thank him. Upon meeting, Paula thinks she’s found her “Berlin Hero,” and Micha has found the woman of his dreams. Still, it is only a matter of time before the web of lies and half-truths unravels, jeopardizing the couple’s happiness and the country’s understanding of the past. Based on Maxim Leo’s eponymous novel, featuring an extraordinary cast including Charly Hübner, Leonie Benesch, Thorsten Merten, Becker himself, and his long-time ensemble, Christiane Paul, Jürgen Vogel, and Daniel Brühl, Wolfgang Becker’s final film is a heart-warming, honest comedy about the nature of truth.



Germany (2025) 112 min.
German with English Subtitles

Director Wolfgang Becker
Writer Constantin Lieb, Wolfgang Becker, based on Maxim Leo’s novel.
Cinematography Bernd Fischer
Editing Jörg Hauschild
Cast Charly Hübner, Christiane Paul, Leon Ullrich, Leonie Benesch, Thorsten Merten, Dirk Martens, Peter Kurth, Daniel Brühl, Eva Löbau, Jörn Hentschel
Producers Stefan Arndt, Achim von Borries
Co-Producers Julia Golembiowski
Production Company X Filme Creative Pool GmbH (Berlin)

AWARDS & NOMINATIONS
Ernst Lubitsch Prize 2026
Wolfgang Becker (Directing)
German Acting Award 2026
Best Comedic Performance – Thorsten Merten (Nom.)
German Film Awards 2026
Best Supporting Actor – Thorsten Merten, Peter Kurth (Nom.), Best Filmscore – Lorenz Dangel (Nominated).

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THE MATCH FACTORY
www.the-match-factory.com



Wolfgang Becker studied German, History, and American Studies at the FU Berlin, and cinematography at the German Film & Television Academy (dfbb) assisting Michael Ballhaus and István Szabó. His graduation film SCHMETTERLING (1986) won the Student Academy Award (1988), the Golden Leopard at Locarno and the Saarland Prime-Minister’s Award (1988). His other films include KINDERSPIELE (1992), CELIBDACHE (1992), DAS LEBEN IST EINE BAUSTELLE (1997), GOOD BYE, LENIN! (2003), and ME AND KAMINSKI (2015). His final film, BERLIN HERO (2025), wrapped in November 2024. Tragically, Wolfgang Becker passed away on December 12, 2024, prior to the completion and release of his final film.



Germany (2024), 80 min.
DCP Projection
Suitable for children ages 8 and older
German with English Subtitles

Writer-Director Bernd Sahling
Cinematography Piotr Rosołowski
Editing Evelyn Rack
Cast Jonathan Köhn, Darius Pasco, Cheyenne Aaliyah Roth, Anna Bahnners, Elias Amerein, Tamino Gottlebe, Malvina Hoffmann, Niclas Meimberg, Theresa Scholze, Markus Friedmann.
Producers Markus Kaatsch, Nina Poschinski, Michael Grudsky
Co-Producers Christian Becker, Oliver Schwabe
Production Company Zeitgeist Filmproduktion GmbH & Co. KG (Berlin) in co-production with Field Recordings Filmproduktion (Köln)

AWARDS & NOMINATIONS
30th SCHLINGEL INT'L FILMFESTIVAL
Award of the European Children's Film Association (ECFA)
12th BREMER KINDER- & JUGENDFILMFEST
KJUKO – Audience Award Best Children's Film
9th INDIAN PANORAMA INT'L FILM FESTIVAL
Best Int'l Feature Film for Children & Youth

WORLD SALES
Zeitgeist Filmproduktion
www.zeitgeist-film.de



Bernd Sahling was born in Naumburg, East Germany. After a traineeship at the DEFA Studio for Feature Films, he worked as an assistant director on numerous children's films. From 1986 to 1991, he studied at the HFF "Konrad Wolf" in Babelsberg and served as assistant director under Helmut Dziuba and Rolf Losansky. From 1995–96 he studied screenwriting at Columbia College Chicago. His award-winning features DIE BLINDGÄNGER and KOPFÜBER and documentaries ALLES WIRD GUT and EDNAS TAG established Sahling as one of Germany's prominent directors for children's and youth films. Since 2004, he has led film workshops with young people and has recorded podcast discussions on working methods in children's films. He is a member of the German Film Academy.

@ GARDENA CINEMA

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13TH
WEST COAST PREMIERE | PRIVATE MATINEE FOR LOCAL SCHOOLS

TOMORROW I'LL BE BRAVE

AB MORGEN BIN ICH MUTIG



Although he is only 12, Karl has been a passionate photographer for years. Somewhat shy and shorter than most of his classmates, he's most comfortable behind the camera, taking photos of his friends or his older brother Tom's rock band, developing them in his home darkroom. None of this would be a problem if he didn't have a crush on his classmate Lea, who happens to be a head taller than Karl and is changing schools after the summer holidays. With a warning from Tom that "A different school means different boys!" Karl knows he has to act soon, be brave, and tell Lea how he really feels. An upcoming class trip may be Karl's last chance to tell Lea how he feels and win her heart.

Developed during a film workshop with young people, Writer-Director Bernd Sahling's multi-award-winning film captures their language, concerns, and dreams in a way rarely seen in youth films. By addressing both the young characters and audience on their level, with respect and intelligence, TOMORROW I'LL BE BRAVE is a charmingly authentic portrait of first love, with all the complications and excitement that come with it.

CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Luisa Rath-John

FESTIVAL COORDINATOR

Daniel L. Chaffey

PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE

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Fly PR

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www.laschicaspeligrosas.com

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www.emago.com

VISUAL IDENTITY

www.plus3mm.com

FESTIVAL TRAILER

www.borisschaarschmidt.de

FESTIVAL SCORE

www.patrickkirst.com

FESTIVAL PHOTOGRAPHY

www.lukasmaier.studio

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