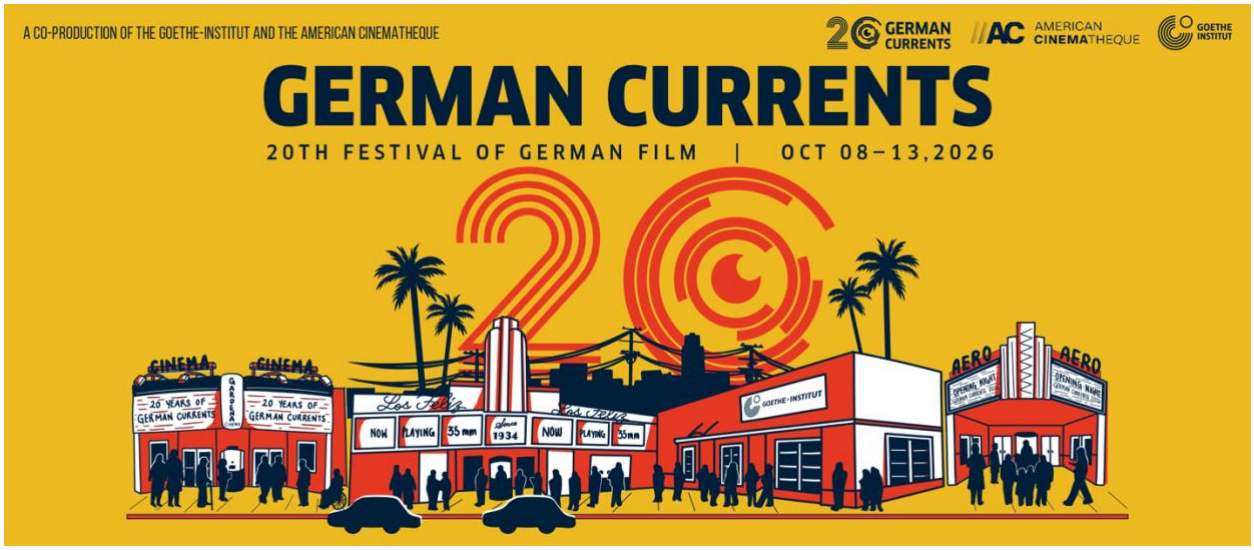
For Immediate Release:

2026 MARKS THE 20-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF GERMAN CURRENTS

THE FILM FESTIVAL RUNS FROM OCTOBER 8 – 13

at
American Cinematheque (Aero Theatre & Los Feliz 3),
Wende Museum, the Goethe-Institut, and the Gardena Cinema,
bringing award-winning German films, filmmakers & premieres to Los Angeles



Landmark 20th Anniversary Edition of GERMAN CURRENTS opens October 8th with Award-Winning Director Paweł Pawlikowski and his new film *FATHERLAND*.

Los Angeles, Calif. (September 15, 2026) - The Festival of German Film in Los Angeles, GERMAN CURRENTS, celebrates two decades of introducing outstanding German cinema to Los Angeles and fostering transatlantic cultural exchange through the power of film. Since its inception, the festival has provided a vital platform for filmmakers, audiences, and industry professionals to create meaningful connections through storytelling and cinematic dialogue.

"Celebrating 20 years of GERMAN CURRENTS is a remarkable milestone," says Luisa Rath-John, Festival Director of GERMAN CURRENTS and Director of the Goethe-Institut Los Angeles. "*The festival underscores the importance of bringing people together through film. I truly believe that film is one of the most powerful connective mediums because it creates empathy, it allows us to experience another person's reality. Especially in today's volatile and polarized world, fostering empathy and strengthening our sense of interconnectedness may be one of the most important things we as creative professionals can do.*"

GERMAN CURRENTS kicks off the 20th edition on Thursday, October 8, with an exclusive red-carpet West Coast premiere of FATHERLAND, the highly anticipated German-Polish film by internationally acclaimed, award-winning director Paweł Pawlikowski (IDA, COLD WAR), starring Sandra Hüller (PROJECT HAIL MARY, ZONE OF INTEREST,

ANATOMY OF A FALL). The premiere is followed by a discussion with Pawlikowski and an afterparty at the Aero Theatre.

"As with my previous films, FATHERLAND deals with the turmoils of history, with exile and with our transcendental need for home and belonging," says director Pawlikowski. "*The film brings together a dramatic historical moment with a very particular human story […] at the center we have the historical figures of Thomas Mann and his wayward twins, Erika and Klaus, locked in a triangular family drama."*

Just as the festival has continued to grow throughout its history, GERMAN CURRENTS 2026 presents an expanded program to mark this significant milestone. This year's program, comprising 12 screenings, includes seven contemporary award-winning feature films, two documentaries, two films for young audiences as part of its educational program, and a curated short film program *NEXT GENERATION SHORT TIGER*.

A particular focus of this year's program is the growing importance of European co-productions and creative collaboration across borders. By highlighting films developed through international partnerships, the festival underscores the interconnected nature of contemporary European cinema. *FATHERLAND* by Paweł Pawlikowski, embodies this spirit and exemplifies the increasingly international scope of European filmmaking.

The German-Austrian-Italian co-production, *A LAND WITHIN* (*Zweitland*), directed by Michael Kofler, is a powerful portrayal of the events surrounding the so-called "Night of Fire" of separatist violence in South Tyrol, highlighting the thin line between conviction and radicalization. Kofler will attend in person to discuss his multi-award-winning debut feature with the festival audiences.

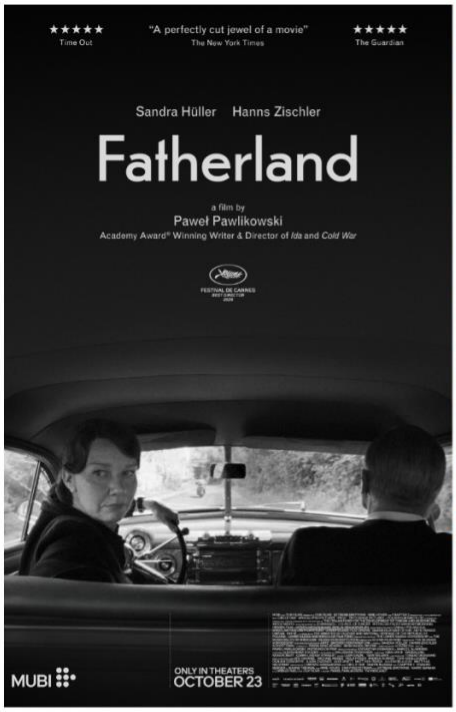
The program also includes the Southern California Premiere of festival circuit favorite *THE FROG AND THE WATER (Der Frosch und das Wasser)*. This German-Swiss co-production by director Thomas Stuber is a heartwarming offbeat road movie that sets two unlikely travel companions on an extraordinary journey across Germany, Switzerland, and Japan. These further illustrate the rich creative dialogue taking place across Europe's film landscape.

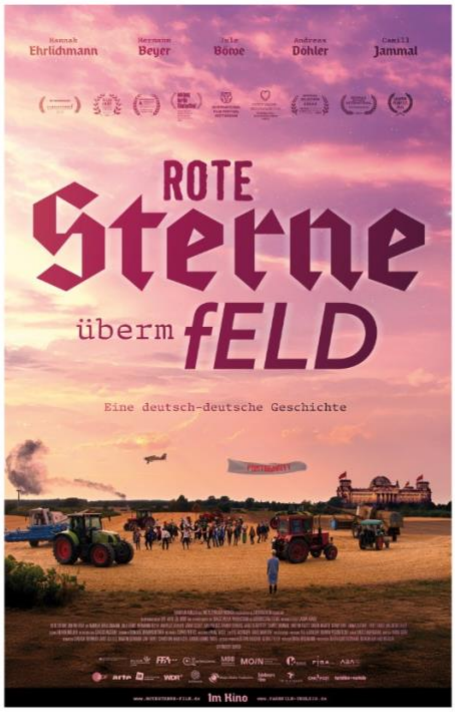
"We love co-programming the festival lineup each year with the amazing team at the Goethe-Institut Los Angeles as we firmly believe in the importance of spotlighting European cinema," says the American Cinematheque Programming Team. *"It's been an honor to partner with GERMAN CURRENTS for the past 20 years and on its anniversary edition. We're so proud to see how the festival has grown throughout the years. We cannot wait to share this year's film selection with our audiences in Los Angeles and join them in celebrating the immense power of cinema."*

In addition to Paweł Pawlikowski, GERMAN CURRENTS welcomes filmmaker Florian Baron with the U.S. Premiere of his documentary *SPEARA.* The film dives into the world of Japanese world-champion spearfisher, Mitsuki, living on the California coast. Her story was discovered by director Baron during his fellowship at the Villa Aurora in Los Angeles, forging a unique connection between the film and the city of LA.

Filmmaker Laura Laabs will present her award-winning debut feature *RED STARS UPON THE FIELD (Rote Sterne überm Feld)* in person as well. The film will celebrate its Southern California Premiere at GERMAN CURRENTS. The screening will be followed by a discussion with the filmmaker.

Director Michael Kofler will accompany *A LAND WITHIN (Zweitland)* and join discussions throughout the festival. His sweeping historical drama is set in South Tyrol in 1961, where political tensions and separatist violence force a young aspiring artist to choose between personal freedom and family loyalty.









Multi-award-winning filmmaker Bernd Sahling will attend the festival to present three of his films. The West Coast premiere of his 1990 documentary *IT'LL BE OK (Alles wird gut)* is part of the Goethe-Institut's international project *Alle Gegen Alles. Punk@50*, celebrating the 50th anniversary of punk and its continuing cultural relevance.

Bernd Sahling will also present two of his acclaimed films for young audiences. His latest family feature *KOSCHKA* is part of GERMAN CURRENTS' annual Family Matinee at the Goethe-Institut on Sunday, October 11. *TOMORROW I'LL BE BRAVE (Ab morgen bin ich mutig)*, a charmingly authentic portrait of first love, with all the complications and excitement that come with it, will screen at GERMAN CURRENTS' School Matinee at the Gardena Cinema on Tuesday, October 13. Both films are featured as part of the festival's Educational Program, co-presented with ELMA (European Languages and Movies in America) and supported by Educational Outreach partners Creating Creators, offering younger viewers inspiring stories about friendship, resilience, self-discovery, and the courage to face life's challenges.

"Recognizing that the future of cinema lies with younger audiences, educational programs remain a key priority for ELMA. We are especially proud to co-present this year's expanded youth program, bringing young audiences together with international filmmakers," says Malin Kan, Director of ELMA (European Languages and Movies in America). *"We are so proud to join the Goethe-Institut in celebrating 20 years of GERMAN CURRENTS. Through this longstanding partnership, which spans the lifetime of our organization, we share the goal of helping audiences discover emerging voices in German cinema and engage with global perspectives through film."*

The festival's annual Filmmaker Brunch takes place on Saturday, October 10, at the Goethe-Institut Los Angeles. This festive, invite-only event brings together industry professionals, members of the press, cultural partners, and the local film community for conversations and networking. A panel discussion with distinguished filmmakers offers unique insights into their creative work and explores contemporary developments in German and European cinema.

20 GERMAN CURRENTS
GOETHE INSTITUT
AC AMERICAN CINEMATHEQUE
Friends of Goethe
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DW Made for minds.
German Film Office
VA TMH Villa Aurora Thomas Mann House
Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany Los Angeles

This 20th anniversary edition of GERMAN CURRENTS will conclude with a special Closing Night at the historic Aero Theatre on October 12, featuring a screening of *BERLIN HERO (Der Held vom Bahnhof Friedrichstraße),* the final film from celebrated German filmmaker, Wolfgang Becker (*Goodbye, Lenin!*). Becker sadly did not live to see the film's release, making this extraordinary work a fitting tribute to his enduring cinematic legacy. We are proud to present the film's U.S. premiere as part of GERMAN CURRENTS.

As GERMAN CURRENTS celebrates twenty years of cinematic exchange, the festival reaffirms its belief in film as a uniquely powerful medium for fostering empathy, understanding, and connection across cultures. At a time of increasing polarization and uncertainty, the festival remains committed to creating spaces where stories can bridge divides, broaden perspectives, and strengthen cultural ties. Through encounters between filmmakers and audiences, GERMAN CURRENTS continues to demonstrate how cinema can serve as a catalyst for dialogue and mutual understanding.

Bernd Desinger (Director of Filmmuseum Düsseldorf), who founded GERMAN CURRENTS in 2006, reminds us: *"The founding and establishment of GERMAN CURRENTS was indeed a major undertaking. I am very happy that the festival still exists today, and is currently celebrating its 20th anniversary. Many film festivals are short-lived and disappear again. In this respect, I am grateful to my successors and to all former and current colleagues for carrying the flame forward. Thanks are also due to the festival's partners, first and foremost the American Cinematheque. Among the many wonderful collaborations over the years, German Currents was and remains something of a crowning achievement. Most of all, however, I am grateful to the audiences. Without their enthusiastic support, it would not have been possible to continue the festival for such a long period of time. Therefore, I send my warmest greetings across the Atlantic to the film lovers in the unique City of Angels!"*

The 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, bringing together some of today's most exciting filmmakers and stories for audiences in Los Angeles.

The GERMAN CURRENTS Film Festival 2026 is a co-production of the Goethe-Institut Los Angeles and the American Cinematheque with the support of The Friends of Goethe, ELMA (European Languages and Movies in America), Condor, the Consulate General of Switzerland in San Francisco, the Austrian Consulate General in Los Angeles, the Italian Cultural Institute of Los Angeles, the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Los Angeles, Paulaner USA, Paulaner Sunset, Tupetz Wine Connection, KRUU.COM, and in cooperation with the German Consulate General in Los Angeles, the Villa Aurora & Thomas Mann House e.V., the German Film Office, the Wende Museum, and DEFA Film Library as well as our media partners Deutsche Welle, KPFK Radio, Campus Circle, and our educational outreach partners ELMA and Creating Creators.

The festival takes place at the following locations

THE AERO THEATRE	1328 Montana Ave, Santa Monica, CA 90403
WENDE MUSEUM	10808 Culver Blvd, Culver City, CA 90230
LOS FELIZ 3	1822 N Vermont Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90027
GOETHE-INSTITUT LOS ANGELES	1901 West 7th St. Suite AB, Los Angeles, CA 90057
GARDENA CINEMA	14948 Crenshaw Blvd, Gardena, CA 90249

All public screenings are free of charge. Reservations are required.
Tickets will be available starting Monday, September 21, at 10am.

For more information, please visit:
www.germancurrents.com
www.facebook.com/germancurrents

CONTACTS

For Film Festival inquiries
Luisa Rath-John, Director Goethe-Institut Los Angeles
Luisa.rath-john@goethe.de

Daniel Chaffey, Program Director Goethe-Institut Los Angeles
Daniel.Chaffey@goethe.de

For Press inquiries
Ilka Erren Pardiñas, Goethe-Institut Los Angeles
ilka.errenpardinas@goethe.de

GERMAN CURRENTS 2026 FULL FESTIVAL PROGRAM

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8th @ AERO THEATRE

7:00 PM Opening Night Remarks and Screening followed by discussion and Reception

FATHERLAND | VATERLAND

OPENING NIGHT | WEST COAST PREMIERE | IN PERSON – PAWEŁ PAWLIKOWSKI

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

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 Mann's 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.

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.

AWARDS & NOMINATIONS:

Cannes Film Festival 2026 Winner: Best Director Award ex aequo

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9th @ WENDE MUSEUM

5:00 PM Screening followed by discussion and drinks reception in the Wende Museum sculpture garden.

Presented in cooperation with the Wende Museum, The Thomas Mann House, and the DEFA Film Library

IT'LL BE OK | ALLES WIRD GUT

WEST COAST PREMIERE | IN PERSON – WRITER-DIRECTOR BERND SAHLING

Dir. Bernd Sahling. East/West Germany (1987-1990) 76 min. DCP Projection. German/English with English Subtitles

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.

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.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9th @ WENDE MUSEUM

7:15 PM Screening preceded by and 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

SOCAL PREMIERE | IN PERSON – WRITER-DIRECTOR LAURA LAABS

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

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.

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 VOLKSBÜHNE (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.

AWARDS & NOMINATIONS:

Filmfestival Max Ophüls Preis 2025 Jury Of The Film Critcs 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

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10th @ GOETHE-INSTITUT

12:00 PM Screening followed by discussion

Presented in cooperation with the Villa Aurora

SPEARA

US PREMIERE | IN PERSON – FILMMAKER FLORIAN BARON

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

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.

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).

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10th @ LOS FELIZ 3

4:00PM Screening

Presented with the support of the Consulate General of Switzerland in San Francisco

THE FROG AND THE WATER | DER FROSCH UND DAS WASSER

SOCAL PREMIERE

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

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 Yamato's screenplay provides the perfect roadmap for award-winning performances by Kanji and Detlefsen in this most unlikely of off-beat road movies.

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 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.

AWARDS & NOMINATIONS:

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

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10th @ LOS FELIZ 3

7:00PM Screening

Presented with the support of the Austrian Consulate General, Los Angeles, the Italian Cultural Institut, Los Angeles, and the German Film Office

A LAND WITHIN | ZWEITLAND

LA PREMIERE | IN PERSON – FILMMAKER Michael Kofler

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

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.

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

AWARDS & NOMINATIONS:

FF Della Lessinia 2026 MicroCosmo Award
Bavarian Film Award 2026 Newcomer Director Award

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11th @ GOETHE-INSTITUT

11:00 AM Screening followed by discussion

Presented in cooperation with the Thomas Mann House

KOSCHKA

WEST COAST PREMIERE | FAMILY MATINEE | IN PERSON –DIRECTOR BERND SAHLING

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

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.

AWARDS & NOMINATIONS:

66th Zlín IFF for Children and Youth Honorable Mention

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.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11th @ GOETHE-INSTITUT

2:00 PM Screening

Presented in cooperation with German Films

NEXT GENERATION SHORT TIGER 2026

US PREMIERE | SHORT FILM SHOWCASE

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

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.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11th @ GOETHE-INSTITUT

4:30 PM Screening

PUNCHING THE WORLD | MIT DER FAUST IN DIE WELT SCHLAGEN

WEST COAST PREMIERE

Dir. Constanze Klaue. Germany (2025) 111 min. German with English Subtitles

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 (Näthe), 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.

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.

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

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11th @ GOETHE-INSTITUT

7:00 PM Screening

PHANTOMS OF JULY | SEHNSUCHT IN SANGERHAUSEN

Dir. Julian Radlmaier. *Germany (2025) 90 min. Digital, German, Persian, Korean + English Subtitles*

In the sleepy East German village of Sangerhausen, Ursula (Schwinning), a waitress with a broken heart, and Neda (Keshvaraz), 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 (Confurious), 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.

Juilan 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 BÜRGELICHEN 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.

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

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12th @ AERO THEATRE

7:00 PM Screening

BERLIN HERO | DER HELD VOM BAHNHOF FRIEDRICHSTRASSE

US PREMIERE | CLOSING NIGHT | PRE-SCREENING DRINKS RECEPTION

Dir. Wolfgang Becker. Germany (2025) 112 min. German with English Subtitles

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, Christiana Paul, Jürgen Vogel, and Daniel Brühl, Wolfgang Becker's final film is a heart-warming, honest comedy about the nature of truth.

Wolfgang Becker studied German, History, and American Studies at the FU Berlin, and cinematography at the German Film & Television Academy (dffb) 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.

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.)
German Film Awards 2026 Best Filmscore – Lorenz Dangel (Nominated).

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12th @ GARDENA CINEMA

10:00 AM Private School Screening followed by discusssion

TOMORROW I'LL BE BRAVE | AB MORGEN BIN ICH MUTIG | IN PERSON –DIRECTOR BERND SAHLING

WEST COAST PREMIERE | PRIVATE MATINEE FOR LOCAL SCHOOLS

Dir. Bernd Sahling, Germany 2025, German with English Subtitles

For school field trip requests, please contact:
Daniel Chaffey, Festival Coordinator: Daniel.chaffey@goeth.de

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

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.

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

About the Goethe-Institut Los Angeles:
The Goethe-Institut is the cultural institute of the Federal Republic of Germany with a global reach. The institute promotes knowledge of the German-language abroad and fosters international cultural cooperation. The Goethe-Institut Los Angeles operates on a partnership basis. For individual projects, as for longer-term joint ventures, the Goethe-Institut connects with stakeholders in the cultural scene – institutions, organizations, companies, people in and from Southern California and Arizona, Germany, and other countries.

About the American Cinematheque:
The American Cinematheque is a non-profit cultural organization whose mission is to celebrate the experience of cinema as a moving art form; we create spaces where both the public and members of the film industry come together as a community with the common language and love of film. Since it began screening films to the public in 1985, the American Cinematheque has provided diverse film programming and live in-person discussions and events with thousands of filmmakers and luminaries, presenting both new and repertory cinema to Los Angeles. For more information, visit www.americancinematheque.com

For more information, please visit: www.goethe.de/losangeles
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Instagram: @goetheinstitut_losangeles

The GERMAN CURRENTS Film Festival 2026 is a co-production of the Goethe-Institut Los Angeles and the American Cinematheque with the support of The Friends of Goethe, ELMA (European Languages and Movies in America),

Condor, the Consulate General of Switzerland in San Francisco, the Austrian Consulate General in Los Angeles, the Italian Cultural Institute of Los Angeles, the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Los Angeles, Paulaner USA, Paulaner Sunset, Tupetz Wine Connection, KRUU.COM, and in cooperation with the German Consulate General in Los Angeles, the Villa Aurora & Thomas Mann House e.V., the German Film Office, the Wende Museum, and DEFA Film Library our media partners Deutsche Welle, KPFK Radio, Campus Circle, and our educational outreach partners ELMA and Creating Creators.

The festival takes place at the following locations

THE AERO THEATRE	1328 Montana Ave, Santa Monica, CA 90403
WENDE MUSEUM	10808 Culver Blvd, Culver City, CA 90230
LOS FELIZ 3	1822 N Vermont Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90027
GOETHE-INSTITUT LOS ANGELES	1901 West 7th St. Suite AB, Los Angeles, CA 90057
GARDENA CINEMA	14948 Crenshaw Blvd, Gardena, CA 90249

All public screenings are free of charge. Reservations are required.
Tickets will be available starting Monday, September 21, at 10am.

For more information, please visit:
www.germancurrents.com
www.facebook.com/germancurrents

CONTACTS

For Film Festival inquiries
Luisa Rath-John, Director Goethe-Institut Los Angeles
Luisa.rath-john@goethe.de

Daniel Chaffey, Program Director Goethe-Institut Los Angeles
Daniel.Chaffey@goethe.de

For Press inquiries
Ilka Erren Pardiñas, Goethe-Institut Los Angeles
ilka.errenpardinas@goethe.de