

Press kit

THE GARDEN

a film by
Sonja Maria KRÖNER



THE GARDEN

DRAMA / GERMANY / 2017 / RUNNING TIME 97 MINUTES / DCP 2K / ORIGINAL TITLE: SOMMERHÄUSER

CAST

BERND	Thomas Loibl
EVA	Laura Tonke
ILSE	Ursula Werner
ERICH	Günther Maria Halmer
FRIEDA	Christine Schorn
MATHILDE	Inge Maux
GITTI	Mavie Hörbiger
JANA	Emilia Pieske
LORENZ	Elliott Schulte
INGA	Anne-Marie Weisz
HERR BUCHNER	Johannes Silberschneider
FRAU FISCHER	Grischa Huber
FRANK	Jonathan Bähr

CREW

Writer & Director	Sonja Maria Kröner
Produced by	Philipp Worm
	Tobias Walker
Director of Photography	Julia Daschner
Production Design	Conrad Moritz Reinhardt
Costumes Design	Andy Besuch
Makeup Artist	Christina Baier
	Nadine Scherer
Casting	Ulrike Müller
Casting Kids	Anne Walcher
Editor	Ulrike Tortora
Sound	Peter Kautzsch
Production Manager	Ole Wilken
Line Producer	Philipp Worm

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SYNOPSIS

Summer 1976. It's the height of summer. A heat wave. Everybody is sweating. The wasps are even more annoying than usual. The portrait of a family who spends the summer - like every summer - in their communal garden. The death of overbearing matriarch Sophie reveals fine cracks within the family's relationships and subtly changes the family dynamics. While the adults argue about the sale of the property, the children are free to roam the garden and the neighbourhood.

PRESS NOTE

In her debut film *THE GARDEN*, German director Sonja Maria Kröner paints an unconventional family portrait whose atmosphere hovers between a pervasive sense of crisis and a new beginning. With a keen sense for human idiosyncrasies, the filmmaker skillfully portrays the different characters while striking the right balance between comic and tragic moments. *THE GARDEN* evokes a latent, intangible threat that gathers like a thunderstorm and keeps viewers on the edge of their seats.

For her feature debut, Kröner has brought together a superb ensemble that features (among others) Laura Tonke, Günther Maria Halmer, Mavie Hörbiger, Thomas Loibl, and Ursula

Werner in the main roles. The family drama, which celebrated its world premiere at this year's Munich International Film Festival in the New German Cinema category, was shot on location in Bavaria. Coming away with sponsorship prizes for both the director and production, *THE GARDEN* proved to be a surprise hit at the Festival.

THE GARDEN was produced by Tobias Walker and Philipp Worm (Walker+Worm Film), who have attracted attention in recent years with such films as *FINSTERWORLD* (2013, director: Frauke Finsterwalder), which was co-produced with BR. *THE GARDEN* was sponsored by the FFF Bavaria, Young German Film Committee, BKM, German Federal Film Board (FFA), and DFFF.

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR SONJA MARIA KRÖNER

In *THE GARDEN*, reality and surrealism are interwoven with no clear-cut boundary between the two. How important was it for you to develop a plot that departs from the typical narrative conventions of the family drama?

This was not at all a conscious decision in *THE GARDEN*. In contrast to other directors who first develop the plot, I start with the characters. I like observing other people and their behaviors.



Director Sonja Maria Kröner

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With this observational approach, the plot of my film is automatically not going to be a classical three-act drama. Of course in order to connect the many ideas and impressions that form part of the script, a dramatic structure needs to be found – even if the story ends up being told in an unconventional way.

What inspired you to film this unusual family story?

The starting point for THE GARDEN was an important place from my childhood: an undeveloped plot of land in Munich that belonged to my family. This is something that no longer exists in our day. The plot of land has also been developed since. I simply wanted to capture the summers of my childhood.

The film is set in 1976, you yourself were born in 1979. Yet we still get the impression that the family situation portrayed in THE GARDEN is very familiar to you?

THE GARDEN is not an autobiographical film, but a very personal one. None of the conflicts in THE GARDEN actually took place in reality. But specific people inspired me, and I myself experienced many situations that I portray in my film: drinking coffee with my great aunt, building a tree house, roaming around the neighbors' yards, and lots of birthday parties in the garden. Of course having grown up in the 1980's, I didn't experience 1976 as a child, the year that forms the backdrop for my film. I nonetheless chose to set THE GARDEN in the 1970's since a place like Grandma Sophie's garden may well have no longer existed in the 80s. There is something hermetic about this garden. You go there and can no longer be reached by the outside world. There are no cell phones, not even a landline and no internet. On top of this, a get-together at such a place has an unconditional quality that you can't really find anymore in families today. It was simply taken for granted that this is where you'd go on weekends and holidays. Even if there are many conflicts and you might also associate a place with bad memories, you keep on going there. This is something that was already starting to disappear in the 80s.

In THE GARDEN audiences experience the atmosphere of the 1970s, which hovers between a pervasive sense of crisis and a new beginning. Would you describe your film as nostalgic?

I think THE GARDEN is nostalgic in a sense since I'm trying to resurrect a certain place of longing from my childhood. For me this has less to do with the 70's, since this period doesn't awaken any nostalgic feelings in me. I only truly delved into this period and read a lot about it when I started working on my film. It's interesting that there are few films about the 70s

in Germany in which the Red Army Faction wasn't one of the subjects, or that didn't focus on prevalent 70's clichés.

Since you just mentioned research for your film: how exactly did you go on about this?

I focused above all on the political and social upheavals of the 70s – and the question of how people spent their time back then, for example where they went on vacation. Along with this, I was interested in the little matters in people's daily lives, for example the kind of ice cream children ate or which kind of toys they used. The water slide from America that you see in the film is actually a result of this research. In the 70s everything that came from America was still regarded as something very special.

What role does the disappearance of little Nina play in the story?

THE GARDEN is intentionally set in 1976, when the so-called "cannibal of Duisburg" was captured. At the time he murdered between eight and fourteen people, some of whom he ate. I found this latent feeling of threat that was looming over the family exciting. The children don't feel totally safe in this idyllic place. The tree house in the film is a bit too high and has an unsecured suspension bridge that one could possibly fall down from. There's a mysterious neighbor who no one meets face-to-face – and from the radio and newspaper we learn the story of a girl who has disappeared from the neighborhood. An underlying tension is built up about something that could happen to the children, but we never know exactly how this tension is eventually going to be released.

There are several summer cottages in Grandma Sophie's shared garden, right?

Yes, there are a total of three.

You were able to bring together a very good team of actors for the film. Did you already have any of them specifically in mind when you were writing the script of THE GARDEN?

No, when I was writing, I usually had people in mind who really existed: relatives, acquaintances, people I had observed on the train or in a café . . . It's sometimes difficult afterwards to find the right cast for the characters you already had in mind.

Who are your models in cinema?

My models are actually more from life and less from cinema. But I might say that one of my sources of inspiration has been South American cinema. I love the aliveness and anarchistic elements in these films. They often explore very profound themes and are very much interwoven with the oral storytelling tradition.

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In atmospheric images, THE GARDEN conveys a feeling of life in the 1970's. How did you collaborate with the camerawoman Julia Daschner?

I graduated in film together with Julia Daschner, we've known each other for years and I have great confidence in her. We both researched and learned about the 70s. It was important for us to develop a color scheme for the film. The basic color is green; it couldn't be otherwise in a film that is set in a garden. We found out that there was often a very pronounced red in films from the 70s. In relation to this red, the other colors in THE GARDEN are paler with more pastel tones. We wanted to show a colorful world without it appearing too garish. Julia and I often went to the location before we started shooting. In this way we got to know the scene very well before and while we were working on the resolution.

BIOGRAPHIES CAST

THOMAS LOIBL (Bernd)

Munich-based actor Thomas Loibl was born in 1969 in Brüggen, Germany and completed his acting studies at the Westphalian School of Acting in Bochum.

In addition to his theater career, the character actor became known to wide audiences in 2011 through his role as Bhagwan-Ober-Guru in Marcus H. Rosenmüller's comedy „My Life in Orange“. Roles followed in films including „Closed

Season“ (2012) by Franziska Schlotterer, „Measuring the World“ (2012) by Detlef Buck, „3096 Days“ (2013) by Sherry Hormann, and „Like a Cast Shadow“ (2015) by Michael Krummenacher. In 2016 Loibl featured alongside Sandra Hüller and Peter Simonischek in Maren Ade's prizewinning comedy „Toni Erdmann“, which in addition to successes at many festivals, garnered five prizes at the European Film Awards as well as an Oscar® nomination for Best Foreign Film in 2017. This year Loibl appeared in the Romantic film comedy „Sommerfest“ by Sönke Wortmann. He also featured alongside Alexander Fehling in the thriller „Das Dritte Sterben“, by Philipp Leinemann, a Walker+Worm production that will be appearing in movie theaters in 2018.

LAURA TONKE (Eva)

Laura Tonke was born in West Berlin in 1974 and grew up in the city. She made her acting debut at the age of sixteen in the feature film „Ostkreuz“ (1991) by Michael Klier.

This was followed by numerous television roles, before she took on her next film role in Tom Tykwer's „Winter Sleepers“ (1997). In 2000 she won the Golden Camera as Best Young Actress and was nominated for Best Supporting Actress at the 2003 German Film Awards for „Pigs Will Fly“ (2002) by Eoin Moore, as well as for her role of Gudrun Ensslin in the film „Baader“ (2002) by Christopher Roth.



Movie Hörbiger, Thomas Loibl, Laura Tonke

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In the tragicomedy „Hedi Schneider is Stuck“ by Sonja Heiss, which celebrated its premiere at the 2015 Berlinale, she plays the title character who is plagued by sudden anxiety, a role for which she received enthusiastic critical acclaim, winning a 2016 German Film Award for Best Leading Actress. The same year she also won a German Film Award for Best Supporting Actress for Laura Lackmann’s film „Too Hard to Handle“.

Tonke has also appeared in such films as „I am Guilty“ (2005) by Christoph Hochhäusler, „The Drifters“ (2010) by Tatjana Turanskyj, and „The People vs. Fritz Bauer“ (2015) by Lars Kraume.

The 2017 Munich International Film Festival featured the premiere of „Zwei im falschen Film“ by Laura Lackmann, in which Tonke plays the leading role. This year she also appeared in Helene Hegemann’s „Axolotl Overkill“.

MAVIE HÖRBIGER (Gitti)

Mavie Hörbiger was born in 1979 in Munich, where she also completed her acting studies.

In 2000 Mavie celebrated her feature film debut in Detlef Buck’s black comedy „Bundle of Joy“, in which she played the leading role. Films that followed included „Blackout Journey“, (2004) by Sigi Kamml, „Seven Dwarves – Men Alone in the Wood“ (2004) by Sven Unterwaldt, „What a Man“ (2011) by Matthias Schweighöfer, „Bibi & Tina – voll verhexelt!“ (2014)

by Detlef Buck, and „Half Brothers“ (2015) by Christian Alvar. This year Hörbiger appeared in Christian Zübert’s „Lammbock 2“ and in Helene Hegemann’s „Axolotl Overkill“.

On television she was most recently seen in thrilling Tatort productions and in the crime film „Anatomy of Desire“ (2017) by Andreas Prochaska. For her role in the Tatort film „Die letzte Wiesen“ (2015) by Marvin Kren, she was nominated for Best Supporting Actress by the German Academy of Television.

Mavie is currently playing the role of “Good Works” in the Salzburg Festival production of „Jedermann“

URSULA WERNER (Ilse)

Ursula Werner was born in 1943 in Eberswalde near Berlin and studied acting at Berlin’s Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts. Her first engagements were at the Halle State Thetaer and “Die Distel” cabaret in Berlin. She then performed as a permanent ensemble member of the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin from 1974 to 2009, where she still appears as a guest actress.

In addition to her theater engagements, Werner has appeared in numerous television and feature films since 1962. In 2008 she played the title role in the romantic drama „Cloud 9“ by Andreas Dresen. For her outstanding performance she received the Bavarian Film Award for Best Supporting Actress and German Film Award for Best Leading Actress in 2009.



Günther Maria Halmer, Emilia Pieske

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She also appeared in the film „Stopped on Track“ (2011) by Andreas Dresen, which won the 2012 German Film Award for Best Feature Film in Gold. In addition, the family film „Winter’s Daughter“ by Johannes Schmid, which featured Werner in the leading role, won the award for Best Children’s Film. In 2012 Werner appeared in the prizewinning thriller „Two Lives“ by Georg Maas and Judith Kaufmann, which was nominated as the German candidate for the Oscar®, also winning Best Feature Film in Bronze and Best Editing in Gold at the German Film Awards. Werner was honored with a short film program at the 33rd Max Ophüls Prize Film Festival in 2012. Soon she will be seen in German movie theaters in the comedy Lucky Loser – Ein Sommer in der Bredouille by Nico Sommer. Werner is currently being filmed in one of the leading roles in „Der Junge muss an die frische Luft“, playing Grandma Bertha under the direction of Caroline Link.

GÜNTHER MARIA HALMER (Erich)

Günther Maria Halmer was born in 1943 in Rosenheim, Germany and after completing school first went abroad, travelling to Paris and then Canada for an extended stay. Upon returning to Germany, he completed acting studies at the Otto Falckenberg School of the Performing Arts in Munich and made his debut at the Munich Kammerspiele in Martin Sperr’s Hunting Scenes from Bavaria. He subsequently held a continuous position at the Kammerspiele from 1970 to 1974, followed by theater performances at the Residence Theater and the Theater in der Josefstadt in Vienna.

In 1974 he appeared in the legendary Munich Stories, directed by Helmut Dietl, which marked the beginning of his successful film and television career. Halmer has since participated in over 150 films, including „Ein verhexter Sommer“ (1989) by Klaus Lemke; alongside Hannah Schygulla in „Abraham’s Gold“ (1990) by Jörg Graser, which won the Audience Award in Cannes in 1990; „Bis dass dein Tod uns scheidet“ by Manfred Stelzer with Senta Berger; „Zwei übern Berg“ by Torsten C. Fischer with Gisela Schneeberger; and „Familienfest“ (2015) by Lars Kraume with Hannelore Elsner and Lars Eidinger.

Halmer can also be seen in international productions, including the Oscar®-winning film „Gandhi“ (1982) by Richard Attenborough, „Sophie’s Choice“ by Alan J. Pakula with Meryl Streep, and the international co-productions „Peter the Great“ (1986) by Lawrence Schiller and Marvin J. Chomsky, Lenin . . . „The Train“ (1988) by Damiano Damiani, and „Amen“. (2002) by Costa-Gavras.

CHRISTINE SCHORN (Frieda)

Christine Schorn was born in 1944 in Prague as the daughter of the actor couple Peter Schorn and Alice Marianne Emilie Schorn. After escaping from Prague via Salzburg, Schorn first grew up in Kiel, then in Berlin from the early 1950’s onward. She completed her acting studies in 1964 at the National Acting School in East Berlin. While still a student she appeared alongside Dieter Mann in On the Way, the successful play by Soviet author Victor Rosov, at the Deutsches Theater, where she still performs today. Schorn played many roles for East German television and received the GDR’s National Prize, First Class, for Art and Literature for her portrayal of the engineer Bolzin in Lothar Bellag’s „Zeit ist Glück“. She continued her successful career after reunification, featuring in many television films and series.

Schorn has also appeared in feature films since 1974. She made her debut in the DEFA film „Elective Affinities“ by Siegfried Kühn, successfully continuing her career from 1989 onwards in this area as well. Films in which she participated include „Superstau“ (1991) by Manfred Stelzer, „Grill Point“ (2002) by Andreas Dresen, „Nothing but Ghosts“ (2006) by Martin Gypkens, „Novemberkind“ (2008) by Christian Schwochow, „Men in the City 2“ (2011) by Simon Verhoeven, „Stopped on Track“ (2011) by Andreas Dresen, „Jesus Loves Me“ (2012) by Florian David Fitz, and „Stadtlandliebe“ (2016) by Marco Kreuzpaintner.

She also appeared in the prizewinning audience hit „Good Bye, Lenin!“ (2003) by Wolfgang Becker in addition to winning the 2008 German Film Award for Best Supporting Actress for her role as the alcoholic mother of three grown-up daughters in „According to the Plan“ (2007) by Franziska Meletzky. Schorn once again won the German Film Award as Best Supporting Actress in 2013 for her performance in André Erkau’s tragicomedy „Life is not for Cowards“ (2011).

INGE MAUX (Mathilde)

Inge Maux was born in Mettmach, Austria in 1944. Her uncle was the composer Richard Maux (1893–1971), who encouraged her in her artistic pursuits and successfully persuaded her parents to allow her to attend the Schauspielschule Krauss acting school in Vienna.

She also took his last name as her stage name. She performed at such venues as the Cologne Schauspielhaus and Zurich Schauspielhaus and appeared in several musicals.

Maux made her television debut in 1978 in the film „Grüne Witwen sind sie alle!“ by Heide Pils. She has since appeared in many Austrian and German feature and television films.

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For her role in the German-Austrian television thriller „Anatomy of Shame“ (2014) by Andreas Prochaska, she received a nomination in the category of Best Supporting Actress by the German Academy of Television in 2015.

She has appeared on the big screen in such films as „Die Schuld der Liebe“ by Andreas Gruber with Sandrine Bonnaire, the children’s film „Tiger Team – Der Berg der Tausend Drachen“ (2010) by Peter Gersina, Ulrich Seidel’s „Paradise: Love“ (2012), and „Der Blunzenkönig“ (2015) by Leo Bauer. For her role in the drama „Jack“ (2015) by Elisabeth Scharang, Maux received a nomination for the 2016 Austrian Film Award for Best Supporting Actress.

Inge Maux is married to the actor Manfred Schmid. In addition to her work as an actress, she is also active as a photographer and painter.

JOHANNES SILBERSCHNEIDER (Herr Buchner)

Johannes Silberschneider was born in 1958 in Mautern in Steiermark, Austria. After completing school in 1978, he studied acting at the Max Reinhardt Seminar in Vienna. He has since worked as a stage actor in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Silberschneider performed the leading role in the world premiere of *Geister* in Princeton at the Schauspielhaus Graz in 2011, for which he was nominated for the 2012

Nestroy Theater Award in the Best Actor category. The same year he also received the Grand Diagonale Acting Award. He earned wide acclaim as the narrator in Thomas Bernhard’s *Woodcutters* at the Schauspielhaus Graz, and has performed in the Salzburg Festival production of „Jedermann“ since summer 2013.

In addition, Silberschneider has appeared in over 100 television productions and national and international feature films since 1982. He has been seen on the big screen in films such as „Kaspar Hauser“ (1983) by Peter Sehr, „Männerpension“ (1996) by Detlev Buck, „The Harmonists“ (1997), as Joseph Goebbels in „The Girl of Your Dreams“ (1998) by Fernando Trueba, „Anne Frank: The Whole Story“ (2001) by Robert Dornhelm, and „Silentium“ (2004) by Wolfgang Murnberger.

He played Gustav Mahler in „Mahler on the Couch“ (2009) by Percy and Felix Adlon and also appeared in „Jew Suss: Rise and Fall“ by Oskar Röhler, „Henry of Navarre“ by Jo Baier, Hitler in „Rommel“ (2011) by Niki Stein, the fantasy trilogy „Ruby Red“ (2013), „Sapphire Blue“ (2014), and „Emerald Green“ (2016) by Felix Fuchssteiner, „Agnieszka“ (2014) by Tomasz Emil Rudzik, and „Life Eternal“ (2015) by Wolfgang Murnberger.

In 2002 the short film „Copy Shop“ by Virgil Widrich, in which Silberschneider played the leading role, received an Oscar® nomination for Best Short Film.



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Silberschneider is currently filming *Zerschlag mein Herz* by Alexandra Makarová.

EMILIA PIESKE (Jana)

Emilia Pieske was born in 2005 and is a successful German child actress. Her first role was in 2011 as Emma Gruber in the television film „Frühling für Anfänger“ by Achim Bornak. She later appeared in a number of television films.

She has been seen on the big screen in such films as „Eltern“ (2013) by Robert Thalheim, „Coming In“ (2014) by Marco Kreuzpaintner alongside Katja Riemann, Andreja Schneider, and Kostja Ullmann, the prizewinning film „13 Minutes“ by Oliver Hirschbiegel, which celebrated its premiere at the 2015 Berlinale, and the drama „24 Weeks“ by Anne Zohra Berrached alongside Julia Jentsch and Bjarne Mädel, which celebrated its premiere at the 2016 Berlinale and, in addition to many nominations, won the 2016 German Film Award for Best Feature Film in Silver.

BIOGRAFIES CREW

SONJA MARIA KRÖNER (Director, Script)

Sonja Maria Kröner was born in 1979 in Munich. She studied literature and philosophy at the Ludwig Maximilian University and later screenwriting and directing at the University of Television and Film Munich. In 2009 she received a media art scholarship from the Kirch Foundation in order to complete her video installation *Six Doors* – a peep show of six women in six different life stages. The installation was presented at the Great Art Exhibition in Munich's Haus der Kunst in 2010. Her graduation film *Zucchini Blüten* (2012) was screened at numerous festivals, including the Hof International Film Festival.

She works as a video artist, screenwriter, and director.

TOBIAS WALKER + PHILIPP WORM (Production)

Walker+Worm Film was founded by Tobias Walker and Philipp Worm in 2008 after many years of collaboration as students at the University of Television and Film Munich.

The desire to offer the best possible realization of the director's personal vision, a striving for authenticity, and individual style are at the core of each production.

With Frauke Finsterwalder's sensational feature film debut *FINSTERWORLD* in 2013, Walker + Worm Film GmbH & Co. KG produced the year's most successful debut film. Highly praised by critics, the film was nominated for five German film awards and received many prizes, including the Bronze Zenith Award at the Montreal World Film Festival, Golden Eye and Critics' Choice Award at the Zurich Film Festival, and TV

Feature Film Award of the Cologne Conference, as well as a LOLA for Sandra Hüller and German Acting Award for Michael Maertens.

2014 marked the appearance of Philipp Leinemann's award-winning feature film *THE KING'S SURRENDER* (Best Narrative Feature Jury Award at the Austin Film Festival, MFG Star at the Baden-Baden Film Festival, and Bavarian Film Award for Best Cinematography for cameraman Christian Stangassinger). Filming of their next joint project *DAS DRITTE STERBEN* has already been completed.

THE GARDEN is Walker+Worm Film's first collaboration with director Sonja Maria Kröner.

Projects by Walker+Worm Film currently in development/preparation include the remake of *STEFAN ZWEIGS SCHACHNOVELLE*, Anca Miruna Lazarescu's *GLÜCK IST WAS FÜR WEICHEIER*, and Jovan Arsenic's *MS ZUKUNFT*.

JULIA DASCHNER (Camera)

Julia Daschner, born in Munich in 1980, has worked as a freelance camerawoman and director since 2008. She completed her studies at the film and television department of the Academy of Media Arts Cologne and the EICTV in Havana with the feature-length documentary *Take to the Road*. At the 2012 IFFF Dortmund Cologne, she won the National Competition for Female Cinematographers in the Feature Film Category with the medium-length film *Bergig*. Julia's feature film debut as DP, *Lose Your Head* (Director: Stefan Westerwelle), celebrated its premiere at the Berlinale in the "Panorama" section. Following her work on *THE GARDEN* by Sonja Maria Kröner, Julia is currently responsible for the cinematography in a children's film being produced in Hamburg and Finland.

PRODUCTION COMPANY WALKER+WORM FILM

Walker+Worm Film was founded in 2008 after a longtime collaboration between the producers Tobias Walker and Philipp Worm during their studies at the University of Television and Film Munich. Walker+Worm Film produced more than 30 feature films, documentaries and commercials. The individual style, the aspiration for authenticity and the desire to realize the unique vision of the filmmakers are the priorities for each production. Walker+Worm Film productions have gained international recognition by film critics, were present at acclaimed festivals and have garnered many awards.

WORLD SALES BETA CINEMA

World sales and co-financing company Beta Cinema has established itself as a „boutique-operation“ for quality feature films that combine commercial viability with artistic

integrity. Prime examples are Oscar winners and worldwide B.O. hits like THE LIVES OF OTHERS, IL DIVO and DOWNFALL.

Recent highlights include the Emma Watson, Daniel Brühl thriller COLONIA, Sundance Grand Jury Prize winner SAND STORM and 2017 Oscars contender THE KING'S CHOICE. The slate of upcoming titles is spearheaded by THE HAPPY PRINCE, written and directed by Rupert Everett with Rupert Everett, Colin Firth and Emily Watson, as well as WERK OHNE AUTOR, the new film by Oscar-winner Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck.

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