



75th IFFMH: Initial highlights of the 2026 programme

Press release – Mannheim, 23 September 2026

The International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg (IFFMH) is going into its 75th edition this autumn with the slogan “Imagine Futures!” From 5 to 15 November in this anniversary year, festival-goers can see numerous German premieres of films made by talented young international directors as well as established filmmakers. The IFFMH has already announced some of the highlights: this year’s ON THE RISE competition will feature films from Denmark, Germany, France, Greece, Japan, Croatia, South Korea and the United States, among other countries – including two productions that got their start in the IFFMH’s emerging talent programme, the Cutting Edge Talent Camp. Other highlights include the Cannes sensation ›Club Kid‹ by Jordan Firstman, Wim Wenders’ 3-D documentary ›From Inside Out – The Architecture of Peter Zumthor‹ and Danny Boyle’s tabloid media thriller ›Ink‹, as well as the Gen Z drama ›I Can’t Say No to Myself‹ by Israeli director Hadas Ben Aroya, Lili Horvát’s science-fiction drama ›My Notes on Mars‹ and the big winner at Locarno, ›You Don’t Belong Here‹ by Florin Șerban, one of the leading voices in contemporary Romanian cinema.

Festival director Sascha Keilholz says: “Nurturing talent and focusing not only on the breadth but also the future of cinema have long been a tradition at the IFFMH. We’re thus even prouder, particularly in our anniversary edition, to present films in competition that have emerged from our festival’s own talent incubator and are having their German premieres here. This illustrates the enduring effect that the IFFMH has as a platform for new voices in cinema. We remain the festival where new talent can be discovered. At the same time, this year’s competition is once again highly diverse in terms of the films’ origins as well as their stylistic approaches and themes.”

In competition: four alumni of the festival’s own talent camp and strong female perspectives

In the ON THE RISE competition, the IFFMH presents talented international directors’ first and second films as German premieres. A special feature of the 2026 anniversary edition is that no fewer than four of the 16 competition films were co-directed by alumni of the IFFMH’s Cutting Edge Talent Camp. Two of the films even emerged from the festival’s own talent incubator while still in their project phase. In her psychological drama ›**Body of Glass**‹, set in Marseille, Naëmi Ada depicts a young dancer’s attempt to escape a toxic relationship. Massih Parsaei’s debut film, ›**Lovers Sleep Alone**‹, meanwhile, tells of the loneliness experienced by a young Iranian man in Berlin. The film’s stark imagery ensures that the audience feels the emotional distance between the protagonist and the world outside. Both films are having their world premiere at the San Sebastián Film Festival, which is currently taking place. Two Talent Camp alumni, Julia Cöllen and Steffen Goldkamp, are involved as producers on two further competition films. In ›**Petty Thieves**‹ – a co-production from Croatia, Germany, France and Serbia – director Mate Ugrin follows a young chef and petty criminal on the Adriatic coast who finds a partner in crime, and perhaps

even a long-term romantic partner, in a hotel employee. The second feature film by Greek director Jacqueline Lentzou, ›**A Day in the Life of Jo: Chapter Phaedra**‹, took the prestigious Orizzonti Award for best director at the Venice Film Festival. This drama explores a day in the life of a teenage girl through dreamlike sequences bathed in a fluorescent glow, hovering between this world and the next. It is a melancholic coming-of-age drama with mystical and symbolic imagery that are entirely its own. These works are all notable for their wide range of artistic styles; their themes converge on the pursuit of connections with others.

Other films in competition this year also focus on female characters and perspectives. One such example is the Franco-Italian entry ›**The Golden Age**‹. Béranger Thouin's brilliant debut film, an epic saga that spans several eras and is filled with grand emotions, is about an independent woman whose journey through life takes her from Paris to Brazil and back again. And in her second feature film, ›**The World Before**‹, director Yoon Dan-bi focuses on a teenage girl named Jin. On the small South Korean island she has never left, Jin reunites with her best friend from childhood after several years and for the first time feels passion stirring within her. This tender love story shows how intense emotions gradually change how we perceive ourselves and the world. In Mads Mangel's masterfully directed debut film ›**The Guest**‹, meanwhile, the conflicts in the relationship between a mother, played by Trine Dyrholm, and her son escalate during a family get-together. Amid old wounds and insatiable longings, this Danish drama explores the possibility of forgiveness.

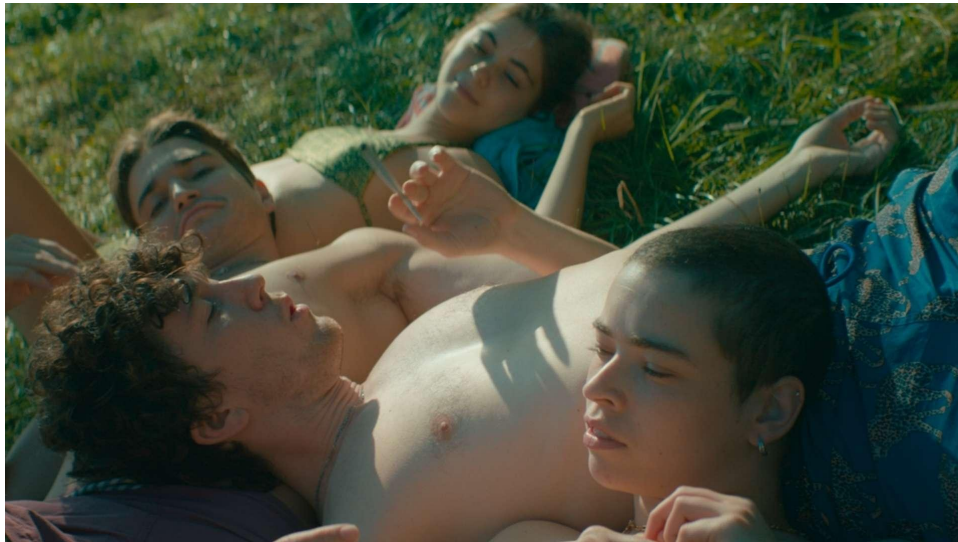


›The Guest‹ © Henrik Ohsten

Hits from the festival circuit and leading voices in contemporary cinema

The PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES section at the IFFMH is traditionally dedicated to films that break new artistic ground within the medium. Romanian director Florin Șerban achieves this in an impressive manner with ›**You Don't**‹

Belong Here – winner of the Golden Leopard at Locarno. Told as a crime story, the film focuses on a surgeon named Marius, his delinquent son and Marius's gradual recognition that he has failed as a father. The European premiere of **›I Can't Say No to Myself‹** by Hadas Ben Aroya – one of the most significant Israeli directors at the moment – will be screened. In this work, brimming with vitality, Ben Aroya explores Berlin as a refuge for young Israeli women, as well as the identity and sex lives of Gen Z. **›My Notes on Mars‹**, the first English-language production by director Lili Horvát, one of the defining new voices in Hungarian cinema, is terrific global cinema, with Mackenzie Davies and Rupert Friend in the lead roles. Part science-fiction drama, part mysterious romance, the film recounts a young scientist's disappearance and miraculous reappearance as it explores the question of whether our partners must always remain strangers to us.



›I Can't Say No to Myself‹ © Meidan Arama

In the FILMSCAPES section, the IFFMH broadens the scope to encompass a wide variety of formats within a given year's body of cinema. Thus it is here that Wim Wenders' 3-D documentary **›From Inside Out – The Architecture of Peter Zumthor‹**, acclaimed in Venice, finds its place. Over a period of 14 years, Wenders has explored the work of this Swiss architect, creating a film that gives viewers a sensory impression of the materials, structures and spaces of Zumthor's buildings. In addition, festival-goers at the 75th IFFMH can look forward to this year's smash hit from Cannes: **›Club Kid‹**, which Jordan Firstman has not only directed but in which he also plays the lead role of a failed party organiser who suddenly learns that he has a son. It's an energetic and touching tragicomedy about responsibility and the things in life that really matter. Alongside this, Danny Boyle's star-studded media thriller **›Ink‹** is one of the most eagerly anticipated films of the year. At the relentless speed of a printing press, Boyle depicts the rise of the British tabloid *The Sun* and the formation of the dark underbelly now seen in our media. The cast includes Guy Pearce as media magnate Rupert Murdoch.



The complete schedule of the 75th IFFMH will be announced on 16 October. Tickets go on sale on 19 October.
The 75th IFFMH will be held from 5 to 15 November 2026.

Images

You can download images via the “press material” section of our website:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/fwvm1c69mfxwe5k2tmnq8/AD-XBPm7MahyKeNle8HH5hQ?rlkey=3vmgbtsyboj9gxmplpq7zf5cu&st=4f7g8ryo&dl=0>

About the IFFMH

With “New Film Experience” as its credo, the IFFMH has been venturing new, interdisciplinary perspectives on and through the art of film since 1952. This makes it the longest-running film festival in Germany after the Berlinale, and it continues to be a major platform for cultural, social and political dialogue. With each subsequent edition, the IFFMH, as a festival for the public in cinemas, invites festivalgoers to discover the rising stars of the international film scene as well as to follow the careers of established filmmakers and to become more familiar with film in the context of other art forms.

Media inquiries:

Rebecca Raab
Head of Communications
e-mail: rebecca.raab@iffmh.de
Tel. +49 621 489262 22

The festival would like to thank its sponsors and partners.