



## **72nd IFFMH to open with Jack Huston's haunting black-and-white directorial debut ›Day of the Fight‹, followed by Andrew Haigh's erotic fairy tale ›All of Us Strangers‹ as its centrepiece, and close with Nora El Hourch's provocatively feminist ›Sisterhood‹**

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The 72nd International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg will celebrate its official opening on 16 November with the German premiere of ›Day of the Fight‹, the first film to be directed by noted British actor Jack Huston, who will be a guest on Opening Night. Festival director Sascha Keilholz: "In ›Day of the Fight‹ we are fortunate to have an opening film that is a stirring and deeply humanistic drama. This story of an underdog, given haunting and lyrical cinematography by Peter Simonite, is very much in the tradition of great films about boxers.

This brings us to the retrospective, which also starts on 16 November with Robert Rossen's ›Body and Soul‹ from 1947 and concludes on 26 November with Martin Scorsese's classic ›Raging Bull‹. All three films are existentialist parables of toxic masculinity, of violence, of the fragility of the male body and the boxing ring as a metaphor for life. They are defined by the intense physical exertion of their protagonists. Opening the festival with a debut film fits in perfectly with the IFFMH's traditional approach of providing a platform for new directors."

The IFFMH's programming team has chosen ›All of Us Strangers‹ by Andrew Haigh to be this year's centrepiece. This erotic and emotionally charged ghost story starring Andrew Scott and Paul Mescal has been causing a sensation since its world premiere at the Telluride Film Festival in late August and is considered a strong contender for the major international awards.

The closing film, also a German premiere and with the director attending, is ›Sisterhood‹ by Nora el Hourch. ›Sisterhood‹ is youthful, dynamic and outspoken cinema from France. Its director, who has Moroccan and French roots, is a major find in the international scene.

### **Films about a fighting spirit, places of supernatural yearning and the younger generation's feminist perspective**

The protagonists of all three films are caught in a personal struggle between two extremes and involve us in a pivotal moment in their lives. Jack Huston's ›Day of the Fight‹ uses powerful black-and-white imagery to paint a portrait of a once celebrated boxer named Mikey who stages his comeback after he is released from prison. But only Mikey knows that, in this fight, he is risking his life.



Jack Huston, born in 1982, rose to fame for his portrayal of Richard Harrow in ›Boardwalk Empire‹ and his roles as ›Ben-Hur‹ (2016), in ›American Hustle‹ as well as in the series ›Fargo‹ and most recently ›Mayfair Witches‹.

Adam (Andrew Scott) in ›All of Us Strangers‹ is also struggling with the permanence of a final farewell. He lives in seclusion in an eerily vacant hotel. An affair with Harry (Paul Mescal) turns his life upside down. He visits his childhood home, which his father and mother, who died in a car accident many years ago, still seem to inhabit. In trying to unite these two worlds – his very immediate love for Harry and his supernatural connection to his parents – he risks losing everything.

Andrew Haigh, whose career began in Ridley Scott's cutting room, has directed a very unusual and mysterious film in which past and present, grief, loss and new beginnings mystically come together. ›Weekend‹, an earlier love story of Haigh's, made a sensational impression at festivals in 2011, and ›45 Years‹ earned both awards for best acting at the Berlinale in 2015.

In ›Sisterhood‹, Nora el Hourch takes a completely different view, namely through the eyes of three teenagers, of the unforeseeable consequences that can arise when one's life is suddenly pulled apart at the seams. When Zineb becomes the victim of a sexual assault, she and her friends decide to expose the perpetrator in a cell-phone video. The video goes viral and sets off a chain reaction that soon becomes unstoppable. Nora el Hourch has a Moroccan father and a French mother – a cultural identity she shares with her main character. While this superbly self-confident debut film always remains on the protagonists' level, it simultaneously zooms in, apparently with ease, on the issues of our time, turning its razor-sharp focus on #metoo, migrant identity, the often hidden power of class affiliation and the very obvious power of social media.

Sascha Keilholz: "The selection of these works as cornerstones of the 72nd IFFMH reveals very different attitudes in films and about film: from role models characterised by masculinity and an aesthetic that borrows from classic American cinema, to queer cinema that is poignantly universal, to the provocatively feminist impetus of a young generation of filmmakers – a dynamic that pervades our entire programme this year!"

## Images

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## 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. The 72nd IFFMH will be held from 16 to 26 November 2023. The complete festival schedule will be announced on 27 October. Advance ticket sales start on 6 November.

## Media inquiries

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