



74th IFFMH: Initial highlights of the 2025 programme

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At the 74th International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg (IFFMH), being held from 6 to 16 November 2025, festivalgoers will once again be able to enjoy numerous German premieres of films by talented young international directors as well as by established filmmakers. In this year's ON THE RISE competition, the IFFMH will present films from Germany, the Netherlands, France, the UK, Canada, Saudi Arabia and beyond. Initial highlights of the programme include ›It Was Just an Accident‹ by Iranian director Jafar Panahi, which won big at Cannes, and ›Renoir‹ by Chie Hayakawa, one of the leading voices in contemporary Japanese cinema.

Festival director Dr Sascha Keilholz: "What distinguishes this year's selection of films is their incredible diversity of form. We're very impressed by the variety of narrative approaches and aesthetic forms of expression that the young filmmakers have chosen. The subjects are very much rooted in the present, often based on real events and, in some cases, personal experiences. We're very much looking forward to having a dialogue with this fascinating generation of artists and our audience on eleven days in November in Mannheim and Heidelberg."

In international competition: psychological pitfalls and extreme suspense

In the international competition ON THE RISE, the festival presents the German premieres of first and second works by talented international directors. This year's films are characterised by a remarkably strong focus on the big issues and challenges of our time: they deal with post-migration trauma, difficult working conditions such as those in the health-care sector, and more generally the fragility of mental health under increasing stress. But they also deal with love as a desired but elusive goal in a globalised world and, last but not least, big money in cyberspace – think Bitcoin.

Roderick Warich, a graduate of the Film Academy Baden-Württemberg, delivers one of the most outstanding German film productions of the year: ›**Funeral Casino Blues**‹. His visually impressive second film is an elegant mix of thriller, romance and ghost story. In Bangkok, a young woman disappears and a bartender sets out to find her; the trail leads through deserted alleys, out of the bustling city, to the Cambodian border and far beyond.



›Funeral Casino Blues‹ © eksystemt Filmverleih

Meanwhile, Thea Gajic's ›**Surviving Earth**‹ and Sophy Romvari's ›**Blue Heron**‹ stand for a whole series of very personal, sometimes haunting narratives by young female directors, based in part on their own experiences. Both of these films deal with post-migration tribulations and the traumas connected to them. Recalling what her own family went through, Thea Gajic tells the true story of a harmonica player who starts a new life in the UK after fleeing Yugoslavia in ›**Surviving Earth**‹. However, because experiences from his past life continue to haunt him, his relationships with those closest to him, especially his daughter, are at risk. In her cleverly constructed film full of meticulous and breathtaking camerawork, Sophy Romvari also deals with strained family ties and the effects of migration on the second generation. Through the eyes of a girl who is the youngest of four siblings, the director relates how a family of Hungarian origin attempts to settle into a new home in Canada. However, the eldest brother suffers from a mental stress disorder, which causes their family life to spiral ever further out of control. A powerful and sensitive film about grappling with one's own childhood.

Wanting to be there for someone even though you're unable to help is also the subject of the Saudi Arabian entry ›**Sink**‹ by Zain Duraie. A mother struggles to relate to her son, who is battling serious psychological issues. Mental health – often a taboo subject – is portrayed here in all its ups and downs.

Mental stress – indeed, overload – is a central theme for Laura Wandel as well. In her social drama ›**Adam's Sake**‹, the Belgian director confidently follows in the footsteps of the Dardenne brothers. Employing restless camerawork and dynamic editing, she depicts a day in the life of paediatric nurse Lucy (Lea Drucker). Though at the end of her tether, she tries to do right by her patients, including a young mother whose child is suffering from a life-threatening condition.

›**Reedland**‹ by Sven Bresser, the first Dutch film at Cannes in twelve years, is a gripping crime story, a keenly observant social study and a beautiful portrait of



the countryside all at once. It is elegant and infinitely rich in references to film history. Reed cutter Johan discovers the body of a girl in his fields. Plagued by inexplicable feelings of guilt, he sets out to track down the perpetrator himself.

The Irish director Ronan Corrigan delivers a spectacular heist film with a difference: ›LifeHack‹. Four millennials plan to rob a tech billionaire – online. But once the hack has been carried out and the \$24 million in Bitcoin pocketed, the drama really begins. Full of suspense and unexpected twists, Corrigan's film interprets the style, humour and values of Gen Z.

Political cinema from Iran, young female cinema from Japan

In the PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES section, the IFFMH showcases works that explore just how far films can go. First and foremost among these is this year's winner of the Palme d'Or at Cannes, ›It Was Just an Accident‹ by renowned Iranian director Jafar Panahi. In this film, a former prison inmate suddenly recognises one of his tormentors, wants revenge, has doubts and then consults other victims of the Iranian regime who are friends of his. With moments of dark humour included, Panahi has succeeded in creating a profound and stirring parable about the moral dilemmas of living together in a repressive country. In the FILMSCAPES section, festivalgoers can look forward to the German premiere of Chi Hayakawa's social portrait ›Renoir‹. Inspired by autobiographical experiences, Hayakawa captures 1980s Tokyo in images of nostalgic beauty. Although Renoir is only her second feature film, Hayakawa was invited to compete at Cannes in 2025 – sensational!



›Renoir‹ © Loaded Films

The complete schedule will be announced on 17 October.

Tickets go on sale on 20 October.



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.

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The festival would like to thank its sponsors and partners.

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