



“Imagine Futures!” – The 75th IFFMH will explore powerful emotions and visions of the future in three dramas with existential themes: Lili Horvát’s ›My Notes on Mars‹ as the opening film, Marine Atlan’s ›La Gradiva‹ as the Centre Piece, and Rafiki Fariala’s ›Congo Boy‹ as the closing film

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In its anniversary year, the 75th International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg (IFFMH) will be screening, at three main points, intense dramas in which the protagonists find themselves at pivotal existential moments in their lives. All three films convey and evoke powerful emotions as they present vastly different visions of the future.

The festival will open on 5 November with the German premiere of **›My Notes on Mars‹** by Hungarian director Lili Horvát, who will be attending the opening in Mannheim. Mackenzie Davis and Rupert Friend give brilliant performances in the leading roles. Also directed by a woman is this year’s IFFMH Centre Piece, **›La Gradiva‹**. This brilliant directorial debut by the Tunisian-French director Marine Atlan was frenetically acclaimed by critics at Cannes, where it received the Grand Prix at the Semaine de la Critique. And at its closing on 15 November, the festival will salute the power of resilience and the pursuit of one’s dreams: **›Congo Boy‹** by Rafiki Fariala, a feel-good drama, follows a strong young man as he navigates being a refugee, facing the challenges of everyday life and addressing his burning desire to become a musician.

Festival director Sascha Keilholz says: “These three films represent the festival’s artistic, thematic and aesthetic diversity. Lili Horvát’s utterly unconventional love story reflects our anniversary slogan ‘Imagine Futures!’ and ties in to this year’s retrospective titled ‘Back to the Futures – Utopias vs Dystopias’. The interplay between emotional depth and hope for the future also feature in our Centre Piece and the closing film. In a sense, this triptych is the cornerstone of our grand anniversary edition.”

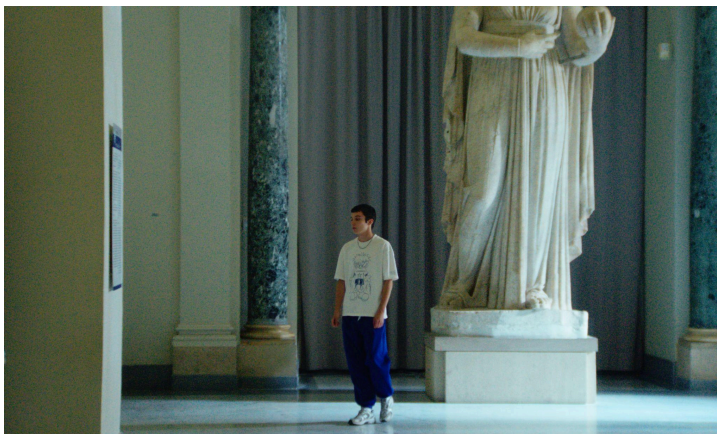
Romantic dramas and hopes for the future

Part romantic drama, part sci-fi thriller, Lili Horvát’s ›My Notes on Mars‹ portrays a couple who have grown apart – but might yet find their way back to each other. The film centres on a brilliant astrophysicist named Margot (Mackenzie Davis), who is exploring the possibility of colonising Mars. Following repeated clashes with her husband, Sam (Rupert Friend), she disappears during a hike and then mysteriously reappears weeks later. Although she can’t remember anything except for her research concerning Mars, Sam is determined to see Margot’s return as a chance to rekindle their marriage.



»My Notes on Mars« © Poste Restante, Amour Fou, Obala Art Centar

Love and the drama of identity are also at the heart of Marine Atlan's »La Gradiva«, an emotionally gripping and visually captivating coming-of-age story about a fateful school trip that will forever change the lives of everyone involved. Set against the backdrop of Pompeii, bathed in golden light, Atlan – a cinematographer up until now – peers deep into the souls of her young protagonists. Surrounded by timeless marble statues and wall paintings, she explores the overwhelming intensity and transience of youth on the threshold of adulthood. She asks what it means when the prospects for the future that youth are normally afforded are suddenly called into question.



»La Gradiva« © Films du poisson, Bibi Film TV, Arte France Cinema

From a Central African perspective, Rafiki Fariala's »Congo Boy« depicts very different existential dramas – and the strength that can be found by holding on to one's dream of a better future, despite all adversity. This gripping debut film does not turn a blind eye to reality, though. Seventeen-year-old Robert lives in Bangui, where he fled to escape the war in the Congo. He dreams of a career as a musician, but when his parents are arrested, he must not only make sure that he graduates from school but also look after his four younger siblings. When he hears that a competition will be held among area musicians, he pins his hopes on it.



»Congo Boy« © Makongo Films, Unité, Kiripifilms, Karta Film

The 75th IFFMH will be held from 5 to 15 November 2026.

The complete schedule will be announced on 16 October.

Tickets go on sale on 19 October.

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.

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The festival wishes to thank its sponsors and partners.