



75th IFFMH: Cutting Edge Talent Camp continues its successful run with 15 emerging talents in 2026

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The International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg's prestigious programme for emerging talent, the Cutting Edge Talent Camp (CETC), is now in its seventh year, with 15 participants due to take part. This hybrid coaching programme is a unique springboard for aspiring directors and producers who are graduates of a German art or film school. It will be held online from 3 to 10 November and in person in Mannheim from 12 to 15 November as part of the 75th IFFMH.

"This year's call for entries brought us an impressive 70 applications from young filmmakers. Not only the strong response, but above all the outstanding quality of the submissions, is a powerful endorsement of the Cutting Edge Talent Camp. The programme has firmly established itself and produces new success stories every year. In doing so, it makes a significant contribution to raising the international profile of German cinema and ensuring its long-term viability. We are very much looking forward to meeting the next generation of promising talent in person this November and supporting them on their journey," said the CETC's three directors, Tina Haagmann, Cécile Tollu-Polonowski and Titus Kreyenberg.

The next generation of up-and-coming filmmakers

Some of this year's participants have already enjoyed initial success. The feature film ›Oasis‹, co-produced by **Alexandra Rilli**, had its world premiere in September 2026 at the prestigious Venice Film Festival, where the independent critics awarded it the Grand Jury Prize – Premio Bisato d'Oro for 2026. ›God Is Grey‹ by director and producer **Jennifer Drake** was named best short film at the 46th Max Ophüls Preis film festival in January 2025. Producer **Leon Harms** was nominated for the 2025 German Short Film Award in the category of feature films up to 30 minutes in length for ›Majini‹, which he co-produced. **Hannah Weissenborn** received, among other awards, the prize for outstanding directing at the 7th Bundesfestival junger Film in 2024 for ›Douze‹. **Elisabeth Köller**, meanwhile, won the Max Ophüls Preis in 2023 for the short film ›Mudhole‹ (directed by Job Antoni), on which she served as producer. The short film ›Crust‹ (directed by Jens Kevin Georg), produced by **Fritzie Bensch**, was nominated for the First Steps Award, won a Student Academy Award in 2024, and was also shortlisted for the Oscar® for Best Live-Action Short Film in 2025.

The 2026 talents in alphabetical order

- **Fritzie Benesch**, Babelsberg Film University KONRAD WOLF
- **Jennifer Drake**, University of Television and Film Munich
- **Sina Guntermann**, Academy of Media Arts Cologne
- **Leon Harms**, Film Academy Baden-Württemberg
- **Anna Ilin**, Berlin University of the Arts
- **Elisabeth Köller**, German Film and Television Academy Berlin
- **Stefan Koutzev**, Academy of Media Arts Cologne
- **Fabian Leonhardt**, Film Academy Baden-Württemberg



- **Basilio Maritano Sailer**, Film Academy Baden-Württemberg
- **Amin Motalebzadeh**, University of Fine Arts Hamburg
- **Constantin Rath**, Atelier Ludwigsburg-Paris
- **Alexandra Rilli**, Merz Akademie – University of Applied Arts, Design and Media, Stuttgart
- **Nele Urbach**, University of Television and Film Munich
- **Jozefien Van Der Aelst**, German Film and Television Academy Berlin
- **Hannah Weissenborn**, Film Academy Baden-Württemberg

International cinema made in Germany: recent success stories

Films by CETC alumni have been well-received at renowned international film festivals: for example, ›**Lovers Sleep Alone**‹, the first feature film by Massih Parsaei, produced by Carla Buchal (both CETC 2025), had its world premiere in this year's New Directors competition at the San Sebastián Film Festival. This portrait of a young Iranian man in Berlin – as sensitive as it is minimalist – is now returning to the IFFMH and can be seen in the international ON THE RISE competition at the 75th IFFMH. ›**Body of Glass**‹, a psychological drama about a dancer in Marseille and her attempt to break free of a toxic relationship, produced by Victoria Braunholz (CETC 2024), also had its world premiere in San Sebastián. Director Naëmi Ada was honoured there with the prestigious Kutxabank New Directors Award. ›**Body of Glass**‹ will also be screened in competition at the 75th IFFMH. ›**Dear Future Self**‹ by Ella Cieslinski and Nina Wesemann (CETC 2025) had its world premiere this year at the Munich International Film Festival, where it received the German Cinema New Talent Award. ›**Babystar**‹ by Joscha Bongard, produced by Lisa Purtscher and Lotta Schmelzer (CETC 2023), had its world premiere in the Discovery section of the 2025 Toronto International Film Festival and was featured in the international competition at the Warsaw Film Festival. Steffen Goldkamp's ›**Rain fell on the Nothing New**‹ (CETC 2021) was screened at the 2025 Karlovy Vary IFF and the 74th IFFMH in 2025, where lead actor Noah Sayenko received the Young Actors Award. ›**The Good Sister**‹ by Sarah Miro Fischer (CETC 2022) had its world premiere at the 2025 Berlinale in the Panorama section and earned the First Steps Award for best feature-length film – to name just the most recent successes. Further success stories from previous years can be found on the CETC website:

https://www.iffmh.de/industry/cutting-edge-talent-camp/cutting-edge-talent-camp/cetc-erfolge-und-alumni/index_eng.html

About the CETC

The Cutting Edge Talent Camp is a hybrid coaching programme for young filmmakers who have attended a German film or art school and who are currently in various phases of developing, financing or post-production of their first or second feature film. The Talent Camp offers participants the opportunity to meet key professionals from the international film industry and to learn about pitching, festival, co-production and marketing strategies. The programme also includes master classes and film screenings. Programming directors at film festivals, international distributors and producers from around the world are among the experts who mentor the talents and offer them initial feedback on



their projects. The Talent Camp receives funding from the MFG Baden-Württemberg, the Federal Commission of Culture and Media (BKM), and the Schwiete Stiftung. It is held in collaboration with the San Sebastián Film Festival and the International Film Festival Rotterdam.

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.

Images

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The Cutting Edge Talent Camp wishes to thank its sponsors and partners.

