



NEWSLETTER

German Documentaries at Film Festivals

Spring & Summer 2025

german documentaries





German Documentaries is the international label for the promotion of german non-fiction film productions abroad.

As an initiative of the **AG DOK** – the German Documentary Association and **German Films Service + Marketing GmbH**, German Documentaries presents german documentary productions at international festivals and markets and organizes co-production meetings and delegations.

In this newsletter, we would like to present a selection of the exceptional productions that were screened at international film festivals this spring and summer.



german documentaries



Festivals

The festival circuit in spring and summer 2025 brought together a large number of German productions and co-productions, many of which won awards.

Right on time with the first rays of sunshine, the **Thessaloniki International Documentary Festival** (March 6-16) opened, featuring ten predominantly German productions – including **THE MOELLN LETTERS** by Martina Priessner, which had already won the Panorama Audience Award Documentary and the Amnesty Film Prize at the Berlinale earlier this year.

With 27 (co-)productions, **CPH:DOX** in Copenhagen (March 19-30) was the frontrunner among documentary film festivals in the spring and summer of 2025 – 14 of which were majority German.

ABODE OF DAWN by Kristina Shtubert celebrated its international premiere here: "Set in a northern forest, the film follows a community that emerged as a replacement for a lost past that perhaps never existed. For its immense respect and long-term commitment, nuanced approach to existential questions, and ability to embrace an environment with so many contradictions," the film, whose director had observed this Christian community for over 10 years, was awarded the Next:Wave Award.

[Source of statement here](#)

ABODE OF DAWN was also among the nine predominantly German documentaries screened at **Visions du Réel** in Nyon (March 4–13). **THE FAMILY APPROACH** by Daniel Abma won the Perception Change Award on Lake Geneva: "Five children sit around a dining table. Instead of 'mum' and 'dad', they say 'Mrs. Wagner' and 'Mr. Gerecke'. In this ephemeral semblance of a family, between parental love and the bureaucracy of youth welfare services, social workers do everything they can to create a home for children. A film about the superpower that is raising a child, and family in all its forms," writes the festival about the film.

[Source of synopsis here](#)

CIRCUSBOY by Julia Lemke and Anna Koch also conveys a very special family life. Eleven-year-old Santiago and his family move around with their home – a circus. The film celebrated its world premiere in the Generation Kplus section of the Berlinale and was one of four majority German (co-)productions at the **Hot Docs Festival** in Toronto (April 24 - May 4).

In addition to **CIRCUSBOY**, another German production was screened at the **International Film Festival for Youth and Children Zlin** (May 29 - June 4), which can be classified as part of the increasingly important subgenre of documentary films for children and young people: **GIRLS DON'T CRY** by Sigrid Klausmann.

The **Krakow Film Festival** (May 26 - June 1) showed twelve majority German documentaries, including **FISSION** by João Pedro Prado and Anton Yaremchuk, which had previously been screened at CPH:DOX, and **ETERNAL YOU** by Moritz Riesewieck and Hans Block, which had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival earlier this year.

At the **Sheffield Doc Fest** (June 18-23), **SHARDS OF LIGHT** by Mila Teshaieva and Marcus Lenz was prominently featured in the International Competition.

Prominently placed at an A-list festival, as the opening film of the Concorso Internazionale at the **Locarno Film Festival** (August 6-16), Kamal Aljafari's **WITH HASAN IN GAZA** celebrated its world premiere. "It is an ode to the people living in Gaza, a reflection on time and time passing. It gives us insight into a world from 24 years ago, with children in Gaza wanting to be seen, heard, and remembered, with adults painfully aware of the dangers of being filmed. Cinema is about the importance of not looking away, of documenting, of acknowledging existences that are and were. **WITH HASAN IN GAZA** gives evidence of a truth that is and was (...)" With this statement, the jury of the Europa Cinemas Label recommended this year's award-winning film for European cinema distribution as Best European Film.

[Source of statement here](#)

WITH HASAN IN GAZA continued its festival tour at the **Toronto International Film Festival** (September 4-14) and the **DMZ International Documentary Film Festival** South Korea (September 11-17). At the latter, the film, which is based on three Mini DV tapes from 2001, was awarded the Frontier Competition Grand Prize.

The **Venice Film Festival** (August 27 - September 6) was the grand finale for late summer, programming Michal Kosakowski's **HOLOFICTION**, composed of archive material, in the Venice Classics section: "This experimental film explores the visual representation of the Holocaust through a montage of thousands of excerpts from fictional films and television series produced between 1938 and the present."

In this way, the festival continues in its catalog, "the audience (is) invited to reflect on the ethics and responsibility of cinematic storytelling, urging a deeper understanding of how these representations shape collective memory and historical perception."

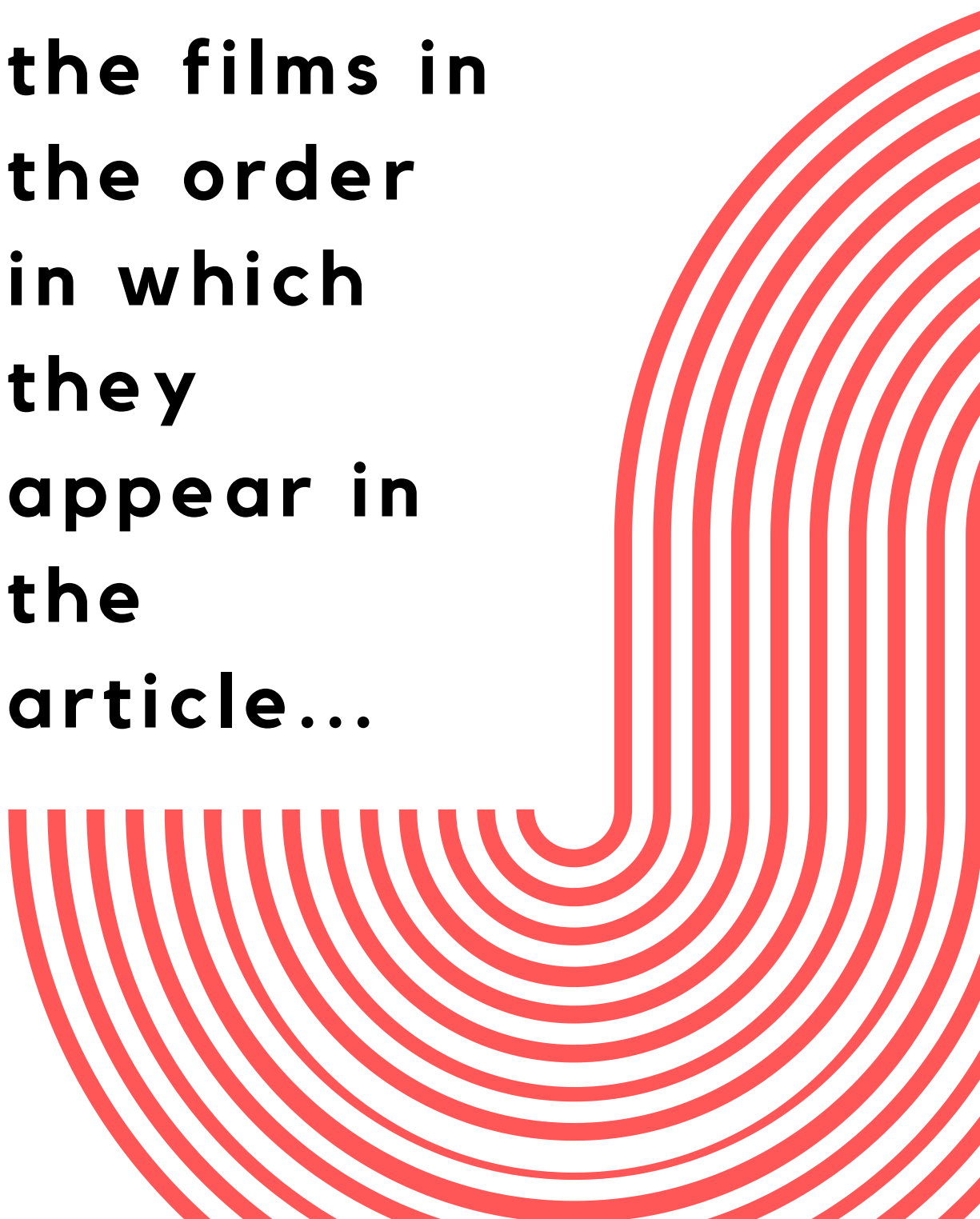
[Source of synopsis here](#)

Summer is over – but anticipation for the fall festival season dominates: For example, we can look forward to the **Doclisboa International Film Festival** (October 16-26), which will open with **WITH HASAN IN GAZA**.

Also coming up are the **Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival** (October 24 - November 2), the **International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam** (IDFA, November 13-23), and **DOC NYC** (November 12-30).

The **Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival** (November 7-23) will also be exciting again this year: the new documentary film competition Doc@PÖFF is entering its second round.

**Read on
to discover
the films in
the order
in which
they
appear in
the
article...**





THE MOELLN LETTERS

by Martina Priessner

Synopsis

Thirty years after the racist attacks in Mölln, survivor İbrahim Arslan discovers hundreds of forgotten letters of solidarity. The film follows him and his family in their struggle to foster a new, victim-centred culture of remembrance.

Germany

2025

96 min

Original
Language:
German, Turkish

Subtitles:
English, German

World Sales:

NEW DOCS

Dasselstr. 75-77, 50674 Köln

Phone: +49 221 16819743

sales@newdocs.de

<http://www.newdocs.de>



ABODE OF DAWN

by Kristina Shtubert

Synopsis

Where do you go when the world feels overwhelming and just plain wrong? Can you escape and start anew? The documentary "Abode of Dawn" focuses on a group of people trying to build a utopian society in the Siberian Taiga. Since the 1990s, they have been following a man who sees himself as Christ reborn: Vissarion. You can find his portrait in every house in the Abode of Dawn and yet he seems to be more of a means for channelling the longings of many of the residents. Their lives rotate around Vissarion like planets around the sun, though they hardly ever meet him. The film does not ask: Is Vissarion truly the Son of God? Instead, it poses the question: Are the people here happier than they were before?

Germany

2024

105 min

Original
Language:
Russian, German
and English

Subtitles:
German and
English

Production Company:

Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin GmbH in Ko-
Produktion mit Kristina Shtubert und dem Rundfunk Berlin-
Brandenburg

<https://www.dffb.de/en/films/sonnenstadt/>



THE FAMILY APPROACH

by Daniel Abma

Synopsis

Five children sit around a dining table. Instead of "mum" and "dad", they say "Mrs. Wagner" and "Mr. Gerecke". In this ephemeral semblance of a family, between parental love and the bureaucracy of youth welfare services, social workers do everything they can to create a home for children. A film about the superpower that is raising a child, and family in all its forms.

Germany

2024

91 min

Original
Language:
German

Subtitles:
English

World Sales:

Java Films

Leading Global Documentary Distributor

Paris / London / Barcelona

Phone: +33 (0) 1 84 76 40 60

contact@javafilms.tv

<https://javafilms.fr/film/the-family-approach/>



CIRCUSBOY

by Julia Lemke & Anna Koch

Synopsis

Eleven-year-old Santino is a child of the circus. He loves to spend time with his eighty-year-old great-grandfather, one of Europe's last great circus directors, who has become his best friend. Together, they share heartwarming stories: tales of a friendship with an elephant, of farewells, new beginnings, and life on the road.

CIRCUSBOY chronicles the lives of these modern nomads, capturing a young boy's experience growing up among an extended family and animals—a life without a safety net, as free as a bird. This documentary road movie for children and families portrays circus life in all its reality and magic.

Germany

2025

86 min

Original
Language:
German

Subtitles:
English

World Sales:

PLUTO FILM

Schliemannstrasse 5, 10437 Berlin

Phone: +49 30 21918220

info@plutofilm.de

<https://www.plutofilm.de/films/circusboy/0094>



GIRLS DON'T CRY

by Sigrid Klausmann & Lina Luzyte

Synopsis

What does it mean to be a girl in the world today? How do they fare in a restrictive world? The documentary GIRLS DON'T CRY is about the longing of six girls from six countries, longing for a self-determined life in freedom, their desire to fall in love, without paternalism, without others having power over their bodies, with equal rights. We see Nancy, Sheelan, Selenna, Nina, Paige and Sinai deal with the crisis of puberty, their self-confident decisions in difficult situations, their courageous fight against brutal traditions such as circumcision, against social constraints and pressure, against beauty mania and prejudice. Being young and cool, even in the face of trauma and loss.

Germany

2025

91 min

Original
Language:
German

Subtitles:
English

Distribution:

farbfilm verleih GmbH
Boxhagener Str. 106
10245 Berlin

Phone: +49 30 - 29 77 29 44
info@farbfilm-verleih.de

<http://www.farbfilm-verleih.de/>



FISSION

by João Pedro Prado & Anton Yaremchuk

Synopsis

A warm film about a hot topic. Is nuclear power the future, or...? The locals of two small European towns throw themselves into the discussion in a film with humor and heart, even though the stakes are high. The climate crisis, Germany's nuclear phase-out and Russia's war against Ukraine are just three of the heavy pieces in the dramatic game about the future of energy. A game with global and unpredictable consequences far beyond where the electricity will be coming from.

Germany

2025

75 min

Original
Language:
German , Polish

Subtitles:
English

Further Information:

<https://kinoprado.com/spaltung>



ETERNAL YOU

by Moritz Rieseewieck & Hans Block

Synopsis

ETERNAL YOU accompanies people from around the globe who use artificial intelligence (AI) to "connect with the dead". Joshua chats day and night with the digital clone of his deceased first love and lets her take part in his everyday life. Christi just wants confirmation that her late best friend is doing well in heaven, but has a harrowing experience with his AI likeness. Jang Ji-Sung meets the VR clone of her deceased 7-yr-old daughter. The inventors of the services deny any responsibility for the profound psychological consequences of those experiences. Numerous competitors hope for a lucrative market, as religious and collective forms of mourning are losing relevance. Is this the beginning of the end of finitude?

Germany,
USA

2024

87 min

Original
Language:
English & Korean

Subtitles:
English

Production Company:

Beetz Brothers film production GmbH
Heinrich-Roller-Straße 15
10405 Berlin
Phone: +49 (0) 30 695 669 10

<https://www.beetz-brothers.com/produktionen/eternal-you/>



SHARDS OF LIGHT

by Mila Tessaieva & Marcus Lenz

Synopsis

War has ravaged the Ukrainian city of Bucha, whose residents have endured unimaginable hostility and suffering. If hope remains a faint glimmer, the will to survive still shines through in this powerful and unflinching film.

War crimes haunt the residents of Bucha, years after Russian occupation. And yet, among the bodies and rubble, they band together with a determination to carry on. Children rehearse school plays, widows rebuild their houses and couples begin married life even as soldiers return to the front – perhaps never to return. Nothing can prepare people for life in a society shaped by war and, as time marches on, fissures in communities become increasingly evident. Is democracy strong enough to hold a people together? Following their acclaimed 2022 film *When Spring Came to Bucha*, Mila Tessaieva and Marcus Lenz continue to trace the city's fight for survival. A tapestry of stories and characters reveal a precarious existence marked by devastation, uncertainty and a longing for peace.

Germany,
Ukraine

2025

93 min

Original
Language:
Ukrainian, Russian

Subtitles:
English

Production Company:

wildfilms

Lenz & Waldmann GbR

Dorotheenstrasse 8

D-42105 Wuppertal

<https://www.wildfilms.de/>



WITH HASAN IN GAZA

by Kamal Aljafari

Synopsis

Three MiniDV tapes of life in Gaza from 2001 were recently rediscovered. This footage now stands as a testament to a place and time that no longer exists. What began as a search for a former prison mate from 1989—a man lost to time and war—led to an unexpected road trip from the north to the south of Gaza, accompanied by Hasan, a local guide whose fate remains unknown. As the camera moves through Gaza's streets and landscapes, it captures fleeting moments of everyday life—fragments of a reality now irreversibly altered. 'With Hasan in Gaza' transforms this forgotten footage into a cinematic reflection on memory, loss, and the passage of time—capturing a Gaza of the past, and lives that may never be found again.

Germany,
Palestine,
France, Qatar

2025

106 min

Original
Language:
Arabic

Subtitles:
English

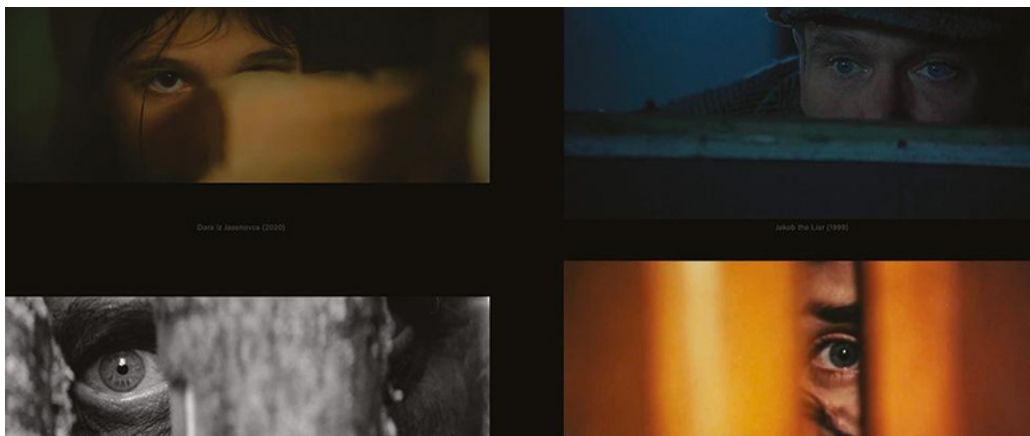
Production Company:

Kamal Aljafari Productions

Berlin, Germany

kamalaljafari productions@gmail.com

<https://kamalaljafari productions/Homepage>



HOLOFICTION

by Michal Kosakowski

Synopsis

Drawing from an extensive archive of over 3,000 narrative works HOLOFICTION critically examines how Holocaust imagery has been codified and reproduced in cinema across decades. The film exposes recurring visual motifs and narrative patterns that have become iconic in the portrayal of the Holocaust. Inspired by Claude Lanzmann's skepticism toward visual representations of historical trauma, the film questions the possibility and implications of depicting such an atrocity in fictional cinema. Through its essayistic approach, HOLOFICTION invites audiences to reflect on the ethics and responsibility of cinematic storytelling, urging a deeper understanding of how these representations shape collective memory and historical perception.

Germany,
Austria

2025

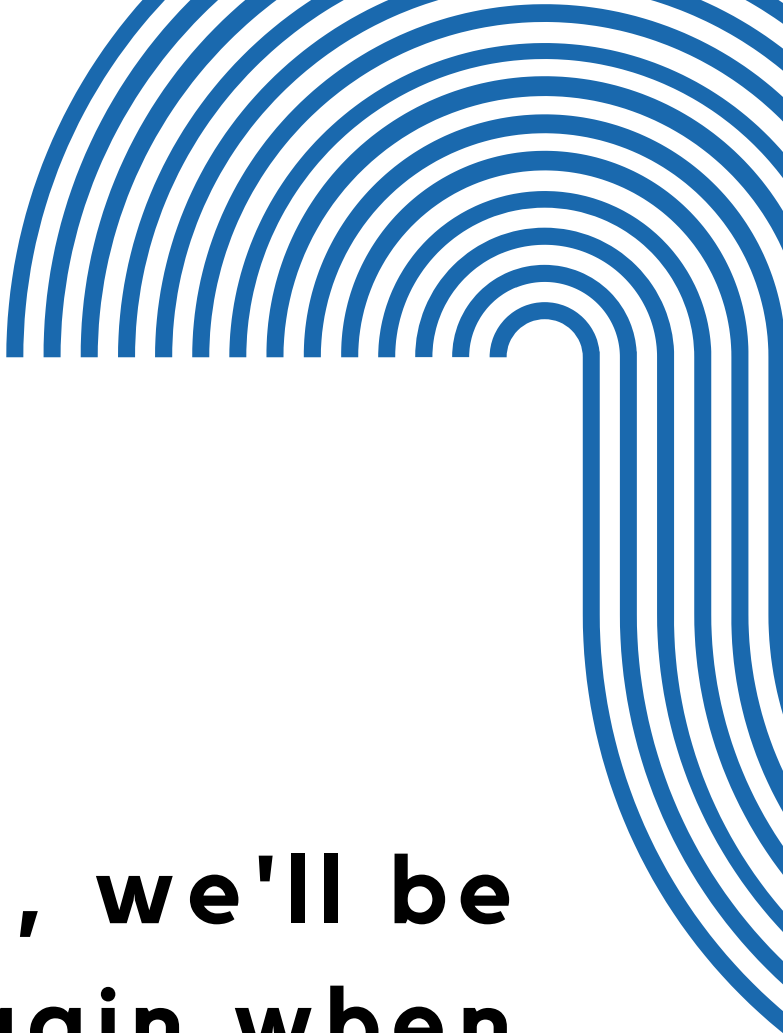
102 min

Original Language:
no dialogue

World Sales:

Kosakowski Films - Andrea Staerke
Brandenburgische Str. 43
10707 Berlin, Germany
Phone: +33 671265628
andrea.staerke@gmail.com

<https://www.kosakowskifilms.com/2025-holofiction>



**Stay tuned, we'll be
in touch again when
the festival circuit
2025 is over.**



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