



MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE
D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2026
Official Selection

OASIS

a film by
JANNIS LENZ


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LOGLINE

When a viral video of a student threatening his classmates surfaces online, the school spirals into escalating violence. Crushed by the pressure of teachers and parents, three outcasts take refuge in a nearby forest. There, play hardens into ritual and pain becomes an escape, until old wounds surface and the boundaries between them are redrawn.



DIRECTOR'S INTERVIEW

Your previous films, the short film WANNABE and the documentary SOLDAT AHMET, received multiple awards at major international festivals. SOLDAT AHMET explored masculinity and male roles, probing questions of identity, vulnerability, and social expectation. As OASIS marks your first feature film, does it continue this investigation?

OASIS is more a continuation than a repetition. The questions it explores have occupied me for years, but with each film my perspective shifts, moving one step further back along the chain.

You can trace this development through my collaboration with Ahmet Şimşek. In one of my first short films, SHADOWBOXER (2015), he played a young man forced into anti-violence training. Years later, he became the title character of SOLDAT AHMET. In OASIS, he appears in a supporting role, and now leads an anti-violence training program himself. Ten years, three films, the same person, each time at a different point within the system.

OASIS goes one step further back: to school, where many of these violent dynamics begin. What interests me isn't

the finished role, but the moment it's assumed: watching hierarchies emerge, seeing who laughs first, who falls silent first, and how quickly these patterns take hold, often for years. It's something everyone identifies with.

What we learn in these early environments - about strength, vulnerability, whose pain matters and whose doesn't - leaves lasting traces. That feels especially relevant today.

As a debut feature, OASIS is a point of convergence for me: many of the questions that have followed me since my earliest films come together here for the first time in a fictional narrative.

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One moment particularly shaped my relationship to school, and to my own youth: the 2009 Winnenden school shooting. It took place just a couple of minutes away from where I studied and it shook me deeply.

The questions it raised - about fear and exclusion, about what happens to young people who can't find their place - never fully left me. They've kept resurfacing in different forms ever since.

What inspired you to tell this story?

I grew up in a small town in southern Germany and often felt like an outsider there. One person who shared that feeling was the son of an American soldier from the nearby U.S. barracks, while my own parents were active in the peace movement. The obvious contradiction never interested us. We just went into the woods and built our own world, a place that belonged only to us.

My father was a teacher, and a passionate one. We often clashed, because I found it hard to fit into the rigid structures of the educational system. One moment particularly shaped my relationship to school, and to my own youth: the 2009 Winnenden school shooting. It took place just a couple of minutes away from where I studied and it shook me deeply.

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Years later, after becoming a father myself, I moved back to my hometown for family reasons. I found myself spending a lot of time in the woods again, this time with my children, the oldest now goes to school himself. The memories came flooding back, and with them, these images. That was the moment I knew I had to make this film.

Many of my earlier films revolve around similar themes, but OASIS was the first project that felt big enough to hold all of these experiences at once: both as a feature film and as the next step in my own artistic development.



Allowing closeness and tenderness takes more courage than competing over who's stronger.



The character of Maya is an interesting force in the dynamics between the three young protagonists. What role does she play in the story?

Maya isn't outside the dynamic between the characters, she's right in the middle of it. She takes risks, pushes boundaries, and takes part in the same games and experiments as the others. The difference is that she plays by her own rules.

Her strength doesn't come despite her vulnerability, but because of it. She doesn't hide what she feels or pretend to be untouchable, and that openness becomes its own kind of power.

It shifts the dynamic in ways the other characters don't expect. The young boys are used to proving themselves through toughness and competition, they don't know how to read someone who doesn't play that game. It challenges them, and at times it overwhelms them, because it exposes how much of their own behavior is armor.

Allowing closeness and tenderness takes more courage than competing over who's stronger. Maya never says this outright. She just acts on it.

It mattered to me not to reduce Maya to that function. She isn't a moral compass or a teacher figure. Like every other character in the film, she stays contradictory and complex - and that's exactly where her strength lies. She's a fully realized person, not just someone who exists to serve the plot.

Rituals and games play a central role in the film, often blurring the boundaries between playfulness and violence, intimacy and humiliation. How do these moments help explore the film's broader themes of belonging and vulnerability?

Rituals and games are, for me, the heart of the film. Within them, the characters feel seen and become aware of themselves, and it's precisely in these moments that something unpredictable always surfaces. The same action can express intimacy while also carrying a trace of violence. Trust and transgression often sit surprisingly close together. The characters are searching for connection, but in a way that always carries risk.

The body is the film's true medium. It speaks to experiences that don't yet have words. These young people carry wounds, fears, and longings they can't simply articulate, so they try to give them shape through ritual. They test their limits. But maybe what they're really testing is trust.

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How far can I go? Who will catch me if I fall? Who will stay? These rituals create a space of freedom, while also raising the question of what happens when that space is broken open by outside forces.

The fact that the three young leads are trained actors who helped develop these scenes from the very beginning wasn't a secondary consideration: it was a prerequisite.

Together they built this physical language, with the help of an intimacy coordinator, scene by scene, drawing on their own instincts and how these bodies would move, resist, and trust one another. That process of co-creation is what allows the rituals on screen to feel lived-in rather than staged, and it's the only way the film could ask this much of them without asking too much.

OASIS can also be read as an exploration of what happens when pain and humiliation are given no space to be acknowledged. Why do you think this theme is particularly relevant in today's society? What does it say about the normativity of violence and social norms in general?

Pain and humiliation happen everywhere: at school, within families, in sports clubs. The very places meant to offer support and protection can just as easily become places of exclusion or crushing pressure. That tension runs through the characters in the film: the desire to belong, alongside the constant feeling of never quite being fully integrated. That's why I wasn't interested only in the perspective of

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the teenagers. The film also watches the adults - teachers, parents, psychologists - who try to take responsibility and, in doing so, often hit their own limits.

It was important for me to leave room for the parent's perspective and to show how, even when they believe they have everything under control, they also participate and further fuel these violent dynamics.

When pain finds no outlet, it doesn't disappear. It remains inscribed in the body. The rituals in the film are an attempt to process something that resists language but still demands to be acknowledged. What comes out of that is rarely clear-cut, and the boundaries shift, often without anyone noticing.

The film tries to make those shifts visible, as an observation, not an argument. It looks at how thin the line can be between what we experience as normal and what is, at the same time, harmful.

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Throughout the film, nature is a central theme. Is it a safe space for the protagonists, or rather an anarchic realm beyond the rules of society?

The forest we depict has largely been deforested. Wind turbines stand among the trees, and mountain bikers race across the terrain. There's no idyllic, untouched wilderness in OASIS, far removed from everything.

The young people search out the last remaining pockets where they can feel unobserved. But even there, the wind turbines are louder than the birdsong.

There is also a second layer to this landscape: scattered throughout the forest are the ruins of bunkers and tank barriers from the Second World War. This is deliberate.

The idea of the forest as a pure, untouched refuge carries a particular historical weight in the German-speaking world: it was instrumentalized by the Nazi regime to promote an ethnonationalist idea of homeland and belonging. I didn't want to reproduce that legacy, even unconsciously.

That is why we show what is there: remnants and warnings from a past that has never fully disappeared, that we shouldn't forget. The young people move through these ruins like ghosts as they play their games.

For the characters in the film, the forest is therefore not a counterpoint to society, but rather a concentrated version of it. It amplifies what's already there: the longing for connection, as much as the fear of it. Nature here isn't really a backdrop, it's a state of being - a place where the characters can behave differently, and where, precisely because of that, the fragility of their relationships becomes visible.

Another striking aspect of OASIS is that it was filmed using a single lens. How did this creative choice help you translate your vision for the film into its visual language? And how does it reflect the interplay between documentary and fiction that runs through your work?

For me, documentary and staged forms aren't opposites, they're different degrees of control. What interests me isn't how someone performs, but what they do when they believe no one is watching.

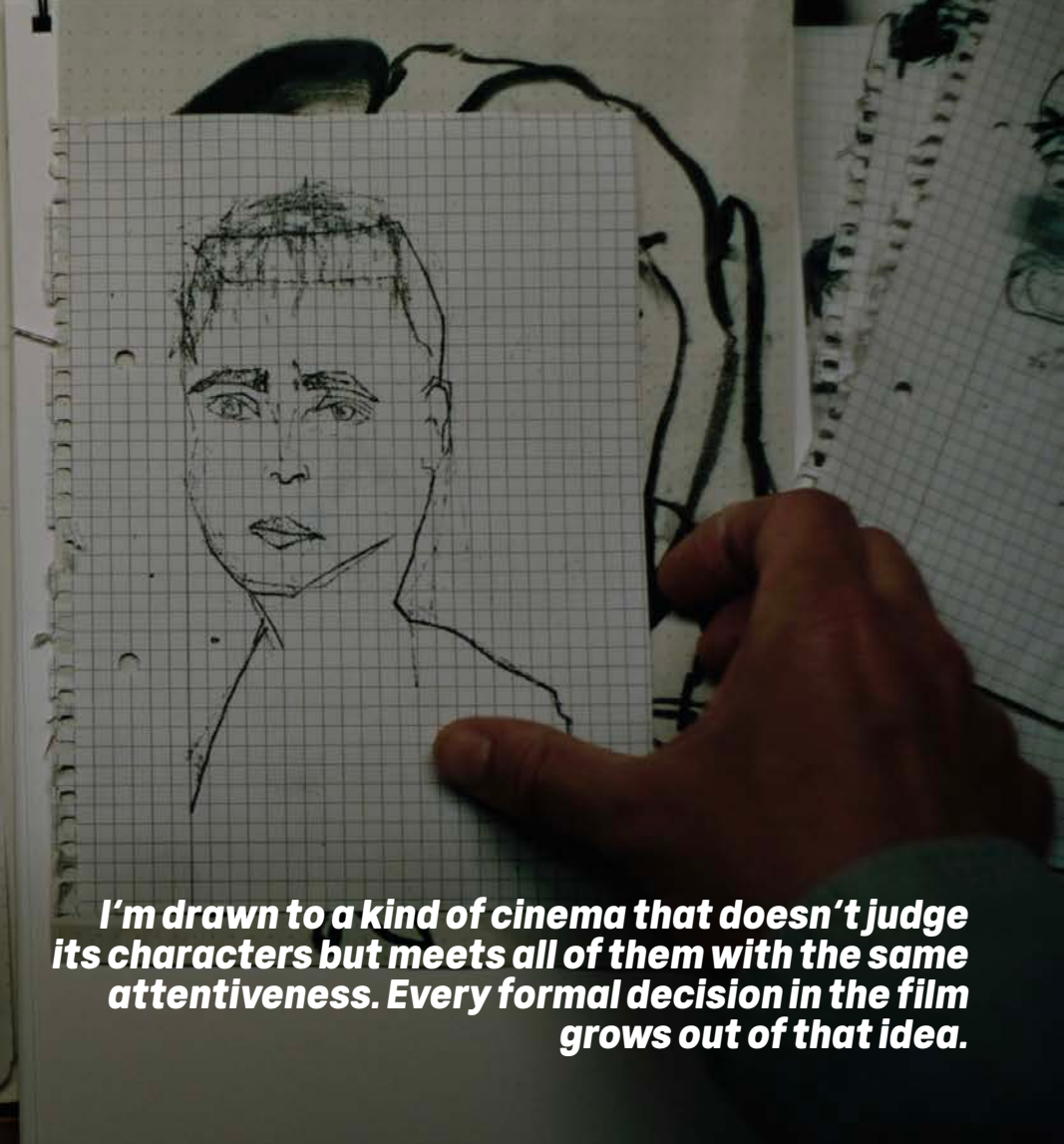
I wrote the screenplay together with my cinematographer, Alexander Dirninger, and we started shaping the visual language already during the writing process. Our aim was to strip things down as much as possible: as few shots as necessary, a single lens, a gaze that doesn't differentiate.

I'm drawn to a kind of cinema that doesn't judge its characters but meets all of them with the same attentiveness. Every formal decision in the film grows out of that idea.

The one break from this visual approach comes from the MiniDV footage the young people shot themselves during the rituals, entirely without direction. Those images clearly stand apart from our own gaze and that's exactly what makes them so valuable. In some of the film's most demanding and intimate scenes, the camera belongs to them. That's a documentary impulse: seeing what emerges when you let go, when another gaze enters the frame.

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DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY



Jannis Lenz is a filmmaker whose work is rooted in physical experience, shaped by his background in parkour and freerunning. Early films such as *ZERO-G* explore bodies in urban environments, testing physical limits, confronting architecture, and redefining space.

Questions of control and vulnerability run throughout his work, evolving into a broader exploration of masculinity as fragile, fluid, and often contradictory.

Working across fiction and documentary, Lenz moves between observation and staging. Lenz is a Vienna Film Academy graduate, where he was mentored by Jessica

Hausner and worked as an assistant to Michael Haneke. Additionally, he is a Berlinale Talents alumnus and a member of the European Film Academy.

His short film *WANNABE* (2017) received the Prix Clermont-Ferrand and was nominated for the European Film Award. His graduation film *SOLDAT AHMET* (2021) premiered at Visions du Réel and won several international awards.

With his debut feature, *OASIS*, Lenz expands these formal and thematic concerns into a longer narrative, continuing his exploration of the body, space, and identity.

DIRECTOR FILMOGRAPHY

2015
SHADOWBOXER
Short Film

2017
WANNABE
Short Film

2021
SOLDAT AHMET
Documentary

2026
OASIS
Debut Feature

PRODUCERS BIOGRAPHIES



MARKUS KAATSCH

Zeitgeist

Markus Kaatsch studied film production at the DFFB until 2017, while also running the film festival agency aug&ohr medien. His student short and feature films received numerous awards, including Best Short Film at the Semaine de la Critique in Cannes and the German Short Film Award, were nominated for the Student Academy Awards, and screened at A-list festivals such as the Berlinale and Locarno. His first non-student feature film, PRÉLUDE, was released theatrically across Germany in 2019 by X Verleih and Warner Bros.

Markus Kaatsch is a member of the German Film Academy and the German Television Academy. His latest productions include TOMORROW I'LL BE BRAVE by Bernd Sahling (2025), EVERYBODY WANTS TO BE LOVED by Katharina Woll (2023).



ALEXANDRA RILLI

Third Picture

Alexandra Rilli is a film producer and co-founder of Third Picture, based in Stuttgart, Germany. Her work focuses on auteur-driven documentaries and feature films with an international perspective. After studying film and working as a production assistant, she co-founded Third Picture, where she has since produced several short and feature films.

In 2024, she was part of the CinEuro delegation to Locarno. Her latest productions include KAN KARDEŞİ - THOSE IN BETWEEN by Esra Laske (2026), DECEMBER EVENING by Matthias Kreter (2025).



CHRISTIAN BACHMANN

Wega Film

Christian Bachmann studied Theatre, Film and Media Studies at the University of Vienna, where he worked as a research assistant and taught seminars in Film and Media Theory.

Active in the film industry since 2008, he joined WEGA FILM Austria in 2020 as a producer, becoming a shareholder of the company in 2025. His work focuses on the development and production of feature films, documentaries and television projects. Latest productions include I IS ANOTHER by Felix Randau (2026), FEBRUARY, SEVEN DAYS by Tatjana Moutchnik (2026).

MAIN CAST

Lukas Vogler
Florian Geißelmann

Andrew Meyer
Anton Petzold

Maya Kyriakou
Mathilda Smidt

Martin Vogler
Godehard Giese

Miss Kast
Britta Hammelstein

Amira Radic
Ioana Iacob

CREW

Screenplay	Jannis Lenz & Alexander Dirninger
Direction of Photography	Alexander Dirninger
Editor	Jannis Lenz & Melisa Krasniqi
Original music	Benedikt Palier
Set designer	Christian Strang
Sound design	Benedikt Palier & Nora Czamlar
Costume Designer	Nina-Sophie Brettschneider
Make up & Hair Design	Janika Kreutzer

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BKM, MFG Baden-Württemberg, DFFF, Filmstiftung NRW, Kuratorium Junger
Deutscher Film, FFA, ÖFI+ - Österreichisches Filminstitut

In cooperation with

WeFadeToGrey & Ocean Pictures Filmproduktion

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Duration: 118 min | Countries of production: Germany, Austria | Color | Aspect Ratio: 1:1,85 | Shooting Format: ArriAlexa 3,2K | Sound System: 5.1 | Fps: 25

TOTEM

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MANATEE

by Anna Roller



THE EMPATHS

by Ernst de Geer



COMPLETED

SHORT SUMMER

by Nastia Korkia



THE HYPNOSIS

by Ernst de Geer



DEAD GIRLS DANCING

by Anna Roller



MARCEL!

by Jasmine Trinca





AUTEURS

DONKEY DAYS

Rosanne Pel



KIKA

Alexe Poukine



MEASURES FOR A FUNERAL

Sofia Bodhanowicz



MY FAVOURITE CAKE

M. Moghaddam & B. Sanaecha



COMPARTMENT N°6

Juho Kuosmanen



SATURN BOWLING

Patricia Mazuy



BLACKBIRD BLACKBIRD BLACKBERRY

Elene Naveriani



NEW VOICES

ALLEGRO PASTELL

Anna Roller



THE VISITOR

Vytautas Katkus



17

Kosara Mitić



COTTON QUEEN

Suzannah Mirghani



ANIMALIA

Sofia Alaoui



THE VILLAGE NEXT TO PARADISE

Mo Harawe



GAGARINE

Fanny Liatard & Jérémy Trouilh



VIEWFINDER

FOLLIES

Éric K. Boulianne



SUDAN REMEMBER US

Hind Meddeb



KALAK

Isabella Eklöf



WE

Alice Diop



CENIZA NEGRA

Sofia Quiros Ubeda



MY SUNNY MAAD

Michaela Pavlátová



LUXOR

Zeina Durra



QUEER CINEMA

FANTASY

Kukla



CROSSING

Levan Akin



AND THEN WE DANCED

Levan Akin



MONEYBOYS

C.B. Yi



BAAN

Leonor Teles



A SONG SUNG BLUE

Zihan Geng



SLOW

Marija Kavtaradze



