

PRESS KIT FATHERLAND



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SYNOPSIS

FATHERLAND centres on the relationship between the Nobel Prize-winning writer Thomas Mann (Hanns Zischler) and his daughter Erika (Sandra Hüller) - actress, writer and rally driver. In the summer of 1949, at the height of the Cold War, father and daughter embark on a challenging and emotional road trip in a black Buick taking them across a Germany in ruins - from US dominated Frankfurt to Soviet controlled Weimar. Returning home after sixteen years of exile in the US, Thomas Mann has to face not only a divided fatherland, but also a deep fracture within his own family.

With *FATHERLAND*, Pawlikowski picks up where he left off with his award-winning *Ida* and *Cold War*, exploring – in his elliptic, distilled style - the themes of identity, family, love and guilt amid the turmoil and confusion of post-war Europe.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Like my previous films, *FATHERLAND* deals with the turmoils of history, with exile and with our transcendental need for home and belonging. It also brings together a dramatic historical moment with a very particular human story. But while the characters in *IDA* and *COLD WAR* were invented, at the centre of *FATHERLAND* we have the historical figures of Thomas Mann and his wayward twins, Erika and Klaus, locked in a triangular family drama. Trying to fuse the personal and the historical in a poignant, mutually enhancing way, we took some liberties with historical facts and their chronology, while trying to stay faithful to the emotional and intellectual truth of the matter...

Mann's return to Germany in 1949 and his attempt to transcend the division and the growing ideological polarisation of his country has obvious contemporary resonances; the old paradigm is dead, the old rules no longer apply, and in their place emerge two crude, mutually exclusive narratives. Narratives which flatten everything, suck oxygen out of the air, corner you into taking sides, and slowly make it impossible to see straight and speak freely. For Mann, the only defence against this ideological reduction was Art – the “poetic gaze” which he mentions in one of his speeches, the open eye for the complexities and paradoxes of life.

FATHERLAND brings together many things, but tries to speak simply, in a distilled way, unfolding in graphic images and concentrated scenes, leaving the audience space to feel and imagine.

THOMAS MANN

BIOGRAPHICAL TIMELINE & SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

1875

Thomas Mann is born in Lübeck, a city in Northern Germany

1901

Publication of *Buddenbrooks*

1905

Marries Katia Pringsheim, with whom he has six children, including Erika (b. 1905) and Klaus (b. 1906)

1909

Publication of *Royal Highness*

1912

Publication of *Death in Venice*

1924

Publication of *The Magic Mountain*

1929

Is awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature

1933

Moves to Switzerland upon Hitler's rise to power

1936

The Nazi party revokes Thomas Mann's German citizenship due to his public disavowal of the regime

1939

Emigrates to the United States

1939

Publication of *Lotte in Weimar*

1944

Becomes a naturalized citizen of the United States

1947

Publication of *Doctor Faustus*

1949

Returns to Germany to receive the Goethe Prize

1951

Publication of *The Holy Sinner*

1952

Re-emigrates to Switzerland, where he will live until his death

1954

Publication of *The Black Swan*

1955

Thomas Mann dies in Zürich, Switzerland at the age of 80

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

PAWEŁ PAWLIKOWSKI
DIRECTOR, CO-WRITER, CO-EDITOR

Paweł Pawlikowski is a Polish filmmaker who began his career directing award-winning documentaries before moving into narrative features with *LAST RESORT* (2000) and *MY SUMMER OF LOVE* (2004), both BAFTA-winning films.

His film *IDA* (2013) won the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film, the first Polish film to do so. It also won five European Film Awards, including Best Film, Best Director and Best Screenwriter. *COLD WAR* (2018) premiered in Competition at the Cannes Film Festival, where Pawlikowski was awarded the Best Director Prize, and later received three Academy Award nominations, including Best Director. It also won five awards at the 2018 European Film Awards, including Best Film, Best Director and Best Screenwriter.

SELECTED DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

2018
COLD WAR

2013
IDA

2011
LA FEMME DU VÈME

2004
MY SUMMER OF LOVE

2000
LAST RESORT

1998
TWOCKERS

1994
TRIPPING WITH ZHIRINOVSKY

1992
SERBIAN EPICS

1991
DOSTOEVSKY'S TRAVELS

1990
MOSCOW PIETUSHKI

ABOUT THE CAST

HANNS ZISCHLER THOMAS MANN

Hanns Zischler has appeared in over 200 international and national feature films and television productions, including films by Jean-Luc Godard, Wim Wenders, and Steven Spielberg. In addition to his work as an actor, he is active as an author, narrator, photographer, and editor. His debut novel, *DER ZERRISSENE BRIEF*, was published by Galiani Verlag in February 2020. He plays a leading role in Timm Kröger's film *DIE THEORIE VON ALLEM*, which premiered at the Venice Film Festival and won three Lolas at the German Film Awards.

SANDRA HÜLLER ERIKA MANN

Sandra Hüller has been known to a wide audience, at least since her leading role in Maren Ade's acclaimed Cannes favorite *TONI ERDMANN*. Whether on stage or on the big screen, in films such as Justine Triet's *ANATOMY OF A FALL* and Jonathon Glazer's *ZONE OF INTEREST*: With her phenomenal acting range, Sandra Hüller imbues each of the characters she portrays with an energy that is unparalleled.

Sandra Hüller began her acting career at the Theaterhaus Jena and subsequently at the Schauspiel Leipzig after graduating from the renowned Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts in Berlin. She has appeared on numerous other prestigious stages throughout the German-speaking world. Among the awards she has received for her theater work are the Gertrud Eysoldt Ring for the title role in Johan Simons' production of *HAMLET* at the Schauspielhaus Bochum, and in 2020, the Berlin Theater Prize for outstanding contributions to German-language theater. Furthermore, she has been voted "Actress of the Year" four times since 2013 in the critics' poll conducted by the magazine Theater heute. Since 2016, Hüller has also been a member of the independent theater collective *FARN*. In 2020, she released her highly acclaimed debut album "Be your own Prince." In 2024, she opened the Ruhrtrienale with the music theater production "I want absolute Beauty," a staged interpretation of P.J. Harvey songs.

Her very first major film role in Hans-Christian Schmid's *REQUIEM* (2006) earned her the Bavarian Film Award, the German Film Critics' Award, the German Film Award, and the Silver Bear at the 2006 Berlin International Film Festival. She also received multiple awards for her roles in Nanouk Leopold's *BROWNIAN MOVEMENT* (2010) and in Jan Schomburg's *ÜBER UNS DAS ALL* (Above us only Sky, 2011). She received further German Film Awards in 2014 for her role in Frauke Finsterwalder's *FINSTERWORLD*. In Maren Ade's cult film *TONI ERDMANN*, Sandra Hüller captivated audiences and critics alike and received the European Film Award, the Toronto Film Critics Association Award, the Malaysia Golden Global Award, the German Film Award, and the Bavarian Film Award for her portrayal of Ines Conradi. *TONI ERDMANN* won numerous national and international awards and was Germany's Oscar nominee for Best Foreign Language Film in 2017. In France, Justine Triet took notice of her and cast her as a director on the verge of a nervous breakdown in *SIBYL – THERAPY WITHOUT A CURE* (Sibyl). She achieved great success under the direction of Maria Schrader in *I'M YOUR MAN* and again with Frauke Finsterwalder in *SISI AND I*. In 2023, she thrilled the press and audiences in Cannes with Jonathan Glazer's *THE ZONE OF INTEREST* as Hedwig Höß, the wife of the Auschwitz camp commander and the wife suspected of her husband's murder in *ANATOMY OF A FALL* (Anatomie d'une Chute). *ANATOMY OF A FALL* won the Palme d'Or and *THE ZONE OF INTEREST* the Grand Prix, marking the start of a series of nominations and awards, most recently an Oscar® nomination for Best Actress for her role in *ANATOMY OF A FALL*. In 2024, she appeared in the heist comedy *TWO FOR ONE*.

ABOUT THE CAST

In 2024, she filmed *PROJECT HAIL MARY*, directed by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, which was released in theaters in the spring of 2026. Most recently, she starred in Alejandro G. Iñárritu's comedy *DIGGER* and Regina Schilling's *INGEBORG BACHMANN – JEMAND, DER EINMAL ICH WAR*. *ROSE* is a story of personal fulfillment; in the title role, Sandra Hüller plays a woman who gains a measure of freedom through a life lived as a man. *ROSE* is a story of personal fulfillment; in the title role, Sandra Hüller plays a woman who gains a measure of freedom through a life lived as a man. For this role, she was awarded the Silver Bear at the 2026 Berlin International Film Festival.

AUGUST DIEHL KLAUS MANN

For more than two decades, August Diehl has been an established figure on the German film and theater scene and internationally for many years as well. His role in Hans-Christian Schmid's film *23* made him instantly famous. In a series of films such as *KALT IST DER ABENDHAUCH*, *TATTOO, WAS NÜTZT DIE LIEBE IN GEDANKEN*, *LICHTER*, *THE NINTH DAY*, the Oscar-winning *THE COUNTERFEITERS*, *HEAD UNDER WATER*, *DR. ALEMAN* and *BUD-DENBROOKS*, he was able to prove his versatility. In 2009 he was seen in Quentin Tarantino's *INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS*, and in 2010 in *SALT* (directed by Philip Noyce). In theaters in Berlin, Hamburg, Zurich or Vienna he shone in *DIE MÖWE*, *DON CARLOS*, *DER JUDE VON MALTA* or *MAJOR BARBARA*. His directors included Bondy, Grüber and Peter Zadek, with whom he worked on three productions. Diehl's television work includes *KABALE UND LIEBE*, staged by Leander Haussmann.

For Lars Kraume's *DIE KOMMENDEN TAGE* he was starring together with Daniel Brühl, Johanna Wokalek and Susanne Lothar. The film opened in German theaters in 2010. In 2011, he starred as Bernward Vesper for the feature production *WER WENN NICHT WIR* by Andreas Viel. For this role he was nominated for the German Film Award. It tells the prehistory of the group that later became known as the RAF. The film was part of the official competition program of the Berlin International Film Festival „Berlinale“ 2011. In 2011 Diehl shot *CONFESION OF A CHILD OF THE CENTURY* together with Charlotte Gainsbourg and Pete Doherty, which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival 2012 in the series „Un certain regard“. In winter/spring 2012, he starred in *LAYLA FOURIE* directed by Pia Marias in South Africa, which had its world premiere at the 2013 Berlinale. He also appeared in 2012 for Bille August's international co-production *NIGHT TRAIN TO LISBON*, which also had its world premiere at the 2013 Berlinale. His feature films continue to include *DARK DIAMOND* by Arthur Harari, *THE YOUNG KARL MARX* (Raoul Beck, 2015), *ALLIED* (Robert Zemeckis, 2016), *PLAN A* (Yadav and Dorn Paz, 2019), *DER RÄUBER HOTZENPLOTZ* (Michael Krummenacher, 2021), *THE ICE TOWER / LA TOUR DE GLACE* (2024, Lucile Hadzihalilovich), *THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MENGELE* (2023, Kirill Serebrennikov) and *SIDONIE IN JAPAN* (2022, Élise Girard), *LES RAYONS ET LES OMBRES* (2025, Xavier Giannoli) among others.

He is nominated for the German Film Award this year for his role of Josef Mengele as Best Actor in Kirill Serebrennikov's movie *THE DISAPPEARANCE OF JOSEF MENGELE* which had its premiere last year at Cannes Film festival in the section Cannes Premiere. With the leading role of Franz Jägerstätter in Terrence Malick's *A HIDDEN LIFE* (2016), August Diehl was back at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival, this time in competition.

ABOUT THE CAST

In special TV and streaming productions like *PARFUM* (Philipp Kadelbach, 2017, Netflix/ZDF), *DIE NEUE ZEIT* (Lars Krause, ZDF, 2018), *DER PARFUMEUR* (2021, Netflix) and at the moment *THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL* (Alex Gabassi, Netflix, 2025-2026) he played essential and leading roles.

With *DER PRINZ VON HOMBURG*, directed by Andrea Breth in Vienna and Salzburg, he returned to the big theater stage in 2012. The stimulating theater work with Andrea Breth found a brilliant continuation with *HAMLET* at Vienna's Burgtheater (for which he received the 2014 Vienna Theater Prize Nestroy) in an acclaimed six-hour production. Also at the Burg, he was seen in *DAS GEISTERHAUS*, and at the Vienna Akademietheater he was part of the ensemble of John Hopkin's *DIE GESCHICHTE VON IHNEN*. He collaborated again with Andrea Breth for *EINES LANGEN TAGES REISE IN DIE NACHT* (Burgtheater Wien, 2018), *DREI MAL LEBEN* (Berliner Ensemble, since 2019), and in *MEDEA* (Burgtheater Wien, 2023). With Kirill Serebrennikov August Diehl also worked on stage in *DER SCHNEESTURM* (Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus, 2025-2026).

ABOUT THE CREW

HENK HANDLOEGTEN CO-WRITER

Graduated at the German Film-and Television Academy in Berlin in 2000. He received numerous awards for his debut film *PAUL IS DEAD*. This was followed by directing successful feature films such as *LEARNING TO LIE* and *SUMMER WINDOW*, as well as co-writing the screenplay for *GOODBYE LENIN!* and *LOVE IN THOUGHTS*.

Alongside Achim von Borries and Tom Tykwer, Henk is the showrunner, director, and writer of all five seasons of *BABYLON BERLIN*. In autumn, the final season of this international hit will be broadcast around the world.

ŁUKASZ ŻAL CINEMATOGRAPHER

Two-time Oscar-nominated cinematographer (*IDA*, with Ryszard Lenczewski, and *COLD WAR*), recipient of the ASC Award and the Silver Frog Award at Camerimage. He collaborated with Paweł Pawlikowski on *IDA* and *COLD WAR*, and with Jonathan Glazer on *THE ZONE OF INTEREST* (Cannes Grand Prix 2023, Academy Award for Best International Feature 2024). His other narrative credits include *THE HERE AFTER*, *THE BORDER*, *DOVLATOV*, and *I'M THINKING OF ENDING THINGS*, the documentary *ICON*, and the animated *LOVING VINCENT*. His most recent film, *HAMNET*, directed by Chloé Zhao, won the People's Choice Award at TIFF 2025, the Golden Globe for Best Motion Picture – Drama, and the BAFTA for Outstanding British Film, received a Golden Frog nomination at Camerimage 2025, and earned eight nominations at the 98th Academy Awards. He is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the European Film Academy, and the Polish Society of Cinematographers. A graduate of the Łódź Film School.

KATARZYNA SOBAŃSKA & MARCEL SŁAWIŃSKI PRODUCTION DESIGNERS

Marcel Sławiński and Katarzyna Sobańska form one of the most important artistic duos in the field of scenography in Polish film and theater. They have been working together since 2008. Their film productions include some of the most significant recent works in Polish cinema. In 2015, their scenography for *IDA*, directed by Paweł Pawlikowski, earned the film an Oscar (Academy Award) for Best International Feature Film.

Their filmography includes, among others: *CHOPIN, A SONATA IN PARIS* directed by Michał Kwieciński (2025), *THE HATER* directed by Jan Komasa (2020), *COLD WAR* directed by Paweł Pawlikowski, and *IN DARKNESS* directed by Agnieszka Holland (2011), which was nominated for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 84th Academy Awards.

Since 2019, they have been members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the Academy's Production Designers Guild (Poland).

They are also co-heads of the Set Design Department at the Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice.

PIOTR WÓJCIK CO-EDITOR

Born in 1993 in Ruda Śląska, Poland, the film editor holds a degree from the Polish National Film, Television and Theatre School in Łódź. He is a member of the Polish Film Academy, the European Film Academy, and the Polish Association of Editors. In collaboration with Bartłomiej Piasek, he forms the editing duo: Piasek & Wójcik.

ABOUT THE CREW

He has received numerous accolades for his exceptional work, including the Polish Feature Film Festival in Gdynia, the *DOKER* International Documentary Film Festival in Moscow, the Juliusz Machulski Award, the Koszalin Film Debut Festival *Młodzi i Film*. Notably, he has been three times nominated for the Eagles - the Polish Film Academy award for best editing. Additionally, he holds scholarships from The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (2018, 2022) and "Młoda Polska" scholarship (2024). He was awarded the Marshal of the Silesian Voivodeship Award for young creators for their contributions to the film industry.

LARS GINZEL SOUND

Lars Ginzel is a BAFTA-winning and Academy Award nominated re-recording mixer and supervising sound editor based in Germany. Most notably he mixed Edward Berger's *ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT*, which also earned him a CAS-award nomination and won him the prestigious AMPS-award.

Over the years he has worked on a wide variety of projects from all kinds of genres and around the world. Among his body of work are films like *CLOUD ATLAS* (Dir. Wachowskis and Tom Tykwer), *THE CAVE* (Dir. Feras Fayyad), Academy Award winner *A FANTASTIC WOMAN* (Dir. Sebastián Lelio) Palme d'Or winner *WINTERSLEEP* (Dir. Nuri Bilge Ceylan), *MARIA* (Dir. Pablo Larain), *APRIL* (Dir. Dea Kulumbegashvili), last year's *THE VOICE OF HIND RAJAB* (Dir. Kaouther Ben Hania) and Cannes Premiere *THE WAVE* (Dir. Sebastián Lelio) and this year's Cannes Premiere *HEIMSUCHUNG* (Dir. Volker Schlöndorff).

TARN WILLERS SOUND

Award-winning Production Sound Mixer Tarn Willers graduated from the UK's National Film and Television School prior to building a career in film.

In his early career as a Production Sound Mixer, he worked on *COMES A BRIGHT DAY* with director Simon Aboud, Rowan Athale's *WASTELAND* and TV series *NEW BLOOD* for Eleventh Hour and BBC.

Tarn's other notable credits include Rupert Jones' *KALEIDOSCOPE*, Simon Bird's *DAYS OF THE BAGNOLD SUMMER* and *STARVE ACRE*, directed by Daniel Kokotajlo as well as 2nd Unit PSM credits on David Ayer's *FURY* and *THE TAKE*, directed by James Watkins.

Tarn headed up the sound team on Jonathan Glazer's *THE ZONE OF INTEREST* for which he won an Academy Award, European Film Award and BAFTA for Best Sound. He followed this by working on another Academy Award winning movie, Jesse Eisenberg's *A REAL PAIN*.

Recently, Tarn worked on Charli XCX's *THE MOMENT* directed by Aidan Zamiri; Rowan Athale's *GIANT*; Tomasz Jurkiewicz's *SKARBK*; *KÖLN 75* with director Ido Fluk; and German mini-series *DISKO 76*.

ABOUT THE CREW

ALEKSANDRA “OLA” STASZKO
COSTUME DESIGNER

Aleksandra “Ola” Staszko is a Warsaw-born costume designer with credits on over 30 feature films, TV dramas, and series. Her work includes *COLD WAR* and the Oscar-winning *IDA* by Paweł Pawlikowski.

She studied Social Sciences at the University of Warsaw and Art at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. A recipient of the Best Costume Award at the Gdynia Film Festival, a Berlinale Talent Campus participant, she is a member of the European Film Academy, Polish Film Academy and Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Costume design and film-making along with traveling remain her greatest passions.

WALDEMAR POKROMSKI
HAIR AND MAKE-UP DESIGNER

Renowned makeup artist Waldemar Pokromski may be the Pole who has worked on the biggest number of Oscar-nominated productions in history. He may only be second to Janusz Kamiński, Steven Spielberg’s regular cinematographer. The two have actually worked together on the set of *THE SCHINDLER’S LIST*, which won a host of Academy Awards in 1994. Pokromski was also the makeup artist for Roman Polański’s *THE NINTH GATE* and *PIANIST*, Michael Haneke’s *LA PIANISTE* and *THE WHITE RIBBON*, Tom Tykwer’s *PERFUME: THE STORY OF MURDER*, and Stefan Ruzowitzky’s *THE COUNTERFEITERS*, which beat Andrzej Wajda’s *KATYŃ* to the Best Foreign Language Film Award in 2008, whose credits – incidentally – also include Pokromski’s name.

Most recently, he has collaborated with: Oliver Stone (*SNOWDEN*), Anthony and Joe Russo (*CAPTAIN AMERICA*), Terrence Malick (*RADEGUND*), Duncan John (*MUTE*), Marie Noelle (*MARIE CURIE*), and Małgorzata Szumowska (*MUG*). He has received a German Film Award (Lola Award) for the makeup for *Die weisse Band*, the Best Makeup Award for *Reverse* at the 34th Polish Film Festival in Gdynia, and Kryolan’s Golden Mask. At the 22nd Polish Film Festival in Chicago he was awarded Wings ‘for achievements in the art of film beyond Poland’. Pokromski was also nominated for a range of prestigious film awards including, the BAFTA (*SCHINDLER’S LIST*) and Prix d’Excellence (*BAADER-MEINHOF*). After almost forty years in the industry, he shows no signs of slowing down. In 2022 he won the Orzeł (Eagle) Polish Film Award for the make-up for *MAGNEZJA*.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

ORIGINAL TITLE
FATHERLAND

DURATION
82 MINUTES

YEAR OF
PRODUCTION
2026

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE
**GERMAN
ENGLISH
FRENCH
RUSSIAN**

COUNTRIES OF
PRODUCTION
**POLAND
GERMANY
ITALY
FRANCE**