

PRESSKIT



WARNER BROS. PICTURES presents a
WIEDEMANN & BERG FILM production
in co-production with SENTANA FILMPRODUKTION and SEVENPICTURES
a film by SIMON VERHOEVEN

WELCOME TO GERMANY

SENTA BERGER
HEINER LAUTERBACH
FLORIAN DAVID FITZ
PALINA ROJINSKI
ELYAS M'BAREK
UWE OCHSENKNECHT
ULRIKE KRIENER
and ERIC KABONGO

Written and directed by SIMON VERHOEVEN
Producers QUIRIN BERG, MAX WIEDEMANN, SIMON VERHOEVEN, MICHAEL VERHOEVEN
Co-Producer STEFAN GÄRTNER
Associate Producer SIMONE RUFF
Line Producers DAVID VOGT, SOFIE SCHERZ
Production Manager DANIEL MATTIG (BVP)
Director of Photography JO HEIM (BVK)
Film Editors STEFAN ESSL, DENIS BACHTER
Score by GARY GO
Sound Recording Mixer BENJAMIN ROSENKIND
Sound Design NICO KREBS
Sound FRANK HEIDBRINK
Production Designer EVA MARIA STIEBLER
Costume Designer SILKE FABER
Make Up Artists BARBARA SPENNER, GERMAINE MOUTH
Casting DANIELA TOLKIEN

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INDEX

SYNOPSIS (SHORT & LONG).....04

DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT.....08

CAST.....10

DIRECTOR’S BIOGRAPHY.....14

PRODUCER’S BIO.....16



SHORT SYNOPSIS

The recently retired teacher Angelika decides, against her skeptical husband Richard's will, to take in a refugee. Soon afterward, the young Nigerian Diallo moves into the Hartmann home, and a whirlwind of complications ensue. These events not only disrupt the lives of Angelika and Richard's adult children Philip and Sophie; they also put their own marriage as well as Diallo's chances of integration to the test. Despite all the chaos, hope prevails that the family will recover its stability, confidence, and peace – like the rest of Germany.



LONG SYNOPSIS

Fall 2016: Germany continues to cope with the refugee crisis. The country is deeply polarized. The plot focuses on an affluent Munich married couple in their 60s: the renowned orthopedic specialist, Dr. Richard Hartmann and his wife Angelika, a recently retired German teacher, who live together in a peaceful and idyllic Munich suburb with their cat "Monsieur."

They have two adult children. Sophie Hartmann, a chaotic student who doesn't ever seem to graduate and who suffers from "helper syndrome," is currently being stalked by the right-wing extremist and taxi driver Kurt Blümlein, who even follows her into her university lecture hall. And Philip Hartmann, an internationally successful corporate lawyer and hopeless workaholic, who has to contend with his own divorce proceedings as well as the pubescent antics of his 12-year-old son Basti.

A brief visit to Richard Hartmann's daily hospital routine reveals that he is currently heading into a new stage of life: retirement is looming. Unfortunately, however, he doesn't feel ready to give up his position. In particular, his younger, sharp, and shamelessly good-looking colleague, Dr. Tarek Berger, is a thorn in his side. Richard not only faces unresolved conflicts in his professional life; his marriage is also at a crossroads. Increasingly panicked about getting older, he takes inspiration from the youthful lifestyle of his single friend, also in his 60s, the plastic surgeon Dr. Sascha Heinrichs, and seriously contemplates a hair transplant. At the same time his recently retired wife Angelika is looking for a new pedagogical purpose and challenge. It's not enough to regularly save mice from the clutches of her cat—no. After her retirement, Angelika wants to do her part to help with the refugee crisis.

At first she opts for another generous donation to the refugee shelter in Fürstenried. Unfortunately, among the clothes she discards is Richard's beloved leather jacket, a relic of his youth. The fact that Angelika has donated this irretrievable symbol of earlier, carefree times disappoints Richard bitterly. Angelika, who has been drinking a bit too much wine lately, doesn't seem to understand and points out Richard's weight gain and larger girth, rather untactfully. This leads to a further conflict between them—one of many these days.

Back at the refugee shelter, Angelika rediscovers her sense of self in an informative dialogue with the shelter director Bernd Bader. While there, she also runs into her energetic former colleague Heike Broscher, an ultra-environmental activist, who defines herself above all through her social engagement. Although these meetings do not result in Angelika's desired position as a German teacher, they provide the initial impetus for a life-changing decision: at a family dinner Angelika confronts her family with her plan to take in a refugee.

At first, Richard and Philip protest. They are more concerned for their own personal security and also criticize what they see as "a naïve German immigrant-welcoming culture." The discussion ends up with Angelika leaving the table in conflict. Philip's son Basti, the 12-year-old "pint-sized gangsta rapper," thinks the idea of taking in a refugee is pretty "damn cool" and supports his Grandma. The next day, Angelika confronts Richard with an appointment at the refugee shelter in the afternoon. Finally, Angelika succeeds in winning him over.

After "casting"-style interviews of a few refugee housing applicants, the Hartmanns finally decide on the shy, young Nigerian Diallo Makabouri, who already possesses some knowledge of German. Bernd Bader, who is trying to protect Diallo's asylum proceedings from any unforeseen turbulence, heartily welcomes the choice. Since Diallo has already been mixed up in several intense disputes with Rayhan, an aggressive shelter resident with Islamist leanings. Bernd is especially happy that Diallo can await his asylum decision at the Hartmanns' place in the safe, peaceful surroundings of an "affluent, idyllic community." Little do Bernd and the others know that the Bureau of Criminal Investigations has become interested in Diallo. Due to a number of misunderstandings and incidents, both he and Rayhan have come under surveillance.

At first, Diallo finds the social customs and traditions of his new home Bavaria contradictory and utterly confusing. Fully in her pedagogical element, Angelika can carry out the integration work she longs to do. She eagerly imparts to Diallo various achievements and elements of German culture. However, Mrs. Sobrowitsch, a prejudiced neighbor and the leader of a fanatical Bible group refuses to endorse Angelika's "social project." She believes Angelika's alliance with Diallo

signals the beginning of the end. Heike Broscher, in contrast, sees an opportunity to contribute and “pops up” at the Hartmanns’ door with a “Welcome Diallo” sign, ready to party.

Accompanied by her entire “African Dance Crew” (including the Zebra), who are more or less voluntarily heeding her call, Heike storms the Hartmanns’ house in order to duly celebrate Diallo’s arrival. Richard returns home after an exhausting and irritating boys’ night out with Sascha. Now, thanks to Heike, he finds out that his house is playing host to a very loud, multicultural “Sodom and Gomorrah party,” complete with various hallucinogenic substances. He feels instantly confirmed in his prejudices and accuses poor Diallo of instigating the party, but these suspicions are quickly dispelled. When the police suddenly show up at the door to check on a noise disturbance complaint made by Mrs. Sobrowitsch, Richard tries to shield Diallo. He cannot, however, prevent Diallo’s name from landing in the police report. And of course the consequences of this wild “welcome party” lead to new conflicts between Angelika and her husband.

In the following weeks all of the conflicts in the Hartmann house come to a head. Angelika realizes that her marital difficulties with Richard cannot be solved, i.e., that their differences are based on varying interpretations of being “a good person.” Richard moves out in a trial separation, sets up a Facebook profile, and seeks refuge in nightlife with his best friend Sascha, who wants to couple him with his former, surgically enhanced female patients.

In the meantime, Basti plays up his anti-school attitude with his plan to make a hip-hop music video, bolstered by strippers, on school property. He enlists the clueless Diallo to chaperone the project in loco parentis, and this lands Diallo with yet another police citation. Due to a mild nervous breakdown, Philip ends up in a psychiatric clinic while Kurt Blümlein’s obsession with Sophie becomes ever more threatening.

In the face of all these chaotic developments, Diallo unexpectedly becomes both the family’s therapeutic anchor and its relationship advisor and gradually wins the affection of his adopted family. Sophie especially confides in him, explaining her disastrous history with men and her hope for a romantic encounter “à la Rosamunde Pilcher.” She experiences just this with, of all people, Tarek Berger, whom her father has declared his archrival, his personal public enemy number 1. But Sophie must first escape the advances of her mentally ill, right-wing extremist stalker Kurt Blümlein, who even follows her into her parents’ house, where Diallo confronts him and the two come to blows. Because of this explosive incident, the Bureau of Criminal Investigations sets its sights even more intensely on Diallo, whose residency permit is now on the line.

Diallo helps Basti advance to the next grade level with his contribution to an oral presentation on “Refugees.” It is the first time he reveals the emotional and deeply disturbing story of his own suffering.

Kurt and his neo-Nazi buddies, “concerned” citizens,—with Mrs. Sobrowitsch out in front—protest outside the Hartmanns’ and the Bureau of Criminal Investigations gathers its units around the house of the alleged Islamist.

Grueling on their nerves, this encounter brings Richard, Angelika, and the whole family together but also presents life-threatening danger. Richard suffers a heart attack in the midst of all the

action. Luckily, Tarek is in the right place at the right time, which finally wins him Richard’s well-deserved respect and acceptance of him as his daughter’s boyfriend. To secure Diallo’s right to stay in Germany once and for all, the entire Hartmann family vouches for him at his all-important asylum hearing. Philip even gives up the biggest deal of his career in order to help Diallo.

At the end, despite all the chaos, hope prevails that the Hartmann family will recover its stability, confidence, and peace—along with the rest of Germany.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

A while ago, a journalist friend said to me, "Pretty brave of you, making a film like this right now." Was that a compliment? I'm not really sure.

The truth is that I wasn't feeling particularly "brave" when I began to develop this film in the spring of 2015. Back then it was a little story of a family rife with quarrels that decides to take in a refugee. The topic was a bit particular. Unusual. But I found it exciting and rich.

I thought it was interesting to contrast an upper middle-class family and all its problems with someone from a completely different cultural realm, someone facing totally different, indeed, much more serious problems. Several comedic and also very emotional possibilities arose from this.

Back then I could never have dreamed that this point of departure, this nuclear family, would come to be understood as a kind of metaphor for Germany or could even be seen as a kind of social satire.

Then came September 2015. Suddenly this was the only topic. Suddenly my film seemed absurdly current. Suddenly every family discussion seemed highly explosive. And I found this microcosm of family life more exciting than ever.

In my writing and also in my directing, I tended to approach things in a playful, relaxed, and politically incorrect manner and tried, up to the very end, to allow references to current events to flow into my work. I didn't take anything too seriously since no film, let alone a comedy, can satisfy every political sensibility and take into account every sensitivity when faced with the complexity of the "refugee question." No film could manage this even for my own sensibilities and sensitivities.

In the end my film is as contradictory as what I experienced in my discussions with refugees, directors of refugee centers, lawyers, and families about "everyday integration." Admittedly, I was always surprised by the humor with which many refugees view their own situation.

Some of these experiences flowed into the character of "Diallo," and I can't thank my actor Eric Kabongo enough for all the heart he put into his role. If anyone was brave, then he was.

Personally, I see it this way: the situation is confusing and complex. My film is certainly no "Refugees Welcome" fairytale; nor is it a cynical, anti-"Yes-we-can" comedy—even if some people perhaps long for this kind of black-and-white portrayal.

Germany and also Europe, are in the midst of a discursive shift that I have never experienced in all my years. People are arguing, seeking, and adjusting their perspectives. But this confusion, this uncertainty, this volatility also makes for really fertile ground for comedy.

And "Willkommen bei den Hartmanns" is, first of all, quite simply a comedy.

It neither can nor wants the slightest bit to offer any serious political solutions. Nonetheless, I personally hope that my film can at least contribute a little bit to loosening things up. And that, in the process, it can even motivate, one way or another, humanistic reflection. And if I have any personal message, then it's merely the hope that the Hartmann family—just like the whole country or maybe even our whole continent—can find its peace and solidarity again, despite all the crises and conflicts.



CAST

SENTA BERGER

Angelika Hartmann

Senta Berger was born in Vienna in 1941, the daughter of a musician and master craftsman and a sales assistant. She took ballet lessons and attended the Max Reinhardt Seminar. In 1958, she became the youngest ensemble member of the Vienna Theater in der Josefstadt, followed by various engagements with German and Austrian theaters. Senta Berger's film career began in Artur Brauner's productions ("The Good Soldier Schweik," 1960; "The Terror of Dr. Mabuse," 1962) and starring with actors such as O.W. Fischer in "Operation Caviar," 1961. Roles in American films, including "The Secret Ways" (1961) and "The Victors" (1963), paved the way for her Hollywood career, where she became an international star. She appeared on the cover of *LIFE Magazine* and was directed by Sam Peckinpah ("Major Dundee," 1964) and Bond director Terence Young ("The Poppy is Also a Flower," 1966). Towards the end of the 1960s, she returned to Europe and made films of various genres in Italy and France.

After a brief stint in the New German Cinema ("Morals of Ruth Halbfass," 1972), she began appearing in successful series and TV productions in 1989. She became a model for middle-aged women who aren't afraid to start over. In 2002, Berger's chief inspector Dr. Eva Prohacek became one of the most distinctive of all German TV detectives in the ZDF series "Under Suspicion."

Senta Berger has worked with all major German and many international stars.

Her awards include Bambis, Romys, the Federal Cross of Merit, the Honorary Golden Bear, the Grimme Award, and a star on the Boulevard of Stars in Berlin. In 2016, she received the Bavarian Film Awards' Honorary Award.

From 2003 to 2010, Senta Berger was the German Film Academy's first president.

She has been married to the doctor, actor, screenwriter and director Michael Verhoeven since 1966. They met during the shoot of the romantic comedy "Jack and Jenny" in 1963. Verhoeven directed Berger in the TV series "Die schnelle Gerdi" and "Lilli Lottofee," and together they founded the production company Sentana Film in 1968. Their sons Luca and Simon are also in the movie business. Directed by Simon Verhoeven, the director of "Men in the City," she is now starring in WELCOME TO GERMANY.

HEINER LAUTERBACH

Dr. Richard Hartmann

Born in Cologne in 1953, Heiner Lauterbach knew early on that he preferred acting to school: he started taking acting lessons when he was 18 years old. He made his stage debut at 19 and soon directed, too. Initially, Heiner Lauterbach became known as a voice actor dubbing Hollywood stars.

In 1983, he was cast in his first feature film, Roland Suso Richter's award-winning directorial debut "Kolp." His breakthrough was Doris Dörrie's hit comedy "Men..." (1985), for which Heiner Lauterbach won a German Film Award. He has since appeared in over 100 features, TV movies and series. His brilliant performance as movie producer Oskar Heiter in Helmut Dietl's social satire "Rossini" (1996) was awarded the Bavarian Film Award for Best Actor (1997) and other prizes.

FLORIAN DAVID FITZ

Philip Hartmann

Florian David Fitz was born in Munich in 1974. From 1994 to 1998, he studied acting at the prestigious Boston Conservatory and graduated magna cum laude. He then toured with the musical "The Rocky Horror Show" and appeared on stage at the Munich Volkstheater.

Since 2000, he has regularly starred in numerous TV films and series. In 2006, Fitz once and for all won over audiences and critics in the role of Götz in Stefan Holtz's TV movie "Kiss me Kismet," for which he won a Grimme Award.

As the loudmouthed macho Dr. Marc Meier in the RTL series "Doctor's Diary," Fitz began building a wide fan base in 2008. He was nominated for the German TV Award for the role. In 2009, he played the successful ad man Niklas in Simon Verhoeven's hit comedy "Men in the City." Fitz was nominated for a Bambi, and the ensemble cast won a Bambi for the sequel, released in 2011. In 2012, Fitz made his debut as feature film director with "Jesus Loves Me," loosely based on a novel by David Safier. He also played the lead role and wrote the screenplay. "Jesus Loves Me" won the Jupiter Award for Best German Feature Film in 2013. For "Vincent Wants to Sea," Fitz won the German Film award for Best Actor in 2011 and "Vincent Wants to Sea" won for Best Film. Fitz also won the Bambi for Best German Actor as well as the Bavarian Film Awards screenwriting award. The film also won the Bavarian Film Awards audience award.

Starring alongside Matthias Schweighöfer, Fitz's second film as director, "The Most Beautiful Day" (2016) was a hit with more than 1.6 million tickets sold. Verhoeven wrote the role of Philip Hartmann in WELCOME TO GERMANY especially for Fitz.

PALINA ROJINSKI

Sophie Hartmann

Palina Rojinski was hired by MTV in 2009, a year after she made her feature debut in "Men in the City." She has been a TV host ever since.

Simon Verhoeven also cast her in 2010 in the successful sequel "Men in the City 2." Several parts in movies and TV productions followed.

In 2015, she shared the screen with Karoline Herfurth and Elyas M'Barek in Anika Decker's relationship comedy "Traumfrauen" (2015). She appears as a voice actor in the Hollywood films "Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs 2" (2013) and "Hotel Transylvania 2" (2015).

ELYAS M'BAREK

Dr. Tarek Berger

Elyas M'Barek was born in Munich in 1982. He discovered his passion for acting in his high school drama club. His first professional experiences in front of the movie camera were Dennis Gansel's blockbuster comedy "Girls on Top" (2001) and as the male lead in Florian Gaag's festival hit "Wholetrain" (2006). He had his breakthrough with the role of Cem Öztürk in the popular, critically acclaimed and award-winning early-evening ARD series "Turkish for Beginners" (2005 to 2008), which won the German TV award and the Adolf Grimme Award for Best Ensemble cast. After other successful TV productions, he played the Austrian assistant physician Dr. Maurice Knechtlsdorfer in the cult series "Doctor's Diary" (RTL, 2009 to 2011), also starring Diana Amft and Florian David Fitz.

Elyas M'Barek has been cast in features such as Dennis Gansel's "The Wave" (2008), Verhoeven's "Men in the City" (2009) and in the Bernd Eichinger production "Time You Change" (2010), in which he played the controversial young rapper Bushido. He delighted 1.8 million viewers in the role of Matthias Schweighöfer's best friend in the box office hit "What a Man" (2011).

M'Barek became a superstar in "Suck Me Shakespeer" (2013), which captivated more than 7 million viewers in Germany, and its sequel, which sold a sensational 7.6 million tickets in 2015. In 2014, he appeared in the box office hits "Who Am I" and "The Man Cave," and as the voice of the bear in "Paddington". In 2015, M'Barek wowed more than just his co-stars in "Traumfrauen."

ERIC KABONGO

Diallo Makabouri

Born Eric Kabongo Ilunga, the Belgian national played himself in the documentary "What about Eric?" (2014). He had a cameo in "The Fifth Estate" (2013) and the Dutch remake of Simon Verhoeven's "Men in the City" ("Mannenharten"). A year later, he had a minor role in "The Connection." In 2015, he played Krazy-E in the gang drama "Black", set in Brussels.

UWE OCHSENKNECHT

Dr. Sascha Heinrich

Born in 1956 in Biblis near Worms, Uwe Ochsenknecht made his breakthrough in Doris Dörrie's "Men..." (1985) as Heiner Lauterbach's rival for the affection of Ulrike Kriener.

Since 1977, he has appeared in countless productions as one of the most widely cast movie and TV actors. He was part of the submarine crew in Wolfgang Petersen's "Das Boot" (1981), appeared in Dörrie's "Money" (1989), "Am I Beautiful?" (1998), "Enlightenment Guaranteed" (1999) and the TV remake of the classic "The Odd Couple" (2003).

Ochsenknecht played the forger of the Hitler diaries in Helmut Dietl's media satire "Schtonk!," the lover of the singer (Katja Riemann) in "Ein Mann für jede Tonart" and also appeared in "Luther," "Die wilden Kerle," "Vom Suchen und Finden der Liebe," "The Wedding Party" and "The Elementary Particles." For the role of the unemployed soccer fan in "Football Rules Ok," Uwe Ochsenknecht received the German Film Award for Best Actor in 2000.



DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Simon Verhoeven was born in Munich in 1972. Already during his school days, he gained practical experience as a set runner and video operator and, at age 13, wrote his first play, which was performed by his high school drama club. After high school, he spent a year at the Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute in New York before graduating with a BA from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. His short film "Nice meeting you" won a Lew Wasserman Award at a festival of American film schools.

He financed his studies with side jobs like directing music videos or acting in various TV films like "Vino Santo" (Xaver Schwarzenberger, 1998) and "Zerbrechliche Zeugin" (Ben Verbong, 2000) and feature films like "Bride of the Wind" (directed by Oscar® winner Bruce Beresford, 2001).

Simon Verhoeven has appeared before the camera in 30 feature and TV films.

After a few shorts and music videos, Simon Verhoeven directed the satirical Munich comedy "100 Pro" (with Ken Duken, 2001), his first feature, which the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper called a "'Kir Royal' for the next generation." After the enormous success of "Men in the City" ("Männerherzen," 2009), he directed "Men in the City 2" ("Männerherzen ... und die ganz ganz große Liebe," 2011), his third feature based on one of his own screenplays. "Men in the City" received the 2010 Jupiter Award for Best Film and the Bavarian Film Award for Best Screenplay. In addition, the ensemble cast received a Bambi and the Bavarian Film Audience Award for its acting. And Justus von Dohnányi won the German Film Award for his portrayal of the German pop singer Bruce Berger. Bruce Berger's satirical hymn, "Alle Kinder dieser Erde," which was written by Simon Verhoeven, became a viral hit on Youtube. With "Unfriend" in 2015, Verhoeven opened himself to a completely different genre and filmed a horror thriller set in cyberspace and starring an international cast.

Filmography

2016 - Welcome to Germany/Willkommen bei den Hartmanns, Feature, Writer and Director
Wiedemann & Berg, Warner Bros.

2017, Bavarian Film Award for Best Production and Audience Award, Bogey Award, Golden Screen Award

2015 - Night Life, Feature, Writer
Wiedemann & Berg, Warner Bros.

2014 - Friend Request/Unfriend, Feature, Writer and Director
Wiedemann & Berg, Warner Bros.
2016, Bavarian Film Awards for Best Cinematography

2011 - Men in the City 2/Männerherzen und die ganz ganz große Liebe, Feature, Writer and Director
Wiedemann & Berg, Warner Bros.

2008 - Men in the City/Männerherzen, Feature, Writer and Director
Wiedemann & Berg, Warner Bros.

2007 - Höllriegel, Script Development
Wiedemann & Berg

2004 - Der Märchenprinz, Writer
Concorde

2001 - 100 Pro, Feature, Writer and Director
Seven Pictures/Tatfilm/Zephir Film

2000 - Nice Meeting You, Short Film, Writer and Director
Farfetched Films

1999 - Phone, Short Film, Writer and Director, NYU

1998 - Water, Short Film, Writer and Director, NYU

Activities

Various Commercials/Campaigns, including Lufthansa, Telekom, Ergo

2003 - Music Takes You High, Music Video, Director
Sony Music

Education

1995 - 1999 Tisch School of the Arts, Directing

1992 - 1995 Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute, Acting



PRODUCER'S BIO

Quirin Berg and Max Wiedemann founded their production company in 2003 while studying at the University of Television & Film Munich (HFF). *The Lives of Others*, their first feature film, won an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

Ever since then, the company has successfully produced box office hits annually such as *Men in the City* and its sequel, *Friendship!*, *Vaterfreuden* or Toronto International Film Festival Official Selection *Who am I - No System is safe*, which sold its remake rights to Warner Brothers US. The international horror thriller *Friend Request* followed and most recently *Welcome to Germany* hit the big screen, becoming the most successful German movie release in 2016. In 2017 *Werk ohne Autor*, the new feature film directed by Academy Award winner Henckel von Donnersmarck with its highly acclaimed cast, will premier.

In 2010 the two producers founded Wiedemann & Berg Television, creating a wide range of made for television feature films, mini-series and series. Their portfolio includes series with up to 180 episodes as well as highly acclaimed and internationally awarded mini-series such as *German History X* and *Line of Separation*, which is currently filming its second season. The focus on their role as pioneering producers reflects in having produced the first German Pay-TV series for TNT/Turner Broadcasting as well as currently filming *Dark*, the first German Netflix Original Series.

In addition to the Academy Award, the two producers and their productions received numerous international and national prizes, including the British BAFTA Award, César, European Film Award, Hollywood Reporter Award, LA Critics Award, German Bambi, German Television Award, German Film Award, Golden Nymph, Grimme Award, Magnolia Award and Rockie Award.

PICTURE TREE INTERNATIONAL GMBH - COMPANY PROFILE

Picture Tree International GmbH is a world sales & production company founded 2012 by Andreas Rothbauer with headquarters in Berlin. The core business of the company is the worldwide licensing of film rights across all genres and media as well as the coproduction of international feature films and domestic German distribution in an integrated business model.

