

**STRAND
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presents

THE GOLDEN GLOVE

A FILM BY
FATIH AKIN

Starring Jonas Dassler

PRESS NOTES

*OFFICIAL SELECTION
Berlin Film Festival*

Country of Origin: Germany
Format: DCP/1.85/Color
Sound: Dolby Atmos
Running Time: 110 minutes
Genre: Drama
Not Rated
In German and Greek with English Subtitles

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SYNOPSIS

From acclaimed filmmaker Fatih Akin (*Head-On, The Edge of Heaven, In The Fade*) comes a gruesome tale of notorious German serial killer Fritz Honka who haunted Hamburg's red light district in the 1970s. Based on the novel of the same name, THE GOLDEN GLOVE follows Honka as he frequents his favorite bar, the "Golden Glove," where schmaltzy German songs move the boozy bar hounds to tears and drinking is a reflex against pain and longing. There, Honka, a pitiful loser chasing after lonely women, keeps more than just secrets in the attic.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR FATIH AKIN

Fritz Honka committed his first murder before you were born. But he lived in your city and walked your streets. Was this a factor in your decision to make the film?

It made the movie more personal. For me, Honka is not just some serial killer like Hannibal Lecter from *The Silence of the Lambs*. The latter is merely a fictional character who commits murders in the USA, while Honka was a real person from my neighborhood, on which he also left his mark. I was told back in elementary school, "Watch out or a kiddy-fiddler or Honka will get you!" He was the bogeyman of my childhood. I always look for as personal rapport with my material. The more successful this is, the more verisimilitude the film will finally have.

You're showing an era – the 70s – and a milieu that won't be familiar to many viewers. That makes it pretty socially critical for a horror film.

But the film isn't a social drama. To me, the concept has a whiff of the prejudicial and didactic. For me, a film is something more philosophical. The approach is rather, "the future is now," in the words of the Indian philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti. How we are today is how we will shape the future. Hence, we are the future. But then we are also the result of our past. So to my mind, past, present and future are actually one and the same. My film is the portrait of a mentally ill individual whose murders can't be explained by social circumstance. Of course you can wonder whether the women he killed had no relatives – I mean why didn't anyone ask about them? But I wouldn't blame that on the era in which the story unfolds. Similar things still occur nowadays. People die in tenements and social housing and putrefy for weeks. It's only because of the stench that people even notice someone is dead. This smell of decay also featured here. Of course you try to be historically correct in such a film. But you also don't want the past to just look old and dusty. Anyone doing so hasn't noticed recent developments in cinema. My film may be set yesterday, but it could all just as well be taking place today.

How does one manage to depict Honka, who was, after all, a psychopath, an alcoholic and a murderer, in such a manner that viewers don't just turn their backs?

I very much took my lead from Heinz Strunk. His novel was of course one factor that got me started on the film. I think it was a great literary achievement, because with it he engendered in me a sort of empathy for this serial killer. Maybe in the book it's rooted in pity. The film doesn't recount where Honka came from or how he was humiliated and raped as a child. I didn't want to seek an explanation for his atrocities. But I tried to capture the traces of humanity that the novel also accords Honka. The other answer to this question is: thanks to the wonderful Jonas Dassler.

In him you had a relatively young actor who plays in elaborate makeup, talks with an accent, and is representing a man much older than himself.

Whoever played him would've had to undergo the same physical metamorphosis. Honka, with his broken nose, ruined teeth and characteristic squint, simply looked unique. These are key visual stimuli that had to be realized. We only got the squint right in the last moment. We'd initially considered doing it digitally, until we learned that there's a special contact lens company in London that also equipped *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Since these were the parameters, I felt a little liberated in my choice in terms of acting age. Naturally, the soul or gaze had to reflect a certain amount of experience, but Jonas could deliver that for me since he had

actually transformed himself. That's where Stanislavski and his Method Acting comes in: when you're in costume and makeup. Anyone who's once worn the well-cut suit of a renowned tailor when going to a film premiere, rather than donning worn-out sneakers, is familiar with this: you just move differently. If you multiply the effect, and consider the false teeth, mouthpiece and nose – these things in themselves maybe technical and superficial, but in the end, they're also connected to the soul. There's a correlation between the physical and the mental.

The actresses also accomplished something special. They had to expose themselves mentally and physically in some scenes. What did that mean for you in terms of your directing?

We began with a technical approach to the matter. This naturally offers some protection, both for the actresses and for me. So you discuss a scene: "You're getting strangled, and I'd like to show you emptying your bowels." You then discuss the mechanical process. The strangulation impedes oxygen-flow to the brain, plus you're afraid. This disables the sphincter. You discuss the effect of fear on the body, and at the same consider the realization. Should you use a mechanical device with a hose? Discussing this helps, because humor normally surfaces in such situations. But you also tell the actress, "This woman has survived the concentration camp and just doesn't want to die. Even if she's leading a miserable and ruined life, it's the only one she has." Then the tears flow. It gets to you, too. But that's part and parcel of it all, and I always let the women know that in the end it's the performance that counts. We want to depict the horror of these murders since the whole thing is supposed to have a shocking effect. This can only be done with the help of realism, and ninety percent of that comes from acting. If you include the actors in your vision, if they appreciate and support it and also have faith in it, it's very exciting and challenging work. And everyone likes a challenge.

The novel spent a long time on the bestseller lists. Did you feel constrained by the expectations of the viewers who know the book?

I didn't even really have that with *Goodbye Berlin*, and that was also a cinematic adaptation based on Wolfgang Herrndorf's successful novel. At the end of the day, you're also just a reader alone with the book. It's all about the thoughts I have on the book. I hope the film will satisfy a community of readers. There's some source material that you more or less have to alter. With Strunk's book, I had to work much more on the dramaturgy than I did with *Goodbye Berlin*; That novel was already like a script: beginning, middle, ending, off we go. Strunk's novel doesn't have such a clear structure, but that's why I find it appealing. I didn't want to come along with a straitjacket, the film was to retain some episodic characteristics. It's fun working this way. The reception of the film is likely to depend on the portrayal of Honka. If it resonates, the majority of readers should be convinced. And the violence of the crimes also had to be rendered in the film. For a long time, I wondered if I could realize that as a director.

Many of the characters have been marked by their experiences in World War II, even if it's more than twenty-five years back at the time of action. Conversely, the Federal Republic was just enjoying the economic miracle. But these figures seem endlessly distanced from it. If you see the economic miracle as a great light, then naturally there are also shadows – that's a law of physics. I've become increasingly interested in the shadows because they're eerier. Ultimately, the economic miracle is also a part of World War II.

There was so much work to be done, the one can't be conceived of without the other. There was a great shortage of labor, without which I wouldn't be here now. Where there are victors, there are losers, and this is about them: the underclass. Perhaps the war left them in a more traumatized

condition than society liked to acknowledge. In the USA, the consequences of the Vietnam War have meant people are much further in terms of trauma-reappraisal. Over here, it took people much longer to admit to themselves that something comparable exists here, too. It's something that the German and Turkish souls have in common: You don't want to process trauma, you want to forget it. But that's not how it works. It creates knots that need to be disentangled.

People go to the cinema because they want to laugh or cry – or to get creeped out.

There's a lot of talk at the moment about the crisis in cinema caused by streaming services. But one genre continues with great persistence: horror. I've always been an avid viewer of horror because I like getting creeped out. Stephen King once said that horror is a way of dealing with death and ephemerality. If you talked about it all the time, you'd end up crazy. Maybe that's why this form of catharsis exists. A horror film that offers its audience the opportunity to face their fears. Fear is a very powerful sensation – something happens in your body when you feel it. But if you experience it in the cinema, where it's not dangerous but actually ephemeral, it can even release feel-good hormones. You experience fear, but of course you survive it, too.

Which films influenced you in this respect?

The fact that I ended up in cinema at all has a lot to do with George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*. I was eight years old, my brother eleven, my mother wasn't around, my father was constantly working. Another family took care of us, and they had a video store. My brother wanted to watch horror films, I had to watch along. That's when I saw *Dawn of the Dead*, and it really got to me. But when, at the end of the film, the names of the cast and crew appeared, I realized that this terror was artificial, man-made. That's how I got interested in the medium. When I read Heinz Strunk's novel *The Golden Glove*, I was struck by the social drama and the historical aspect, but also by the serial killer motif. In my film, I tried to narrate the story as horror. You want to scare the audience. How do I have to position the camera, how do I have to edit to achieve that? But of course I do have a conscience, it's about human dignity, too. That's why I didn't want to recount the murders as pure entertainment, I don't want to glorify anything. One of the standards I tried to live up to is Krzysztof Kieslowski's *A Short Film about Killing*. It's a great deal more cruel than the *Saw* films or those of Quentin Tarantino. Michael Haneke also achieves the same in such disturbing films as *Caché* and *Funny Games*. Likewise, I also took my lead from "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," in both William Dieterle's 1939 version with Charles Laughton and Jean Delannoy's 1956 version with Anthony Quinn.

Tod Browning's *Freaks* also caused a sensation.

And no wonder. He worked with amateurs, with disfigured people. The film was partially banned although he was only depicting reality. And that may have yet more power to scare you than a conventional horror film. In my film, too, you don't really see the splatter elements that are in every episode of *The Walking Dead*. They don't really get to you anymore because by now they're mere cartoons. I wanted to create images in viewers' minds that aren't even on the screen. That was the cinematic challenge. Flirting with cinematic genres has been a central theme of all my work since *Short Sharp Shock* in 1998.

WRITER-DIRECTOR FATIH AKIN

Fatih Akin's international breakthrough came with *Head-On* winner of the Golden Bear, as well as the German and European Film Award. He documented the diversity of the Istanbul music

scene in *Crossing The Bridge – The Sound Of Istanbul*. His 2007 feature *The Edge of Heaven* won the Best Screenplay prize at Cannes.

The following year, he directed an episode for the compilation film *New York, I Love You*. In his comedy *Soul Kitchen*, he created a monument to his hometown and won the Special Jury Prize in Venice. For his documentary *Polluting Paradise*, Akin followed the environmental damage in the Turkish village of his ancestors for many years. His 2014 feature *The Cut* premiered at the Venice Film Festival.

In 2017, Fatih Akin achieved his greatest success to date with *In the Fade*, starring Diane Kruger. Among other prizes the feature was honored with the Best Foreign Language Film Golden Globe, the Best Actress award at 2017 Cannes Film Festival and the German Film Awards for Best Film and Best Screenplay. His new feature *The Golden Glove* premiered at the 2019 Berlin International Film Festival.

JONAS DASSLER IS FRITZ HONKA

Jonas Dassler was born in Remscheid in 1996. After graduating from high school in 2014, he attended the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts in Berlin. A year later, he took on his first film role in Henri Steinmetz' *We Are Fine* alongside Franz Rogowski and Angela Winkler. In 2016, he appeared in *Never Look Away* by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. He started taking lead roles in 2017 and was distinguished with the Bavarian Film Awards' prize for Best Young Actor for his performances in both Julia Langhof's *LOMO – The Language of Many Others* and Lars Kraume's *The Silent Revolution*. Jonas Dassler also regularly appears on stage. Since the 2017/2018 season, he has been an ensemble member at Berlin's Maxim Gorki Theater. He has appeared in productions such as *Alles Schwindel* (It's All Lies), *A Walk on the Dark Side* and *The Just Assassins*.

MAIN CAST

Fritz Honka	Jonas Dassler
Gerda Voss	Margarethe Tiesel
Doornkaat-Max	Hark Bohm

MAIN CREW

Director & Writer	Fatih Akin
Based on the novel "Der Goldene Handschuh"	
By Heinz Strunk	

Casting	Monique Akin
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Producers	Nurhan Şekerci-Porst
	Fatih Akin
	Herman Weigel

Co-Producers	Willi Geike Jérôme Seydoux Sophie Seydoux Ardavan Safaee
Director of Photography	Rainer Klausmann, bvk
Editors	Andrew Bird Franziska Schmidt-Kärner, bfs
Production Designer	Katrin Aschendorf
Makeup	Maike Heinlein Daniel Schröder Lisa Edelmann
Music	FM Einheit
Music Supervisor	Pia Hoffmann
Production Sound Mixer	Joern Martens
Sound Supervisor	Kai Storck
Sound Re-Recording Mixer	Richard Borowski Matthias Schmidt
Line Producer	Klaus Spinnler
1st Assistant Director	Scott Kirby

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