

A movie poster for the film 'Sovjet'. The title 'Sovjet' is written in large, white, serif letters that are slanted to the right. Above the title is a stylized eye with a black iris and pupil, looking directly forward. The eye is set against a red background that features radiating white lines, creating a sunburst or starburst effect. The overall composition is dark, with the red and white elements standing out. At the bottom right of the title, there is a small red rectangular box containing the text 'A FILM BY JOHANNES GRENZFURTHNER!'

Sovjet

A FILM BY
JOHANNES GRENZFURTHNER!



F I L M M O V E M E N T®

presents

solvent

a film by
JOHANNES GRENZFURTHNER

**"Deftly intertwines reality and fiction...
a tale of horror that both provokes and haunts."
-High on Films**

Austria | 2024 | English, German with English Subtitles
Horror, Mystery | 94 minutes | 1.78:1

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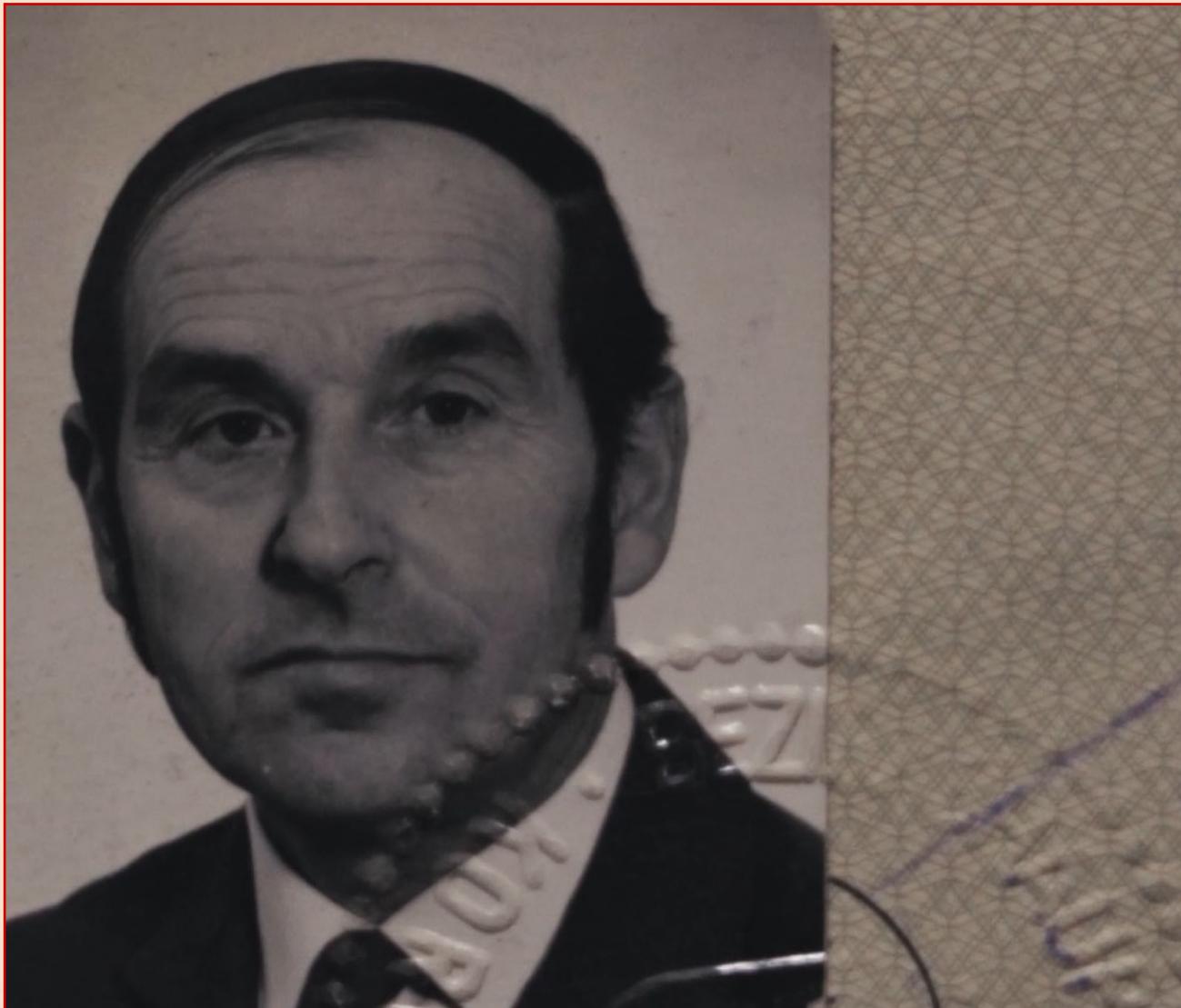
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SYNOPSIS

An American expat joins a team of experts searching an abandoned Austrian farmhouse for historical Nazi documents that may be hidden within it. However, when they discover a secret buried deep in the home's bowels, the team is forced to confront an ancient, insatiable evil intent on consuming them and everything they hold dear.

Directed by boundary-pushing filmmaker and actor Johannes Grenzfurthner (*Masking Threshold*), SOLVENT is a "horror odyssey that takes us down a path of madness and refuses to let us go" (*Hoy Sale Cine*).



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Though not directly linked in plot, SOLVENT is the spiritual successor to *Masking Threshold* (2021) and *Razzennest* (2022), forming a trilogy bound by a shared spirit. These films are kindred works, forbidden siblings.

SOLVENT delves into the haunting shadows of history, where past sins resurface in surreal and unexpected ways. At its heart, the film confronts the true horror of history by weaving it into a narrative that disturbs yet entertains. A project that explores memory, guilt, and the human struggle to face our darkest secrets.

My connection to this story is deeply personal. Set and shot on my maternal grandparents' derelict farm, the location underscores the link between past and present, bridging the real and imagined. The character Wolfgang Zinggl, depicted through photographs of my grandfather, Otto Zucker, embodies the complex legacy of World War II history. This representation addresses the silence and reluctance that have plagued generations of German and Austrian families, including my own. Many of Zinggl's lines are directly quoted from conversations I've overheard – whether from neighbors, passersby, or participants in online forums. There are many references and much subtext in Zinggl's story, such as the right-wing obsession with esoterica and new-age medicine. Additionally, the Nazi character initially "disappears" in 2014: seventy years after his work at the KZ, and briefly before the Syrian refugee crisis that reignited severe racism in Europe. The fictional timeline of the film plays out in the months leading up to the October 7 attacks.

Body horror and grotesque elements add complexity to the exploration of guilt and memory, incorporating almost Freudian tropes about filth, destruction, and eroticism. Character transformations symbolize the inner turmoil of confronting the past, bringing these horrors to the surface. The film's grotesque imagery underscores its themes, depicting the twisted and deformed nature of the past that shapes our present. One of my historical consultants, a member of the Jewish Association of Austria, praised the depiction of post-war family psychodynamics and what he calls "realism through grotesqueness." While SOLVENT features an artistically exaggerated core, it diverges from typical horror films that use Nazis as central motifs. My goal is to use this stylized approach to explore the enduring effects of Nazi ideology and its infiltration into modern society.

For my co-author Ben Roberts, SOLVENT became a meditation on authority and quietism. It explores Martin Luther's concept of total submission to authority, akin to divine command, and connects it to the quietism that followed the devastation of World War I. The film grapples with the humanist reckoning of the millions lost and forgotten, highlighting the silent suffering of history's overlooked voices. It aims to challenge viewers to reflect on the cost of blind obedience and the balance between authority and individuality.

Update, October 2024: Premiering SOLVENT on September 26, 2024, just days before Austria's election, made the film's themes even more urgent. With the far-right FPÖ emerging as the leading party, Oskar Deutsch, President of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (IKG) Wien, warned of its ties to nationalist Burschenschaften linked to Nazi ideology. His statement that the FPÖ's rise feels "threatening to many" added chilling relevance to my film's theme. —Johannes Grenzfurthner



LEAD ACTORS AND CREATIVES

Jon Gries (as Gunner S. Holbrook) is an American actor known for his versatility in film and television, often portraying quirky or offbeat characters. He gained significant recognition for his role as Uncle Rico in the cult classic *Napoleon Dynamite* (2004), where his comedic performance became iconic. Gries has also appeared in popular TV series like “Lost,” playing Roger Linus, and “The White Lotus,” where he portrayed Greg Hunt. His extensive career spans multiple decades, showcasing his ability to handle both comedic and dramatic roles with equal skill.

Aleksandra Cwen (as Krystyna Szczepanska) is a Polish actress known for her powerful performances in independent cinema and theater. She gained significant recognition for her lead role in the 2017 horror film *Hagazussa: A Heathen’s Curse*, where she portrayed Albrun, a woman facing isolation and psychological terror in 15th-century Austria. Her performance was praised for its intensity and emotional depth. Cwen is known for her talent for complex, challenging roles. Her work often explores dark and atmospheric themes, making her a compelling figure in contemporary European cinema.

Johannes Grenzfurthner (as Ernst Bartholi) is a multifaceted Austrian artist, filmmaker, and writer known for his innovative work spanning film, theater, and interactive media. As he puts it, “I manipulate people to positively respond to my lies and made-up realities, and feed off these emotions.” In SOLVENT, Grenzfurthner not only directs but also takes on one of the leading roles, highlighting his hands-on approach to storytelling and his commitment to pushing creative boundaries. As the founder of the art and film collective monochrom, Grenzfurthner is acclaimed for his ability to blend narrative, political commentary, and dark humor, effectively hacking the traditional cinema framework. His versatility in both directing and acting reinforces his status as a significant figure in contemporary independent cinema.

Roland Gratzer (as Fredi Weinhappl) is an Austrian actor, writer, and radio personality with a diverse career in the arts and media. He has worked extensively in theater, film, and music, showcasing his versatility across various creative platforms. As a member of monochrom, Gratzer has been involved in producing independent film and theater projects, often focusing on satirical and socio-political themes. He is also widely recognized for his comedic skills and engaging presence as a radio presenter and host with the Austrian public broadcasting organization ORF.

Pieter de Graaf is a renowned Dutch composer and pianist whose music blends classical traditions with contemporary influences, creating emotive and introspective soundscapes. Known for his delicate piano melodies and cinematic depth, De Graaf received the prestigious Edison Classic Award in 2020, recognizing his contribution to modern classical music. His acclaimed works, including the album *Fermata* (2019) and the innovative “A Tapestry of Life” series (2024), showcase his versatility and creativity. Pieter’s performances have captivated audiences on renowned stages such as Best Kept Secret Festival and Amsterdam Dance Event, cementing his reputation as a leading figure in the modern classical scene.

Ben Roberts (aka Benjamin Wesley Roberts) is a writer specializing in fiction and screenplays. His short stories and other works of fiction have been published in a variety of prestigious literary journals, including *Harvard Review*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Quarterly West*, and many others. Roberts has demonstrated his versatility and talent in screenwriting as well. His screenplay for the film *Able Bodies* received widespread recognition, winning numerous awards. In addition to his solo projects, Roberts has also collaborated with notable directors, such as Johannes Grenzfurthner, with whom he co-wrote the screenplay for *SOLVENT*.



CAST

Gunner S. Holbrook
Krystyna Szczepanska
Ernst Bartholi
Fredi Weinhappl

Jon Gries
Aleksandra Cwen
Johannes Grenzfurthner
Roland Gratzer

CREW

Directed by
Written by
Produced by

Executive Producers

Director of Photography
Edited by
Original Score by
Costume Design by
Casting by

Practical Effects by
Special Effects Makeup

Johannes Grenzfurthner
Johannes Grenzfurthner and Benjamin Roberts
Jasmin Hagendorfer, Günther Friesinger,
Julianne Gabert and Johannes Grenzfurthner
Tom Gorai, Neal Jones, Annick Mahnert,
Bill Straus
Florian Hofer
Anton Paievski
Pieter de Graaf
Frieda Pheonix
Julianne Gabert (Los Angeles) and
Sophie Mashraki (Vienna)
Matthias Ramon Jaklitsch
Roman Braunhofer



ABOUT FILM MOVEMENT

Founded in 2002 as one of the first-ever subscription film services with its DVD-of-the-Month club, Film Movement is now a North American distributor of award-winning independent and foreign films based in New York City. It has released more than 300 feature films and shorts culled from prestigious film festivals worldwide. Film Movement's theatrical releases include American independent films, documentaries, and foreign art house titles. Its catalog includes titles by directors such as Hirokazu Kore-eda, Maren Ade, Jessica Hausner, Andrei Konchalovsky, Andrzej Wajda, Diane Kurys, Ciro Guerra and Mélanie Laurent.

In 2015, Film Movement launched its reissue label Film Movement Classics, featuring new restorations released theatrically as well as on Blu-ray and DVD, including films by such noted directors as Eric Rohmer, Peter Greenaway, Bille August, Marleen Gorris, Takeshi Kitano, Arturo Ripstein and Sergio Corbucci.

For more information, please visit www.filmmovement.com.

