

REEL SUSPECTS

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PRINTER FRIENDLY

TO THE NIGHT



A film by Peter Brunner
111 min, AUSTRIA, 2018
Color, HD & DCP
ENGLISH

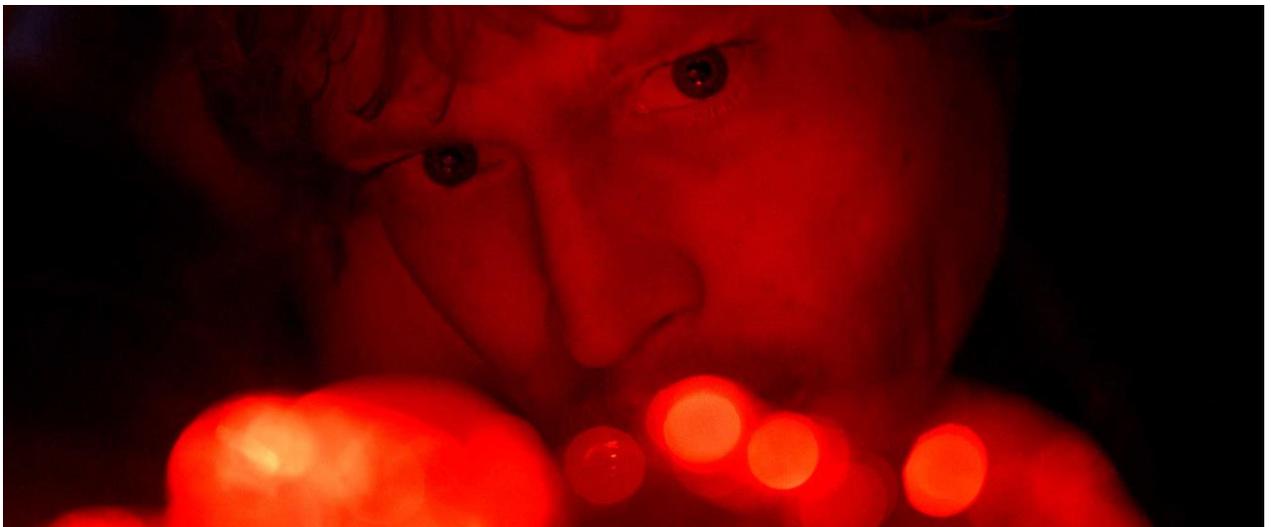


Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival

REEL SUSPECTS

SYNOPSIS

Norman, the sole survivor of a tragic fire accident when he was just a child, has been struggling with a lingering feeling of guilt all his life. Together with his girlfriend Penelope and their baby son, Norman tries to forge a new life. Norman's memory is reignited one night and he sets off on an unparalleled quest, following a trail of flames whose powers shall now heal him.



DIRECTORS'S BIOGRAPHY & FILMOGRAPHY

Peter Brunner, born in 1983, is a Vienna-based filmmaker and musician. the son of a psychoanalyst and a painting therapist is a former student of Michael Haneke at the Vienna film academy. His work includes short films and music videos as well as the feature sickness of the youth, which he directed together with fellow students and in which he played the leading role. His feature film debut my blind heart premiered at Slamdance film festival and in the Tiger competition at IFF Rotterdam 2014, and won several awards at international film festivals, including a nomination for the Golden Frog at Camerimage film festival. His sophomore feature "Those who fall have wings" was awarded the Special Jury Prize at the 50th Karlovy Vary international film festival in 2015. "To the Night", starring Caleb Landry Jones, Brunner's English language debut shot entirely in New York, had its world premiere at the Karlovy Vary international film festival.

- 2018 TO THE NIGHT
- 2016 FOR A PERSON AS FOR AN ANIMAL
- 2015 THOSE WHO FALL HAVE WINGS
- 2014 MY BLIND HEART

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DIRECTORS'S STATEMENT

How to conduct a fire? you can't conduct a fire!

To the night! that's a toast to living instead of surviving! A toast to the poet, the therapist, and the prophet we could be for one another. To all that we don't know about ourselves and to not being afraid of swimming in unknown waters.

This film is about my most intimate impressions of characters exploring love, pain and forgiveness. A toast to character-driven filmmaking! Basic inspirations and questions about this film reach back as far as my childhood, when I lost myself in Hieronymus Bosch's hellish pictures after elementary school and asked myself what the people in the flames could possibly feel. To the night is based on questions like "how do people, who doubt to be lovable, experience the World?", "how to protect one's memory?", "do we have to forget each other?". Questions as an attempt of understanding how you can live together in the flames. In to the night I ask those questions through the troubled and restless eyes of the limit-defying, Cobain-like character Norman, who on his quest for a home has to be careful not to burn in the fire which he set himself. The main character, Norman, already emerged while i was working on the screenplay for my first feature film my blind heart. It developed its own momentum and became the basis of a new film - To the night.

Norman springs from real examples like Arthur Rimbaud and Edvard Munch and their mutual fear in yearning that turned into an addiction. Munch shares with Norman that their artistic process helped them to cope with their guilt for the imagined responsibility they felt over their losses by creating a product via the reparative process. Although Norman, as an artist suffering from ptsd, has no words for what makes him go against the flow, the unspoken question that accompanies his yearning is: what is a successful life? – in the sense of your relationships with the people closest to you that you love. "I don't know if my mother ever caressed me" Norman wonders in the film.

To the night has a 6-year-long history of financing that took the material from Cinemart at Rotterdam IFF to IFP's no borders in New York. The fact that the film can now, after 8 years, be experienced in a completed state means that it can be despite of things - despite of all the obstacles along with many important and difficult experiences. With Caleb Landry Jones and Eléonore Hendricks in particular, we found actors who at the same time felt the same appetite for these characters and their attitude towards the world. For years, Norman's and Penelope's child had been called Caleb in the screenplay of To the night because I was attracted to the emotional tension Caleb Landry Jones can make tangible through his acting power, which I noticed in his previous works. Sometimes there are actors who just go to other places. So it was not that I saw something specific in him that did not exist and for which I had a special vision. It was just there - the distant drums that only he can hear, by whose rhythm he lives and which will never stop beating.

Like my previous works, the narrative of To the night is an introspective character study, however, the central motifs are deepened here by moving the view of the female protagonist into focus. But we mostly look at the world through Norman's "inner perspective". Moment by moment, decision by decision. Everyone carries their inner tempo within them and the shape of my personal rhythm and tempo tells the story from out of the characters, through their contradictory actions and not through a classical construction. When i think and talk about films, it is the characters I feel first, then the

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relationships and situations, the stance, the visual language, the sound design and the way the music is used, but rarely the story itself. The nostalgic concept of a blueprint construction annoys me, because it leads to the thousandth reproduction of a reproduction based on too many compromises. Rewards when the plot point hits home. I find that fundamentally wrong and unfree. Thus, however, the filmmakers get the cinema they deserve.

To the night emerged in the shadows of our capitalist global film landscape that is maintained only by increased entertainment, with the same tools that already Pasolini as well as many others after him have used to arm themselves: "pounding away on the same nail can bring down the house."

I tried to invite the team to make a film that focuses on emotions. Also in response to the emotional alienation of our time. The not-seeing, because our gaze is lowered on to the small rectangles that promise us new freedom by always the same thumb wiping. Norman's self-therapy, his being thrown back on the body and living with the disease, reinforces a topic that is very important to me: the narration of the body! Therefore, the self-experience through the body that is in constant dispute with itself is a starting point to ask the question: "what makes us human, in the broadest sense? that we can suffer?"

Norman's life with PTSD, with his mental imbalance, is supposed to open up another view on life with such a problem, because it is not just soldiers returning home who are affected by it. With the question, "why did I survive?" - and thus addressing a sort of survivor syndrome - I focus more on the mythical dimension in *To the night*, in the sense of Sisyphus rolling his fears uphill, rather than on performing a documentary pathologization. This film was created from the unbreakable concern for showing an honest portrait of people struggling through trauma for the family they never had. To show how they are affected by that. And how far they will go for their love. This attitude is inscribed in the film. My biggest concern has always been to create a condition through characters that are in conflict with their bodies, and to make them and their environment - in all their contradictions - an emotionally realistic experience. Therefore, our work exists on the risk that the actors have taken.

Our approach during the preparatory work was to always erase the boundaries between the documentary and the fictional, in order to feel and reinterpret the story through the eyes of the characters. The intention is to break the dividing line in front of and behind the camera: "trying to equalize", "no Machiavellian plan", "being on the same page" in order to be together in the moment as "spiritual warriors", free. And the only way to earn this spontaneity is not to focus on or being blocked by how you are, but rather - following Cassavetes' approach - to be who you are, however wrong or right it may be. Coffee without caffeine, chocolate without sugar. This is the contradictory expectation of an entertainment society that wants to consume the extremes served to them on a silver platter, but does not want to know how they came about. Thus, the focus in *To the night* is not on Norman's artistic work, as in films such as "Pollock", but rather how it comes about, on Norman's approach to his fear. People like Norman are worthless for our society permanently seeking growth and improvement. Worthless, should they not happen to produce "investment art" like shiny, golden balloon dogs. But they will never be worthless to the people who love this person, like their parents, their family and friends. So how do you deal with it if you cannot remember the meaningful people and your relationships and feelings towards them? The longing for this is *To the night*.

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CAST

NORMAN: CALEB LANDRY JONES
PENELOPE: ELÉONORE HENDRICKS
LUNA: JANA MCKINNON
ANDI: CHRISTOS HAAS
CATY: ABBEY LEE



Caleb Landry Jones, a Texas-native born on December 7, 1989 is an American actor and musician. He started off in supporting roles next to actors such as Mark Wahlberg, James Mcavoy, Michael Fassbender, Jennifer Lawrence or Tom Cruise and has gone on to appear in both independent and mainstream films. In 2017, he appeared in *The Florida Project*, *Get Out* and *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*. All three films received nominations (two for best picture) at the 90th Academy Awards in 2018, with *Three Billboards* eventually winning two Oscars, and *Get Out* receiving one Academy Award.

Filmography (selection)

To The Night (Peter Brunner, 2018)

Friday's Child (A.J. Edwards, 2018)

Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri (Martin Mcdonagh, 2017)

Twin Peaks (David Lynch, 2017)

The Florida Project (Sean Baker, 2017)

Get Out (Jordan Peele, 2017)

Heaven Knows What (Josh & Benny Safdie, 2014)

Antiviral (Brandon Cronenberg, 2012)

Contraband (Baltasar Kormakúr, 2012)

X-Men: First Class (Matthew Vaughn, 2011)

REEL SUSPECTS

CREW

WRITER, DIRECTOR & EDITOR

PETER BRUNNER

DOP

DANIEL KATZ, ISC

PRODUCTION DESIGN

KATIE HICKMAN

COSTUME DESIGN

RACHEL DAINER-BEST

SOUND MIXER

MICHAEL MOOTE

SOUND DESIGN

STEFAN ROSENSPRUNG

PHILIP WALDENBERGER

MANUEL GRANDPIERRE

RE-RECORDING MIXER

BERNHARD MAISCH

COLOR GRADING

KURT HENNRICH

PRODUCER

OLIVER NEUMAN & SABINE MOSER

MATT PARKER & CARLY HUGO

COPRODUCER

ULRICH SEIDL

PRODUCER & CREATIVE COLLABORATION

KLARA VON VEEGH

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER:

DANIEL BLANC

GILL HOLLAND

LINE PRODUCER

TAYLOR SHUNG

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PRODUCTION

FREIBEUTERFILM

In 2007 Freibeuterfilm was founded by film editor and producer Oliver Neumann, directors Sudabeh Mortezaei and Sebastian Meise and producer & production manager Sabine Moser. Their intention was to create a platform for innovative, personal projects in the areas of creative documentaries and fiction film. Freibeuterfilm wants to create a space for innovative films with attitude. We are driven by passion for filmmaking, curiosity about humans and their stories, a desire for visual storytelling, and socially relevant subjects. Films by Freibeuterfilm were shown in Cannes, Berlin and Venice Film Festival, nominated for the European Film Awards and awarded several Austrian film awards.

Filmography (selection)

2018

To The Night (fiction, dir. Peter Brunner)

2017

Testament (fiction, dir. Amichai Greenberg)

2016

Hidden Reserves (fiction, dir. Valentin Hitz)

Seeing Voices (documentary, dir. Dariusz Kowalski)

House of Atonement (doc, dir. Maya mc Kechneay)

2014

Macondo (fiction, dir. Sudabeh Mortezaei)

High Performance (fiction, dir. Johanna Moder)

2013

My Fathers, my Mother & Me (doc, dir. Paul Robert)

2012

Still Life (fiction, dir. Sebastian Meise)



Outing (doc, dir. Sebastian Meise & Thomas Reider)

Pál Adrienn (fiction, dir. Agnes Kocsis)

LOVELESS

Loveless was founded by Emmy-nominated producers Carly Hugo and Matt Parker, who have worked together since 2004 and have collectively produced over twenty-five films. Our films have premiered at many top festivals, including Sundance, Cannes, SXSW, Berlin, Toronto, Telluride, and New York. We are committed to creating films that are poignant and original, while keeping a steady eye on commercial viability and sustainability as a company.

Filmography (selection)

2018

To The Night (fiction, dir. Peter Brunner)

2017

Agnelli (doc, dir. Nick Hooker)

2016

Approaching The Unknown (fiction, dir. Mark Rosenberg)

Suited (documentary, dir. Jason Benjamini)

2015

Five Nights in Maine (fiction, dir. Maris Curran)

Everything is Copy (documentary, dir. j. Bernstein & n. Hooker)

2013

Mother of George (fiction, dir. Andrew Dosunmu)

COPRODUCER - ULRICH SEIDL FILMPRODUKTION

Following the international success of his feature *Dog Days* (2001), in 2003, Ulrich Seidl, together with Veronika Franz, founded Ulrich Seidl Filmproduktion, on the one hand to produce their own films, and on the other to provide filmmakers with creative conditions different from those in usual production companies.

Import Export (2007), the first theatrical feature produced by Seidl Film, premiered in competition at the 2007 Cannes film festival. It was followed by *Paradise* (2012), the award-winning film trilogy whose separate parts had their world premieres in competition successively at the three most important international film festivals: Cannes, Venice and Berlin.

In 2014 no fewer than two of Ulrich Seidl film productions screened in Venice: Ulrich Seidl's essay film *In the Basement* (2014) and *Goodnight Mommy* (2014), the fiction feature film debut by Veronika Franz and Severin Fiala (who had previously directed *Kern* (2012), the documentary about the actor and director Peter Kern).

The latest film *Safari* had its world premiere at the 73rd international film festival in Venice, 2016.

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Filmography (selection)

2018

To The Night (fiction, dir. Peter Brunner)

2016

Safari (doc, dir. Ulrich Seidl)

2014

Goodnight, Mommy (fic, dir. V. Franz & S. Fiala)

In the Basement (doc, dir. Ulrich Seidl)

2012

Paradise Love (fiction, dir. Ulrich Seidl)

Paradise Faith (fiction, dir. Ulrich Seidl)

Paradise Hope (fiction, dir. Ulrich Seidl)

Kern (doc, dir. Veronika Franz & Severin Fiala)



REVIEWS

THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

Caleb Landry Jones headlines this psychological acid trip of a movie directed by Austrian filmmaker Peter Brunner ('Those Who Fall Have Wings').

A childhood tragedy consumes a young Brooklyn artist in *To the Night*, the English-language debut from Austrian musician and semi-experimental director Peter Brunner (*Those Who Fall Have Wings*). This former student of Michael Haneke has crafted a psychological drama that's hard to watch as the protagonist — played by Caleb Landry Jones at his most intense — both consciously and subconsciously tries to find a way to deal with the fact that his parents died in tragic circumstances when he was a child.

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A Karlovy Vary competition title, this will travel to other festivals mainly on the strength of the name of co-producer and editing consultant Ulrich Seidl, as well as cinephiles' familiarity with Jones, who last year alone co-starred in *Get Out*, *Three Billboards Outside of Ebbing, Missouri* and *The Florida Project*. However, the project might be a tad too experimental and the protagonist too unlikable for more commercial pickups.

Norman (Jones) is an artist whose latest project involves slowly melting babies made of ice in glass boxes and underneath menacing red lights. Since Norman has brought his own 8-month-old to the opening — a child somewhat oddly called Caleb (Bodhi and Hudson Mitchell) — it's already clear this is a guy with some unresolved issues. It slowly becomes clear, mainly through the rather facile showcasing of material on Norman's laptop, that the tortured artist lost his parents in a fire at his palatial childhood home outside New York. Though the property, on a large leafy estate, has remained unsold, one assumes there must have been some kind of inheritance that has allowed Norman to afford his enormous Brooklyn artist's loft, which is the kind of gigantic atelier space filled to the brim with industrial loot and mountains of knickknacks that seems to exist more often in the minds of overeager production designers than in reality.

His girlfriend and the mother of little Caleb, Penelope (Eleonore Hendricks), has to suffer through Norman's breakdowns and violent outbursts, like when he hits her in the face during a shouting match early on. She seems aware he's a broken individual but it is still something of a miracle she decides to stick around, especially because he has a way of punishing her for things she does out of kindness, like when she organizes a party for his 29th birthday (he can't deal with the party because he turns older than his parents ever were). Their relationship is never really explored, however, with the director instead always staying close to the perturbed and blinkered perspective of his male protagonist.

Brunner, who also edited the film and wrote the screenplay, continues in the semi-experimental vein of his previous two films, *Those Who Fall Have Wings* and *My Blind Heart*, as *To the Night* strings together images and situations that are connected more in emotional or psychological terms than they are rooted in logic or narrative conventions. The star of Brunner's earlier works, Christos Haas, an actor with Marfan syndrome, plays a supporting role here as Andi, a friend of Norman's whose kitchen fire rather predictably sparks a problematic response from the protagonist. Andi is also involved in the story's rather bizarre finale, which involves an aquarium, a contraption to lower a car seat into the glass box full of water and a jerry can of gasoline. No points for guessing things might not quite turn out as planned — even if it is hard to guess what exactly it is that Norman did plan to do.

To the Night does feature a striking and fully committed performance from Jones, who sells both the character's intense rage as well as his tragic and seemingly incurable gloom. Whether all but the most hard-core art house audiences will want to follow such a downbeat and often negative character for the span of an entire feature, however, is another matter.

The feature's look is appropriately grungy, combining expensive-looking locations with a more ragged visual aesthetic that often feels vaguely hellish, with red lights a recurring visual motif throughout. **By Boyd Van Hoeij for *The Hollywood Reporter* – June 2018**