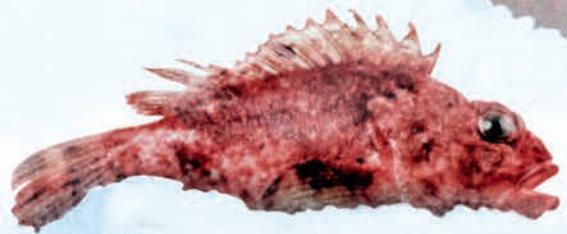


# WILD MOUSE



 **67** Internationale  
Filmfestspiele  
Berlin  
Competition



A FILM BY JOSEF HADER



## SYNOPSIS

Kings should be treated courteously! At least, that's what famous music critic Georg (Josef Hader) thinks. But he finds himself counting pennies when his chief editor (Jörg Hartmann) suddenly fires him from the Viennese newspaper for which he has been writing for decades. While keeping his dismissal a secret from his psychotherapist wife Johanna (Pia Hierzegger), whose mind is occupied solely by getting pregnant, Georg begins to plot his revenge. He is aided by old school friend Erich (Georg Friedrich), and in return the newly liberated Georg helps him repair a rundown rollercoaster in Vienna's Prater Park. Georg's nightly campaigns against his former boss start with small acts of vandalism. They soon escalate to extremes, and Georg's tame, bourgeois life gets completely out of hand...



*I don't have any of the right qualifications for what I do. After INDIA, I suddenly found myself in the position of being both a screenwriter and an actor without having really trained to do either. Together with Wolfgang Murnberger, I moved from one Wolf Haas screen adaptation to the next, trying to learn how to tap into the element of drama that lies in comedy. It's thanks to Murnberger's generosity that I was increasingly given the opportunity to voice my opinion on set and to influence how these productions were directed. It gave me the impetus to write my own screenplay and to take full responsibility for the film's artistic vision from beginning to end. My approach when capturing the experience of life is not to ban any colour or allow any specific hue to dominate. Film genres offer prisms through which we can understand the world and, if need be, people for us to blame. But I would rather my story be one focused on how the fact that absolutely nothing goes together is the main problem. In my eyes, 'tragicomedy' is the most accurate representation of this thing we call life.*

Josef Hader (director-writer, actor)



## AN INTERVIEW WITH JOSEF HADER

***WILD MOUSE is your first feature film as a director. Is filmmaking so fundamentally different from your cabaret work?***

Making this film always felt like being on holiday from solo cabaret work, because there you are all on your own. Of course directing a film means the focus is very much on you, and you have to rise to the challenges, but it also means you can assemble your team yourself and determine what kind of atmosphere there will be on the set. The writing aspect isn't really so different, because in cabaret I always try to put on a kind of theatrical show as well. I always have a planned structure, although I never completely stick to it. And then I revise it a number of times, which makes it clear to me what I really want to say. I like revealing as little as possible at the beginning. Not having enough information is always a source of suspense. In the first scene I didn't want to show exactly what's going on, to serve it up on a plate. Two people are walking through a large office, and at first you can't really make out what kind of place it is; they're talking about things you can't immediately make sense of. Maybe if it was on TV you would just zap over to another channel. But it's in the cinema, and people have paid to get in, so they don't run out straight away. That means you really can start off with a little question mark.

***Your main characters are initially bestowed with identity based on their professions, and their attitudes towards life are also very closely connected with current economic developments. There are still three social classes, as it were, but the middle class is beginning to crumble. Is that a social sector you wanted to look at more closely?***

I wanted the film, which is anyway a mixture of several genres, to be a satire of modern middle-class life as well. A blow of fate for a middle class person isn't usually purely tragic; generally it's also comic. If the story of my main protagonist being made unemployed were shifted to a working-class environment, where people in situations like that really are faced with deprivation, it would also be possible to bring out the comic elements, but it would be harder to pull off the dark humor. I mean, if someone's face is in the mud you don't push it down even further. But when catastrophes like this happen to the middle classes, they are less fundamentally threatening, and there's something laughable about people who react as if their very existence were in jeopardy. My main protagonist would have been able to look for another job, or write a book about music, or simply not work for a year and live from his redundancy pay as a journalist. But he acts as though he were facing annihilation, because the blow to his ego is so devastating. In a way Georg's interpretation of the situation as a complete tragedy is a sort of luxury he can afford.

***What place did you intend humor to have in Wild Mouse? In your work as a cabaret artist you have the reputation of seeing humor as particularly important...***

Some people would say that as a cabaret artist I have the reputation of seeing humor as relatively unimportant... The screenplay came into being without any tactical considerations of how funny the film should be. I don't really do that when I am developing a cabaret show either. Of course I always have plans, and basically you have to calculate these things, but the nice thing is that after a certain point you can write yourself free of it. At some stage all that matters is the story, and nothing else. In a cabaret show you intuitively give more space to the gags, because you're all alone on stage, and if you didn't have any jokes you'd die a death every evening. But even in cabaret I often attempt to replace humor with suspense. That makes it more interesting to play as well. In films I think the tragi-comic should always arise from a serious situation. When I was writing the screenplay for INDIA with Alfred Dorfer and Paul Harather, we tried to decide in advance which jokes would emerge from the film and which wouldn't. With the Brenner films we tried to insert more drama from one film to the next, and to use comic elements only at specific points, and in a very measured way. With WILD MOUSE the aim was to maintain the balance between tragedy and comedy so carefully that there wasn't any pressure in the dialogue to go in one direction or the other. It was my hope that if you really could balance the comic and tragic it would create a depiction of life which is closer to the way I perceive my life.



**The most cinematic images appear in a landscape of untouched snow. It can't have been easy to shoot those scenes. What's the significance of this snow-covered landscape for you?**

When I was a young man I saw François Truffaut's film SHOOT THE PIANO PLAYER. Part of the story takes place in the snow, and I can still remember how fascinated I was by the effect snow has in a film, because it completely changes the sound and the picture. Ever since then I've had the idea in the back of my mind of a final scene in snow, where everything is completely covered and muffled, as if you were walking on cushions. It's only possible in a landscape with deep snow, so we waited for that and then started filming. The good thing is that if you're running around in your underpants for three days trying to film the scene, you don't have to act any more. It becomes a bit like a documentary film. The snow and the cold take charge, and all you have to do is be there and turn on the camera.

**You worked with a very interesting pair of cinematographers: Andreas Thalhammer and Xiaosu Han. What did they bring to the visual work?**

It really is impossible to overestimate the contribution those two made. My ideas about the camerawork were essentially that I didn't want to exclude the possibility of beautiful images, but I also didn't want to subordinate everything to the beauty of the visual. So I tried something un-Austrian, which was to find a relaxed approach towards beauty and ugliness, and to make a film where both could appear. And I didn't want the audience to watch the hero's failures with cool detachment: I wanted them sometimes to be uncomfortably close. One decision I made when I first started writing was that I really didn't want the film to have a composed score running through it; so essentially the locations and the editing would have to create the music. I discovered Andreas Thalhammer and Xiaosu Han when I looked at various show reels from camera operators. The two of them hadn't been to any school; they just make films, and they've been doing that all over the world even though they're still very young. When we met we discovered immediately that we were on the same wavelength. We agreed at a very early stage that we wanted to film in CinemaScope. CinemaScope doesn't actually mean an expansion but a concentration of the image. You can conceal things and only reveal them at a certain point.

**As the writer and director you place yourself in a tradition of Austrian auteur filmmakers. It's more unusual for the writer and director to be the leading actor as well.**

**How did you treat yourself as an actor?**

I thought the biggest difficulty would be that on the one hand I'd be a colleague for the other actors but on the other hand I'd be the boss on the set. I decided to behave the way you would in a band or a string quartet, where you play together but one person has more say about the direction things move in. But the others can also put forward their ideas.

**How did you direct yourself as an actor?**

Of course I was concerned about my own acting. But because I was even more worried about being the director, there wasn't any time to worry about my acting as well. I thought to myself, well, if it's not good enough we might as well pack up and go home. After three days of filming it felt to me as though three weeks had gone by, because it was so intense. But I was able to sleep much better at night than if I'd only been an actor. I had the completely unfounded impression that I was doing quite well.



**You play a protagonist who is a real expert on classical music, with everything that entails. What motivated your choice of music for the film?**

I tried to find the music myself, but I also had advice, especially about which pieces would be easier or harder to get hold of. There are some interpretations which are only available for an exorbitant price. It took me a long time to find music that would be appropriate for Georg in his rage and defiance. Finally it occurred to me that some sort of baroque music might be fitting. One subject dealt with by many composers during that period was „la follia“ – madness. It constantly varies between minor and major, between tragic and cheerful. Vivaldi’s Follia, the version by Il Giardino Armonico, sounds like punk music to me.



I think Beethoven is very appropriate when you’re trying to get up the nerve to do something. If I listen to Beethoven in the car I always drive too fast. And I wanted a very modern Beethoven, where you can really hear how new and edgy his music was for all his contemporaries. That’s why it was the German Chamber Philharmonic conducted by Paavo Järvi. Then I was faced with the question of what Georg listens to in the concert hall. Many years ago I was able to work with Nikolaus Harnoncourt on a concert performance of Mozart’s Der Schauspieldirektor, because he wanted a cabaret artist on board. That’s where I met Andrea Bischof from Concentus Musicus, who also plays in the Quatuor Mosaïques. She and her partners were prepared to play the scene in the concert hall, although as a quartet they are constantly travelling around the world, and for a musician at that high level there’s nothing more unnatural than miming to a playback of your own music in a film scene as if you were really playing. I chose the Schubert because it is a variation movement which begins very sadly and then becomes enraged. Georg is sitting in the concert hall listening to the Schubert, moved, and then the angry variation of the same theme is used as film music, almost as though it were inside him, and he allows himself to be carried along by this music to his first minor act of aggression. Music can make someone big and expansive and calm. With George it’s different. The music makes him smaller, angrier but also braver. He does things that you just don’t do, and the music in his head helps him do them. That’s how the whole tradition of military music grew up. It was there on the battlefield so people would be less afraid of death and more willing to attack the enemy.



## JOSEF HADER



In recent decades, Josef Hader, born in 1962 in Waldhausen (Upper Austria), has won over audiences across the entire German-speaking world as a cabaret artist, collecting all of the most prestigious cabaret awards.

He lay the foundations for a career in film in 1993 with his screenplay for **INDIA**, which he co-wrote together with director Paul Harather. The film won multiple awards, including the Max Ophüls Prize, and is considered one of Austria's most well-known and successful films. In 2000 Josef Hader won the Best Actor Award at the Locarno International Film Festival for his role in **HOLD-UP** by Florian Flicker.

Hader continues to limit his film and television roles to a small number of projects, usually preferring productions where he also has the opportunity to be involved in writing the screenplay. In 2000 he not only took on the role of Simon Brenner, the hero of Wolf Haas' series of novels, for the first time in the film **COME, SWEET DEATH** (a performance which continues to earn him growing cult status), he also went on to co-write all four Brenner adaptations (**SILENTIUM** (2004), **THE BONE MAN** (2009) and, more recently, **LIFE ETERNAL** (2015)), together with director Wolfgang Murnberger and the author himself, Wolf Haas.

In 2009 he was awarded the Deutscher Fernsehpreis (German Television Award) and, in 2010, the Adolf Grimme Prize for the TV film 'Half a Life' by Nikolaus Leytner. Most recently, Josef Hader could be seen alongside Axel Prahl, Devid Striesow and Robert Stadlober in **DER BAU**, an adaptation of a Kafka novel directed by Oscar winner Jochen Alexander Freydank. In 2016 Hader impressed as Stefan Zweig in a biopic that has already garnered much attention, won many awards and is currently Austria's contender for best foreign language film at the Oscars, **STEFAN ZWEIG: FAREWELL TO EUROPE** (directed by Maria Schrader).

In **WILD MOUSE**, he is not only listed as scriptwriter and lead actor: this production also marks his directorial debut.



## SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

(as an Actor)

- 2017 **WILD MOUSE** (dir. Josef Hader)
- 2016 **STEFAN ZWEIG: FAREWELL TO EUROPE** (dir. Maria Schrader)
- 2015 **LIFE ETERNAL** (dir. Wolfgang Murnberger)
- 2014 **KAFKAS DER BAU** (dir. Jochen Alexander Freydank)
- 2010 **AUFSCHEIDER** (dir. David Schalko)
- 2009 **THE BONE MAN** (dir. Wolfgang Murnberger)  
**DIE PERLMUTTERFARBE** (dir. Marcus H. Rosenmüller)
- 2004 **SILENTIUM** (dir. Wolfgang Murnberger)
- 2002 **BLUE MOON** (dir. Andrea Maria Dusl)
- 2000 **COME, SWEET DEATH** (dir. Wolfgang Murnberger)  
**HOLD-UP** (dir. Florian Flicker)
- 1993 **INDIA** (dir. Paul Harather)

# WILD MOUSE (WILDE MAUS) a film by JOSEF HADER

2017 – Austria – 103 minutes – sound Dolby Digital 5.1 – ratio 2.35:1 – in German

## MAIN CAST

Georg **Josef Hader**  
Johanna **Pia Hierzegger**  
The Boss **Jörg Hartmann**  
Erich **Georg Friedrich**  
Sebastian **Denis Moschitto**  
Nicoletta **Crina Semciuc**  
The Editor **Nora Waldstätten**



## MAIN CREW

Director & screenplay **Josef Hader**  
Cinematography **Andreas Thalhammer**  
**Xiaosu Han**  
Editing **Ulrike Kofler**  
**Monika Willi**  
**Christoph Brunner**  
Production Design **Christoph Kanter**  
Costume Design **Max Wohlkönig**  
Make-up **Monika Fischer-Vorauer**  
**Andreas Meixner**  
Casting **Eva Roth**  
Production Manager **Ulrike Lässer**  
Producers **Michael Katz & Veit Heiduschka / Wega Film**  
Co-production with support from **ARD Degeto & Freibeuter Film**  
**Österreichisches Filminstitut**  
**ORF Film-/Fernsehabkommen**  
**Filmfonds Wien**  
**Land Niederösterreich**

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DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY XIAOSU HAN – ANDREAS THALHAMMER SOUND HJALTI BAGER JONATHANSSON – BERNHARD MAISCH EDITOR ULRIKE KOFLER – MONIKA WILLI – CHRISTOPH BRUNNER

COSTUME MAX WOHLKÖNIG PRODUCTION DESIGN CHRISTOPH KANTER MAKE UP MONIKA FISCHER-VORAUER – ANDREAS MEIXNER PRODUCTION MANAGER ULRIKE LÄSSER

DIRECTOR AND SCRIPT JOSEF HADER PRODUCERS MICHAEL KATZ / VEIT HEIDUSCHKA WORLD SALES THE MATCH FACTORY





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*Famous music critic Georg's tame, bourgeois life gets completely out of hand when he secretly begins a revenge campaign against the editor who fired him...*